

## CHAPTER 7

# Digital Alienation

The inevitable failure of our own lives to match up to the digital Ideal is one of the motors of capitalism's worker-consumer passivity, the docile pursuit of what will always be elusive, a world free of fissures and discontinuities.<sup>1</sup>

Mark Fisher, *K-Punk* (2018) p.130.

Academic jargon and common language have not yet caught up with many aspects of digitality in order to denote or describe them. This is partly because we still need to recognise the extent of the new and then develop the requisite concepts needed to try to explain it. This is a problem. How, for example, to name what digitality does to culture? How does it produce culture? How do we consume it? What, precisely, is the 'connection' between you and me and the virtual network that pervades our physical world by means of digital bit-streams that colonise our consciousness through the ubiquity and relentlessness of its commercial message? Does the term 'connection', with its association with physical or in some way contiguous linkages, even fit in this new context? An analogue connection we can recognise through forms of contiguity, but what of digital's 'discontinuity', as R. W. Gerard put it at the Macy Conference? Or even more difficult, what of networked automation where, as networked computers become more sophisticated, automation itself becomes automatic—where there is no human 'at the very beginning and the very end' of a process as Norbert Wiener reasoned there must be if we are to remain in control of the process? If digitality's critical functions are difficult to denote, then it may be useful to think about what these functions are not. From there we can consider what this cleared conceptual space provides by way of an opportunity to, if not denote accurately and describe fully, then at least acknowledge that there is work to be done concerning digitality's effects, and accept that some old assumptions regarding the basic tenets of political economy need to be rethought for new times.

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If the ideas of ‘dissociation’ and ‘double-alienation’ are brought into the analytical frame, then ‘production’ can’t be said to describe what we (and computers) ‘do’ when digitality makes possible the aggregation of data—which is the mainstay function of the web, and of the growing digital ecology. In what sense do we ‘produce’ when digital technology ensures that we don’t even have to be aware that we are ‘producing’ the data that is being harvested, almost constantly, if we carry a smartphone? As digitality becomes more sophisticated and pervasive, we don’t even have to possess a smartphone or laptop. Indeed, we don’t even need to be born: a foetal scan will produce data that ‘can never be retracted. They will be available to third parties and there is no telling how they will be used.’<sup>2</sup> A bank account with a cash-card will tell a lot about us—what we buy, where we go, how much income we have, how much debt we carry, etc. And as we walk down the street or enter a public building, facial recognition software can do it too, matching our features and our GPS coordinates with a passport or driver’s licence photo that has our residential address and other information accompanying it.<sup>3</sup> Such forms of ‘production’ are sources of accumulation, yet it is not necessary for us to be consciously part of the process. In terms of political economy and the formation of culture, this is something that we have hardly begun to think through.

Moreover, if we don’t ‘produce’ or are not part of a growing element of the productive forces of society in ways that Marx or even Baudrillard would recognise, then surely we cannot be said to ‘consume’ in the same ways either? We clearly ‘do’ something in the service of the data corporations that allows them to make profits, but ‘consumption’ with its associations of materiality and of the human-scaled recognition that stemmed from the analogue-based processes of the production-consumption cycle, simply does not capture this new process from a new category of technology. Of course, we still act as traditional consumers in much of daily life when we buy material things. However, within digitality much of what we face is, or appears to be, free. For corporations to be profitable, we not only have to produce, but also consume. But where, exactly, is the act of consumption online? It seems to be connected to what we still call production, but this has been incorporated, lazily, into what is today called ‘prosumption’, a futurist and business-studies concept that does not really explain much at all.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Marx gives the closest approximation here when he writes about the *conditioning effect* of capitalism’s productive forces upon individual consciousness.<sup>5</sup> But we need to be more precise and questioning, and we need to rethink these industrial age assumptions that we have so unreflectively grafted on to a new context. This is especially so if we want to understand how culture is formed through digitality.

If we are questioning the role and functioning of production and consumption in the context of digitality, then we are bound to do the same in relation to the idea of base and superstructure. And similarly, the ‘connection’ between the productive base and its superstructural society in the context of digitality is no longer clear. The interpenetration between the two that Raymond Williams

saw functioning as a 'totality' now seems problematic also. Williams posited separate spheres that interpenetrate and mutually constitute each other. But, again, within digitality, what is 'base' and what is 'superstructure' is not easily recognised. Jean Baudrillard tries to move away from the binary altogether by suggesting that in the society of the image it is all 'superstructure' and it is here where the illusions of the real are generated in the production and consumption of the electronic image.<sup>6</sup> Baudrillard has been accused of being too 'consumptionist' whereas Marx is often deemed too 'productionist'.<sup>7</sup> But in his *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Baudrillard gets us close to something interesting that I will develop shortly. He does this in a critique of a few crucial lines of Marx in the *Grundrisse* where Marx writes that in the industrial process of production man 'steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor'.<sup>8</sup> For Baudrillard, Marx betrays 'an innocence of machines', so that if one draws out the logic of his arguments in *Capital* and *Grundrisse*, then he (Marx) 'goes well beyond political economy and its critique, since it literally signifies that it is no longer a matter of a production process, but of a process of exclusion and relegation'.<sup>9</sup> Marx's purported signalling of the end of his own political economy through his underestimation of technology is therefore for Baudrillard the death-knell for the project of Marxism in the age of the electronic image:

when production attains ... circularity and turns in on itself, it loses every objective determination. ... Simultaneously, when this sphere of signs (including the media, information, etc.) ceases to be a specific sphere for representing the unity of the global process of capital, then we must not only say with Marx that 'the production process has ceased to be a labour process', but that 'the process of capital itself has ceased to be a production process'.<sup>10</sup>

Whether Baudrillard misreads or selectively quotes Marx must remain an open question here, but Marx does go on to write that this stepping aside enables in the worker a form of 'mastery' over 'his own general productive power', his 'understanding of nature', but that the 'theft of alien labour time, on which the *present* wealth is based, appears a miserable foundation in the face of this new one, created by large-scale industry itself'.<sup>11</sup> Marx is clearly suggesting this 'mastery' will come in a future unalienated society, and not one under capitalism. Still, Baudrillard's point of 'exclusion and relegation' is useful, if we put aside that the terms suggest two slightly different things. And this brings us back to the double-alienation concept I described earlier through the work of Rahel Jaeggi.<sup>12</sup>

The fundamentals bear restating: digitality *breaks* with the logic and relationship of mutual constitution, of flow and of continuity and contiguity, that humans have forged with technology ever since our evolutionary drift toward being tool-making and tool-using creatures. This break constitutes an

historically unique double-alienation: from our relationship with analogue technology and from the natural environment that supplied the analogues from which our earliest tools were made, and from the bond, the 'circle of action', that was formed from their mutual interaction.<sup>13</sup> Like the natural world, technologies surround us. But through digitality our relationship with them is transformed. So, too, then, is the relationship with the processes of 'production' and 'consumption' and 'base' and 'superstructure'. The process of digital rupture effects an alienation, but of a new kind, and Jaeggi's concept of a 'relation of relationlessness' captures it well. Objectively, it is impossible *not* to have a relationship with our digital tools and our virtual environment, but because these are so antithetical to our analogue essence, the relationship is one that is effectively meaningless, given our inability to understand or relate to digital as we could with the analogue that had formed our species. It is a form of alienation, as Jaeggi puts it, that suffers from a 'loss of meaningful involvement in the world'.<sup>14</sup> It is important to understand also that in this alienation, its 'relation' being one of 'relationlessness' means that it takes a particular and nuanced socio-technical and ontological form. It is *relationless* in that it is 'the loss of a relation'<sup>15</sup> to one that contains little or no mutuality in the McLuhanesque sense of an ongoing dialectic where 'we become what we behold ... we shape our tools and afterwards our tools shape us'.<sup>16</sup> Digitality is nothing without humans, yet at the same time its logic of automation and the in-built need to excise human participation from its operations that is its corollary, is what makes it what it is and gives it its power. It is a relation of domination—'the power of the distant' as Stiegler phrased it, but of a specific kind.<sup>17</sup> Again Jaeggi's theory provides a useful insight into the condition as it applies to digitality, describing also a new expression of technological determinism emanating from the digital sphere: 'What we are alienated from,' she writes:

is always *at once alien and our own*. In alienated relations we appear to be ... both victims and perpetrators. Someone who becomes alienated in or through a role at the same time plays this role *herself*; someone who is led by alien desires at the same time *has* those desires—and we would fail to recognise the complexity of the situation if we were to speak here simply of internalised compulsion or psychological manipulation. Social institutions that confront us as rigid and alien are at the same time created by us. In such a case we are not—and this is what is specific to the diagnosis of alienation—master over what we (collectively) do.<sup>18</sup>

Jaeggi defines this lack of mastery as *heteronomy*—a state of 'having one's properties determined by an other—and the complete absence of essential properties or purposes'. It is an absence that creates 'relationlessness'; and it is an absence of a relation with technology and the skills of using and comprehending it in ways that correspond with our evolutionary essence. In the time-space of digitality this ontological component is replaced by an increasingly

autonomous and automatic machine logic that we recognise with difficulty and with meanings (expressed as machine-purposivity) that are pre-coded into it as instrumentality.

Digitality we can see in this context functioning as a self-contained sphere, one created by us, but one increasingly autonomous from us—a digitality that is ‘alien and our own’. Its alienness directs itself towards us, and in our relative powerlessness we internalise its purpose (coded as capitalism’s needs) as our own—in a deeper and more comprehensive way than ever before. At the global scale, and with a present-day sophistication that is surely still only embryonic, digitality functions as the base and superstructure and the production and consumption processes rolled into a vast digitally-connected, algorithmically-collected and instrumentally-directed sphere of information. Culture comes from this. But it is culture that corresponds not to human needs and innate human diversity in the formation of culture, but to capitalism’s needs and the limitations that it places upon the forms of culture that are possible.

### Monotony Culture

Computing and capitalism mutually interpenetrate and reconstitute each other as one—as digitality. Within this sphere, three main components combine to express the logic that shapes digital culture. These are: commodification, instrumentalisation, and time-space compression. In brief we can say that: *commodification* operates dynamically within a neoliberal market system and is afforded the widest latitude to create the basis for a culture that is almost wholly commercial; *instrumentalisation* algorithmically shapes the culture’s forms as an instrument of purpose, where conscious action and choice in the construction of culture are replaced by algorithmic choice that functions automatically; and *time-space compression*, driven by competition within and between the culture industries, means that the turnover rate at which cultural signs and symbols are marketised and distributed is increasingly accelerated, thus creating a logic where cultural forms are marked by an inherent lack of originality or innovation, and where instead culture ‘eats its tail’, to employ a phrase by Charles Babbage referring to the way computer algorithms function. These principles form the basis, the breadth, and the boundaries of what digital culture can be—and what it can’t.

Digital culture is mass culture. It occupies the attention and consciousness of billions in what is essentially a zero-sum game against the physical world, because if you are online then the physical world disappears or is sublimated to some degree. We see the virtual manifest as cultural in social media, in film, in fashion, in music; it also permeates politics, ideas, literature and so on. These seemingly diverse realms converge in the digital sphere as aggregations of information that circulate in countless combinations to suit different markets, or they are experimented with by data aggregators in the hoped-for creation

of new markets. For example, think of the current craze for ‘real-life’ podcasts that can mix true-crime with politics, or ethics with celebrity, etc. These are mostly freely downloadable but are sponsored by whomever their makers can convince to sponsor them, thereby inserting the cash nexus into the heart of the experience. And with a predicted 15 billion hours of attention being soaked up by podcasts in the US alone by 2021, sponsors flock to those formats and themes that prove most successful—often made so through algorithmically-driven features such as recommendations, trending, likes, and so on.<sup>19</sup> Digital culture acts as the engine of demand for capitalism’s material commodities, too, such as cinema tickets, clothes, computers, shoes, cars, home-furnishings, books, smartphones, real-estate, and so forth. The virtual and physical combine, but the virtual sets the parameters through the particular imperatives of a dominant digital capitalism. The result is a digitally-created culture that is mass and global-scaled, is restricted in its possible forms, and is subject to endless recycling of its forms in order to synchronise with capitalism’s ever-shortening time-frames. All this is ‘culture’ only in name. Raymond Williams, let us recall, spoke of a defining feature of culture as being ‘always both traditional and creative.’<sup>20</sup> However, digital culture is not and cannot be either traditional or creative. It is the social expression of mass alienation and therefore constitutes a *crisis* of cultural forms that is due to both the nature of digital technology and the needs of capital accumulation.

Let us look at the components of crisis in some more detail. The first component we see in the limitless excess of commodified signs that are injected into wherever there is a ‘connection’ through which digital networks reach us. Excess normally diminishes the value of a commodity, even a commodity-sign. And as Nicholas Mellamphy argues, within the digital network there is ‘permanent excess: excessive downloads, excessive connections, excessive proximity, excessive “friends”, excessive “contacts”, excessive speeds and excessive amounts of information.’<sup>21</sup> However this matters little when digital replication costs are negligible. And so exchange value can still be realised as profit when, driven by competition, the culture industries flood the virtual world with sign values. The sign that is freighted with exchange value can reach to almost anywhere through ever-increasing means of delivery—be it a screen positioned at eye-level on a urinal stall advertising online betting, or directly into your ears when your podcast listening is strategically interrupted by messages about home insurance. In this sense, cultural production is like a 24/7 exercise in crudely targeted phishing. With the attention of millions caught within the driftnet of sign values, the law of probability ensures that some will move from attention to purchase. But it is more than that: simply to be within the realm of attention is still to be ‘captured’. This is because within digitality, captured attention is an aspect of our alienation. And so within the digital sphere, whether buying or not, we exist in an ocean of signs—to become either immobilised by too much choice or oppressed by our ‘indifference’ to that which is ‘at once alien and our own.’<sup>22</sup>

The second component is the instrumental logic operating within digitality. This generates forms of culture that are shallow and confined within an algorithmically-narrowed scope. The hegemony wielded by a handful of data corporations does not mean that they have the capacity to be innovative and expansive in their role as aggregators and disseminators of 'what is best and what is good', as Raymond Williams put it. Their business model has an inherently negative effect on creativity and innovation. The combination of monopoly capitalism and privatised algorithms generates this negativity. The idea that monopoly capitalism stifles innovation is a mantra beloved by neoliberals more than most. In fact Milton Friedman thought a government monopoly to be a 'lesser evil' than a market one.<sup>23</sup> And for almost half a century the trend toward market deregulation has been pronounced. However, hardly anywhere have governments been proactive in respect of the regulation of the tech-sector monopolies that have arisen since the 1980s.<sup>24</sup> Such new industries are *liable* to become monopolies, primarily because legislators and the wider marketplace don't figure out their potential for monopoly until they have become too big, and by then it is too late: witness Microsoft's monopoly of the computer standard operating system through its Windows software in the 1980s. For a generation this market advantage put them in a dominant position, until the mid-2000s when Apple's Mac OS forced its way into the market to create the present duopoly.

For their part Facebook and Google monopolise the data industry and make it very difficult for competition to threaten them. Acting as 'super-monopolies' they simply buy up would-be rivals, patents and intellectual property where necessary. The corollary is that they need only concentrate on business innovation that will increase user engagement, with the form of technological innovation following the function of this imperative.<sup>25</sup> If Facebook and Google's business model is concerned centrally with growing user engagement, then monetising user content by selling it as user profiles to advertisers is where they realise the exchange value of data. This is where the algorithm comes in. And this is where the data monopolies direct much of their immense R&D budgets.<sup>26</sup> Human bias is inherent in algorithms. They are mathematical lines of humanly-written code that direct the computer through specific steps toward specific goals. The steps and goals are inherently instrumental, with the objective being to manipulate user data in order to manipulate the web activity of the users who provide it. In terms of the argument about data corporations being the source of much cultural practice today, a certain logic follows from the algorithm's central role: if the business purports to be building 'communities' in positive ways, as Facebook avers, or if it provides access to the world's knowledge and information through connectivity, as Google claims, then these practices must also be the source of much of Williams's 'common meanings' that constitute culture within our digital lives. However, the forms of cultural practice emerging from what is essentially a process of technological determinism necessarily reflect the biased and instrumental logic of the algorithms that produce them. And it follows that



if Facebook and Google stifle innovation through their respective monopolies, then the forms of culture that develop from our interactions with them will reflect this imperative—i.e. they will be restrictive, culturally repressive, and ‘one-dimensional’ because of the orientation toward the programmed needs of the algorithm. How does this work in practice?

Earlier I described the emergence of Web 2.0 around 2004 and how it rescued the commercial internet for capital. The use of cookies and tracking software are vital functions for business, but these are the kind of things businesses don’t like to advertise. For tech entrepreneur Tim O’Reilly, coiner of the Web 2.0 buzzword, a friendlier web with a ‘new architecture for participation’ through the web’s ‘collective intelligence’ was a useful way to mask the real function of the web experience. ‘Participation’ sounds, and is supposed to sound, faintly democratic, but in Web 2.0, ‘participation’ was of a kind slanted toward the data harvesting strategies that Amazon and Google had already been experimenting with in conjunction with cookies and tracking software.<sup>27</sup> Ostensibly, Web 2.0 was to be an enhanced focus on ‘participation’ through such functions as Amazon’s ‘recommendations’, or Google’s PageRank algorithm, or Facebook’s immensely successful ‘like’ button. And we see it more widely across the web in Netflix’s ‘if you liked ... you might like...’, or in Twitter’s ‘trending’ list, or in the ‘most viewed’ or ‘top ten stories’ clickable lists that now appear as standard on countless news sites. Generating data is the sole objective here, with ‘participation’ serving merely an ideological role. As Andrejevic and Burdon put it: ‘These days we generate more than we participate.’<sup>28</sup> Proprietary algorithms do the work of giving the collected data pre-coded monetisable shape by deciding whether user activity is ‘relevant’ to its own aggregating and profiling activity. The ideological spin on what is effectively a large-scale deception and breach of privacy operation is reflected in the example of Amazon’s concept of ‘collaborative filtering’, where platforms and millions of users ‘collaboratively’ choose, purchase, rate, or recommend in a process that supposedly forces out the bad and promotes the good—be it a brand of coffee-maker, health advice, a movie, further sources of information, a brand of whisky, where to link to next, and so on.<sup>29</sup> With reference to Google, a 2010 *Wired* magazine article promotes this ideology, attempting to disseminate the positive idea, as Ted Striphas observes, of the search engine’s leveraging of ‘crowd wisdom’ through its PageRank algorithm:

PageRank has been celebrated as instituting a measure of populism into search engines: the democracy of millions deciding on what to link to on the Web. But Google’s engineers ... are exploiting another democracy—the hundreds of millions who search on Google, using this huge mass of collected data to bolster its algorithm.<sup>30</sup>

As a journal of the libertarian technocracy, *Wired*’s point, of course, is to paint a picture of a virtuous cycle of positivity in such ‘collaboration’. And Striphas is



rightly sceptical of what he sees as a particularly neoliberal basis for the generation of what he terms 'algorithmic culture'. He writes that the article:

makes algorithmic culture sound as if it were the ultimate achievement of democratic public culture. Now anyone with an internet connection gets to have a role in determining 'the best that has been thought and said'.<sup>31</sup>

The words Striphas quotes are from Matthew Arnold, the Victorian educationist and cultural critic who in 1867 published *Culture and Anarchy* in which he sought to define an educative cultural agenda for Britain, through which all classes would be able to partake in 'the best that has been thought and said'. And Striphas sees something of the Arnoldian patrician in 'algorithmic culture' and imagines that 'companies like Amazon, Google and Facebook are fast becoming, despite their populist rhetoric, the new apostles of culture'.<sup>32</sup>

I'm not so sure. *Wired's* phrase 'people deciding' and Striphas's counter-argument of apostolic prescription are basically arguments for agency and power that come either from the people or from the apostles. However, the major issue is not human, but algorithmic. Striphas charts the sematic shifts of his keywords 'crowd', 'information' and 'algorithm' as combining and orienting towards 'order', especially after the Second World War. People were systematically cut out of the equation at each step of the combining process in cybernetics, information theory and finally business. Today, users don't so much decide with the click of a button or the flick of a finger. And data corporations don't so much care about the content of their datasets. When we 'like' or 'recommend', or when we act on these as nudges to a purchase or to link to another website, what we fundamentally do is supply data—in ways that algorithms encourage. We 'produce' value for the data corporations. And as is the case with physical or intellectual labour in the traditional ways, and in traditional economies, there is little 'choice' involved for most people. At root it is a mixture of economic compunction coupled with the allure of the 'magic' of the computer. Striphas laments the fact that the most sophisticated and powerful AI and machine-learning algorithms are secret, and that we 'can't see under the hood' to see how they really work.<sup>33</sup> This much is true and will be so until the day comes when what Reuben Binns calls 'algorithmic accountability' becomes a civic reality. But reason and logic can nonetheless give insight into how they function today in broad terms. The process is informational and transactional. It's also automatic, with the *algorithm making the decision* in a millisecond. Relevance is decided on the basis, as Binns puts it, 'of algorithmic models trained on large datasets of historical trends. Personalised platforms build detailed profiles of their user's attributes and behaviour, which determine the content they view, the products they see and the search results they receive'.<sup>34</sup> Binns goes on to make things explicitly clear by repeating himself: 'Machine learning involves training models with learning algorithms, using large datasets of relevant past

phenomena ... in order to classify or predict future phenomena.<sup>35</sup> Such logic, he continues, is an example of a 'decision-making system in so far as it derives decision-relevant outputs from given inputs.'<sup>36</sup> His emphasis on the past or historical trends in order to classify is the important point. Automatic machine learning algorithms make choices based upon historical or past information and use these choices to classify our personal digital experience. This means that further (future) experience will be drawn from and conditioned by the past, and then this experience is automatically incorporated into the next phase of work of the algorithms. And on it goes.

If we think about this logic with respect to human culture we can see that since its 'learning' is from 'past phenomena', there can be no evolution or development of culture as it was traditionally understood. Algorithms are historical. And their classificatory logic means that there can be no random interspersing of cultural forms that may throw up mutations that may constitute something actually new or unexpected. The logic is backward-looking and inward-facing. In this way, the web and its burgeoning datasets may be seen as a kind of information whirlpool, spinning centripetally and oriented to self-containment. To paraphrase Adorno and Horkheimer slightly: 'The [culture] machine rotates on the same spot.'<sup>37</sup> The new or unexpected, which must either come from the outside or from random mutations from the inside, cannot evolve because of the supervening action of the algorithm. Algorithmic culture, then, is not a 'collaborative filtering' of users' 'collective intelligence' to produce what is best and what is good. Neither is it apostolic and prescriptive culture from above, as Striphas would have it. It is the algorithmic generation of backward- and inward-looking data reproduced as the basis for commercial strategies. What such logic excludes and alienates are cultural forms and meanings derived from physical and analogue life which contain the human-scale and the ordinariness (in Williams's sense) that can be the basis for expanding and diversifying cultures that evolve from or break from the past—instead of being digital shadows of it.

The third component is time-space compression. It's self-evident but too often we overlook the fact that the word 'culture' derives from the verb *cultivate*. To cultivate is to prepare ground and tend the plants that grow from the seeds planted. Cultivation denotes roots and attachment and stability and cyclicity. In human affairs it can also signify place, such as the culture of a people who are from a certain place. Certainly this is an association that can attenuate as human culture, mediated by new technologies, changes as its communicative realms extend from local, to regional, to national, to international. However, 'experience, contact, and discovery'<sup>38</sup> bring cultures together and sustain them in myriad ways across time and space. They thus function to create cultural histories and traditions, with their specific or general forms of structure and substance, which in endless combination can be the validation of a culture and of the individual and group within it. In pre-digital times this process was an analogue-derived one consisting of tradition, of contingency and evolution—all

as an effect of how people related to time and space. The historically different ways in which the barriers of time and space were mediated (or not) is what gave pre-digital human culture its diversity. Again, we can look to Raymond Williams to express the idea of the space-time of culture in his typically insightful and redolent prose:

Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land. The growing society is there, yet it is also made and remade in every individual mind. The making of a mind is ... the slow learning of shapes, purposes, and meanings, so that work, observation and communication are possible.<sup>39</sup>

What emerges most of all from these words, and really from his entire essay, is the *human-scale* practice of culture and its human-scaled *temporality*. Williams downplays the roles of capitalism and commodification in 'Culture is Ordinary' because he is seeking to discover the essential essence of culture-making. In this sense the essay may be read as a 'ground zero' expression of culture, just as Adorno and Horkheimer's essay may similarly be seen as the 'ground zero' analysis of culture's commodification. These essays, read in conjunction, can still serve as a powerful analytic tool to help explain the elements of transformation and intensification of culture in the context of digitality.

We have looked at the effects of commodification and instrumentalisation upon the nature of culture within digitality. In summing up I will discuss a particular effect of digital time-space compression—social acceleration—upon the 'purposes and meanings' of mass culture: that it creates a state of *stasis*, a stagnancy, in the mass cultural life-blood, where growth, evolution and change are being forced out in direct proportion to digitality's colonisation of every sphere of society.

In a *Vanity Fair* essay from 2012, Kurt Andersen looks back over the previous twenty years of popular culture and surmises that 'Movies and literature and music have *never changed less* over a 20-year period.'<sup>40</sup> He goes on to try to explain this phenomenon of a culture 'stuck on repeat, consuming the past instead of the new':

Not coincidentally, it was exactly 20 years ago that Francis Fukuyama published *The End of History*, his influential post-Cold War argument that liberal democracy had triumphed and become the undisputed evolutionary end point toward which every national system was inexorably moving: fundamental political ferment was over and done. Maybe yes, maybe no. But in the arts and entertainment and style realms, this

bizarre *Groundhog Day* stasis of the last 20 years or so certainly feels like an end of *cultural history*.<sup>41</sup>

Andersen does not really know why this is so. He speculates the cause may reside in the culture itself having become somehow 'postmodern', where lazy artists, architects, television producers and movie makers etc. will simply plunder the past to play *bricolage* with styles and forms. He further speculates that maybe it's a global case of 'nostalgia' where 'new technology has reinforced the nostalgic cultural gaze [and] now that we have instant universal access to every old image and recorded sound, the future has arrived and it's all about dreaming of the past'.<sup>42</sup> Again, no reasoning as to why culture has become seemingly nostalgic. To graphically reinforce his point, Andersen's essay has a cartoon illustration that features a line-up of five males, dressed in a quintessential fashion outfit from the 1930s to the 1990s, in gaps of twenty years. The first three figures (depicting 1932, 1952, and 1972) could hardly be more dissimilar. The first is in a suit, tie and fedora, James Cagney style; the second is a James Dean figure in leather jacket, Levi's, sunglasses and pomaded quiff; and the third is an African-American with wide flares, Afro hairstyle and platform shoes. The remaining two figures (1992 and 2012) look identical in flannel shirt, jeans and sneakers, and with only the iPod earphones distinguishing the most recent from the analogue Sony Walkman from 1992. The 2012 illustration is still everyman today, except perhaps, that the earphones would now be of the wireless kind.

If fashion has stopped changing, then so too has mass culture more broadly, is Andersen's message. However, the lack of the new in mass culture may not mean much to many people. That sons today often dress like their fathers, or daughters like mothers, in an early 1990s way; or that the music they listen to, or the films they watch, might be largely the same, or re-makes, or derivations, gets only the occasional airing in magazines, and usually in a quasi-humorous tone. But culture's growing stasification is an effect of capitalism's growing post-1945 maturation. From the time of Adorno and Horkheimer at least, the idea that culture has been tied to the trajectory of capitalism has been broadly accepted in social theory; the question has really only been one of how deep the commodity logic had penetrated into society. Adorno, writing in *Prisms*, his book of cultural criticism first published in English in 1967, underlines the relationship between capital and culture when he notes 'the primacy of the exchange process' in the production of cultural forms.<sup>43</sup> The exchange process is not the full explanation, of course. It accounts for commodification, but not stasis. For that we need to consider the temporal aspect of capital. It was Marx who first articulated the importance of time in the production of commodities. In *Capital* he wrote about machines, owned by capitalists, as the 'objective means, systematically employed, for squeezing out more labour in a given time'<sup>44</sup>. What this signified, for Marx, is that the worker had lost control of time; it had become abstracted from the time-experience of the worker. It

was alienated from her through the machine, abstracted by the speed of the machine and made calculable by the clock. In other words, time had become money, had become a medium for exchange and exchange value. Efficiency in production, leading to rationalisation, thus became the driving force of production in the early years of capitalism, and with the whole system-logic based essentially upon this alienation of human time.

Efficiency and rationalisation (necessitated by competition) meant in turn that innovation (to make things faster) in machine technology was the only way for the individual industrial capitalist to stay in business. This logic is the basis of Fordism and automation and instigated the revolution in computing. On a much broader scale, efficiency and rationalisation set in historical train a gradual acceleration of the forces of production. And as Fordist capitalism became the dominant mode, and after 1945 especially, individuals within society began to experience time as an accelerating force. According to Hartmut Rosa, this was expressed in the growing sense of increase in the 'pace of social change' and 'the pace of life'.<sup>45</sup> As Adorno and Horkheimer claimed, commodity culture within Fordist capitalism began to be oriented increasingly towards standardisation and sameness. Although the authors didn't emphasise it, this standardisation was an effect of abstracted time exerting its pressure upon the nature of culture. As production in the culture industries got faster and faster, there was less time for non-alienated and human-scale culture and its meanings to be cultivated and expressed naturally through innovation or diversity.<sup>46</sup> Capitalism cannot 'efficiently' register and commodify change in human time. Human time is too slow for the ever-quickenning production-consumption cycle. At the same time, pressures of competition in the culture industries drive the imperative always to produce something new—or seemingly new. 1950s pop music, for all its industrialisation and instant commodification, *was* something new. It was, perhaps, the final cultural innovation in modernity, and it stands as historical testament to modernity's attenuating capacity to create new forms—and capitalism's increasing capacity to industrialise them immediately.<sup>47</sup> Growing out of a nascent youth culture in the Anglosphere that was gradually asserting itself after 1945, its forms and meanings evolved through 'cross-cultural contact' in the US that saw the adoption of African-American musical culture as the basic element of the soon-to-be-standardised pop music of the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>48</sup> Cultural industry production must nevertheless *appear* to be new and different, even if it is only in a superficial form. For twentieth-century analogue capitalism this was an ongoing and increasing problem, one that reached its point of cultural crisis in the final quarter of the century. In the 1980s, Fredric Jameson wrote about the nature of the emergent postmodernism in culture (and postmodernity as a cultural era). Jameson was a seminal source here in that he could see postmodernism as an expression of a *temporal* crisis of culture. There was no time for the new to be born authentically and naturally. So artists, architects, writers, movie-producers, playwrights, and so forth, motivated often by a Warholian approach that was partly critique and partly an

embrace, resorted to cultural practices that were oriented towards, and drew from, existing forms in modernity. Pastiche, bricolage, irony, parody and so on thus became the cultural keywords for the creation of something new, when that something was not new at all. In an essay first published in 1983, titled 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', Jameson argues that through use of such devices, cultural producers 'will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds—they've already been invented'.<sup>49</sup> Within modernism's corpus, he wrote, 'the most unique [artistic forms] have been thought of already'. Jameson now gets to the crux of the issue in his critique of late-capitalism, and also aims indirectly at Herbert Marcuse who thought he glimpsed salvation in art. Pastiche and the other keyword practices, Jameson argues, signal a postmodern impoverishment:

in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum. But this means that contemporary or postmodernist art is going to be about art itself in a new kind of way; even more, it means that one of its essential messages will involve the necessary failure of art and the aesthetic, the failure of the new, the imprisonment of the past.<sup>50</sup>

Jameson gives examples from film culture of the time, when 'nostalgia' films began to go mainstream: films 'about the past and about specific generational moments of that past', such as Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* and George Lucas's *American Graffiti*. Such films were already so 'omnipresent', he notes, that their emergence was hardly registered as a shift in cultural production.<sup>51</sup> Jameson gives his theory a heavily Lacanian psychological element, which supposes that, with the postmodern turn, 'Cultural production has been driven back inside the mind ... to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about that past'.<sup>52</sup> With this 'psychological turn', however, Jameson's theory begins to break down. It does so primarily because he neglects to take political economy through to the core of what was happening within late-capitalism. Jameson's consumer society, he well knows, is also capitalist society. Its cultural production and its resultant shape and form are driven above all else by capitalism's imperatives. With only the past to draw from for its 'new' cultural signs and symbols, cultural producers automatically appropriate it; look to what is ready to hand to make a pastiche, to re-create, to ironise; find whatever else can be brought to bear, to give, consciously or not, the impression of something new, something fresh and something that will stand out from the competition and sell. When something new is needed all the time, the actually new has no time to emerge. Such cultural consumption shapes the living culture, the 'ordinary culture', leaving the seeds of the new to wither or fail to strike roots in the soil, because the soil (society) is made infertile by commodification. Consumer society becomes expressive of that past, and is actually a

prisoner of it, as Jameson argues. But it is so because of the economic imperatives of the late-capitalist production of culture, and not because of any mass psychological need. If anything, consumers born into such a culture adopt the Stockholm syndrome, identify with the products of the stasifying logic of the culture industries, and want, expect and demand its output.

Digitality brings the same economic imperatives as analogue capitalism, but with an accelerated space time that transforms and intensifies the stasification process. But it does so with a twist: cultural production is not caught up in the past, as in Jameson's analysis of late capitalism, but is trapped within a *constant present*, within a network time temporality that effaces any remaining spheres of the human scale in culture that has any connection to capitalism.

In the 1980s this process is already underway. The quantum leap to digital is made increasingly within industrial sectors, and the developed economies of the West stand at the threshold of popular computing with the rise of Microsoft and the broader techno-libertarianism emerging from southern California. Digitality goes from being sectoral-industrial to mass cultural. Through this process of colonisation, the human-scale and human time in cultural production and consumption are being relentlessly driven out. And as the production–consumption cycle tightens, and as social acceleration gathers pace as a consequence, cultural forms and commodities become increasingly narrow, rigid, repetitive and monotonous. As just noted, the time of the network needs to be factored in as a shaping force of the culture of digitality. Network time is the experience of time when in the network. It's time beyond the clock, because the clock is no longer so relevant when one person is located in place A and another is in place B, which may be ten thousand kilometres away. They share the same time, but differing time-zones: the time of the network.<sup>53</sup> All kinds of subjective time experience may be experienced or shared within network time. The 'timescapes'<sup>54</sup> that are created may take many different forms. However, the computer is the supervening power within network time, and with the computer being in service for capitalism, the orientation of the 'timescape' is always towards acceleration, to faster connections, to more of them, to getting rid of latencies and interruptions online, and so on. Through acceleration, and through more and more connections made and sustained through time spent online, the experience of network time becomes one of a present-centred time, a continuing 'now' where one's attention is taken up always by screen-based activity, which is restless activity because the network is engineered specifically to keep you moving, busily active and multifariously connected in the generation of data.

Behind all this networked activity sits the algorithm. Charles Babbage noticed something about this mathematical underpinning of his Analytical Engine as he was drawing it up in the 1830s. The working of the algorithm caused the Engine to 'eat its own tail', by which he meant that, as touched on earlier with Reuben Binns, it would pause during calculation and use the values that it had previously determined to choose between two possible next steps.<sup>55</sup> It



feeds on its history. Babbage also observed that the algorithm *lays down its own railway*, meaning that its path is not only based upon the past, but follows a pre-determined and narrow trajectory.<sup>56</sup> Network time combines with algorithmic logic to govern the experience of billions of individuals in their consumption of the production of culture from the culture industries. What this permutation produces in our digitality is different from the straight-out 'automatic succession of standardised operations'<sup>57</sup> that so dismayed Adorno and Horkheimer; and is different from the plundering of the past as a source of pastiche and nostalgia, as Jameson claimed. There is no meaningful past or future in the network, only the digital present. Moreover, the sources for commodity culture production don't come from the collective memory of cultural industry producers who reach back into their own cultural experience for material. This would be bad enough. The cultural material, increasingly, is already in the network, stored or circulated as data or information that can be retrieved at any time to be remade into something 'new' to sell. How does this work in practice? How does the digitally 'new' come into being? And what are its human effects in the consumer culture of digitality?

As I write this, F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby* is reportedly being re-made by YouTube as a serial for its Premium subscription service.<sup>58</sup> The novel has been re-created for film and television several times before, most recently in 2012, starring Leonardo Di Caprio as the Gatsby character. However, the novel and films and TV series—and now the YouTube streaming version—are not cultural mimesis for an individual or collective reappraisal of a pre-Great Depression US, and the class-culture excesses deriving from a decade of fanatical speculation on Wall Street. Neither do they constitute a reflective and insightful social-psychological study depicting the essential emptiness of materialism in a specific time and place in modernity's evolution in the twentieth century. Such might be the case outside of their digital reproduction and circulation. Inside the technologies of digitality, however, it's simply material that's lying around. And there it exists, invisible to all the senses, as binary code written onto proprietary master-copies on secure servers, or on pay-to-view subscription servers, on individual hard-drives on smartphones, on pirate websites around the web, and so on. It is the alienated product of an alienating process. Culturally it is empty; it is information. Culturally, it signifies no history or nostalgia or literature or new exploratory fields in cinematography or screenwriting or acting. Culturally, it is not 'traditional or creative'. It is virtual material that is stored or circulates as bytes of information. And this—along with everything else that has been digitised as the material for our mass cultural world—as if by magic, appears as 'the very ideology that enslaves [us]' as soon as it is manifest on the screen in front of us for us to consume.<sup>59</sup> Such cultural materials' virtuality and ready access ensure their present-centred atemporality. They constitute the signs and symbols of the now, of the instantaneous and the impulsive. But still, we imagine (if we ever consider it) that we control and choose within digital consumer culture. And so *The Great Gatsby* appears on

screens, free, or bootlegged or paid-for, and we can watch, pause, rewind, fast-forward or exit. It's up to us, or so we are told by the libertarians who say this is the free market at work. But to consume this way is still to be 'captured' in the way I described before—we are alienated either through engagement with, or indifference to, what is before our eyes. We are alienated by our immersion in a network-induced constant present. The time of the digital machine is something approaching real-time, and it holds us there, suspended, and disconnected from the technology itself, from our immediate surroundings, from other people, and from nature. And so digitality repeats and remakes. If it sells, so much to the good. It also creates the 'new' from non-stop derivations from what is lying around in the form of formats and genres and clichés from which any number of permutations are possible. This is all we can expect, because it is all that the digital network and its digital products are capable of, because human time and the human-scale of culture has been driven out by digital speed.

Other spheres of culture exist, of course. And they are of the type and quality that Raymond Williams would recognise as 'ordinary' and essentially human and human-scaled. These micro-spheres are everywhere, all around us and every day. Simply talking face-to-face with a friend, lover, colleague, the person who makes your coffee at the café you go to every day is ordinary culture's 'ground zero', or what Emmanuel Levinas said to be the 'irreducible relation' that is the font of not only culture, but ethics, too.<sup>60</sup> They exist in our human and human-scaled connections with families, with institutions of work, in work itself that is not screen-oriented, in reading a book, in sharing a drink, playing sports, going to the cinema, knitting a jumper for a friend, fixing a bike for your son, in almost any *pastime*—to employ a term that is often overlooked for what it signifies. But these are examples not of mass culture, but of remnants of pre-digital forms that are the basis of the 'ordinary' that had sustained humanity for thousands of years, but which began to change and, in many ways, attenuate, as the industrial way of life began to dominate. In our post-industrial era, these micro-spheres exist in the vast shadow of a digitality that every day insinuates itself into these remnants, in the zero-sum game that is time spent with networked technology. This mass sphere is where our relationships with physical people, physical things and the physical environment terminate. We flip to another logic: from analogue to digital, and from the less-than-total alienation of pre-digital capitalism, to its almost total form within the network, in the digital relation of relationlessness that unteaches or does not teach at all what non-digital life can consist of and what non-digital existence can be, in respect of at least the potential for human freedom. Above all, mass digital culture, in its growing pervasiveness and increasing diminution of that which is not digital, means that our innate sense of the human-scale is being lost. This is perhaps the worst effect of digitality, and for two related reasons: first is that politics at the speed of the network, of social media, drives millions of us towards identity politics and thus towards identitarian concerns that tend to find their home online.<sup>61</sup> Second is that our growing online life makes the

most important issue confronting humanity—the climate crisis from global warming—alien and incomprehensible to us as a physical reality and as a political project. The logic of this is not pretty, but neither is our environmental future: our alienated human-scale cannot easily connect with the global-scale consequences of our local-scale activities that capitalism has scaled up to a global and existential crisis.

## Conclusions

### *A Post-Modern Marxism for Our Time (and Space)*

In summing up *Postmodernity*, David Harvey draws upon the metaphors of the cracked mirror and its fused edges to stand for how he appraises the conjunction of the postmodern condition. He writes:

The cracks in the mirror may not be too wide, and the fusions at the edges may not be too striking, but the fact that all are there suggests that the condition of postmodernity is undergoing a subtle evolution, perhaps reaching a point of self-dissolution into something different. But what?

Answers to that cannot be rendered in abstraction from the political—economic forces currently transforming the world of labour, finance, uneven geographical development, and the like.<sup>62</sup>

One may speculate about what Harvey's 'and the like' might consist of, but it certainly wasn't going to be revolutionary technological transformation of economy, culture and society by a new category of technology that would up-end the 'basic rule' of accumulation. And this unfolding wasn't to be 'rendered in abstraction' either. The 'something different' would emerge from the deep-laid 'political—economic forces' that he had identified in his book and what these would generate. Beyond this, the challenge that *Postmodernity* took up was *what to make* of these various manifestations in the context of their fundamental drivers.

Such a strong and classical Marxist theoretical framework meant that Harvey was able to be positive throughout *Postmodernity*. However, whilst 'something different' was in the air in 1989, the objective political and economic picture was rather mixed. For example, the Berlin Wall was to fall at the end of that year, but few predicted it and fewer knew to where it might lead. Related to this was the fact that for several years Mikhail Gorbachev had been taking the Soviet Union and its state capitalism through embryonic reforms, but these too were highly unpredictable. For their part, China and India were already embarking upon a serious opening to the West—at least economically; but some

analysts thought that a south and east Asian form of *perestroika* might encourage political reform, especially in China, with a rising middle class agitating for more democracy, and not necessarily of the socialist kind. In the West itself, globalisation was unfolding fast in the context of a Reagan–Thatcher-inspired neoliberalism that saw financialisation generating a consumer boom based upon cheap money and easy access to debt for individuals as well as businesses. But this was accompanied by a growing evisceration of Fordism and the rust-belt of the great industries of working-class organisation in mining, steel, shipbuilding, auto-manufacture, and so on. But then again, the working classes in the Anglosphere, the leading edge of neoliberalisation, were still organised to a surprising degree if looked at from today's perspective.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, since the 1970s the emergence of what were termed 'new social movements' around issues of colour, environmentalism, gender and sexuality appeared to be primed for fusion around a socialist centre if the ideological conjuncture was right.

If the picture was mixed, Harvey brought something new to the 'basic rule' of accumulation that put it in a more positive frame. His spatialised perspective on accumulation revitalised a Marxist political economy that had been running out of ideas within late capitalism. It was a startling thesis. It suggested that there was a fundamental and irresolvable spatial contradiction in the trajectory of accumulation, one that would place an intrinsic limit upon the long-run potential of capitalism itself. Economic and political crisis (for capitalism) would inevitably show itself 'in the fullness of time',<sup>64</sup> and so socialists needed to prepare for when the overripe fruit of accumulation would fall. *Postmodernity* argued that it was fundamental 'political—economic forces' that shaped late-capitalist society, and it was the late capitalist crisis emanating from these forces that had caused the cracks that were then evident. These cracks took ideological and cultural form in the postmodern 'condition' which was the antithesis of the forms of ideological and cultural fusion that had been driven to the edges. Intellectually, this manifested as an eschewal of the idea of progress and the abandonment of any sense of history, and so on. But in art, architecture, literature, film and so forth, the effect of the ideological transformation in cultural production was evident, too.

However, this superstructural froth did not affect the fundamental trajectory of capitalism and its logic of accumulation. For Harvey, the 'basic rule' of accumulation was the same in 1989 as it had been at the time of the rise of a revolutionary and technologically-charged modernity. The 'compression' of space and time continued as it had since the nineteenth century, and it was accelerating, but its main significance was that for all its cultural manifestations, the main driver was economic—the spatial expansion of capital. In the context of the globalisation trajectory of the 1980s and 1990s, Harvey strongly implied that this latest 'spatial fix' of capital accumulation would be the largest in history and perhaps the last. When the whole planet became an integrated capitalism, accumulation would have nowhere else to go. It would then build inexorably to the point where a crisis in the 'short-run solution to the accumulation problem'

could emerge, with ‘the least advantaged countries and regions suffering the severest consequences.’<sup>65</sup> At a generalised level, this would signal capitalism’s functional *dénouement*. *Postmodernity* theorised that the cracks and the fusions were held in tension and in dialectical movement—and turning toward a ‘self-dissolution into something different’. However, his portentous question ‘But what?’ would hang like a shadow over his entire oeuvre for the next three decades.

Today, one will look long and hard to find a new book with ‘postmodernity’ or ‘postmodernism’ in the title—or even as the subject-matter inside its covers. As the Google Ngram word-frequency viewer shows, ‘postmodernity’ peaked around 2000 and slipped precipitously afterwards. ‘Postmodernism’ reached its apex slightly earlier but fell even more steeply in the following years. The decline in the use of these terms did not signal a change in the culture of fragmentation, of incredulity toward metanarratives, of ephemerality, of deconstruction, and so on—of the tropes that Harvey lists as markers of the ideology.<sup>66</sup> Rather, the decline was a reflection of the *success of an ideology*. Far from being in danger of ‘self-dissolution’, postmodernity had sunk deeply into Western consciousness. Not just in culture—but in economy and society, too. Today we inhabit a real and actual post-modern global economy where post-Fordism and the flexible accumulation it makes possible have been triumphant. And it is paradoxical that this success is due in no small part to the very ‘silliness’ that Harvey had derided in the writings of Jean-François Lyotard in his uber-perceptive 1979 work *The Postmodern Condition*. Lyotard argued that modernism had changed because ‘the technical and social conditions of communication have changed.’<sup>67</sup> The quote is from Harvey, who left it hanging at the end of a paragraph critical of Lyotard, as if nothing could be more absurd and therefore unworthy of further comment. Lyotard predicted a coming ‘hegemony of computers’ which would impose ‘a certain logic’ upon society in respect of knowledge and its ‘exteriorisation’ into databases and networks.<sup>68</sup> This much is now clear. But the ‘hegemony of computers’ that would become digitality has achieved much more. Networked computers facilitate the flexible accumulation that Harvey described. However, not only did this change our perceptions of time and space, it changed how a great deal of capital was accumulated: the ‘basic rule’ had been circumvented through a potent combination of virtual space, automation and alienation from a ‘hegemony of computers’ which also became a hegemony over capitalism’s primary mode of production and consumption. At the level of the economic, the modern had become postmodern. And the ‘something different’ was to change everything, not least Harvey’s space economy thesis.

Over more than three decades of intensive and extensive digitality, the cracks in the mirror have become fused and the fused edges have developed multiple cracks. The anticipated ‘self-dissolution’ of an ideology did not come. Postmodernism has entrenched itself so deeply into society that its ideological essence disappeared into the consciousness of people and the practice of life. Like Williams’s culture, postmodernity became part of the ‘normal’. This was indeed

‘something different’ but something a classical/spatialised Marxism could not see because it could not take seriously the revolutionary role of digital technology. And the irony is itself postmodern. The web with its podcasts and YouTube and downloading websites and davidharvey.org has made Harvey the most influential living Marxist intellectual. The ‘something different’ is technological and is what communicates his voice to millions, yet the song remains the same. For example, a 2017 video debate titled ‘Technology and Post-Capitalism’ can be found on YouTube and on davidharvey.org.<sup>69</sup> In it, David Harvey and Paul Mason, socialist and journalist, deliberate the question: ‘do technologies create new possibilities?’ Mason, author of best-selling mainstream books on the connections between new media and politics, talks about the possibilities for socialism and communism in a world where our descendants will no longer have to work because of the fantastic productivity of computer-based machines. People, too, he argues, will become different because of how we communicate online. We will develop a capacity for adopting ‘multiple selves’ that are the more-or-less deterministic corollary of the multiple modes of communication that digitality affords. However, where this will leave us in respect of the socialist project, when much production is done by machines, and where individuals have developed protean selves, is not clear in Mason’s contribution. Harvey, if I can paraphrase his input, argues in terms that would not have been out of place in *Postmodernity*. He begins by saying that neoliberalism is not about the market, but about the consolidation of class power. This is probably true to some extent, but it misses the point of digitality. Continuing, and echoing Wolfgang Streeck, he acknowledges that the working class has been ‘destroyed by de-industrialisation’ made possible by computerisation and automation (40:30). And relying on Marx, as he always has in questions concerning technology, he argues that the central question is not one of changed ontology, or of determinism, or of social shaping, but simply about who controls it. He concedes that digital technologies have all kinds of ‘emancipatory possibilities’ (39:26) but it is always in the end a question of power and who holds it. The obvious question to ask here is: if digitality has made obsolete much of the analogue basis of industrial production that formed the working class in a historically and technologically specific way, how are these (now) cracked edges ever going to fuse together when alienation and automation are of a different order from when Marx theorised them—a theorisation that Harvey continues to repeat?

In the fused and solid centre of the mirror, we see only ourselves. It is an alienated ‘self’ that has no humanising relationship to the invisible data-flows of virtuality and cyberspace that pixilate our screen-companion. Neither do we have a positive relationship to the obscure digital processes that generate them. Increasing preoccupation with this new category of technology means that we have a diminishing relationship to the physical and the analogue when immersed for hours on end within digital representations of immaterial worlds. This digitality creates a heteronymic relationship with users vis-à-vis its pervasive technologies; and as digital technologies become more intensively and

extensively networked, they generate a deterministic force that is much more powerful and far-reaching than a determinism attributable to any single, discrete, non-connected, non-digital tool. In politics, as Bernard Stiegler wrote, digitality forces upon us a ‘collective individuation’<sup>70</sup> as human actors; but it is a coercion, as Stiegler also wrote, from which we can gain freedom and agency through cognitive control over the technology’s functions—in his case the smartphone. However, networked digitality is too powerful and too unrecognisable (as a technology) for the individual—or even the collective—to stand against. What we now face is a *networked determinism* that was instanced in the Cairo protests of 2011 which led to the catastrophic Arab Spring. A ‘collective individuation’ of mainly young and tech-savvy protestors managed to topple Mubarak from the Egyptian presidency. But a lack of *real collectivity*, in terms of a coherent political project, meant that sustained political action beyond the short-term was impossible, and this permitted institutional–authoritarian power to reassert itself. The individual and collective relation to digital technology, as a technology of freedom, was shown here to be one that was fundamentally alienatory, both cause and consequence of the failure of users to apprehend human potential, and digitality’s frustrating the means of its appropriation.<sup>71</sup>

Such alienation leaves us individuated and vulnerable to the logic, speed, scale and instrumentality of networked digital technology that is almost wholly oriented around the needs of accumulation and commodification. This mutated form of accumulation is powerful in ways that we have still to fully comprehend. This is especially the case in advertising, a culture-forming industry that leads the way for accumulation in virtual space. The digital networks that generate potentially endless fields of virtuality penetrate the planet almost in its entirety. Fibre-optic cables, multivariant wireless technologies and laser links criss-cross the land, sea and air carrying digitality into regions, cities, towns, streets, buildings, houses, rooms, televisions, laptops, desktops, smartphones and AirPods. Digitality reaches to wherever users may be, so to create an atmosphere of commodification and to instantiate direct commodification through advertising. Advertising keeps the web flickering and sucking up our attention. Its messaging is inserted into the dopamine hit that we seek when communicating and connecting online. And its messaging (as with all adverts since the beginnings of mass media) is the message of dreams, of impossible worlds and impossible happiness and impossible health and impossible sex and *impossibility* laid out as real and as possible, every day, every hour, every minute. Impossibility is the psychological axis of alienation upon which production and consumption turn.

The digital culture of dreams and promises makes us even more susceptible to digital’s seeming preternatural quality. Our non-recognition of it reinforces the impression of its magical qualities. A magical world can appear before us with the press of a ‘button’ which is in fact an ‘icon’ or an ‘avatar’, which is itself an electronic–digital connection to virtual space and a code-driven arrangement



of pixels. Through the connection, the screen emits a dopamine-infused spell, promising magical solutions to manufactured problems. Distributed dreams become simultaneously individual and public dreams; the connection becomes virtual accumulation. To paraphrase Debord, the dream is a spectacle and the dream becomes capital.<sup>72</sup> The irrationality of advertising further feeds our perception of digital machines. Our ‘fascination with automatisms [and] the technique of things and processes beyond our [analogue] senses’<sup>73</sup> gives digital technology an almost miraculous quality. To us, mostly untutored as to the working of digital machines that have no analogue in nature or in our bodies that we can correlate, they seem to be more than ‘smart’. We are told and we mostly believe that they are capable of almost anything as compared with our human-scaled capacities in time and space; and capable of *literally* anything in the virtual space of their own creating. This, and decades of propaganda by the ‘data merchants’<sup>74</sup>, means that we trust computing—if not the data companies that proliferate their effects. And trust means that we give ourselves over to them, or have appropriated from us by them much that in a previous analogical context was held individually, socially and culturally, in forms of knowledge, in forms of political communication, in sociality and social relations, and in production and consumption.

Much of what I have written here bespeaks a level of Frankfurt School hopelessness—that the commodity and its digital medium have got humanity by the throat. And to a significant degree, digitality expressed as commodification has shown Adorno and Horkheimer to be more than perceptive in their analysis of late-modern capitalism. But the authors of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, for all its darkness, did not advocate hopelessness. They did not express hope, to be sure, but neither did they project despair. They kept their philosophical options open until the end of their book, when the very last sentence opens a crack of light: ‘all things that live are subject to constraint’, they write. And constraint means constraint on domination by the negative dialectic as much as domination by digitality. Moreover, Adorno, for one, was clear that in his thinking he was engaged in diagnosis, and left prognosis to others.

Much of what I’ve written bespeaks a criticism of Harvey, too. But it is a criticism based upon a respect that for me goes back a long way. As a student I heard him speak, in around 1995, to an audience of perhaps one thousand. He came on stage after being introduced and stood alone under a spotlight, with no notes or lectern or specific question to address—and began talking. As he continued, I was increasingly amazed by the performance. He spoke in sentences, as from a page, but with the practiced naturalness of an actor in a stage play. He was clear, coherent and compelling. He spoke for an hour about the tenets of Marxism, of the benefits of the geographic imagination, of the various struggles of peoples around the world at that time. And optimistically (as always), he talked about the prospects for socialism. I recall that performance from time to time. And I recall it whenever I purchase another of his books or watch his lectures on the web. And with each encounter I became more convinced that he can

speak unprompted and flawlessly for an hour because he knows his lines. And the lines never seem to stray very much from the central guiding principles of his own brand of Marx. And as I read and watched through the years, always with an interest that never flagged, my thoughts would sometimes despairingly turn to the cliché that has been attributed to John Maynard Keynes, which goes ‘When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do?’

Marx came from an analogue-only universe in respect of its technology. Marxism is thus based upon untheorised or unquestioned analogue assumptions about the function of technologies within capitalism. Harvey’s Marxism is analogue because he considers technology from the perspective of Marx. The technological facts had already changed in 1989 and Harvey didn’t change his mind—or perhaps it’s fairer to say that he didn’t notice or pay sufficient attention to the new facts and the changes that flowed from them. Harvey didn’t and doesn’t want his Marxism to change. But in a post-modern, post-analogue world, it must change or it must engage.

Mark Fisher, an uncompromising music, film and TV critic, critical theorist, popular culturalist, philosopher, and most of all blogger, killed himself in 2017. In many ways this British writer who was born in 1968 and so grew up under the shadow of what Jenny Turner called ‘the neoliberal restoration’, was a Marxist for these post-modern times.<sup>75</sup> He was a Marxist in ways that Harvey isn’t. For example, he drew upon a wide range of sources from TV shows to music lyrics, from Deleuze to Baudrillard, from Spinoza to Freud, and from Jameson to Žižek. He also, as Simon Reynolds writes in the Foreword to his massive, posthumously published *K-Punk*, ‘wrote penetratingly about politics, philosophy, mental health, the Internet and social media (the *phenomenology of digital life*—its peculiar affects of connected loneliness and distracted boredom).’<sup>76</sup> And he lived his intellectual life digitally by expressing his ideas mainly through his blogs. But he lived digitality enough to know that the internet was both conduit to a vital audience beyond the academy, and a temporal trap that forces us to live increasingly in the present, and with digital technology ‘completely colonizing our sense of what technology is.’<sup>77</sup> Not realising what we have lost, in other words. Non-realisation through non-recognition keeps us incarcerated and suspended in relationlessness in digital time and space—alienated from the technology and from people around us:

One of the effects of modern communications technology is that there is no outside where one can recuperate. Cyberspace makes the concept of a ‘workplace’ archaic. Now that one can be expected to respond to an email at practically any time of the day, work cannot be confined to a particular place, or to delimited hours. There’s no escape—and not only because work expands without limits. Such processes have also hacked into libido, so that the ‘tethering’ imposed by digital communications is by no means always experienced as something that is straightforwardly unpleasant. As Sherry Turkle argues, for example, though many parents

are increasingly stressed as they try to keep up with email and messages while continuing to give children the attention they need, they are also magnetically attracted to their communications technology...<sup>78</sup>

This suffocation, this ‘no escape’, emerges directly out of Fisher’s concept of ‘capitalist realism’ whereby, as he put it in his 2009 book of the same name, ‘it’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.’<sup>79</sup> For Fisher, capitalist realism is a term preferable to, though synonymous with, postmodernism. He prefers it because it seems more final, and means that modernity is completed with capitalism’s triumph through a commodification that has colonised the consciousness of billions:

the lack of alternatives to capitalism is no longer even an issue. Capitalism seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable. [Fredric] Jameson used to report in horror about the ways that capitalism had seeped into the very unconscious; now, the fact that capitalism has colonized the dreaming life of the population is so taken for granted that it is no longer worthy of comment. It would be dangerous and misleading to imagine that the near past was some prelapsarian state rife with political potentials, so it’s as well to remember the role that commodification played in the production of culture throughout the twentieth century.<sup>80</sup>

The book is closed, and we must move on. We cannot wallow in theory and the neurotic parsing of it to understand the present condition, *ad infinitum*. But if the thinkable is colonised, it’s only because our lack of imagination makes it so. And occupation of the thinkable is domination of the thinkable, and domination, as Raymond Williams reminds us, ‘cannot exhaust all social experience.’<sup>81</sup> Fisher’s solution, if there is one, is that ‘we have to invent the future.’<sup>82</sup> This sounds good, but it seems contradictory if the thinkable is already colonised. And this brings me back one last time to David Harvey. Harvey’s future is already invented. It’s baked into his modernity and capitalism, and capital’s spatial limits will see it implode, ‘in the fullness of time.’ Fisher’s future is there for the inventing, but it’s not clear how to do this when capitalism colonises every corner of reality. Nonetheless, as a Marxist for our times, there’s a way of reading Fisher, in opposition to Harvey, that allows us to see with a bit more imagination. To extend the horizons of the thinkable, we need to think a good deal harder. This means occupying that which has already been thought within the left and Marxist traditions, whilst keeping the back and front doors—the past and the future—open. In a real sense, Harvey’s discomfort with macro-level periodising—post-modern, late-capitalism, etc.—forecloses his space economy framework. But implicit in Fisher’s exhaustive analysis of the ‘seamless’ expansion of capitalist realism through the commodity is that if there is nothing progressive and humanist in it or thinkable beyond it—a possibility he does

not close off—then we need to invent it. And seeing capitalist realism as being synonymous with postmodernity suggests also that there are ways through the social-psychological and technological hegemony of capitalism.

And that's one reason I've stuck with postmodernity and tried to revive it as a re-thinkable concept. Through it we can invent the future. Digitality has played a major part in ending modernity. We live in a new ideological and technological age now: post-modern and post-analogue. This doesn't mean that we are post-capitalism, or anywhere near it. But it does mean that we need to look at the frames of analysis that allow us to make sense of the ideological and technological now. This, in its turn, doesn't mean that we need to look for and establish some kind of post-Marxism—like post-capitalism, it's a concept that barely makes any logical or theoretical sense. Marxism co-evolved with capitalism and modernity. Modernity has moved on, because capitalism, as its leading dynamic force, has mutated, through the digitality-effect upon accumulation. Marxism, in all its modern and analogue senses, needs to adjust. What this means is that our post-modernity requires a post-modern Marxism.

A post-modern Marxism would be an adaptation of its theoretical structures to the 'realism' that is around it and in which its thinkers live and practice. The primary reality being the reality of digitality. We need to recognise this reality and prioritise on the basis of how it speaks to us today. To clearly understand the import of the digital would be to understand that in our postmodernity many of the things that we have left behind in the modern and analogue universe—democracy, production, consumption, labour, time, space, sociality, socialism, communism—no longer function as they once did, and so we should consider whether it is possible to fit them into this new technological context. Once we understand this context we can then begin to adapt the legacies of our modern and analogue universe to it, or, better, assert more democratic control over digitality so to make its logic fit better with the legacies that we still need to work for us if we are to avoid a capitalism without stabilisers lapsing into serious catastrophe or barbarism.

Gramsci wrote in his *Prison Notebooks* about how in times of prolonged crisis it is vital, politically speaking, to understand the precise nature of the 'terrain of the conjunctural', meaning the whole scope of the crisis in its trans-historical context. He wrote:

A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity), and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts (since no social formation will concede that it has been superseded) form the terrain of

the ‘conjunctural’, and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organize.<sup>83</sup>

Today we are in an extended period of crisis—for three decades and more it has gone on—and it is a crisis that digitality helped to create, but also to both mitigate and prolong. This is the hostile terrain upon which we need to organise, but we can only do it through a form of Marxism that recognises our post-modernity as a reality and recognises itself similarly.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mark Fisher (2018) *K-Punk*. New York: Repeater Books, p.13.

<sup>2</sup> Monica Bulger (2019) ‘Special Report on Digital Media’, *The Economist*, 5<sup>th</sup> January, p.44.

<sup>3</sup> In what was a rare positive action in 2019, it was widely reported that the San Francisco Board of Supervisors banned the use of facial recognition technology in that city, a ban that extends to government agencies, including the police. See Kate Conger, Richard Fausset and Serge F. Kovalski (2019) ‘San Francisco Bans Facial Recognition Technology’, *New York Times*, 14 May: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/14/us/facial-recognition-ban-san-francisco.html>

<sup>4</sup> The idea of the ‘prosumer’ seems to have been coined by Alvin Toffler in his 1980 work *The Third Wave*, where he asserted that pre-industrial society was a prosumer one, but that industrialised society opened a gap between production and consumption. Post-industrial society, he argues, offers the chance for these two roles to come together once more in a more holistic and positive way. More recently, George Ritzer and Nathan Jurgenson build upon Toffler’s idea in the context of Web 2.0 and argue that ‘capitalism is having a difficult time gaining control over at least some of the prosumers on Web 2.0’ and so there exists the possibility of a genuine freedom because people ‘seem to enjoy, even love, what they are doing and are willing to devote long hours to it for no pay.’ However, the authors take no cognisance of the function of algorithms and their capacity to aggregate and potentially monetise *all* activity on the open Web. See their (2010) ‘Production, Consumption, Prosumption: The Nature of Capitalism in the Age of the Digital “Prosumer”’, *Journal of Consumer Culture* 10(1), 13–36. More generally in the social sciences the term is critiqued as merely another form of exploitation—which it is—but this is still theorising upon old paradigms of production and consumption from another age.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Marx (1994) ‘A Preface to the Critique of Political Economy’, *Selected Writings*, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, p.211.

- <sup>6</sup> Jean Baudrillard (1993) *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. London: Sage.
- <sup>7</sup> See Ritzer and Jurgenson, 'Production, Consumption, Prosumption', pp. 19–22.
- <sup>8</sup> Cited in Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, p.16.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.15–16.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Interestingly, David Harvey takes up this issue and these same comments by Marx in his *Marx, Capital and the Madness of Economic Reason* (2017) (London: Profile Press). However, he dismisses such Baudrillardian reading of Marx and technology as 'ludicrous' and a 'technological fetish' that is a 'vast distraction' from the real work of political activism. See pp.125–127.
- <sup>11</sup> Karl Marx (1973) *Grundrisse*. London: Penguin Books, p.705. (my italics)
- <sup>12</sup> Rahel Jaeggi (2014) *Alienation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- <sup>13</sup> See Chapter Two.
- <sup>14</sup> Jaeggi, *Alienation*, p.23.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25.
- <sup>16</sup> John Culkin. (1967) 'A Schoolman's Guide to Marshall McLuhan', *The Saturday Review*, 18 March, pp.51–53. <http://www.unz.org/Pub/SaturdayRev-1967mar18-00051>
- <sup>17</sup> Bernard Stiegler. (2009) 'Teleologies of the Snail: The Errant Self Wired to a WiMax Network', *Theory, Culture & Society* 26(2–3) (March/May), 33–45, p.36.
- <sup>18</sup> Jaeggi, *Alienation*, p.24.
- <sup>19</sup> See Robert Kitai (2018) 'Three Reasons Why Audio Will Conquer Social Media' *Adweek*, 21 June: <https://www.adweek.com/digital/3-reasons-why-audio-will-conquer-social-media/>
- <sup>20</sup> Raymond Williams (1989/1958) 'Culture is Ordinary' in *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*, Robin Gable (ed.). London: Verso, p.96. Outside the closed loop, non-digital cultural forms continue, and tradition and diversity and creativity by practitioners sustain them all over the world. Examples are endless, from Japanese origami to fusion cuisine, and from Anglo-Indian literature to the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance. However, practices such as these are increasingly marginal and even face extinction, like languages, as new generations of digital natives see less meaning in them or are literally no longer exposed to them.
- <sup>21</sup> Nicholas Mellamphy (2015) 'Editorial', *Fibreculture* 25, p.5.
- <sup>22</sup> Jaeggi (2014) *Alienation*. p.24. Jaeggi goes on to note that: 'the concept of alienation posits a connection between *indifference and domination* that calls for interpretation. The things, situations, facts, to which we have no relation when alienated do not seem indifferent to us without consequence. They dominate us in and through this relation of indifference.' (p24) (emphasis in original).
- <sup>23</sup> Milton Friedman (2002) *Capitalism and Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.28.
- <sup>24</sup> China is a major exception and regulates much within its capitalism. However, monopolies are not the same kind of problem in China. Corporations, even monopolies such as Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent, are under the

control of the state, and ultimately act in the interests of the state, and so may be regulated or broken up whenever the state decides to do so. see Patrick Williams (2014) 'The reign or reining in of Chinese monopolies,' *East Asia Forum*, 16 December: <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/12/16/the-reign-or-reining-in-of-chinese-monopolies/>

<sup>25</sup> Industry Analyst Roger McNamee said in an interview that: 'Google, Facebook and Amazon are increasingly just super-monopolies, especially Google and Facebook. The share of the markets they operate in is literally on the same scale that Standard Oil had ... more than 100 years ago—with the big differences that their reach is now global, not just within a single country.' Chantel McGee (2017) 'Google, Facebook are super monopolies on the scale of Standard Oil, says VC Roger McNamee,' *CNBC Markets*, 27 June: <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/27/google-facebook-are-super-monopolies-roger-mcnamee.html>

<sup>26</sup> Unsurprisingly, computer technology companies spend more on R&D than any other sector. A large proportion of this, however, is in AI and the algorithms upon which it functions. See Rani Molla (2017) 'Tech companies spend more on R&D than any other companies in the U.S,' *Recode*, 1 September: <https://www.recode.net/2017/9/1/16236506/tech-amazon-apple-gdp-spending-productivity>

<sup>27</sup> Yevgeny Morozov (2013) 'The Meme Hustler,' *The Baffler*, April. <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/the-meme-hustler>

<sup>28</sup> Mark Andrejevic and Mark Burdon (2015) 'Defining the Sensor Society,' *Television and New Media* 6(1), 19–36, p.20.

<sup>29</sup> Ted Striphas (2015) 'Algorithmic Culture,' *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 184(4–5), 395–412, p.407.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Reuben Binns (2018) 'Algorithmic Accountability and Public Reason,' *Philosophy & Technology* 31(4), 543–556, p.545.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp.545–546.

<sup>37</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer (1986) 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,' in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. John Cumming (trans.). London: Verso. p.134.

<sup>38</sup> Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary,' p.93.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Kurt Andersen (2012) 'You Say You Want a Devolution?' *Vanity Fair*, January. <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2012/01/prisoners-of-style-201201> (emphasis mine).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Andersen, 'You Say You Want a Devolution?'



- <sup>43</sup> Theodor Adorno (1997) *Prisms*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, p.83.
- <sup>44</sup> Karl Marx (1976) *Capital* Volume 1 Harmondsworth: Penguin, p.536.
- <sup>45</sup> Hartmut Rosa (2003) 'Social Acceleration', *Constellations* 10(1), pp.49–52.
- <sup>46</sup> Tradition, as an integral part of culture, would always look after itself, and whether commodified or not, in music or literature or art, etc. consumers and producers of traditional or conservative cultural forms would not see relative predictability and absence of change as indication of a crisis of culture.
- <sup>47</sup> As noted earlier, Marshall Berman saw this contradiction in terms of 'modernisation as adventure, and modernisation as routine'. See (1982) *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. London: Verso, p.243.
- <sup>48</sup> See Reebee Garofalo (2002) 'Crossing Over: From Black Rhythm & Blues to White Rock 'n' Roll' in N. Kelley (ed.) *Rhythm and Business: The Political Economy of Black Music*. New York: Akashit Books, pp.112–137: p.113. The Hip Hop and rap music of the late 1970s was perhaps the last flowering of a new cultural form, but it was born within the culture industries of New York and Los Angeles—and wherever it did emerge as something new from the streets, then the artists themselves were more often than not ready to embrace the culture industries (the record industries) in order to commercialise and commodify their 'product'. See M. E. Blair (2004) 'Commercialization of the Rap Music Youth Subculture' in Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (eds.), *That's The Joint! The Hip Hop Studies Reader* (pp. 497–504). New York, NY: Routledge.
- <sup>49</sup> Fredric Jameson (1983) 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society' in Hal Foster (ed.) *Postmodern Culture*. London: Pluto Press, p.115.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.115–116.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.116.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.118.
- <sup>53</sup> See Robert Hassan (2003) 'Network Time'
- <sup>54</sup> Barbara Adam (1998) *Timescapes of Modernity*. New York: Routledge.
- <sup>55</sup> Bruce Collier and James MacLachlan (1998) *Charles Babbage and the Engines of Perfection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.74.
- <sup>56</sup> This phrase was referenced in 'Analytical Engine', History-Computer.com: <https://history-computer.com/Babbage/AnalyticalEngine.html>
- <sup>57</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer 'The Culture Industry', p.137.
- <sup>58</sup> Caspar Salmon (2018) 'Filming a Great Gatsby origin story shows our culture eating itself', *The Guardian Online*, 22 November: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/22/great-gatsby-origin-story-culture-book>
- <sup>59</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer, 'The Culture Industry', p.134.
- <sup>60</sup> Emmanuel Levinas (1985) *Totality and Infinity*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, p.80.
- <sup>61</sup> Mark Lilla (2017) *The Once and Future Liberal*. New York: Harper.

- <sup>62</sup> David Harvey (1990) *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, Op. Cit., p.358.
- <sup>63</sup> Trade Union membership in Britain in 1989, for example, was at 41 percent (down from 55 percent in 1979), but double what it is today (20.1 percent). See Bob Mason and Peter Bain (1993) 'The Determinants of Trade Union Membership in Britain: A Survey of the Literature', *Industrial and Labour Relations Review*, 46(2) (January), 332–351. See also CWU Research (2018) *Trade Union Membership 2017: Statistical Bulletin*: <https://www.cwu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Trade-union-membership-2017.pdf>
- <sup>64</sup> Harvey, *Postmodernity*, p.359.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.183.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.43.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.49.
- <sup>68</sup> Jean-François Lyotard (1979) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.4.
- <sup>69</sup> See <http://davidharvey.org/page/4/>
- <sup>70</sup> Stiegler, 'Teleologics of the Snail', p.38.
- <sup>71</sup> See Jaeggi, *Alienation*, p.37.
- <sup>72</sup> Guy Debord (1994) *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books, p.17.
- <sup>73</sup> Gehlen (1980) *Man in the Age of Technology*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.14.
- <sup>74</sup> Theodore Roszak (1986) *The Cult of Information*. New York: Pantheon, p.31.
- <sup>75</sup> Jenny Turner (2019) 'Not No Longer but Not Yet', *London Review of Books*, 41(9), p.3.
- <sup>76</sup> Fisher *K-Punk*, p.14. (emphasis mine)
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid., p.686.
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.466.
- <sup>79</sup> Mark Fisher (2009) *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Ropely, Hants: O Books, p.1.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp.8–9.
- <sup>81</sup> Raymond Williams (1979) *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review*. London: Verso, p.252
- <sup>82</sup> Fisher, *K-Punk*, pp.629–682.
- <sup>83</sup> Antonio Gramsci (1992) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: International Publishers, p.178.

