Planet Utopia

The key figure of the capitalist utopia is the individual who is ultimately free. The capitalist's ideal society is designed to protect this freedom. However, within *Planet Utopia: Utopia, Dystopia, Globalisation*, Featherstone argues that capitalist utopian vision, which is most clearly expressed in theories of global finance, is no longer sustainable today.

This book concerns the status of utopian thinking in contemporary global society and the possibility of imagining alternative ways of living outside of capitalism. Using a range of sociological and philosophical theories to write the first intellectual history of the capitalist utopia in English, Featherstone provokes the reader into thinking about ways of moving beyond this model of organising social life through sociological modes of thought. Indeed, this enlightening volume seeks to show how utopian thinking about the way people should live has been progressively captured by capitalism with the result that it is difficult to imagine alternatives to capitalist society today.

Presenting sociology and sociological thinking as a utopian alternative to the capitalist utopia, *Planet Utopia* will appeal to postgraduate and postdoctoral students interested in subjects including Sociology, Social Theory, Cultural Studies, Cultural Theory and Continental Philosophy.

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Planet Utopia

Utopia, Dystopia, and Globalisation

Mark Featherstone

For Paddy

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

On the Seashore: Utopia, Dystopia, and Cultural Politics

I On the Seashore

> *On the seashore of endless worlds, children meet.*
> *Tempest roams in the pathless sky,*
> *Ships are wrecked in the trackless water,*
> *Death is abroad, children play*

<div align="center">(Tagore in Kuhn, 2013: Front Matter)</div>

In his essay 'The Location of Cultural Experience', the psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott (2005) quotes the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore in order to frame his discussion of the emergence of culture in play and playfulness. In his work on children, Winnicott was never interested in notions of utopia or dystopia, but rather the ways in which kids play, imagine, and create in secure spaces defined by their parents. In his view this experience, the experience of creativity, which we first encounter in the potential space set out by Mom, is a model for later cultural development. In other words, we learn to create through childhood play, which opens onto the infinite expanse of the human imagination and allows us to imagine entirely new worlds, and then take this forward into our adult life, where we continue to play, imagine, and create in secure spaces where we feel able to think new thoughts without penalty or punishment. Reading Winnicott's (2005) work, and thinking through his use of Tagore, we might suggest that the seashore represents the liminal space of imagination and creativity, the borderland between feelings of security and containment where we know what is what and everything remains the same, *and* the experience of insecurity and otherness where we encounter anxiety, but also possibility, newness, and the future.

While the sandy beach represents the safety of land, the sea is the infinite space of possibility, mystery, and monstrosity. We know we can live on land. We can breathe. The sea, on the other hand, is the space of the shipwreck, disaster, and drowning. It represents endless expanse, the infinite that threatens to envelope us and dissolve our fragile sense of self in its vast, dark, waters (Hamilton, 2013). Despite—or perhaps more precisely because of—this risk, we know that without the sea and the possibility of exploration, we would miss and never encounter the

hope of the new and the future. As we gaze out from the land over the vast expanse of water towards the horizon, what we see is possibility, potential, and utopia. In order to understand Winnicott's reference to Tagore, then, we might consult Gaston Bachelard's (1994) book on water, and particularly his idea of the Charon complex. Here, water, and the endless ocean, is simultaneously a representation of death but also hope, the future, and the possibility of peace. Recalling Freud (2003), who talks about the oceanic experience in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Bachelard links the idea of the ocean to the bind between the endless peace of death and the infinite promise of the future. By positioning his children on the seashore, Winnicott (2005) avoids the worst excesses of the Freudian ocean, where men drown and are consumed by monsters emerging from the abyss, and instead allows his kids to look out over the vast expanse of water with their feet planted firmly on dry land. Thus, the seashore is Winnicott's safe place which allows creativity and imagination to happen. The seashore is Winnicott's spatial metaphor for imagination played out under conditions of psychological security. But why introduce this work with reference to Winnicott's paper and particularly his use of Tagore's seashore? What does any of this have to do with notions of utopia and dystopia?

I begin with reference to Winnicott's (2005) work, and his reference to Tagore, because I want to argue that we have lost touch with the experience of the seashore in contemporary social and cultural life, especially under conditions of neoliberal capitalism where everything is defined by its cost or quantifiable benefit, and that this has impacted upon our possibility to imagine other worlds which might improve or enrich our own. In this way my view is that we have lost our sense of the value of imagination, creativity, wonder, and the kind of naivety that is inseparable from the experience of childhood, simply because kids are not entirely integrated into the world. Before they are fully socialised into the world, kids retain the ability to look upon life through strange eyes and see things otherwise, on the basis of how they might look in some other imaginary universe. This is a situation, and an experience, which I think we need to rediscover in order to reopen the horizon of the future, a future that is beyond the narrow confines of neoliberal capitalism, where obsession with economy makes everything seem absolutely predictable. Moreover, I would risk the claim that this is more than an issue for individuals, who have simply become hyper-rational economic actors, and is in fact a matter of cultural politics, which decide how we behave in the world defined by cultural norms and values. This is the case because, as Winnicott (2005) shows, imagination, creativity, and the invention of the new are absolutely reliant on psychological security defined and provided by others and community. In this respect, culture, imagination, creativity, and thoughts of the new are not simply the property of the individual genius, but rather experiences that are enabled by groups that create secure spaces to allow them to happen. However, I would argue that this is *not* the concept of security which has come to dominate the contemporary social and political experience in the West, especially since 9/11, because what the current mania for security

requires is absolute lockdown and limitation of creativity and imagination (Hamilton, 2013). In other words, contemporary concepts of security and safety restrict creativity, imagination, and cultural expression and limit the experience of the new to parameters set out by the neoliberal capitalist orthodoxy on the basis that what this orthodoxy is organised to compensate for is the stormy ocean of capitalism, which throws people back and forth and offers them little in the way of psychological peace and stability.

In this way we might argue that the reason for the situation where we become obsessed with a particular form of security is that we have lost sight of the liminal space Winnicott (2005) talks about through reference to Tagore's idea of the seashore. As opposed to this experience of liminality, the globalisation of neoliberal capitalism has plunged the majority of the world's population into a situation of social and economic insecurity, which compares to the terrifying experience of being cast adrift on the stormy ocean, and has sought to compensate for the consequences of this position through political measures designed to ensure security through the limitation of the sociological, political, and cultural imagination. Although a population living in precariousness, tossed about on the ocean of capitalism, is more likely to accept security measures—which insist upon a particular concept of normality, limit their ability to think otherwise, and contribute even further to the destruction of imagination wrought by the domination of economic logic—it is also true that people deprived off the human ability to think of their future will eventually react. Taking this into account, I think that we can identify a potentially utopian moment, the moment when the lack of possibility for cultural expression able to challenge the capitalist orthodoxy tips over into blind rage and the acting out of frustrations concerned with the fear and uncertainty of living in a global risk society which seems devoid of a human future. The question of this work is, therefore, concerned with social and cultural politics and the need to address what we might creatively and imaginatively consider a global dystopia, where people are reduced to the status of objects defined by economic value and there is no imagination beyond the imagination required to increase profit margins, and the search for a way back to the seashore, which will enable us to think about the new from the safety of a place without precariousness, anxiety, fear, and death. Against the dire utopia-cum-dystopia of late, neoliberal, global capitalism, then, the objective of this work involves the attempt to reignite the utopian imagination, which involves thinking of dystopia as a worst-case scenario that requires radical change, and to open the present up to the kind of childhood naivety and critical distance required to think about the future. The ultimate aim of this attempt to think the contemporary global situation otherwise is to create a space for the new, for hope, and for the future, or, in other words, the kind of other worlds which children endlessly create through their play. However, before I move on and explain the structure of the book, I would like to take stock and explore how global capitalism produced our current impasse, which we might suggest is defined by a dystopic world without a future.

II The Global Capitalist Dystopia

In 2008, in the teeth of the American-led war on terror, the British political philosopher John Gray (2007) wrote about the end of utopia. For Gray, history had proven that utopia is a dangerous concept. Indeed, in his view processes of globalisation had resulted in the emergence of new faith-based forms of utopian violence structured around the historicist vision of some historical grand plan leading from the past through the present to the future. Against this idea Gray argued that the eschatological view that war, destruction, violence, and ultimately apocalypse would lead to the new and produce utopia were simply fantastical and based in irrational theological thought. In this respect my reading of Gray's book, *Black Mass* (2007), is that it updates Karl Popper's (2002a, b) classic critique of Stalinism, rooted in his attempt to destroy the philosophy of Plato, Hegel, and Marx. Following Popper's books *The Poverty of Historicism* (2002c) and *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (2002a, b), Gray takes the view that the problem with utopian thought is that it is based in metaphysics, which projects an interpretation of the present into the distant past and far-off future in order to construct a law-based vision of history. In locating the origins of utopian thought in Zarathustra and ancient religious conceptions of the opposition between good and evil, Gray argues that the utopians' mistake is to believe it is possible to separate the entirely good from the absolutely bad and discover some kind of good place devoid of evil. In religious thought, this good place is other-worldly and only becomes accessible post-mortem, whereas in modern utopian thought, the good place is somewhere else, located on the other side of the ocean, which we can reach through exploration and discovery.

If the classic ancient utopia is Plato's *Republic* (1991), where the perfect world is an imagined city based in an appreciation of metaphysical form, the most famous modern utopia is Thomas More's work of 1516 which gave the concept its name. Utopia, the good place, which is also a no place, is ironic in a way which Gray's utopians are not. While More's utopia essentially destroyed itself by erasing every statement of the good with a statement of impossibility (the good place is a no place and so on), which we may read as an early version of the critical technique Adorno (1981) would later call negative dialectics, Gray wants to argue that the majority of utopians actually believe in their schemes and want to see them realised. What this means is that while More was keen to critique the early modern enclosures, which placed common land in private hands, through reference to an imagined land where wealth was held in common, he never believed this was really possible. Thus, the good place is a no place, an impossibility. By contrast, Gray (2007) suggests that history's major utopian political figures, from the Jacobins through Mao, Pol Pot, and Baader-Meinhof to contemporary radical Islamists, have been seduced by ideas of egalitarian justice and sought to impose their plans upon the world through the violent destruction of the other who is seen to stand in the way of its realisation. However, it is not only leftists whom Gray

targets in his discussion. He is also critical of contemporary neoliberal capitalists and politicians for their utopian vision of a frictionless global economy without borders or boundaries. Again, he points out that the realisation of this utopian fantasy relies on the violent destruction of alternative models of living and that this essentially contradicts the ethical core of utopia itself—the freedom of individuals to realise themselves through interactions with others. In his critique of a mode of thought that promises violence, destruction, horror, and ultimately totalitarian domination, Gray responds with a Popperian philosophy of reason, rationality, and critique which he considers more measured, open to debate, and essentially negotiation.

However, what Gray (2007) fails to recognise is the way in which contemporary capitalism, and the capitalist utopia of completely smooth regulation-free exchange, has produced a dire form of utopia, or perhaps we should say dystopia, devoid of belief and a human future. Thus the problem of Gray's critique of utopia and the politics of belief is that the precise problem of contemporary global, neoliberal capitalism is that it has produced a social and economic form based in exchange, cost, benefit, and value, that is devoid of belief or any sense of wider significance. Utopia and some kind of belief are therefore exactly what is required today to save people from a void of disbelief and nihilism. It is surprising that Gray fails to recognise this problem, since I think that his book *False Dawn* (1998) remains the best account of the fantastical nature of the global capitalist utopia, which crashed in the same year that his work on the poverty of utopia was published. In this book, and against what we later find in *Black Mass* (2007), Gray effectively explains the collapse of the capitalist utopia and describes the opening of a new space of utopian potential, possibility, and futurity. Where we might say that Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) tells the story of the American utopia realised, Gray's *False Dawn* (1998) explains the discontents and coming collapse of this model of social, economic, and cultural laissez-faire. In other words, it offers a theory of *the end of the end of history*, which Gray then closes down in his *Black Mass* (2007) by explaining the inherent violence of the historical, or more precisely historicist, worldview that takes an analysis of the present and then extends this into a philosophy of past, future, and every moment in between.

In terms of detail, Gray's thesis in *False Dawn* (1998) is that the original capitalist laissez-faire utopia of Adam Smith came to an end in the fires of World War I, simply because of the destruction wrought across Europe. Following the chaos of the interwar years, which saw the rise of fascism, Nazism, and communism, and the subsequent horrors of World War II, which effectively destroyed normal society for the major protagonists, Gray explains that the victorious democratic powers realised the necessity of tempering the violence of capitalism and regulating the market, in order to prevent a political swing to the extremes of left or right. Against the violence and unfreedom that resulted from economic turbulence, he shows how the Western powers turned towards welfare, managed capitalism, and a belief in a social, rather than individual, good. Although this vision of social consensus politics remained in

place until the late 1970s, the capitalist utopia made a comeback when a combination of rising costs and union power began to eat into the production of surplus value and it became clear that the economic and political elites would need to free the market and stimulate competition in order to increase productivity and surplus creation. This is exactly what Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan achieved in Britain and America through the creation of a new highly moralised anarcho-capitalism defined by ideas of individual freedom, free market economy, and minimal government. In many respects the period from the late 1970s to the early 1990s represented the gestation of the new utopia characterised by class struggle that concluded in the collapse of Eastern European and Soviet communism and the subsequent rise of gangster capitalism. Looking further afield we might also look to the Chinese turn to a hybrid form of authoritarian free market economy, which began with Deng's creation of the special economic zone and ended with the crackdown on the new left that followed 'Tank Man' and the events of Tiananmen Square, for evidence of the rise of the new global utopia-cum-dystopia.

Following these events, which saw the rapid collapse of the socialist alternative around the world, Fukuyama (1992) was able to declare the end of history, and neoliberal capitalism appeared to emerge triumphant, a potentially globalised system, a kinetic utopia of perpetual motion, defined by individual freedom, competition, and the endless creation of surplus value. This new model of society was utopian in the way in which it took its lead from economics and then proceeded to define every aspect of life through reference to economic logic. As such, politics became about economic management, while the sphere of culture was defined by the saleability of ideas and cultural objects. This social form, where significance reduces to calculations around more or less, is the realisation of the neoliberal idea, where economy and economic freedom are everything, and any attempt to disturb or manage this freedom is viewed with suspicion and regarded as a first step towards Soviet totalitarianism. Indeed, it is possible to argue that this fear of backsliding towards totalitarianism is the definitive idea of the neoliberal model, which not only justifies its commitment to economic freedom on the basis that freedom must be superior to management, but also organises its restrictive concept of culture, where there is no alternative to the current orthodoxy simply because the *other* form of social organisation is inherently bad.

What we find here, then, is a shift in the idea of the good, and a reorganisation of the concept of utopia itself, from an idealisation of a static system to come, characterised by a vision of a perfectly egalitarian self-identical society without conflict, to a new ideal, and a new utopia of restricted or deferred conflict. This new utopia is premised on Hobbes' (2008) political physics, where social struggle stands in for the natural survival of the fittest, Smith's (1982) notion of the invisible hand, where the system is good in itself and should not be tampered with, and Hayek's (2006) valorisation of freedom and an avant-garde society organised around movement for movement's sake. In my previous work (Featherstone, 2010) I explained this shift in terms of a

concept of kinetic utopia, or utopia of movement, and explained the negative impacts of this model, which are still largely ignored today, *insofar as there is little sense that they comprise inevitable systemic effects*. But what are these effects, or what Ulrich Beck (1992) might call bads? What are the negative by-products of the new capitalist kinetic utopia? The central problem of this utopia results, in my view, from a new social form defined by the goods of competition and individualism, which result in a dystopic world of winners and losers, where violence and inequality are morally justifiable. While this may seem unproblematic from the American point of view, where there is a historical commitment to the rugged individual, the frontier, and the Wild West, the society of anxiety, fear, anomie, and disorientation this has produced is not productive or conducive to peaceful social relations, if this is understood to have any kind of importance in itself or for the individual. Of course, in the American-led neoliberal world defined by savage competition and the principle of winner takes all, there are better ways to manage inequality than the defence of the principle of egalitarianism. Thus what we have seen since the emergence of the new kinetic utopia is the creation of an asocial form where the fear of the other is sublimated into an obsession with security and defence.

However, there is more to this situation than the immediate rational decision to security and defence, because what this withdrawal from the social world achieves is a refusal of the other and an acceptance that life with them is impossible. In the words of Zygmunt Bauman (1995), the contemporary world of insecurity and security is a world of fragments, a world without a coherent social order, a world of social disorder, a world where anomie is paradoxically normal. The effects of this situation on the individual are profound because, of course, this is not simply a social and political condition, but rather one which drills down into the lived experiences of every person subjected to the rule of the new utopia. As Lacan (1993) shows in his work on the psychoses, without a master signifier to tell individuals how to organise their world, they fall into madness, psychosis, and defensive psychological formations such as paranoia, which reconstruct a worldview on the basis of a deeply negative view of others who are objectified, dehumanised, and turned into monsters. In this way the dystopic condition of the kinetic utopia more closely resembles Bret Easton Ellis' dystopian *American Psycho* (1991), where Bateman fantasises about butchering innocent people whom he transforms into objective projections of his feelings of frustration towards his meaningless world of things, than classic dystopias concerned with presenting the dark side of authoritarian or totalitarian domination, such as Kafka's *The Castle* (2000), where the source of power remains hidden, incomprehensible, and inscrutable. Of course, we might say that Kafka's vision of power imagines what would later come to pass in Easton Ellis' dystopia. In Kafka's nightmare, power is hidden. In *American Psycho* (1991) it vanishes altogether, and the fantasy of power's existence in some kind of unified form is revealed in Bateman's attempt to save himself through sadistic violence. Where we once believed that power's lack of visibility was a sign of its concealment, Bateman's psychotic fantasy

world is evidence that in the postmodern world, power in its modern, authoritarian form has disappeared to be replaced by a strange form of diffuse or micro power, what Foucault (2004) calls biopower.

The most recent iteration of this new turn was, of course, outlined by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their *Empire* (2000). In *Empire* Hardt and Negri show that the contemporary global system is centreless and lacks a core. In their account the traditional centre of global power, America, which had dominated since World War II and the rise of the consumer society, has lost its grip. Instead, empire has become a transnational corporate utopia held together by a global market, what Baudrillard (2005) calls a system of objects. Although the basic idea of this utopia is frictionless exchange, and the regulation of space is perceived in terms of an anachronism which will slow transfers of capital and the generation of surplus value, the reality of the global neoliberal capitalist system is that the border has become a site of enormous anxiety, fear, defence, and security. The reason for this *borderline* situation is that the frictionless kinetic utopia is always a fantasy which must accommodate the reality of the nation-state that must in turn struggle to maintain some kind of social and political order and temper the turbulence of the transnational economic system. Thus Foucault (2008) explains two variants of the neoliberal state committed to the economic organisation of life: the American anarcho-capitalist model, defined by an idea of individual freedom in the market, and the German ordoliberalist approach, where state regulation plays a much bigger part in the creation of the space of economy. In his view the American approach positions government in negative terms, so that there is a commitment to minimal intervention in the lives of its citizens, whereas the German model requires positive government action in order to create a space of economic freedom.

Although we can still find evidence of these two models in the practice of capitalism today, I would suggest that what we have seen happen since the 1970s is a shift in the anarcho-capitalist model towards larger government, and centrally a greater sense of the need to intervene in the life of the social body. This idea is, of course, in Foucault's work, and we find it explored most clearly in his seminar of politics, war, and social defence, published under the title *Society Must Be Defended* (2004). In this book Foucault explains that the role of government in the neoliberal society is to create a space for economy and limit its own influence. In this respect government becomes about administration and police power outside of the economic sphere which represents a kind of civilised battlefield. Since economy can never really contain the enmity unleashed in the name of competition, Foucault's point is that the social world itself becomes a war zone that government must seek to control without any sense of bias beyond the moral ideal that order must be upheld. The only moral principle here is the principle of utility—what works for the economy. This setup is, of course, bad enough, because Foucault paints a picture of the capitalist utopia transformed into an inhuman dystopia, a machine set on the creation of value for no reason beyond the creation of value itself.

However, what we witnessed in the wake of the 2008 global crash in terms of bank bailouts, austerity programmes, and so on may lead us to move beyond Foucault's view and conclude that matters are even worse, and that the global economic system works on the basis of class interests, which are barely hidden behind a utopian or dystopian vision of the neutrality of the machine that has no human interest.

In Foucault's (2004, 2008) view, the main problem of the neoliberal system is always social defence and the management of danger which emerges from the borders of the machine. In his account this opposition to the other defines the racism of the capitalist system. Surveying the history of the kinetic utopia, we might argue that Foucault's thesis is clearly supported by the events of 9/11 and beyond in the apparently endless war on terror. In the first instance, what Al Qaeda, bin Laden, and Atta attacked was the symbol of American economic power, which led to the savage defence of this system in wars on the Afghan Taliban and later Saddam's Iraq. For writers such as Derek Gregory (2004), this defence of 'civilization' represented a new form of colonialism, and it would be a mistake to fail to recognise the ethnic dimensions of the American-led war on terror. However, what is less apparent, but perhaps equally remarkable, is the ways in which this form of colonial power reversed and began to take effect in the Western powers themselves in the wake of the economic crash through the creation of a new politics of class demonisation and hate. The scene was already set for this politics of race hate by the Islamophobia which has taken hold across America and Western Europe since 2001, but I would suggest that it was only fully realised in the political discourse which evolved around austerity across Western Europe in the period following 2008. Here, the centrality of *homo economicus*, the neoliberal man who produces and consumes and nothing else, was aggressively defended against the apparently lazy, feckless, wasteful other who is regarded as genetically deviant and biologically unable to function within the coordinates of the system. Thus the undisciplined youth, the lazy unemployed person, the immoral single mother, and the devious immigrant have been demonised, condemned, and abused across Europe in a move which confirmed Foucault's (2004) thesis that the essence of liberal and neoliberal freedom resides in ferocity and the slavery of the other.

Here, we encounter the class or what Foucault (2004) calls race-based politics of the new kinetic utopia-cum-dystopia, which shows that its view of the value of economic struggle is not devoid of interest, but rather structured by ideological bias and a motivated vision of insiders and outsiders. Centrally, however, Foucault also shows how all of this violence and social warfare is hidden beneath a discourse of totality, cohesion through struggle, and utopian freedom, which means that despite the violence of everyday life which everybody sees, there is no sense in either elites or the masses that this violence is somehow aberrant, inhuman, or representative of a condition civilised people might want to leave behind. This transformation of perspective, where what might first appear dystopic becomes utopic from a certain point of view which accepts the essential nature of violence, is one aspect of what Arthur Kroker (2007) calls quantum culture that

predominates in the contemporary neoliberal landscape. Beyond this ideological reversal, what we also find in neoliberal culture is a strange fusion of hyperbole, which defines the utopian belief that capitalism and the economic vision of reality is the truth of the world, and black cynicism, comparable to the Hobbesian view of the wickedness of man and the irreducibility of violence and warfare. Kroker explains this fusion of opposites in his *Born Again Ideology* (2007) through a discussion of the contemporary capitalist commitment to the utopian transformation of man and world through techno-science *and* its view of the essential, natural character of struggle where change seems impossible. Where one position is absolutely orientated towards the future and the possibility of change, the other is conditioned by an essentialist vision of humanity that remains impervious to transformation or improvement. In seeking to capture this ideological phenomenon, where oppositional positions fuse in a new form which resists the Western tendency to recognise contradiction or produce synthetic solutions, Kroker turns to quantum physics and Niels Bohr, who discovered the essential contradictory nature of the universe where a particle can be in two places at once, to suggest a new model of thinking through political and social reality.

Although Kroker (2007) never extends his thesis to consider political economy, we might apply his concept to the changing nature of class structure in the developed world to show how the phenomenon of embourgeoisement, which led many in the 1960s to imagine a bright new future of affluence, fuses with the old concept of the proletariat, which post-industrial utopians believed had been consigned to the past by computer technology. Here, we may refer to the new class Guy Standing (2011) calls the precariat, defined by freedom from social structure and immersion in the capitalist game, but also by chronic insecurity in terms of knowing where their next meal is coming from. While Standing wants to suggest that the precariat is in many respects new, the product of neoliberal ideology around individualism and changes to capitalist attitudes to labour contracts and so on, another way to look at the emergence of the precariat is to refer back to Marx and Engels' concept of the lumpenproletariat (Featherstone, 2013) and say that new precarious class is really little more than a postmodern version of the old class that is not a class. Again, Kroker's point holds even if Standing's class is really the lumpenproletariat in new rags. The old comes back in the form of the new. The class which is not a class survives in the new quantum culture where opposites are happy bedfellows. Beyond the quantum nature of Standing's new class, we should also note that perhaps the key characteristic of the old lumpenproletariat was its insecure position outside of normal class structures and the violence which followed from this essential precariousness. Although Marx never made much of the idea of the scum of the class system in his major works, in many ways these people were the dystopic future of his vision of capitalism which has finally arrived in our world in the form of the neoliberal precariat (Featherstone, 2013).

Evidence of the predominance of this class is everywhere today, from the floating population which continues to drive Chinese capitalism to chronic

labour insecurity across Europe and America. Similarly, it is not hard to find evidence of the dystopic effects of this globalised condition of insecurity in the phenomenon of infanticide and particularly the school shootings and school murders which have affected societies from China through Japan to America and reflect a thanatological tendency on the part of those excluded from the kinetic utopia to try to destroy the future (Stiegler, 2012). If Ellis' *American Psycho* (1991) reflects the violent, psychotic, fantasy world of the consumer who wants to find some meaning in the world through destruction, we might consult Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk about Kevin* (2003) to think through the psychopathology of the youth who confronts a world devoid of real care or attention and responds with cold, nihilistic rage. Since Kevin's war on the world is the result of the negative perception he forms in his early months that his parents never really cared about him and basically wanted rid of him, it is unlikely that the contemporary neoliberal turn to security will resolve the problem of nihilism, primarily because this strategy is premised on a view of the natural wickedness of man and the need to manage the dangerous effects resulting from the normal struggle, conflict, and competition within global capitalist society. In other words, Kevin's negative response to lack of care will never really be solved by the turn to a Benthamite or Foucauldian prison society where weapons are either outlawed or made more accessible in the name of defence, because neither of these moves will solve the basic problem of the lack of care in social relations engendered by the neoliberal generalisation of violence and violent competition as an essential economic good. Instead, the turn to security exacerbates the problem of the kinetic utopia–cum–dystopia by transforming Gray's (1998) Hobbesian world into a new penal form, what Foucault (2004) calls the gulag archipelago of capitalism.

As we have already noted, 9/11 intensified this situation by emphasising the contrast between absolute economic freedom, which as Hobbes (2008) knew always folds back into complete unfreedom, and social and political authoritarianism under conditions of security. However, John Hamilton (2013) notes that the origins of the notion of security lay elsewhere in Cicero's concept of *securitas*, which finds its etymological roots in the prefix *se*, meaning 'away from', the root word *cura*, or 'care', and the suffix *tas* for 'state of being'. For Hamilton, the Latin origins of the English word 'security' should thus lead to the conclusion that *being secure* refers to a state of lacking care or carelessness where we have no sense of otherness, danger, possibility, or the future. The irony of the contemporary obsession with security is, therefore, that its pursuit of a utopia of safety without danger folds into a careless totalitarianism that mummifies in the full psychoanalytic meaning of this term where mummy takes over and offers safe passage back to the womb where we can live life like corpses, stillborn in a world without otherness. Understanding the global kinetic utopia of total economic freedom and social and political mummification in terms of the emergence of post-mortem capitalism is instructive because it enables a new perspective on the endless war on terror, which becomes about the destruction of the other in the name of a totally secure life lived under the sign of death.

According to Foucault's (2004) work, and especially his seminar on social defence, we find the most developed modern version of this commitment to security in Nazi society, where social war and the quest for biopolitical defence became absolute goods, taking the form of a suicidal death drive towards the ultimate form of purity, the death of the species itself.

What Hamilton (2013) effectively finds in the contemporary neoliberal drive towards a utopia of security is, therefore, social war resolved in an asocial form defined by mummification and post-mortem safety. However, it would be a mistake to imagine that there is no escape from this state of zombification, and that we are condemned to the utopian–dystopian womb of security forever more in the way that Fukuyama (1992) imagined, because the economic crash revealed the truth of what Paul Virilio (2012) calls the insecurity of history. Virilio explores this condition in his book *The Great Accelerator* (2012) through a comparison of the fate of the global economy and Large Hadron Collider. Here, he contrasts the terminal velocity of capitalism with the light speeds of the CERN machine and opposes the real crash of finance capital to the fantastical creation of a black hole capable of swallowing humanity in a story of techno-scientific utopianism gone bad in the emergence of an abyssal dark dystopia without end. In the case of global finance capitalism, the utopia of complete freedom meshed with absolute unfreedom took the form of speculation on the basis of riskless risk, where enormous financial risk was offset by derivatives and other financial instruments designed to insure against losses on the free market. Of course, what took place in 2007 through 2008 was the collapse of the fantasy of riskless risk in the near bankruptcy of the underwriters (insurance companies such as AIG) of the total risk of the system. What the crash revealed, then, about the kinetic utopia of absolutely smooth capitalism was its failure to recognise the irreducible nature of risk and the limitations of the principle of exploitation. In this way the crash revealed the fantastical nature of the kinetic utopia, which was essentially based in first, a failure to understand that risk must always be underwritten by some insurer or other who possesses the resources to back the system itself (the state), and second, a refusal to recognise the limits of the cynical exploitation of the precariat based in their liminal position on the edge of the capitalist system.

In the first instance, the problem of the private insurers was that they were unable to underwrite the costs of the complex instruments designed to insure lenders against losses on the market because they were absolutely certain that the system itself was complete. In other words, they bought into the idea of the end of history and suffered from the complacent belief that those on the cutting edge of the kinetic utopia would remain good for their debt even though the flexibility of the capitalist economy itself meant that, however willing the precarious class may have been to repay its debts, there were limits to the exploitative credit and bad loans they could stand. Thus the fatal mistake of the financial elites was rooted in their belief in perhaps the core principle of the capitalist utopia—the unlimited nature of exploitation. In truth,

exploitation is limited. The contemporary situation is evidence of this fact. Basically, there is only so much exploitation the precarious class can take and remain within the system. Cast out of the system by redundancy and their inability to keep up with exorbitant debt repayments, the American precariat compromised the concept of riskless risk and transformed the kinetic utopia from a system premised on a fantasy of total security to a shambles defined by endless insecurity, panic, and anxiety about the future. The result of this apocalyptic shift, which saw security tip over into insecurity, has been the end of the kinetic utopia, or least the revelation of what Bourdieu (1998) calls the neoliberal dystopia of unlimited exploitation.

   Although the capitalist elite has sought to extend the life of its violent utopia through austerity and the creation of more precariousness, it may be the case that the neoliberal system has nowhere else to go, simply because the majority are now largely excluded from the goods it has to offer and can no longer believe in its fantastical utopian story. As Bernard Stiegler (2012) explains in the second volume of his *Disbelief and Discredit*, the contemporary capitalist system represents dystopia realised. There is no belief in this social, political, economic, and cultural form, and the law of the capitalist superego which previously bound the majority to the system no longer holds. In this state, defined by the death of the Weberian spirit of capitalism, we are cast into the abyss of nihilism and significance disappears. The American dream is over and total objectivity takes over. Now there is nothing beyond crude materialism which reveals the excremental nature of the worker and the commodity that previously animated the system through the former's spirited pursuit of the latter as a quasi-theological good full of value. In the wake of the collapse of this kinetic utopia, where the good was always simply one more purchase away, we find ourselves back on the seashore. Caught in the gravitational field of the black hole late capitalist dystopia, we can either collapse into cynicism and wallow in the meaninglessness of a permanent present without change or refuse this bleak situation, reconstruct the world, and recreate the future.

III Post-Catastrophic Utopianism

> Spirit is a bone.
>
> (Hegel, 1976: 208)

It may be possible to employ the logic of Hegel's enigmatic comment on the pseudo-science of phrenology to the study of the contemporary global dystopia in order to understand how the destruction of the spirit of capitalism in the rise of a new crude materialism without human future might produce fragments of utopian hope. In much the same way that Hegel observed the reduction of spirit to bone in the new science of phrenology, what we have witnessed in recent years is the collapse of the capitalist belief system, which previously convinced with regard to its ideological principle of openness and centrally its defence of the principle of individual self-realisation. In the wake

of the global crash and subsequent great recession, which when it ends will have produced a slimmed-down, leaner, meaner version of capitalism more like Adam Smith's (1982) version of laissez-faire capitalism than anything we have seen in the 20th century, what we find is capitalism stripped of its pretension to inclusion and reduced to bare materialism, namely the reduction of the worker, labour power, to the status of a functional object in the name of the production of surplus value. The new capitalism is, thus, capitalism without hope, capitalism with a future. However, Marx and Engels (2004) understood in the 19th century that capitalism in its pure form—capitalism without concession, capitalism without pretence—cannot survive for very long, because of the resistance it necessarily produces. In this respect, in much the same way that Hegel identified the dialectical shift involved in the reduction of spirit to bone, Marx and Engels saw that the reduction of capitalism to pure mechanism produces hope in the form of those who plan alternative futures. In the 19th century this resistance took the form of the workers' movement, socialism, communism, and utopian socialism. In the 21st century, these expressions of resistance have been extended by new media technology, which has enabled groups such as Anonymous to form around the idea of a global multitude of the exploited, and the very processes of global capitalism themselves, which have created a planetary class divide, where it becomes possible for writers such as David Graeber (2013) to talk about the 99 percent, the exploited mass of the world's population.

I would argue that we find the origins of the notion of the 99 percent, which continues to inspire the anti-capitalist movement today, in Antonio Negri's (2013) use of Spinoza's concept of the multitude. The idea of the multitude, which Negri outlines in his book *The Savage Anomaly* (1999) and then employs in his works with Michael Hardt, namely *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2004), and *Commonwealth* (2009), develops out a radical vision of the liberal tradition that opposes the Hobbesian and Lockean theory of liberalism and restricted freedom. In Negri's (1999) Spinozan concept of the multitude, what liberalism captures is the endless possibility of humanity, which always exceeds every structure organised to contain and define its orientation towards the future. Against this irreducible openness to the future, what Negri calls *potentia*, power seeks to organise, contain, and define possibility in the name of structure, control, and the maintenance of the status quo. Negri talks about this counter-tendency to potential in terms of *potestas* and argues that politics resides in the struggle between these two tendencies—the tendency, on the one hand, towards revolutionary change, the new, and the future, and on the other hand, towards conservatism, orthodoxy, and the maintenance of the status quo. In searching for a new politics of freedom in the contemporary globalised world, Negri (1999) suggests that we must enable the expression of potential through a new form, which he calls *disutopia*, where the creative and imaginative power of the utopian form is separated from its totalitarian potential in power. Essentially, I think that it is this disutopian impulse that animated recent resistance movements, such as Occupy, which sought to oppose the neoliberal

orthodoxy but avoid the authoritarianism of the Leninist party model in the name of endless creativity, imagination, and freedom. There is, of course, little point in opposing the neoliberal capitalist machine through a new authoritarianism which destroys the human potential for creation, because the essential problem with the current orthodoxy is that it closes down the space of imagination which enables human life to flourish in order to exploit human labour power to the point where the reproduction of life starts to become unsustainable. In order to solve the problem of super-exploitation, which deprives many of the basic resources necessary to survive, the first objective must, therefore, be to free the human potential for creativity from the capitalist imperative that links culture to economic value and regards any other cultural production as worthless.

This is, of course, the point made by those who struggled against capitalism in the late 1960s. While Deleuze and Guattari (1983) fought the Oedipal structures of the patriarchal system, Marcuse (1987) argued against the performance principle which reduces every aspect of human life to economic value. Although capitalism shifted to a new form in the wake of 1968, becoming high-tech creative capitalism in order to absorb the imaginative potential of its opposition, it appears that this recent Californian transformation has now run its course. The terminal nature of the system, what we might call its *lateness*, was already evident before 2001 with the rise of the new anti-capitalist left in 1999, which expressed significant discontent with the capitalist idea of the good. However, even today, the problem of *attachment* remains a significant one. Although the capitalist machine may seem devoid of meaning and spirit, the dual technologies of bio- and psycho-power mean that the neoliberal subject, *homo economicus*, remains the hegemonic psychological type, even though this way of being currently resembles a zombie mode of subjectivity without life, meaning, or significance. How, then, is it possible to fight this state of being that is already dead? Perhaps the only way to resist this type, which seems to live on after its own death, is to create the conditions for the kind of dialectical reversal from base materialism to a new kind of imaginative idealism by insisting upon the dystopian state of the contemporary world system. In order to provide an example of what this dystopia of method might look like, consider Walter Benjamin's (2009) work on German tragedy, and imagine that the contemporary global system resembles a kind of baroque catastrophe.

In Benjamin's (2009) work on the *trauerspiel*, early modern German tragedy captures the image of tyranny in a state of collapse. The tyrant seeks to exert control, but continually fails, because fate dictates that his efforts to shore up his empire must always miss their mark. Realising his terminal situation, the tyrant falls into an abyss of melancholia, characterised by a sense of paralysis and a perception of the end: the end of his reign, the end of his meaning, the end of his-tory. Surveying his world, the sovereign sees nothing but failure, ruination, and decay everywhere. It is in this dystopian vision of collapse that Benjamin finds utopian possibility and the space of the new. In a world devoid

of meaning and significance, he explains that the exposed thing, or what he calls the *creaturely*, offers hope for the future, because it affords the opportunity to begin again. As Susan Buck-Morss (1991) shows, Benjamin saw the same situation played out in the Paris arcades of the late 19th century, where the ruined objects of early consumer capitalism shone with utopian possibility. Perhaps this perspective is still appropriate, or *even more* appropriate, for the contemporary world, where consumer capitalism has become a global form, what Benjamin might call a global ur-landscape, a kind of natural background or fate which seems absolutely inescapable. Frozen in this natural system, there is nowhere to go, and we collapse into repetition, compulsion, and routine in order to dull the pain caused by our lack of future. However, descent into the dark underworld of the contemporary addictogenic society offers no real escape, because immersion in the compulsion to repeat simply emphasises our profane objectivity—unless, of course, it produces reflexive recognition and the determination to engineer change.

There is, therefore, value in ruins. There is ruin value in the debased worker who is simply a meaningless cog in a machine, ruin value in the prostitute who is little more than a piece of meat bought and sold like any other commodity, ruin value in the addict who is a slave to junk, ruin value in the slum dweller who must struggle to survive on a daily basis. In these ruined bodies living in dystopia we confront Benjamin's (2009) creaturely life, the blank people Catherine Malabou (2012) calls the new wounded, the waste products of late capitalism who open up the possibility of the kind of catastrophic and post-catastrophic subjectivity Wilfred Bion explored through his work. For Bion (1993) these subjects come face to face with bare life, or the thing in itself he captured through his use of the symbol O, and must find some way forward into the future. In other words, O represents the lived experience of dystopia, a world catastrophe for a destroyed subject which is also a blank canvas, an island of hope that points towards an infinite number of possible futures. Although Bion was centrally concerned with catastrophic subjectivity, Benjamin's (1999) utopians were not only destroyed subjects-cum-objects—the prostitutes, the beggars, and scum of the capitalist system—but also children, who always exist on the edge of the world, because they are in the *process* of being socialised into normal ways of living. Benjamin (2006) found utopian hope in kids, whose naïve questions—Where did I come from? What is this, that, and the other? Why is the world the way it is? and so on—suggest distance from orthodoxy and the accepted order of things, because their way of being suggests a model of imaginative, ludic thought and practice which might enable everybody else to escape the closure of modern, capitalist society. Against the hard pragmatism of the capitalist, who is only interested in costs and benefits, Benjamin wanted to wake the capitalist subject up to the dream-world of the child who invents the future through everyday play. For Benjamin, the human future is hidden within these small utopias (Stewart, 2010).

Even in the contemporary situation, where the child has become a key source of value production for capitalists, Benjamin would resist despair on

the basis that children will always find the new in their play with even the most profane objects. In his work, capitalism evolves through different conceptions of value, where use value becomes exchange value becomes symbolic value becomes ruin value becomes utopian value, which results in the transition of the object from a useful object to a commodity to be bought and sold to a symbol to be exchanged and finally a ruined piece of waste that signals the closure of one way of thinking and the possibility of some other path into the future (Featherstone, 2005). This is how Benjamin finds utopia in dystopia, infinity in the finite and the profane, and suggests we might escape the nihilism of the always the same of capitalism. Žižek (2008, 2010) makes a similar point in his recent works on catastrophe and utopia. In his *In Defence of Lost Causes* (2008), he argues that we must exploit the current global situation in the name of the lost cause of the eternal idea. However, whereas Žižek's eternal idea reflects a Platonic notion of justice, I would argue that this concept has little value today, simply because of its inherent authoritarianism, and must instead be taken to represent a kind of empty signifier, which we need to fill out through creative practice. Thus, my view is that what the pursuit of the eternal idea of justice calls for is less some transcendental imperative around division of resources imposed from above and more the creation of a space of immanence to enable experimentation about what it is people value in life. Although this call may appear to be based in utopian idealism, I would argue that such activity is absolutely practical and rooted in the immanent idealism of the child at play. Absorbed in play, this utopian child exemplifies the idea of fixation, which reflects deep immersion in the objective world, where profane things become magical signs of the future to come.

Utopian play is purposeful, and characterised by practice organised around an imagined goal, but centrally a goal which is open to adaptation on the basis of creative interaction with changing circumstance. Thus it becomes clear why culture is so important politically—culture is the space of interaction between the subject and the objective world, where the subject simultaneously makes meaning in the world and in doing so creates his own identity. In my view, this is what utopian practice means today, and how we can develop a mode of concrete utopianism to oppose the global capitalist system that seems devoid of spirit, significance, and human meaning. As Žižek points out in his apocalyptic *Living in the End Times* (2010), the generalised crisis of late capitalism, which takes in looming ecological catastrophe and intractable social division, means that we must find a way to move beyond the neoliberal utopia-cum-dystopia in the creation of a human world. In my view, culture must play a central role in this task, because culture is communication, and the basis upon which humans form worlds. Culture is also the medium of human imagination, creativity, and fantasy, what Winnicott called our little madnesses (Kuhn, 2013). I would argue that we need more little madnesses in the contemporary world, simply because neoliberal capitalism has created a worldless world where meaning is reduced to economic equations around value. There is no humanity in this mode of thinking.

Thus, my objective in this book is to consider the concepts of dystopia and utopia from the vantage point of the seashore where children play and imagine possible worlds very different from our own. Following this introductory chapter, where I have sought to read global politics through the lens of the psychoanalysis of D. W. Winnicott, in the next chapter I move on to focus on the situation of contemporary Greece. Wrecked by EU austerity measures caused by fantastical attempts to build a new neoliberal utopia on the back of unsustainable debt and credit, I compare and contrast the Greece of the early 21st century with the Greece of the original utopians, the ancient Greek philosophers Plato (1991) and Socrates, in order to try to articulate a vision of a more socially just, economically sustainable society. In Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of the book, which comprise the centre of the first part of the work, I move on from this exploration of Greece, which re-reads Plato's *Republic* (1991) through the lens of Alain Badiou's philosophy, in order to try to understand how the contemporary global capitalist model emerged and whether it is possible to read this history through concepts of utopia and dystopia. On the basis that there is no sustained study of the utopian vision of capitalism, which is supposed to be *the* realist mode of social and economic organisation par excellence, in these three chapters I track the evolution of capitalism and capitalist thought back through the work of Adam Smith (1982, 1999), John Locke (1988), and Thomas Hobbes (2008) before leaping forward into the works of Milton Friedman (2002) and finally the key theories of contemporary financialisation. In order to kick-start this history, I begin with a discussion of the difference between the capitalist vision of economy and the archaic, primitive view of economy found in Plato (1991), but also anthropologists such as Marshall Sahlins (1974) and Marcel Mauss (2000). Where the latter primitivists regard economy in terms of the need to sustain life, the capitalists, perhaps starting with Bernard Mandeville (1989) and John Locke, take economy as a means of ever-increasing productivity and profitability. Tracing the development of this history, in Chapter 3 of the book I explore the development of capitalism in America, and particularly across the post-World War II period when Milton Friedman (2002) and the neoliberal thinkers read economics through the cold war cybernetic theory of early computational thinkers such as Norbert Wiener and John Von Neumann, who, with John Nash, was instrumental in the development of game theory (Mirowski, 2002).

In order to extend this work, which shows how economy evolved from a system for the distribution of scarce goods necessary to sustain life to a techno-scientific cybernetic model concerned with the production of profit removed from any concern with human or environmental sustainability, I move on to look at the ultimate form of capitalist, economic abstraction, financialisation, where money makes money without the need for human production. Against this theory of the non- or post-human dimensions of contemporary economy, where human and world are subordinate to the needs of the financial system that abolishes the future in the name of debt repayment, in Chapter 5 of the book I take up an alternative vision of economy, organised around the

irreducible sociality of people and the necessary relationship between human and world explored in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty (1969) and Deleuze and Guattari (1994). The aim of this chapter, then, is to suggest a leftist, red–green model of what I call the minor utopia, where work and productivity are understood in terms of natural productivity and the satisfaction of need, rather than abstract profit making that harms humanity both in itself and through the destruction of its biospheric life support system. In this chapter I connect Merleau-Ponty (1969) to Marx (1988), and recall my earlier reference to Winnicott (2005) on infant creativity, in order to argue that humans are infinitely creative and imaginative and defined by the need to express themselves and that the capitalist model of economy has progressively subjugated this potential and reduced humans to profit-making machines. Inspired by Marcuse's (1987) work, I suggest that under this utilitarian model there is no room for life or human imagination that transgresses the current order of things, which is by definition beyond utility.

In Chapter 6, I return to the issue of the utopian potential through an exploration of the dystopian dimensions of the ur-space of sociality, the city, in cinema of the Danish director Nicolas Winding Refn, and particularly the ways in which he situates his characters within an autistic space where social relations never hold and continually break apart. The space of the city is, of course, key here because the history of the ideas of utopia, dystopia, identity, society, economy, politics, and culture can be traced back to the invention of the urban form that creates a space for the articulation of everything human. Akin to a variety of contemporary utopias, which envision the city in terms of dystopian collapse, Winding Refn's films, but particularly his most recent works *Drive* (2011) and *Only God Forgives* (2013), imagine the globalised city (his cities span the globe, from LA in the West to Bangkok in the East, to create a nightmarish vision of the global city) saturated with asociality, suspicion, mistrust, and ultra-violence. At the heart of both films I consider, the main character is explained in terms of destroyed masculinity rooted in lost childhood and the kind of abandonment one might imagine Winnicott's children suffer in the mechanised world where alienated work in the name of profitability is more important than human development. It is on the basis of this work on cultural expressions of global dystopia linked to ideas of the collapse of social and particularly familial relations that I turn, in Chapter 7, to a consideration of the situation of youth in contemporary Britain. In this chapter, entitled *Dis-United Kingdom*, I move back into straight sociological critique and take up a discussion of the riots of 2011. Building upon the recent work of Bernard Stiegler (2012), who writes of uncontrollable societies and destroyed subjectivity, I seek to understand the riots in terms of the explosive frustrations of a blank generation, or what we might call a de-generation, whose future, and thus utopian hope, has been taken away by the condition of intergenerational abandonment that is implicit in neoliberal economics, politics, and society.

In this dystopia, which I explore through the idea of hoodie horror, the real horror is not the horror of violent youth (a kind of feral, criminal underclass),

but the horror of youth abandoned by a mechanised economic system that puts profit before intergenerational debt, social responsibility, and a sustainable, liveable human future. Finally, and in order to conclude the book, I think about possible responses to this hopeless, dystopian situation and seek to argue for the critical value of what I call the spectre of sociology. Here, in the concluding chapter, I seek to articulate a new ethico–political role for sociology that transcends a concern with the production of 'useful facts' and revolves around the need to oppose the violence of neoliberal capitalism in the name of a liveable future. Since neoliberalism must ignore an ethical sociology, which consequently becomes a spectral way of thinking concerned with invisible social relations and abandoned responsibilities, and instead seeks to transform the discipline of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber into an instrumental servant of the state that produces fact and never asks questions, I close the book by suggesting that sociology, sociological thought, and the sociological imagination are ghosts, ghouls, and spectral manifestations of the future that haunt the neoliberal utopia/dystopia of the present. In the contemporary critical period, where there appear to be no alternatives but also no way to carry on with the current order of things, the future is literally unimaginable. Any imagined future is ridiculous, science fiction, and thus utopian in the worst sense of the word, simply because instrumental rationality cannot imagine change outside of its fixed vision of the world. This is a truly dystopian state of affairs that demands utopian thinking. In this respect I argue for a utopian, spectral form of sociology—a ghostly, value–based way of thinking from the past that we must paradoxically keep alive in the name of future possibility to come. In this respect I seek to imagine a new version of sociology, a utopian sociology able to imagine the unimaginable, a critical sci–fi sociology on the seashore.

Filmography

Drive, 2011, Nicolas Winding Refn, Icon.
Only God Forgives, 2013, Nicolas Winding Refn, Icon.

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1   Back to the Future

Utopia and Dystopia in Greece

I Hyper–Plato and Contemporary Utopia

In this chapter I propose to situate the first, classic, utopian imaginary, Plato's (1991) *Republic*, in the context of the contemporary global crisis or, to use the Greek term which possesses a slightly different meaning that I will explore below, *krisis*. In order to read the *Republic* (1991) in this way, I will take Alain Badiou's (2012) recent hyper-translation of Plato's text and explore its relationship to the global crisis. My thesis here will be that Badiou's hyper-translation reflects the ways in which the crisis has thrown utopian politics back to the future. In other words, I want to suggest that the crisis has thrown the utopian politics of the past, which many have suggested were dead and buried by the excesses of the 20th century and centrally the horror shows of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao, back centre stage, where they come to represent future possibility. Moreover, I suggest that these politics represent a kind of *sci-fi politics*, a utopia to come, because they return in the context of a static, stagnant scene organised around a kind of zombified version of Fukuyama's (1992) end of history paradigm. In this respect, the purpose of my chapter is to read Badiou's (2012) Plato, a sci-fi Plato for the 21st century who we might call *Hyper-Plato*, in the bright light of the contemporary global scene ruled by the zombie politics of 1989, the year when the Berlin Wall came down and Fukuyama's fantasy of global America came to pass. In order to set this reading up, I follow my exploration of Hyper-Plato with a discussion of collapse of the global economic system. Here, I rely on Yanis Varoufakis' (2011) theory of the Global Minotaur because it captures the idea of the post-war utopian global order constructed by American policy makers. The idea of system-building is important here because I want to emphasise that in much the same way that Daedalus, the original architect of the Cretan labyrinth, *designed* the home of the monstrous Minotaur, the contemporary global system was the product of a *plan* to ensure the future of an American-led form of globalisation.

It is on the basis of this plan, which was executed over the course of the second half of the 20th century, that I suggest the global system might be understood in terms of a utopian strategy to create a world in America's image. In tracking the collapse of this *real fantasy*, in the third, and final,

section of the chapter, I seek to locate the collapse of the global utopia of the monstrous Minotaur in the original space of Plato's *Republic* (1991), Greece. Here, I show how the crisis—or *krisis* to use the Greek term which refers to a moment of decision and thus emphasises the relationship between the economic collapse and the necessity of a leap to a new state or condition—found form in what we might call, following work in *Radical Philosophy* (2013), the Greek symptom. This means that the collapse of the global utopia of the Minotaur found *symptomatic* expression in the dystopian conditions of contemporary Greece, the ancient home of utopian thought. Thus, in order to conclude the chapter, I explore the ways in which the heirs of Hyper-Plato, those who recognise the utopian impulse in Plato that exceeds the authoritarian monster that inspired Robespierre, Lenin, and Stalin, have sought to oppose the global dystopia which has landed in Greece in the early 21st century.

In his contemporary reconstruction of the *Republic*, Badiou (2012) creates a new utopian figure adequate to the political situation of the 21st century—Plato who is more than Plato, Hyper-Plato. Emerging from the cave of the distant past into the banal wreckage of the present, Hyper-Plato looks towards the future. Against the deeply depressive atmosphere of the contemporary moment, where we realise there is no alternative but know that change is absolutely necessary, Hyper-Plato confronts his reader with a discussion of *fundamentals*. Akin to his ancient brother, his theory is modelled on an appreciation of Spartan order and organisation. Regarding the Spartan origins of Hyper-Plato, we might consider Plutarch's (2008) portrait of perhaps the very first utopian statesman, Lycurgus, and note his key reforms—the redistribution of land and recourses, equality, and rule by elders. I think that we find this basic appreciation of the importance of the communal in Badiou's (2012) Hyper-Plato. Similarly, he supports the Spartan approach to socialisation, though he may not extend his theory of child rearing to the lengths found in the ancients. However, he recognises the value of the Spartan view that kids are part of the city, rather than the property of their parents, and that they should be educated in the name of discipline and obedience to community. Centrally, Hyper-Plato supports the Spartan opposition to elaborate ways of saying very little—the Spartan utopia was, of course, entirely opposed to the use of nonsense in language, because this obscures discussion of fundamentals, and what we find in Hyper-Plato is a concern for fundamentals that is strangely antithetical to contemporary political debate, which simply confirms that there is no other way but what we have today.

What matters in Sparta is always community, and the Spartan group and Spartan city would be a kind of hive. In this sense the Spartan is an insect-man who lives, works, and dies for the good of the group. As Elizabeth Rawson (1991) points out in her study of Sparta in history, the Spartan focus on collectivity was, in the ancient context, a novelty because traditional Greek heroism, based in Homer, had always insisted upon individual glory. Although he is keen to reject the image of the insectoid, because of the insect-man's appearance in Kafka (2007), Burroughs (2010), and others, and wants to

support ideas of individual realisation, Badiou's (2012) Hyper–Plato opposes the search for fame and glory for its own sake. He associates this excessive desire for recognition and the need for adventure with contemporary celebrity and suggests that these are the psychological traits that we find along the road to the emergence of tyrannical, fascist man. One need not be Freud or a psychoanalyst to understand that the root cause of the need for fame and glory is weakness and a diminished sense of self, and Hyper–Plato supports this view in his psychosocial theory of the political self. While he does not explicitly support the Spartan commitment to war as a way of life, what he finds in the warrior's orientation to life is a vision of truth beyond the contemporary bondage to economy that ties people to a miserable materialism defined by meaningless metabolism. Indeed, I think that we can find the Spartan hatred of money in Hyper–Plato's account of his utopia, simply because of the ways in which money breaks ranks and creates inequality, envy, and jealousy. For Badiou's (2012) Hyper–Plato, true social life is impossible without equality because inequality produces hatred between self and others. In the Spartan case this is why the famous battle of Thermopylae is so important and remains such a vital myth in Western culture, because what the symbol of the *three hundred* reflects is the spirit of communal transcendence in the face of the immense gravity of material forces of opposition.

Although Badiou's (2012) Hyper–Plato is no warmonger, he links the idea of order and control to justice. Where he departs from the Spartan fantasy of his ancient brother is in his attempt to save some sense of Athens, and its principles of openness and newness, from the sheer functionalism of the hive model of communism, which ironically re-emerges in the late capitalist utopia. Hyper–Plato's city is not simply a camp, where the soldier is ideal and function is all that matters, because he understands the need of people to realise their potential outside of their allotted place in the social order. Place of birth cannot be everything, and Badiou's (2012) Hyper–Plato disagrees with his ancient ancestor on this issue. Where Plato advances the need to tell lies, and achieve order through the myth of metals, Hyper–Plato does not seek to link his utopia to some natural system. However, it would be a mistake to say that Hyper–Plato has no sense of order, because I think that he remains indebted to Platonic cosmology, and the notion of quasi–divine symmetry which we find in *Timaeus* and *Critias* (2008), on the grounds that cosmological order supports his idea of justice. The challenge of Hyper–Plato is to escape the history of the unfolding of this idea of orderly, functional justice and beauty. This idea has, of course, played out across modern history, and the history of the idea of utopia named by Thomas More (2008). Beyond the French Revolution and the Nazi utopia, the idea of a cosmic utopia of perfect order and symmetry found its global form in the American-led empire which appeared on the scene in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. In this respect, I think that Hyper–Plato's unlikely interlocutor is Francis Fukuyama (1992), because Badiou has brought Plato back to intervene in the decadent dying days of this global utopia-cum-dystopia. In throwing Plato into the present,

Badiou transforms him into Hyper-Plato, the philosopher of the future shorn of the authoritarianism Karl Popper (2002) found so disagreeable. Hyper-Plato is thus Plato more than Plato. He is the idea of Plato, who Plato would have been if he had not been a Greek aristo, committed to the defence of class power and so on.

However, it would be a mistake to say that Badiou (2012) simply wants to preserve the idea of Plato, the utopian thinker who imagined a new society, because he is also keen to insist on the need for Hyper-Plato to overcome the classical dualism of his ancestor—the absolute separation of the forms and sensible world. Centrally, Hyper-Plato is never simply about the assertion of the utopia idea, because Badiou wants to show how the idea can *participate* in the sensible, in the real world, through a process of subjectivisation. In this way Hyper-Plato's objective is to reach a view of the utopian truth and universalise this vision through a process of subjectivisation which takes in Plato's original psychology of the five types of political man. Thus Hyper-Plato is no longer simply a philosopher, but also a psychoanalyst, who understands that we can find the truth of a social system in the psychology of its people. We can see this thesis in operation from the very start of Hyper-Plato's *Republic* (2012), where his Socrates debates the meaning of justice with Thrasymachus. While Thrasymachus takes the view that might is right and that justice serves the interests of the powerful, Socrates insists that inequality can only produce discord and hatred and that any idea of justice that advances these conditions is not worthy of the name. While inequality produces hatred between people, and thus destroys the social system, Hyper-Plato's Socrates also notes that this condition tears the self apart and creates a state of schizophrenia, because the reason of unjust man is no longer in charge of its own house but has instead become subordinate to other psychological forces emerging from the libido.

But is this idea, where the self is controlled and disciplined, really a recipe for freedom? Glaucon's response to Socrates suggests that freedom resides in behaviour driven by the appetites. True individuals, capitalist individuals, do what they want. They may pretend to be good in order to gain favour from others who respect their higher values, but this is little more than a cynical nod to social necessity, and the truth of their behaviour is driven by the principle of desire and the desire for advantage over others. According to this miserable vision of social life, Glaucon notes that injustice is the complaint of the weak who never get what they want out of life. It turns out that this is a key debate in Hyper-Plato's work, because it opens out into his Socratic discussion of the idea of justice which structures the new Republic's theory of utopia. In this account Socrates' first question is to ask his interlocutors about the identity of society. What is society? His response is that society is essentially a division of labour where individuals specialise in the performance of particular tasks. Of course, the problem with this theory of the division of labour, which Durkheim (1984) would revisit in the modern period of history, is that eventually the division of tasks becomes so complex that the social system starts to collapse under its own weight. The relationships between

individuals break because they have little in common. They fall into a state of anomie where they have no sense of their part of the collective. Against this problem of specialisation, Socrates suggests that it is better for people to remain closer to nature and live more basic lives because this enables them to remain part of a common social system based in their common being on the earth. Although Glaucon baulks, and proposes that what Socrates suggests is a primitive city of pigs, Hyper-Plato's (Badiou, 2012) Spartan utopia of a division of labour organised around basic needs is attractive because it frees his citizens to think about fundamentals rather than navel-gaze and vanish into solipsistic obscurity.

Beyond this advantage, the appeal of Socrates' city of pigs is, of course, always supported by its difference from the catastrophic dystopia of Atlantis, which casts a dark shadow over Hyper-Plato's Republic. Here, we should recall that Atlantis was Plato's original dystopia from *Timaeus* and *Critias* (2008) which reflected the likely injustice, inequality, and disaster that would result from urban hubris, excess, and expansion. Against the uncontrollable desire, and eventual hate, which came to characterise Atlantis, Hyper-Plato's Socrates suggests that his ideal city would teach kids to be good citizens who would display active thought. He tells us that they would investigate, create, and make decisions not because they thought they could gain personal advantage but because they want to discover the truth, which refers to ideality, symmetry, or beauty of phenomena. In order to achieve this, the kids would need to learn courage, self-restraint, concentration, and disinterestedness. In short, Hyper-Plato's Socratic educational philosophy becomes about moving beyond self-interestedness towards a universalistic attitude to the discovery of truth and meaning able to inform social policy on the ground. However, there is no more basic social policy than this educational policy designed to produce citizens who are balanced, moderate, stable, and self-disciplined, because these people would grow into those who would design the ideal city in their own image. In Hyper-Plato's view, these universal citizens would be capable of producing a universal city—a city without borders, a city without otherness—and ensuring that the beauty of their creation would not slide back towards division and fragmentation. But unlike his ancient ancestor, whose city was famously immobile and timeless because he sought to cut it off both temporally and spatially, Hyper-Plato seeks to evade limitation. This evasion of limitation, or allowance for change and development, is most clearly reflected in the way he cuts into the original text's vision of the allocation of essential tasks.

Where Plato (1991) allocates roles on the basis of birth and the myth of metals, Hyper-Plato's universal man is Marx's (1988) polymorphous worker, who can work everywhere but also has special talents which the city should look to foster. In this respect Hyper-Plato's (Badiou, 2012) utopian city would be universalistic in its openness and provision of opportunity to workers, who would be able to realise their particular talents across a range of fields. Centrally Hyper-Plato is concerned to maintain this dialectical complex, where the division of labour remains open enough to foster individual talents, across the key functions

of society—production, defence, and government. This democratic openness is essential to the goodness of his utopian city because it means that the distribution of roles will never become caught in a rigid class stratification system based upon inheritance and a tradition of normalised inequality. In seeking to avoid the corruption of roles, Hyper-Plato insists that his people should be self-disciplined, courageous, wise, and essentially live selflessly for their community. It is here that education becomes central to the postmodern Greek's theory, because it is education that ensures the production of proper psychological development and organisation. While the original Plato (1991) called the three parts of the self: reason, spirit, and passion, Hyper-Plato translates these terms into thought, affect, and desire in order to better situate his vision of the ideal person within a post-Freudian universe. However, in much the same way that his ancient brother insisted upon the importance of reason in the governance of the self, Hyper-Plato explains that his ideal self would be organised around thought, which would ensure his participation in the universal idea. On the basis of this participation in the idea, his person could then relate to others in a fair and equal manner and thus create a just society based upon unity and collective psychology, rather than discord and selfish individualism.

For Hyper-Plato (Badiou, 2012), this is what justice means—symmetry, balance, and unity—and injustice resides in the collapse of this beautiful form. Thus injustice refers to excess, inequality, fragmentation, and the dark confusion these conditions produce in both social relations and individual psychology. This distinction between the just and the unjust is key to understanding Badiou's (2012) futuristic version of the first utopia. For example, in order to ensure justice and equality in what he calls his fifth form of government, or communism, Hyper-Plato also insists upon the classical Spartan principle of gender equality because talents and abilities are always distributed evenly across genders. Although his society is no patriarchy in this respect, Hyper-Plato is keen to escape from the totalitarianism of his ancestor, who abolished the family and passed kids over to professional child carers, by explaining that private life and family is necessary to provide shelter from public life and the space of the state. In this respect, he seeks to balance the principle of universalism, where equality reigns, with a recognition of the need to allow particularity and private life choices room to breathe. Of course, the balance between these states is not easy to find, which is why Hyper-Plato (Badiou, 2012) emphasises the importance of thought and the need for philosophy to inform politics in the creation of a dialectic of theory and practice. Everything starts with thought, and the ideational sense of beauty and totality, because it is only this that can resist the perversion of endless opinion, babble, and confusion Hyper-Plato links to contemporary democracy which has no sense of direction. Against this tyranny of opinion, where everything tilts towards the needs of the rich and famous, Badiou's (2012) postmodern Greek waits on the appearance of some Event-God that would shake this nonsensical system to its core and open up a space for the rediscovery of the beauty of truth.

It is in this context that Badiou's (2012) Hyper–Plato returns to his ances-tor's famous cave myth, which becomes a movie theatre in the contemporary postmodern global society. In this new scene the ancient prisoners of the cave who sat transfixed before the flickering images on the cave wall become slack-jawed kids caught in the warm glow of the screen that captures their attention in the name of orientation towards the consumer lifestyle. The purpose of the Event-God is thus to break the spell of the screen and recapture the atten-tion of kids who need to turn back towards the beauty of the idea. If he can encourage the kids to forgo the spectacle of the screen, Hyper–Plato imagines that he can switch them onto philosophy and centrally numbers, which he thinks are essential for participation in the beauty of the abstract idea. Of course, these are not the numbers of the Wall Street banker or contemporary global capitalism, that screen out the reality of the greedy, desiring self and provide a sheen of objectivity and fairness for a form of accumulation which is essentially pathological and corrupted. Instead, Hyper–Plato's (Badiou, 2012) numbers perform an important function—they serve to lift individuals out of their self and enable their participation in abstraction, equality, and justice. Indeed, in seeking to translate this concern for numerical abstraction, sym-metry, and reason back into the language of the material sphere, Hyper–Plato strikes against the contemporary masters of numbers by explaining his utopian proposal to limit wages and accumulation. There will be no monstrous bank-ers' bonuses in Hyper–Plato's utopia because people will possess no more than they need to live a sustainable life on earth. In this way, he opposes the con-temporary consumer society of desires and wants in the name of a city limited by human need and moderation.

But if this is Hyper–Plato's (Badiou, 2012) ideal society, how are we to under-stand the process which led the early humans from their primitive state, when need was what mattered, to their current exorbitant situation, which brought the Greek back to the future in the first place? The answer is Hyper–Plato's discussion of his ancestor's typology of bad societies, which shows how, when people had what they needed, the original city of pigs became corrupted and collapsed in various more or less dystopian forms. Given that Hyper–Plato sug-gests that we need to find our way back to truth and justice today, the suggestion of the new Republic is that the contemporary, postmodern, global capitalist society represents a version of one or more of these dystopian forms in need of reform by philosophical critique. First, he tells his interlocutors about timarchy, which is a militaristic society where honour and status is what matters. Timarchy emerges when the original communistic society becomes complacent and people are overtaken by a desire for power and domination. This occurs because the original utopian commitment to the truth contains the potential for its own demise in its fundamentalist devotion to a cause which easily slips into a self-righteous search for power and a myopic rejection of others who become dangerous enemies. Hyper–Plato (Badiou, 2012) explains that once this occurs, timarchy becomes a spectacular society where people are obsessed with struggle and essentially their status relative to all others. The result of this situation is

the emergence of a society of inequality, hatred, and permanent low-intensity warfare. Under these conditions the objective of government becomes about the management of violence and policing conflict and social war. However, the real problem with the timocratic society is that it also contains the seeds of its own destruction in the Machiavellian lack of transcendental purpose. In other words, the problem of timarchy resides in the complacency of the combatants and their tendency towards base materialism.

Over a more or less extended period of time, people in the timocratic society lose their sense of higher morality and forget exactly why they are concerned with achieving status and power. While the original moral timocrat wanted power in order to evidence his own adherence to a transcendental principle of excellence, the complacent fall from this position occurs when the descendent of the warrior wants status for its material benefits. Here, the timocrat becomes the oligarch who obsesses over money and accumulation and is defined by material desires. While this condition is the preserve of elites, and excludes the masses, Hyper-Plato (Badiou, 2012) explains that we live in oligarchy. However, this state of affairs cannot last because the inequality inherent in this kind of society generates resentment, rebellion, and eventually the overthrow of the elites by the middle class, who want their own piece of the pie. Unfortunately, however, the oligarchic masses lack the moral compass to pull back from excess and, instead of seeking to return to a basic society of needs, they set out to generalise the elites' obsessive, acquisitive way of life across the entire society. Here, Hyper-Plato (Badiou, 2012) explains that oligarchy becomes democracy where economy, money, and accumulation is everything to everybody and there is no wider or deeper meaning to life. Given this lack of transcendental significance, goodness, or truth, government in democracy is absolutely concerned with popularity. The leader in democratic society has two interrelated objectives—to remain popular and give the people what they want, which is access to riches. As it turns out, this is a fatal strategy simply because the leader can never give the people what they want. This is the case because desire has no end. As the post-Freudian or Lacan analyst understands, once desire is unleashed it expands endlessly and eventually consumes the entire society in a blaze of irreconcilable conflicting urges. Herein we enter the deadly society of drive.

Finally, Hyper-Plato (Badiou, 2012) explores the true dystopian society, tyranny or fascism. This occurs when appetite becomes everything and desire short-circuits to create a society of drive where people can no longer wait to consume. On the basis of this psychopathology, where I must have everything now, democracy is fundamentally unstable and further revolution becomes inevitable. Hyper-Plato notes that it does not take long before the impoverished masses take the law into their own hands and kick out the elites who were unable to satisfy their impossible desires. Enter the tyrant or fascist leader who seizes power on the basis that he will subdue the elites and give the people what they want. Centrally, the fascist leader also possesses an idea, but this is not Hyper-Plato's beautiful idea but rather a perverted, corrupted idea based

on division, hatred, and a thirst for annihilation. Driven by his philosophy of hate, the fascist is absolutely unable to tolerate difference, and tortures and murders anybody who threatens opposition. However, despite his commitment to murder, the fascist never really has any authority, because his position is based on corruption, violence, and others who are similarly determined by hatred and will kill him if the opportunity presents itself. Under conditions of fascist state terror, there is no self-control and no self-discipline, but only violence and fear. At this point, Hyper–Plato (Badiou, 2012) explains, the endless desire for money is replaced by endless hate and the death drive, where the fascist personality seeks to merge with eternity through the destruction of himself and everybody else. Long live death! In practical terms, the fascist personality manifests its commitment to death in drive-based addictogenic behaviours—the fascist self is hyper-sexual, hyper-violent, but also hyper-moral, where the excessive aspect of these behaviours confirms their interrelation, interdependence, and fatal circularity.

Although Hyper–Plato's (Badiou, 2012) scheme suggests no way back from tyranny or fascism, I would suggest that a cunning dialectical reversal is implicit in this form of anti-government. The fascist self is driven by sadistic bloodlust and the search for pleasure, but there is no real release for anxiety and terror here, only fear of the other who is similarly lycanthropic. It is in this way that I think Hyper–Plato's fascism presupposes a space of utopian possibility. As Walter Benjamin (2009) explained in his work on German tragedy, ruins and absolute misery create spaces of *hopeless hope* and ideality. According to Hyper–Plato, humans need this ideational substance in order to survive. They cannot live in materiality alone, because they are more than animals who simply live, feed, breed, and die in the world. However, he is also clear—humans must choose their own idea. It cannot be imposed upon them from above. This is the additional problem of tyrannical government. The precise reason tyranny lacks a beautiful idea is because its idea is essentially particular, organised around the desires of one person, who is, by virtue of his belief in his own individual righteousness, deeply perverse. Who, then, should choose the idea? Who is qualified to choose the beautiful idea? Again, Hyper–Plato is very clear. The people who will be in a position to choose the beautiful idea will be those who have been reduced to nothingness, because it is only in their base materiality, their misery, and their animality that people will be able to understand what is at stake in social life and organise the social world in the interests of everybody. In this respect Hyper–Plato's (Badiou, 2012) *Republic* is deeply dialectical but also revolutionary in ways that his ancient brother's work was not, simply because he pins his hopes for the future on the wretched of the earth, and those who have been destroyed by a form of society devoid of beauty, justice, and ideality. While Plato's (1991) saviour class, the philosopher kings, was elite, Hyper–Plato's (Badiou, 2012) people of the future are those who are lost in today's world. They are miserable, nowhere, non–people, but in this way contain the potential for goodness. They are the utopian people—the non–people who are also the good people.

This is how Hyper–Plato (Badiou, 2012) reads the contemporary world situation. He is never explicit about this, but Badiou's decision to reimagine Plato for the 21st century suggests that we are currently balanced on the edge of a major dialectical shift, where the misery of capitalist materialism has the potential to open out onto a new ethics based in ideality. Centrally, then, I think that we must understand Hyper–Plato's discussion in the context of Fukuyama's (1992) end of history period, which has been transformed from a triumphalist story about the final victory of the Anglo-American model of capitalism to a horror show concerned with zombie ideas about globalisation and the spread of democracy, simply because he poses his fundamental questions about the nature of society, politics, economics, and culture for a fatal society where it seems that nothing will ever change, but that everything must be rethought and rebuilt from the ground up. Here, I think we approach Hyper–Plato's (Badiou, 2012) contemporary utopianism, which implies both a dark dystopian vision of the present and an almost fatalistic sense of utopian possibility to come. In the next section of this chapter, I propose to explore the origins and collapse of Hyper–Plato's global utopia–cum–dystopia of American economic power before leaping back to Greece to seek out utopian possibility in the wreckage of the home of the original utopians.

II The Coming of the Event–God in the Global Capitalist Utopia–cum–Dystopia

How should we understand the coming of Hyper–Plato's Event–God, the critical moment which will shift global society from a dystopian present which seems endless towards a future full of possibility and hope, and locate this situation in contemporary history? For the economist Yanis Varoufakis (2011), the contemporary collapse of the global financial system represents this critical moment, which Hyper–Plato would understand in terms of the emergence of the Event–God and the possibility of a new idea about how we might organise social, political, economic, and cultural life. Although we might connect his account to Hyper–Plato's myth of cinema and suggest that what the global financial crisis represented was the collapse of the utopian capitalist fantasy of endless economic growth, Varoufakis (2011) opts for a different metaphor, the Global Minotaur. Here, the global financial system, organised around the endless circulation of money beyond any real relationship to material things, is less a movie theatre or a screen for the capture of our attention and more a labyrinth, a postmodern version of Daedalus' mythological maze designed to house the Cretan monster, the Minotaur. In Varoufakis' (2011) account, the problem with the contemporary global labyrinth is that its homeowner is wounded and unable to defend his own house. The result of this is that the people who had previously lived in fear of the beast no longer need to fear him. Akin to Hyper–Plato's (Badiou, 2012) cinephiles, who will one day learn the difference between film and reality, the people caught in Varoufakis' maze can start to think for themselves and no longer have to live in the labyrinth, because the Minotaur no

longer threatens to consume them. In other words, they are free to step outside of the maze and create the world on their own terms.

In Varoufakis' (2011) story the Global Minotaur is America and the labyrinth is the American-led global economic system that has developed since the end of World War II. He explains how since the 1960s American policy has entailed the consumption of the surpluses of the rest of the world. While this was enabled by the rise of the consumer society and the individual's thirst for luxury and excess, Varoufakis points out that America became a deficit society. In other words, America began to live in debt. It became a bloated, luxurious, excessive nation built upon consumption far beyond its means. However, he points out that this was enabled by creditor nations, who sent the profits made from American consumers back to the land of the free in order to buy world money from Wall Street. The next move was for the bankers to use this new money to finance American capitalism and American consumers in order to consume and complete the labyrinthine system. Everything would continue to work, so long as the global system could continue to feed the beast. According to Varoufakis (2011), this idea of economy based in the recycling of surpluses was largely unshakeable from the 1960s onwards, and formed the basis of global economic structures until the global crash of 2008 destroyed it under the weight of unmanageable debt. The problem here was that America could no longer consume the rest of the world's surpluses, because of its own indebtedness causing a crisis of finance and liquidity, to keep capitalism on the rails. However, Varoufakis' (2011) story starts much earlier than the 1960s and the emergence of the neoliberal period dominated by finance, credit, and indebtedness. Indeed, he tracks the development of this system back to the end of World War II and America's emergence as a global creditor. At this point America's problem was that it lacked a method to recycle its own surpluses, but it saw that political control could be bought in Germany and Japan in order create a global Pax Americana—an American utopia based in a shared consensus around the goodness of capitalism.

At this point, the Americanised global system was designed in the name of cold war politics. Support for West German and Japanese capitalism was part of the Truman doctrine, strategy of containment, and opposition to Soviet communism. While America financed the West German economic miracle, German corporations sold to Europe, which became its principal export market. In the case of Japan, Maoist China meant large parts of Asia were inaccessible, so early post-World War II Japanese capitalism supported the American war effort in Korea. Back home in America, in the 1960s Kennedy and Johnson sought to create a more equal society in order to guarantee social cohesion and maximise the population available to consume. At this point the essential building blocks of America's utopian global plan were in place. For Varoufakis (2011), this plan unravelled under pressure of the cost of the Vietnam War, and America became a debtor nation. The effect of this deficit was to place enormous pressure on the relationship between the value of the dollar and the price of gold, with the result that Nixon brought an end to the gold

standard and gold convertability in order to avoid cutting spending. On 15 May 1971 the dollar became free-floating global currency, the currency necessary to purchase oil, and the second stage of the global economic plan began to take shape in the form of an empire of debt and surplus recycling. Supported by low interest rates, the Global Minotaur came to life. At this point America began to attract the surpluses of other nations in order to finance American consumption, stimulate productivity around the world, attract further surpluses, and so on ad nauseam. Under this system it became impossible for Americans to consume enough, with the result that greed became a kind of global civic virtue—after all, Americans were now consuming in order that the rest of the world could continue to produce and so on into a future of endless excess. Finally, and off the back of this consumption, Wall Street became big business, simply because there is profit in finance in the form of interest. Heading into the 1980s neoliberal financial culture began to take off.

In the words of Costas Lapavitsas (2013), Wall Street culture is premised on a model of *profit without production*. In his view the massive expansion of finance under conditions of neoliberal capitalism was the result of a dangerous lack of productivity in Western capitalism from the 1960s onwards. Centrally, this remains the case today and is likely to define a future organised around austerity, automation, and redundancy. However, before he reaches this point Lapavitsas explains the perversity of what we might paradoxically call financial production. In the first place his account of global finance follows Aristotle's (2009) view of the monstrosity of finance—profit from finance is monstrous because there is no new value when money begets money begets money and so on. In his view this form of capitalist incest can only lead to disaster in the form of a monstrous society—an overblown, excessive society committed to greed or what the Greeks called *pleonexia*, because it has no sense of work or the real production of value, which requires immersion and engagement in the world. The late capitalist society of Gordon Gekko, Michael Douglas' infamous character from Oliver Stone's *Wall Street* (1987) who proclaims that greed is good, could be considered ironic in this respect. Its emergence was premised on the labyrinthine design of America's post-World War II planners, who sought to create a *stable* system which would globalise capitalism and prevent the catastrophic recurrence of events such as the stock market crash of 1929. However, they made the mistake of founding their moderate, stable system upon the *normal excesses* of monstrous accumulation and consumption and failed to imagine what would happen when this monstrosity could no longer be contained. Like Daedalus, the master engineer and builder, they built their machine to house monstrosity, but unfortunately in their case, the monster eventually grew too big for its prison. In the end the system was destroyed by the excesses of accumulation, consumption, and what Lapavitsas (2013) calls profit without production.

In seeking to theorise the idea of the global financial system, Lapavitsas imagines a shift from the sphere of production towards the sphere of circulation. At this point capitalism has entered a new stage and become what Felix Guattari (Genosko, 2012) writes about in terms of semio-capitalism, where the symbolic

nature of money is revealed in an economy of free-floating value—value which is no longer based in productive engagement with the materiality of the world. Under these conditions America became a kind of fantasy space, which Jean Baudrillard (1988) writes about in terms of hyper-reality, because anything was, and necessarily had to be, possible. Excess was no longer a privilege or even a choice—instead, it became a kind of Kantian imperative, essential to ensure the functionality of the global system. Thus America became hyper-real, more than real, a fantastical utopia, off the back of the fundamental geopolitical importance of consumption. In terms of domestic policy, the tax cut becomes a key symbol of the maintenance of the hyper-real nation because the tax cut means that the American consumer can buy what the new capitalist worker in the sweatshop of productivity, China, makes. In return the Chinese corporation, which makes cheaply in order to sell dearly, reinvests its surpluses in Wall Street, which in turn finances American business and the American consumer. In this way, consumption and the hyper-real life survive despite a productive sphere organised around low wages, driven down to ensure competition with the Chinese worker. This was increasingly the setup in the final days of the Global Minotaur—Chinese capitalism produces through low-cost labour in order to generate surpluses to sacrifice to the American Minotaur which then buys Chinese goods and so on into the future. On the American side, Wal-Mart becomes a utopian space of cheapness where the destroyed American worker can continue to consume. Of course, in terms of the sphere of production, and the world of work, Wal-Mart drives the American worker into the ground in the name of competitiveness. Thus the utopia of cheapness and value for money is a necessary antidote for the miserable conditions of militarised labour which is the other side of the dialectic of global capitalism organised around a dystopic race to the bottom.

However, this neoliberal utopia, or what Mike Davis and Daniel Bertrand Monk (2008) call an evil paradise, collapsed under the weight of its own hyper-reality. In other words, it became a victim of its own success. Given the misery of the worker who is part of the inhuman ideology of cheapness, the hyper-real utopia of America organised around consumption and buying a good life screened out every other reality including balanced budgets. On the basis that Wall Street was not only willing to support this hyper-real fantasy world, but also actively sought to profit from it through both high interest repayments and a percentage of defaults, it is not surprising that the American consumer bought into the dialectic of global capitalism. At the top of the food chain, of course, the American political elite itself was committed to maintaining the consumer fantasy in order to maintain productivity abroad and financialisation at home. Thus the labyrinthine global system collapsed somewhere deep inside the monster itself, which was completely sold on the goodness and transcendental beauty of the financial system. But everything went wrong when American consumers, impoverished but jacked up on debt, determined to own a piece of the pie, their own home, could no longer fund their hyper-real life. Unfortunately, large numbers of these poor Americans could not afford their repayments and began to default to such an extent that

the banks burdened with toxic assets lost liquidity and could no longer afford to finance American consumption.

The American response to this situation was, of course, bank bailouts and quantitative easing designed to restore liquidity to the markets. However, the damage was already done, and the American labour market was in no position to continue to support the exorbitant consumption which had driven the global system since the 1970s. Across the Atlantic, the collapse of the Minotaur impacted upon both productivity and consumption and drove the Eurozone economy into crisis, which the German leaders of the EU sought to resolve through austerity. Here, the ideology of ordoliberalism or *ordungspolitik* suggested that the crisis was the result of a lack of economic balance in the southern nations, which had consumed too much from a weak productive base. From the German point of view, these nations needed to cut their spending and increase productivity in order to balance their books and compete on a global level. According to Lapavitsas (2013), the pervasive nature of this view, which ignored the wider geopolitical and ideological roots of the crisis, led to the rise of a new brand of *economic racism* across Europe. Understood through the ordoliberal lens, the lazy European periphery, the Greeks, Spanish, Italians, Portuguese, and Irish, were to blame for the Eurozone situation and needed to change their own economic behaviour. Thus the peripheral states, which had been driven into debt by their own elites' adoption of neoliberal policy, became debtor nations and began to impose austerity measures upon their own people in order to continue to finance the frozen markets. In this context austerity came to mean a squeeze on wages, which were already low by comparison to their northern neighbours; public sector cuts, in order to reduce government spending; and tax increases, largely targeted at middle- and low-income groups. The real purpose of this squeeze on public finance was, of course, to service national debt and ultimately fund the bank bailouts made necessary by the crisis in liquidity which had impacted globally. However, as economist Mark Blyth (2013) notes, austerity never really works to address recession because it fails to solve the issue of a lack of productivity, which requires investment.

In the case of the Eurozone crisis, austerity cannot address the crisis in the peripheral nations because it does not respond to issues of job creation, but only deepens the problem by causing even more unemployment and redundancy. Given this lack of attention to concerns around productivity, the only way in which austerity addresses competitiveness is by further driving down wages in a situation where there is mass unemployment and workers simply have no choice but to take what is on the table. Thus, it is possible to see how the collapse of the Global Minotaur eventually became an opportunity in the Eurozone to drive down wages and retrofit the workforce for global competition where the Chinese worker is the ideal type. Here, we see the emergence of what Slavoj Žižek (2015) calls capitalism with Asian characteristics, and a dark, dystopian version of Hyper-Plato's city of pigs. Here, workers live to satisfy their needs and nothing more, but the problem is that even this

is no longer really possible in a society organised around a competitive race to the bottom. Under these conditions the worker is caught in a fatal bind. Debt is necessary to support life—health care, education, periods of unemployment, and so on—but also moralised as essentially evil. In the capitalist world, the worker is not part of some Spartan utopia, where the collective lives and dies together, but rather totally individualised, self-reliant, and self-responsible. Thus their needs cannot be socialised, but must be met on an individual basis. For this reason, debt is essential and must be repaid and escaped in order to restore moral goodness, simply because the creditor cannot be expected to pick up the bill. Akin to the debtor nations, which must remain bound to their debts despite the human costs to their populations, indebted workers are by definition morally suspect and must find some way to repay their debts. As a result they are tied to work and a future of low-wage labour in order to continue to service their debt, which they may very well never escape. For David Graeber (2011) and Maurizio Lazzarato (2012), this is the contemporary condition of debt and the morally depraved indebted man that we must escape if we are to ever live in a more humane society. In their view the current indebted society is a dystopia which stretches out in time, colonising our future with endless repayments, and a utopian solution to this problem would *either* entail the cancellation of debt, or its humanisation, where we recognise that indebtedness is part of our humanity, universality, and participation in Hyper-Plato's (Badiou, 2012) social truth. In many respects these two possibilities amount to the same solution—communism.

For both Graeber (2011) and Lazzarato (2012), the problem of debt resides in the transformation of obligation into a financial problem, because this codes the relationship between individuals in cold, hard, objective terms. What is a human relation effectively becomes a commodity transaction which must be quantified and eventually resolved through repayment. Following repayment, the relationship between individuals is effectively cancelled, and the normal business of the self-enclosed capitalist worker/consumer resumes. At this point the necessary hell of obligation, debt, dissolves. According to Lazzarato (2012) this is effectively how Nietzsche (2003) came to understand debt in the second essay of his *The Genealogy of Morals*, although he had little sense of the need to exchange the morally hazardous idea of debt for the communistic notion of obligation. In this essay Nietzsche explains the horror of endless debt that destroys man's humanity and transforms him into a calculator who endlessly weighs his own and everybody else's debt. Under these conditions nobody is free because debt is everywhere. As Lazzarato (2012) notes, the German word for debt, *schulden*, recalls the word for guilt, *schuld*, in support of his idea that the rise of calculative debt creates a new subject, the morally indebted man who lives under the gaze of the great calculator, financial capitalism, which employs debt power to debase debtors every day. Under the gaze of debt power, I am always guilty because I am always in debt, but I can be either good or bad for my debts, depending on whether there is a view that I will be able to pay in the future. Thus whether I am considered solvent or insolvent

dictates my future—I either have a future in debt where I can obtain further finance or my future is cancelled and my life is limited to basic repayments. In this situation, my objective must always be to remain solvent and able to make enough money to service my debts, which effectively transforms me into my own capitalist object, a surplus-making machine, an entrepreneurial self committed to enterprise and future surpluses.

Beyond the paradox that a future organised around necessary debt is no future at all, the problem of the rise of the entrepreneurial self is that all social relations become defined by objective, calculative, instrumental reason. Although the German social theorists Ferdinand Tonnies (2010) and Georg Simmel (1997) both identified this effect of capitalism and the rise of the money society in the late 19th to early 20th century, what is new about the contemporary indebted person is the way in which his entire life is infected with economic logic, simply because neoliberal ideology leaves no aspect of life or society untouched by cost/benefit analyses. In this respect the problem of the Nietzschean (2003) approach to the resolution of debt that Lazzarato (2012) adopts, which is the desire to escape from the debt relation in its entirety, is that it fails to recognise the essential and irreducible nature of social relations. As Hyper-Plato (Badiou, 2012) shows through his re-presentation of his ancient ancestor's original discussion of the division of labour, social interdependence is not a choice but a fact, and the failure to recognise this is the hubris of those who believe themselves somehow more than human—superhuman. Centrally, it is this conceit which inadvertently confirms what eventually becomes the neoliberal condition of indebtedness, since the endless desire to escape from the evil of social interdependence continually resolves in the demonization of social obligation in the idea of debt, where reliance on others is quantified with a view to repayment and cancellation in the name of the fantasy of absolute self-reliance. This is precisely what David Graeber (2011) recognises and continually affirms in his history of the idea and practice of debt—debt is everywhere in the form of the obligations which emerge from essential sociability and only becomes itself in the form of what we might call debt-in-itself as a kind of symptom of the desire to escape from sociability and its related obligations. This desire to escape is, of course, the utopian fantasy of the person who believes he is somehow above the social, where the classic case is the Nietzschean superman or American cowboy.

For Graeber (2011) primordial debt, which is the debt we owe to the world and everybody else in society, is inescapable because we cannot live without either our biological or sociological life support systems. Following Plato's (1991) original story of the *Republic*, this thesis was most famously formulated under conditions of modernity by Thomas Hobbes (2008), who saw that people could not survive in a state of nature. On the basis of this view, Hobbes suggested a contract where people pay for social security with individual freedom. This is not, however, a one-off payment, and we must continually recognise our debt to society and others by setting aside our own interests in the name of the good of society. Although Hobbes never went so far as to suggest that people would

make this bargain out of anything but self-interest, which is where the problem of the liberal and what would become neoliberal fantasy of the self-reliant self comes from, Graeber (2011) finds in this basic contact between self and society the roots of the communistic idea that I would trace back to Plato and Badiou projects forwards into Hyper-Plato. However, where Plato, and by definition Hyper-Plato, see beauty in this social relation which creates universality, Hobbes and the original liberals saw necessity and self-preservation and were thus constantly tempted to imagine potential escape. This is evidenced, of course, by the very idea of the contract, which suggests a legal bond, where no natural relation of trust exists—it is also clear how this contractual relation finds form in monetary exchanges that similarly enable relations between strangers who have no desire to become brothers. At this point Graeber (2011) recalls both Marx (1988) and later Simmel (1997) when he notes that the problem with this monetary form of sociality is that it alienates humanity in quantity and transforms people into things. Under these conditions life becomes about calculation—how much am I/you worth?—and humanity is nowhere.

The irony of this situation, where humanity is transformed into an abstract quantity, is that it resolves into a miserable materialism, which is devoid of any kind of significance beyond more or fewer calculations. Against this brutal materialism, ironically devoid of the very ideality that both Plato (1991) and Hyper-Plato (Badiou, 2012) suggest are essential to human life, Graeber (2011) notes that religion comes back to offer some transcendental significance. In the world of Hyper-Plato, we have seen that this is the case in the form of Islamic radicals concerned with opposing the reduction of life to timeless calculations, but it is also true that the extent to which religion opposes the liberal and more recently neoliberal capitalism of social relations is limited, per Nietzsche's (2003) insight, by the endless need of the religious man to weigh his sins. Along the same lines we also know that Max Weber's (2010) Calvinists, who founded American capitalism, sought to demonstrate their salvation through capitalist success. In the hyper-rational salvation economy that resulted from this psychological complex, God eventually left the scene, leaving behind a nihilistic machine that worked for its own sake but was somehow haunted by the original spirit of capitalism which says that escape from misery, debt, and sin is ultimately possible through monetary accumulation and consumption. This is essentially the capitalist utopia of Adam Smith (1982, 1999), where debt and the spectre of the defaulter who cannot escape his indebtedness are resolveable conditions—pathological states that we must tolerate, but not normalise, in order to save the ideal of the selfish individual who is ultimately self-contained, self-reliant, and also the key element of the good society.

This is essentially why the indebted man becomes such a moral problem in the contemporary global system—debt is essential to live and, under the psychological complex of capitalism, consume in order to live a good life, but it is also a moral evil that limits individualism, the core principle of the good, capitalist society. However, this becomes especially problematic under conditions of financialised capitalism, where debt is a universal phenomenon, and

everybody's future is a repayment plan that stretches out across an endless present. As Graeber (2011) notes, when this starts to happen there is no sense that there is an outside to debt, no sense of a capitalist utopia where I have no debt, and the very idea of debt as a social obligation which could be cancelled through final repayment starts to collapse back to the original universal communistic idea where I am obliged to everybody else who sustains my existence. In this sense Graeber (2011) shows how the dystopia of the post-Minotaur world, which was ultimately organised around the capitalist fantasy of an escape from indebtedness through excessive consumption, need not be simply about slump, insecurity, and precariousness. Although these conditions are the initial manifestations of the collapse of the Global Minotaur and the late capitalist utopian system that was home to the beast, we should not bemoan the critical stage of a machine organised around the idea that those who make it can buy their way out of social relations, somehow living outside of society like the monstrous offspring of Nietzsche's superman and the Wolf of Wall Street, Jordan Belfort (2013). Beyond the initial crisis where debt becomes unmanageable and austerity transforms society into an inhuman dystopia, an unliveable wilderness, we may find the hopeless hope of Hyper-Plato's (Badiou, 2012) universal, communist idea, where the moral evil of debt transforms itself into the transcendental principle of obligation and duty to others. What is more is that this is precisely what it is possible to see in austerity Europe today—a super-state caught between a dystopia totally insensitive to human needs and a utopian adventure that recalls the origins of the European idea in the home of the original utopians, the ancient Greeks. For Zygmunt Bauman (2004), this is the choice that Europeans face. They must choose between the ordoliberal fortress state that wants to punish its own people and lock out anybody living beyond its borders or reject these paranoid politics in favour of a more human, socialistic state based upon the idea of universalism. In the recent work of the late German sociologist Ulrich Beck (2014), this decision comes down to a choice between Germany, and Merki-avelli's vision for a 19th-century future of Victorian capitalism, or Greece, and the original idea of Europe, which is simultaneously Spartan and universalistic and Athenian, and open to a future beyond the weight of debt to the great God of the bottom line. In the final section of this chapter, I return to Greece, home of the European idea and utopian thought and contemporary laboratory for the creation of capitalism with Asian characteristics outside of Asia itself.

III Contemporary Greece and the Hopeless Hope of the Universal Idea

Perhaps the key difference between Plato (1991) and Badiou's (2012) postmodern Hyper-Plato is that whereas the former wrote about his utopia from a position of assumed power and authority, his contemporary brother realises he is in the position of the revolutionary and must found his idealistic city on the grounds of the contemporary post-historical hegemon of Fukuyama (1992) and the

neoliberals. This is why the idea of the Event-God is so important to Hyper-Plato's discussion, because it represents the critical point when the old system breaks down and is replaced by the beautiful idea of the future. However, this is ironically where Hyper-Plato's analysis lacks—perhaps because of his ancient brother's work, and his position of assumed power, Hyper-Plato has little sense of a revolutionary politics or how to oppose a state which is organised around holding onto power, even though it is itself dead on its feet, a kind of staggering, shambling zombie devoid of thought. In this respect, I think that it is possible to say that what we need to take from Hyper-Plato is a vision of the new, and the necessity of the communist idea, but that we should turn to others for a politics of resistance and rebellion. In the current context, and especially in the home of utopia, Greece, where the *krisis* of the neoliberal system is perhaps most keenly felt, Hyper-Plato provides the idea of communist, but not a revolutionary politics of opposition. In search of this politics of resistance we might turn, for example, to Jacques Ranciere's (2010) theory of dissensus to oppose the contemporary consensus of the undead. In Ranciere's classic exploration of the notion of dissensus, he explains that the real politics must oppose pure politics because these are based upon a distinction between the rulers and the ruled where the rulers make decisions and tell the ruled what to do. Akin to Hyper-Plato (Badiou, 2012), who insists upon universality and the polymorphic nature of the citizen, Ranciere says that real politics occur when those who are absolutely outside of the circle of pure politics make their voices heard. Again following Badiou's Hyper-Plato, who finds the idea of the future in the wretched of the earth who have been transformed into animals by a city which has no place for them, Ranciere's politics come from the part of society that has no part or place in society.

But while utopian politics emerge in the socially excluded, the shit of society, in both Ranciere (2010) and Hyper-Plato (Badiou, 2012), Ranciere is quick to say that those who manage pure politics, those in power who call the shots, will never simply roll over and allow a new society based in the idea to take shape. In thesis 7 of his 'Ten Theses on Politics', he introduces his concept of the police which ensures the 'distribution of the sensible' and excludes others who have no place in the hegemonic vision of society. Thus the police ensure that the hegemon remains in place by preventing the emergence of legitimate opposition and telling those who may be sympathetic to other views to move on and simply accept the status quo in the name of security and stability. According to Ranciere's (2010) Althusserian concept of police, there is nothing to see in the crisis—in fact, there is no crisis—and what people need to do is simply readjust to the new hegemonic vision of normality. Against this vision of consensus, which Ranciere associates with contemporary post-democracy, post-politics, and authoritarian capitalism, he explains that what is required is a new vision of politics which embraces the principle of dissent or what he calls dissensus. Indeed, from Ranciere's point of view everything went awry when Plato (1991) sought to produce a perfectly ordered city with no space for opposition or debate. In his view, the problem with the Platonic

model is that it relies on the idea of political philosophy, where the order of the city is an object of truth rather than debate, because what this excludes is the possibility of the inclusion of the part that has no part—in other words, those who dissent. Thus Ranciere's (2010) Plato is a police philosopher—a philosopher of order and security—and what he seeks to introduce is a philosophy of resistance and opposition.

In terms of the contemporary global situation explored above, I think this theory of resistance is vital, because this is exactly what we cannot take from Hyper–Plato. Against his ancient brother, who was a philosopher of authoritarian order, Hyper–Plato (Badiou, 2012) drops the idea of an urban utopia organised around the myth of metals and instead opts for a social system based on a far more flexible conception of universality. Centrally, my interpretation of Badiou's (2012) Hyper–Plato is that he absolutely accepts the value of dissensus, debate, and disagreement, and that this is written into the very form of his work on the ideal city. Although he seeks to contain this within the bounds of his idea, there is no sense in which this is based upon the exclusion of a part that has no part. Indeed, the only exclusion that we find in Hyper–Plato's city is the exclusion of the exclusive desire for division which, for example, relies on the tyrannical rulership of the poor. This is, of course, precisely the exclusion of pure state-based politics which Ranciere effects in his defence of the need for the real politics of dissent. However, what we cannot find in Hyper–Plato—and this is why I think Ranciere's thesis is important for my discussion—is a theory of resistance to police power, beyond the idea that we must escape the command of habit that becomes the habit of command in Ranciere's theory of real politics. While resistance is *implicit* in Hyper–Plato (Badiou, 2012), whose very reappearance on the contemporary scene is symbolic of the attempt to question the undead norms of the neoliberal, end of history paradigm that we follow out of habit, what Ranciere (2010) provides is an explicit theory of resistance and the need to oppose the state's vision of the new normality of what Yannis Stavrakakis (2013) calls the debt society. My view of Hyper–Plato's work is that he performs this resistance through the way he seeks to derealise or derange the contemporary political scene through his discussion of the basic fundamentals of the good society. I think Badiou's (2012) Hyper–Plato resists through the way he throws the ancient past into the undead present in the name of the rebirth of the new— the precise effect of this procedure is to effect the disruption of police order which Ranciere calls for in his political theory and open a space for dissensus and the participation of the part that has no part in normal state politics.

However, Hyper–Plato (Badiou, 2012) also leads the reader back to Greece, the home of the original utopians, frontierland of the contemporary global *krisis*, most advanced space of social dystopia under conditions of austerity and, as a consequence, the most likely space for the re-emergence of the beautiful utopian idea into the undead world of post-politics. Writing about the ways in which the ancient past haunts the Greek present in his book on Athens, Jacques Derrida (2010) explains that we owe ourselves to the other

side and the idea of the great universal which inspired Socrates, the first phi-
losopher who ultimately gave himself to death, the universal, and the idea in
399 BC. According to Vangelis Calotychos (2003), this sense of indebtedness
to the ancient past is a particularly Greek phenomenon, which finds form in
what he calls Greek 'ab-sense', a sense of otherness or separation, which is also
a sense of lack, loss, or Freudian melancholia. Perhaps it is this melancholic
sense of indebtedness to the idea, or what we might call, following Derrida
(1994), the spectres of Plato, which brought the student of Socrates back from
the dead in Badiou's (2012) spooky Hyper-Plato. Following Derrida's (1994)
theory of spooks and Ranciere's (2010) work on politics, I think that it is
possible to see how Hyper-Plato haunts the contemporary scene—the funereal
logic of the Greeks means that it is here, in the space of the philosophers, that
the pigs, those who suffer, those who know what is at stake, those who have
no part, will continue to come back and haunt police power. Despite their
misery, these are the people of the other utopia which contrasts so starkly
with the fantasy of neoliberal Greece that began to emerge in the early 21st
century, and especially around the spectacle of the 2004 Olympics.

For the political theorist Paschalis Kitromilides (2013), this tension between
freedom and conservatism has always been present in modern Greek culture
and remains live in contemporary postmodern Greece. While the ghosts of
Socrates and Plato haunted Greek modernity and Enlightenment politics from
the 18th century onwards, there was always a particularist, nationalistic, intol-
erant strain in Greek culture, concerned to create a new Greece on the basis
of opposition to the Ottoman invaders from the east. Although there is a
principle of freedom at work in the resistance to invasion, and Ranciere (2010)
would approve of the dissent of the ruled in the face of the ruler, the problem
with this expression of Greek political freedom is that it resolved into a form
of chauvinism and fascism which reflects Hyper-Plato's (Badiou, 2012) expla-
nation of the way in which democracy and rebellion slide into tyranny when
they lose their relationship to a universalistic idea of truthfulness. I think that
we can find these two tendencies present within contemporary Greek politics—on
the one hand, those haunted by the spirit of Socrates, the anarchists, want to
reform the city outside of the post-political system of the elites, and on the
other hand, the elites who have become the modern, and today postmodern,
tyrants who rely on police power and fascist extremists in order to defend
their interests that are absolutely lined up with those of the neoliberal utopians
are out to protect the undead system defined by injustice, inequality, division,
and confusion.

In his work on the contemporary Greek political situation, Costas Douzinas
(2013) outlines this struggle between the people, who are outside of state politics
and centrally have no democratic control over the dictates of the infamous troika
of the European Union, European Central Bank, and International Monetary
Fund which has sought to pull the strings of government from a distance, and
the elites, who are committed to the maintenance of the zombie neoliberal
system that continues to destroy Greek society. Early in his book Douzinas notes

that he first became involved in the Greek crisis when he was made aware of the situation of the three hundred Hepatia immigrants on hunger strike over the state's refusal of their basic human rights to recognition. Recalling the famous three hundred Spartans who similarly stood up to the immense material force in the name of principle, Douzinas (2013) explains that the Hepatia immigrants symbolise the wider struggle of the Greek people with the state that reduces them to the status of inhumans, or *homo sacer*, the Roman figure who may be killed with impunity because he stands outside of the law. Against the inhumanity of the figure Giorgio Agamben (1998) explores in his book of the same name, Douzinas argues that the Greek people have little choice but to fight for freedom and democracy. Since the state has defined normal politics in terms of agreement with neoliberalism and austerity, they have no choice but to take up real politics, Ranciere's (2010) politics of dissent, on the street and in the square, the ancient agora, which was, ironically, the foundation space of both the market and debate and discussion in the ancient city. In reclaiming the square for politics, Douzinas (2013) regards those who occupied Syntagma Square in Athens in the summer of 2011 as the last free men in Greece—the followers of Hyper-Plato and the beautiful idea of communism. While the neoliberal police want to transform man into *homo economicus*, the contemporary indebted man who must become an entrepreneurial machine in order to keep his head above water, Douzinas defends the protestors because they keep alive the democratic tradition of *zoon politikon*, the human as political animal.

In Douzinas' (2013) account of the Greek situation, this democratic struggle is absolutely necessary because the neoliberal demand to repay debt has created a humanitarian crisis across the country. Of course, in the hands of the Greek elites this demand has led to a repeat of the global response, where socialism comes in to save the rich, while the people are thrown to the lions of the market. For Douzinas, this has become the new reality principle of Greece and the rest of Europe which the neoliberal elites have sought to normalise to the exclusion of opposition and resistance. This is the case even in the face of the extremity of the situation, where austerity is not simply an economic policy, but a biopolitical form of life, which threatens the means of existence of large sections of the population. In line with Michel Foucault's (2004) theory of biopower developed in his lecture course, *Society Must Be Defended*, where the biopolitical shift represents a move away from taking life towards letting die, what I think we can see in the politics of austerity is a strategy of abandonment, where the state looks after the neoliberal elites and simply lets the people live or die. The politics of this strategy have, of course, been governed by an idea of abdication of responsibility—'in the face of the global crash there is little that governments can do, but seek to tighten their belts'—which excuses malign neglect and any need to intervene in the situation of what Stuckler and Basu (2013) call the body economic. If the body politic is caught between a normal politics of neoliberal austerity, where the rich receive welfare and the poor are thrown to the lions, and the politics of resistance, where the poor assert their right to live a decent life and the rich respond

with brutal police power, Stuckler and Basu explain that the austerity body economic is in crisis, split between those living on the edge of survival, where poverty, unemployment, depression, intoxication, and suicide have become the norm, and those who continue to profit, even in the face of such catastrophe. According to the vision of Hyper-Plato (Badiou, 2012), there could not be a less beautiful, more grotesque society than this—a society defined by misery, division, and hate.

This is, of course, a far cry from the utopian fantasy of the new Greece, which emerged in shadow of the Global Minotaur. In the early years of the new century, Greece grew on the basis of the same financial bubble that sustained the American fantasy of endless consumption, and even built its own hyper-real utopia of a global Greece. Before Badiou (2012) brought Plato back for the political crisis of the 21st century, the Greek neoliberals had already sought to bring ancient history to the postmodern present in the form of the Olympics, which involved the transformation of Athens into a spectacular global city. In this new self-confident capitalist Greece, the Anglo-American obsession with property ownership and property prices began to take hold, and upmarket areas of Athens such as Kolonaki became playgrounds of the elites who had money to burn. However, in the much the same way that the neoliberalisation of urban space across the world has always been absolutely exclusive, the development of Athens never really took account of people or Greek society itself, which had never been organised around the kind of industrial capitalism of its northern European neighbours, such as Britain and Germany. What this means is that the neoliberal fantasy world was bought and built on the back of state indebtedness, rather than a strong productive base, and when the Global Minotaur could no longer hold the global system together, the fantasy was exposed to the cold light of day. At this point the people were held to account for the neoliberal excesses of the rich by the transnational elites who never had any intention of accepting the costs of the overblown financial system. Under conditions of austerity, what Ross Domoney (2014) calls the authoritarian-financial complex took over from normal political process and Greece entered a phase of military neoliberalism defined by the absolute opposition between the elites, the fascist Golden Dawn party, and the anarchists and leftists, who would come to identity with the radical left party, Syriza.

While the fascists have sought to transform the crisis into a problem of the other, the foreigner, and the immigrant, the elites, backed by the transnational neoliberals, have followed the logic of disaster capitalism Naomi Klein (2008) explains in her work, *The Shock Doctrine*. In the face of social, economic, and political crisis, the neoliberal elites have begun to dismantle the public sector and privatise its functions. Wages have been driven down in the name of the transformation of Greece into a neoliberal paradise, and the country has effectively been downsized. For Panayota Gounari (2014), this radical transformation of the body economic has led to catastrophic effects, which she explains in terms of social necrophilia. Here, she makes use of Erich Fromm's (1992) psychoanalysis of necrophilia from his work on human destructiveness to try to

understand a form of economic behaviour which punishes, attacks, and essentially destroys the social in the name of calculation. In tracing the thanatological dimensions of austerity, Gounari says that death is everywhere in Athens—children suffer from malnutrition, young people face lives organised around redundancy, and the poor must struggle to make ends meet on the streets. Thus Athens becomes a thanatopolis, a city where people struggle to survive, and there is no future because basic survival is everything. Following the same train of thought, where culture starts to collapse back to nature under pressure of economic violence, Laurie Penny (2012) notes that Athens is a city in the process of disintegration. In order to capture this state of urban anomie she calls her short book *Discordia* and explains that in the divided city there is no sense of the future. In this respect, Athens becomes a strange, timeless zone—a horrible inversion of utopia, a true dystopia, where the Lacanian symbolic order which organises the way people situate themselves in time and space collapses into a psychotic version of Fukuyama's (1992) society at the end of history. In response to this social psychosis where life seems entirely meaningless, those trapped at the very bottom of Greek society have turned to narcotics and in particular to shisha, or the cocaine of the poor, which addicts report 'makes you want to kill'. Is this not, then, the perfect narcotic for a thanatological society destroyed by austerity and in the grip of a kind of civil war between the neoliberal elites, the fascist champions of the death drive who have absolutely embraced the state of social war, and the leftists who remain committed to Hyper-Plato's (Badiou, 2012) universal idea of communal justice and equality?

Under these conditions contemporary Greece recalls Weimar Germany in the 1920s. In much the same way that Weimar Germany was wrecked by crisis and suspended between the communist and fascist solutions to the ruins of capitalism, Greece is a nation set to pause—the way forward is 19th-century capitalism, the radical left, or the extreme right. Caught in this moment of interval, Christos Filippidis (2011) explains that the city no longer fulfils its civic function. Where the original city, the polis, was designed to organise people in order to enable them to live better, more secure, human lives, Filippidis explains that contemporary Athens has become an urban jungle of violence and conflict. In the face of the collapse of capitalist society, Filippidis explains that the abstract space of the city, which is set up to manage the population, no longer holds. In other words, the order of the Greek city has broken down before the anger, resentment, and violence released by the economic crisis. Although these emotions are considered largely pathological in neoliberal society, where instrumental rationality, calculation, and objective measures of cost versus benefit take precedence, Peter Sloterdijk (2010) explains that anger is in the very origins of Europe. Long before Socrates and Plato made the idea central to European thought, Homer's heroes inhabited what Sloterdijk calls a utopia of motivation—a universe where everything comes back to drive and the struggle to escape the gravity of nature. According to Sloterdijk, this motivation is absolutely necessary to human life. It is what separates humans from animals and complete immersion in the world. In the

Greek case, we might say that this motivation, anger, and indignation is all that is keeping the people alive and preventing them sliding into complete submission. In this respect, Ranciere's (2010) idea of dissensus is less about politics and more about metabolism or basic survival in the face of a vision of consensus which is committed to nihilism and destruction.

The problem in Greece is, of course, that this necessary anger has taken two forms. While the left has sought to argue for the beautiful idea, social unity, and equality, the extreme right has employed a psycho-politics of sadism in order to mobilise the poor against others. In this situation, the fascist party, Golden Dawn, trades on the idea that the way out of the crisis is to brutalise people worse off than yourself in a kind of brutal social war where the only law is survival of the fittest. Against Hyper-Plato's communist idea, then, the philosophical guide of Golden Dawn would be Thrasymachus, who took the view that power is everything and might is right. There is no society here, but instead a strange antisocial density of people characterised by revulsion of proximity. Sloterdijk (2010) captures the idea of this antisocial society, where people are revolted by the others they have to live with, through the concept of Sartrean hell which we find in his play *No Exit* (1989)—'Hell is other people.' In this state, living through anger and hate, the fascist cannot stand other people who become monstrous. As Klaus Theweleit (1987, 1989) explains in his study of Nazi psychology in Weimar Germany, fascists seek to over-compensate for their own destroyed self through the destruction of the other. In this respect they transform themselves into hyper-masculine, armoured, militarised machines, and then dehumanise the other, who becomes a kind of abomination, in order to wipe out the very possibility of a social relation—it is, of course, impossible to insist upon a social relation when neither member of the potential relationship is human or capable of relationality. In the Greek case, the fascist body becomes a throwback to the ideal classical body, the Discobolus (Discus Thrower) of Myron, whom the Nazi sculptor Arno Breker idealised in works such as his 1935 *Prometheus*, while the body of the other is transformed into Dionysus, a monster beyond reason and centrally the characteristics of beauty, symmetry, and order that both Plato (1991) and Hyper-Plato (Badiou, 2012) link to goodness and truthfulness.

The truth of the matter is, ironically, that it is the fascist body, and the fascist self, which is ugly, distorted, and divided against itself, in the sense that the fascist is conscious of his own weakness but chooses to refuse this in a spectacular display of power, a fantasy of strength which masks his own impotence and absolutely relies on the construction of the monstrous other who simply needs to be destroyed. In other words, the fascist hates himself, but projects this onto the other, who becomes a screen for his own monstrosity. Quite apart from the struggle with the neoliberal elites, who are also set on the preservation of inequality and injustice, the leftist resistance must also oppose this fascist violence, which is in truth simply a symptom of the principle of radical division inherent in neoliberal politics. The result of this ideological connection between neoliberal politics and the rise of fascism, which

is clearly articulated in Hyper-Plato's (Badiou, 2012) account of the slide towards dystopia, is that the Greek police clearly identify with and support Golden Dawn. Under these conditions, the problem of the left is not only that its politics is abjected, othered, and ruled out of bounds by the police concerned with defending the neoliberal centre, but that the police are also supportive of the extreme right, whose reaction to the presence of otherness is violent attack. In the Greek case, this is not a new situation. As Neni Panourgia (2009) explains in her work on the Greek left, *Dangerous Citizens*, leftists have historically been abjected by the state and forced to fight a kind of endless social war in order to survive. In this respect, Greek politics has a history of resistance to consensus, especially in the form of anarchism which steps out of state politics, because national unity has often been by dictatorship, and the result of state terror and the suppression of opposition.

Ranciere's (2010) politics of resistance and dissent is, therefore, not new in the Greek context—in this case it is not a novelty based upon the end of history and the rise of post-political consensus, but rather a tradition grounded in opposition to state power where consensus is often founded upon the exercise of violence. Along these lines, Douzinas (2013) argues that the force of the multitude has utopian potential to change the situation in Greece. He understands their protest in terms of Ranciere's idea of true politics beyond the state and links them back to the ancient tradition of direct democracy where government was not simply by representation. Beyond representative politics, the occupation of Syntagma of 2011 was thus about the exercise of counter-power. When the multitude says that they have had enough of those in power, they are no longer simply a crowd, but rather united, transformed into what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) call the multitude, by their common opposition. This is an important step for Douzinas, and Badiou agrees with him in his work on the rebirth of history from its long sleep under the influence of Fukuyama's (1992) theory, because he thinks that anger, rage, and indignation create a proto-unity, a 'we', far beyond the immediate space of the square. Although Syntagma was, in his view, the immediate point of resistance, the space where the people rejected power and challenged the common-sense consensus of neoliberalism, this moment of dissent connected with other spaces of rebellion across time and space to form a history of opposition and a narrative of indignation that captured the spirit of the times and further unsettled the already shaken hegemon. In this way Douzinas (2013) connects Syntagma to riots in the Paris suburbs in 2005 and London in 2011 and numerous other cases of rebellion through the idea of angry counter-power and suggests that we can link these rioters together to form a network of resistance—a negative proto-communist unity. The concept of negativity is central here, however, because there is little sense of an idea in these outbursts of violence—there is no positive sense of where these protests would lead or how they would replace power.

However, what these moments can be seen to reflect is the emergence of Hyper-Plato's Event-God, which smashes through the consensus and opens the space for some new social, political, economic, and cultural paradigm. In recognition of the need to take advantage of this critical moment, Douzinas (2013) suggests that the next step for the Greek resistance is to capture the state through the support of Syriza—the postmodern communist opposition—and from there to find ways to challenge the destruction of society through austerity. In other words, anger, indignation, and refusal are not enough on their own. In order to effectively oppose the transformation of the Greek into bare life in the service of the German economic machine, Douzinas clearly supports Badiou's Hyper-Platonic solution—political organisation centred on the defence of an idea of justice, equality, and communism. Following the anarchists, who shout, 'We are an image of the future,' Douzinas (2013) hangs the future of Europe on the politics of contemporary Greece and the hope that the leftists might be able to somehow save society from the neoliberal necrophilic economic good. Akin to Badiou (2012), who brings Plato back to the present in the name of the future in the form of Hyper-Plato, Douzinas looks to the past, and the ur-space of utopia, for his sense of universal truth. Against the brutal materialism of neoliberal capitalism, which has no sense of humanity or value beyond economic calculation, he explains that the other—where this can mean other people, other ideas, and other values—has always been central to Greek thought. Indeed, in many respects the experience of thinking itself is always the thought of the other, the thought of the unthought, because it cannot be anything else. In Douzinas' (2013) view, then, our task should be to think—we must think, and think otherwise, through the lens of the foreigner, who is always strange—because it is only when we think through strangeness that we can think outside of police power which orders our lives, cancels our thought in automatic response, and normalises the inhumanity of the capitalist system. Where Badiou (2012) reinvents Plato in the form of Hyper-Plato, who is always *more* than his ancestor, Douzinas thus makes Greece speak to a wider situation. We might, therefore, say that his Greece is a kind of Hyper-Greece—a symptom or navel which we can trace outwards, towards a global or universal problem, and a global or universal idea. Despite this universality, however, there is no sense in which Douzinas' (2013) Greece is somehow a philosophical abstraction. On the contrary, his dystopia is now—it is live and urgently demands *the* utopian response, the beautiful idea of communism, which the party, Syriza, has thus far found impossible to deliver, but which remains on the other side of the borderline of the neoliberal nightmare.

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2 The Origins of the Capitalist Utopia

I The Theology of Unbelief

The central question of contemporary capitalism revolves around its impossible durability. How has this socio-economic system, which celebrates the extreme wealth of a small minority at the price of the impoverishment of so many, survived the recent financial crash that revealed its undemocratic core? The answer to this question may reside in the utopian form of late capitalism, which also signifies its dystopic democratic deficit. Of course, this is not to suggest that there is anything particularly unusual about undemocratic government or in fact assert that democracy is necessarily the best form of government. Indeed, we might conclude that Pericles' model of government is inherently pathological, best suited to the kind of critical opposition we find in Socrates, and note Plato's (1991) opposition to the rule of the stupid masses that put his teacher to death. Moreover, the reader would not be surprised by the claim that what the contemporary Anglo-American champions of freedom idealise in their populist rhetoric is in practice nothing like the political form the Greeks spoke about in terms of democracy, but that they were never particularly keen on in any case. The Greek, and most famously Platonic, problem of democracy was that it put too much power in the hands of the masses, who simply cannot be trusted because of their tendency to elect crowd-pleasers and tyrants who are only too happy to tell them what they want to hear. However, the problem with contemporary capitalism in its neoliberal form is that it even fails on this cynical measure of democratic government, primarily because it can no longer pretend to be able to offer the people what they want in exchange for their subservience. That is to say that even if one rejects the notion of the ideal electorate able to vote for the common good rather than their own interests, the problem with democratic government under conditions of neoliberalism, and what the financial crash and most especially the response to the crash reveals, is that it is no longer possible to say that it is in any real way connected to *political* democracy in even the cynical sense, where the people vote for the leaders who are likely to give them what they want, because it is constrained by an ideological form that is inherently utopian and ideologically undemocratic. What the response to the crash revealed is that beyond the utopia of democratic

participation, where people vote for the best polis, and further out than the cynical city, where people vote for the leader who will serve their own ends, we encounter the tyrannical *asociety*, where even the cynical vision of democracy collapses and the idea of a free vote is a sham designed to preserve the fantasy that the people are in power, while the tyrannical leaders pull the strings. This was, of course, Plato's (1991) fear about democracy—he thought that it contained the tendency to collapse into tyranny. It may be that this ancient horror story has been realised today in the emergence of the neoliberal capitalist utopia, where democracy is little more than a screen to hide the truth of a new form of economic totalitarianism.

Centrally the key ideologues of late capitalism, including Friedrich Hayek (2001) and Milton Friedman (2002), who I propose to explore in this chapter, made the connection between capitalism and freedom on the basis that government should work for the economy, in order to ensure fair competition and maintain economic order, but absolutely not become embroiled in dictating ends to people who are more than capable of making their own decisions. In this respect, the early neoliberals wanted to move away from laissez-faire, because the classic political economists, such as Smith (1982, 1999), put too much emphasis on the ability of the market to regulate itself, but were also concerned to avoid any kind of interference in the market itself. Instead, they wanted to set the rules, regulations, and laws of economy in order to make sure capitalism works. Although there can be little doubt that they believed, and perhaps some even continue to believe, in freedom inside the market, it is more difficult to make the claim that they had or have the same faith in proper political freedom, which we might define in terms of the freedom to make decisions about the organisation of the market, simply because the latter would tend to threaten the technocratic belief that what matters in government is not some idealistic concern with debates about fundamental goods, but rather governance, to use a Foucauldian term which has entered the lexicon of capitalist institutions shorn of all its critical significance, and the organisation of rules to ensure economic efficiency. In this respect, there is nothing democratic about neoliberal capitalism, unless we think in economic terms about the objective nature of competitive struggle, which this form suggests should be organised in order to reward merit where this refers to ability, hard work, creativity, and sensitivity to market needs.

Thus contemporary neoliberal capitalism is never really democratic in political terms, because its ideological form demands that political leaders abandon their concern with ends in favour of working on means which ensure that economy becomes a space of freedom. What this means is that even when an electorate votes for this, that, or the other leader on the basis of their media performance, their ability to charm the people or 'look the part', the political freedoms neoliberal politicians offer are illusory because they are in truth technocrats already bound by a utopian vision that the best kind of society is one characterised by a capitalist economics and driven forward by competitive struggle which stimulates innovation, development, and modernity. The

reason this vision is truly utopian is because it suspends the space of political debate, which no longer matters because the decision has been made by history. As Margaret Thatcher announced in the early 1980s when she said that 'there is no alternative', and Francis Fukuyama (1992) proclaimed a decade later when the wall came down, history is over because capitalism is the only game in town. In my view this is why neoliberal capitalism first realised in the Conservative and Republican governments of the late 1970s and early 1980s signifies the emergence of the capitalist utopia which has been rolled out over the last three decades and become a kind of global common sense that owes its durability to the absence of alternatives which it has itself abolished through the foreclosure of democratic space.

This is precisely what Wendy Brown (2015) explains in her book on the neoliberal destruction of the utopia of democracy, possibility, and imagination. What she shows is that neoliberalism represents the humiliation of politics by economics and the transformation of the former into the administrator of the master field of the latter. But it is not only politics that is humiliated by economics in this neoliberal utopia, because law loses its fundamental concern with justice and starts to become about the creation of regulation best placed to ensure efficiency and competition. Similarly, sociology becomes a form of statistical knowledge production organised to enable the new capitalist state to sharpen its social policy to ensure economy functions more effectively. Given this utopian machine, where electorates vote for political leaders who humiliate politics in the administration of economy, law in the creation of regulation for competition, and sociology in knowledge production concerned with the creation, maintenance, and defence of competitive society fraught with alienation, anomie, and potential collapse, what people vote for is less ideals and more technocratic competence that they simply cannot assess for lack of expertise and knowledge. Moreover, even if we assume this expertise and knowledge, and take the view that the late capitalist voter is a competitive individual who makes decisions on the basis of what is good for him rather than good for society as a whole, the contemporary neoliberal order would be left with a democratic deficit simply because what the response to the economic crash has revealed is that the kind of utopia the neoliberals have in mind is less one that champions free competition in order to ensure maximum efficiency in distribution of goods, and more one concerned with the defence of class power and construction of a social, political, economic, and cultural system defined by the mass acceptance of extreme levels of inequality. But why is this the revelation of the crash and subsequent neoliberal responses?

The democratic deficit is the truth of the financial crash because the history of the period post 2008 has seen governments step in to defend the financial system and act as 'lender of last resort', but then look to pass this debt down to the masses in the form of austerity in such a way that reveals the class bias of the political elites, who are undoubtedly over-identified with the economic system they support through regulation and policy. In this way the neoliberal utopia has been revealed to be less about the objective defence of economic

freedom against the state concerned with unfairly redistributing in the name of social justice and more about a class war that no longer speaks its name, primitive accumulation, precariatisation of the middle classes and proletariat—who can no longer assume their place in the socio-economic system and base critique on this position—and the progressive immiseration of the world's poor, who become a vast reserve pool of labour. This is the utopia of neoliberal capitalism for the super-rich revealed by the crash that ended the Anglo-American fantasy of universal embourgeoisement, development, and modernisation and is in truth a far more pervasive dystopia of inequality, desperation, and hopelessness about the lack of alternatives caused by the capture of politics by economy. It is in respect of the collapse of the neoliberal fantasy of endless growth, what the American champions of the managed free market called the great moderation, that the economist John Quiggin (2012) writes of zombie economics in order to explain the view that even though it is clear that neoliberal ideas no longer work in the real world, the neoliberal elites continue to push these notions post-mortem, because they have no other way of thinking. However, it is also quite possible that the contemporary neoliberals realise that their ideas are bankrupt insofar as they could ever deliver better lives, development, modernity, and hope for the majority, but that they are content to continue to operate on the basis of neoliberal principles simply because they serve their utopian purpose—the creation of a global system of super-exploitation able to extract profit from workers too poor to resist and interest from debtors who must borrow money in order to survive.

This is the capitalist utopia par excellence simply because it contains no resistance in the form of an ideology of socialist reason able to separate itself from the history of totalitarianism and provide the masses with an alternative way of thinking to frame their complaints about the everyday misery of living in the neoliberal utopia. Since there is no sense of socialist reason, where politics comes back to humiliate economics in order to open a space for the true democratic discussion of fundamental goods beyond economic rules, regulations, and restrictions, the masses easily buy into the neoliberal dream-worlds that circulate through the channels of what Adorno and Horkheimer (1997) spoke about in terms of the culture industry, even though they cynically know that the fantasy will always remain beyond their reach. In this respect the high-end neoliberal utopia, which revolves around the fantastical creation of a city of absolute carnal indulgence, is always beyond the reach of the vast majority, even though they hold onto it for the lack of any other viable belief system. Outside of the rich middle classes and desperate proles, who desire neoliberalism's fantasy spaces in order to fend off the dark night of precarity that haunts them every day, the world's poor labour under the illusion that the capitalist meritocracy may deliver them a better life, where they can eat, drink clean water, and access health care and education. It is only the absolute minority, David Graeber's (2013) 1 percent, who live in the neoliberal utopia, where carnal pleasure is everything and the life of the mind is meaningless. This is why the capitalist utopia is no utopia worthy of the name.

Although we may speak of the neoliberal form through the idea of utopia, because it entails the totalisation or globalisation of a particular vision of the world, it would be a mistake to imagine that there is any wider philosophical sense in which this form of capitalism could deliver a utopian world. The idea that capitalism, never mind neoliberal capitalism, could produce a better world for the masses represents the central fantastical idea of free market thought from Mandeville (1989) through Smith (1982) to Mises (2007). But even more, the economic humiliation of the political, and as a consequence philosophical, means that the outside edge of the capitalist utopia, the moment when needs are met and degenerate into wants, and then beyond modest wants the most perverse desires humans can imagine in order to give themselves something, however meaningless, to believe in, is a truly stupid, perverse utopia. This is the contemporary neoliberal utopia, which pretends to operate on the basis of absolute efficiency, but reveals its perversity through its fundamental defence of economic reason. This perversity emerges from the fundamental economism of neoliberal thought that cancels politics and philosophy and transforms society and culture into spaces of idiocy and madness that masquerade as places organised around the democratic freedom to choose. This is, however, a truly psychotic vision of freedom and choice, which will never be able to organise a life, or the life of a society, because politics and philosophy remain the arts of debate, decision, and the good. Economics cannot replace politics and philosophy, and the result of its arrogant attempt to do so is the emergence of the perverse utopia, contemporary neoliberalism.

What is more is that this critique of economy is clearly known in Western thought. Consider Aristotle's (2009) *Politics*, where he warns about the perversity of money, which can become an end in itself; Weber's (1992) *Economy and Society*, where instrumental reason threatens to transform society into a rational nightmare, an iron cage; or Adorno and Horkheimer's (1997) horror of the dialectic of the Enlightenment, where freedom collapses into unfreedom and slavery. Of the course, the problem with the neoliberal present is that despite our knowledge of these critiques, we fail to take them seriously because we believe in the madness of late capitalist reason, the neoliberal utopia. If this is the case, our next question should be: What is it about the neoliberal utopia that leads people to believe but simultaneously stubbornly refuse to recognise the utopian madness of this form of reason? In order to answer this question we must look back to the history of Western thought, Platonism, and the connection made between Plato's ideal city and totalitarianism by Karl Popper (2002a) in his work on the open society. In this work Popper firmly identifies Plato, utopianism, and the horrors of totalitarianism, and at the same time advances the cause of liberalism, which refuses the fantasy of historicism where the future resides in the present which resides in the past, and perhaps most importantly the theory of methodological individualism. While the critique of historicism insists upon the idea of the open society, which is characterised by the openness of its conception of the future, methodological individualism ensures that this openness functions in microscopic terms. Here, liberal individuals

maintain an essential critical distance from others who may influence their opinion. As a result they are able to think for themselves. The other side of this independence, however, entails the individuals' essential limitation. Since they remain apart from others, and as a result outside of any prevailing world-view, their view of the world is also partial, limited, and incapable of a holistic vision of the social, political, economic, or cultural situation.

The value of this view for Popper (2002a), and the other members of the Austrian school such as Hayek (2001) and Mises (2007), is that it ensures, first, liberal independence, since no one individual can claim the role of universal planner, and second, the primacy of the intelligence of the collective that knows more than any singular individual. In Popper's work it is this methodological individualism that ensures that the liberal society is an open society. For Mises and Hayek, it is this figure, the figure of the individual, who ensures the supremacy of the market society, since the mechanism that pools the intelligence of individuals to create collective intelligence is the market. Where the utopian planner, the totalitarian ruler, Hitler or Stalin, forms the collective, the people, on the basis of his own view, and as a result violates the perspectives of every other individual who must bow before his superior vision of the world, the ethical superiority of Popper's Austrian liberal society resides in the way in which the collective worldview emerges from individual interactions without the apparent suppression of any particular viewpoint. While Popper (2002c) found the mechanism for arbitration between views in empirical science, where utopian theory finds falsification in evidence, the market theorists Hayek (2001) and Mises (2007) saw the economy as a decision maker. Here, exchange produces information and the price mechanism creates a form of collective intelligence which is total, but not totalitarian. Given that this system entails liberal freedom and places the individual at the heart of society, but at the same time produces a kind of spectral collective intelligence that comes from nobody in particular, it is not hard to see how the neoliberal utopia emerged from the horrors of the Austrian critique of totalitarianism (Popper, 2002a, b).

The effect of this theoretical model, which I would suggest laid the foundations for the emergence of the neoliberal utopia we live inside today, was to simultaneously prohibit philosophy and political theory concerned with the good—since there can be no overall vision of the good in a world where the collective is a spectre—and rationalise the madness of the neoliberal model, simply because the Austrian individual is assumed to be a rational free thinker, capable of making his own decisions. Against the totalitarian monster, it is easy to see how the Austrian individual took on this rational appearance. While the insane utopianism of Hitler and Stalin was clear to people of the mid-20th century, the Austrian individual was always a methodological abstraction, designed to represent rationality, and most importantly limitation. Whereas the utopian sees everything, knows everything, and occupies the position of a god, the liberal individual is rational, reasonable, partial, and respects this situation. However, the problem with this vision, which we see clearly in the contemporary neoliberal utopia in power, is that the abstract construction of

the Austrians refuses to accept this limitation. Although—and most importantly because—he is bereft of the opportunity to imagine the whole and think about the cosmos through philosophy and politics, he works his human desire for transcendence out through the economy. Caught under the spell of individualism, which ensures that he cannot effectively transcend himself in others in the creation of a truly thoughtful society, the neoliberal individual seeks to become through things, which are more real than the others he finds around him, who have been transformed into abstractions. Of course, they may suffer and call out for his help, but he has no responsibility to them beyond the emergence of the collective intelligence of the market where he meets them on equal terms.

It is, of course, not normal to associate capitalism with utopia or utopianism, since the horror story of the history of utopia from Plato onwards concerns the nightmarish results of the attempt to create the perfect world (Popper, 2002a, b). By contrast the liberal, and later neoliberal, corrective to this vision focuses on the individual, and the way in which individuals may prevent each other's worst excesses, cancelling these in a collective that takes off the sharp edges of their most extreme views, and is in this respect simultaneously immanent *and* transcendent. However, the madness of this vision, which projects the human desire to transcendence through the economy in such a way that legitimates extreme work and exorbitant levels of consumption, has become clear in the contemporary totalisation or globalisation of the neoliberal model that is ironically aneconomic regarding wider theological, philosophical, or political significance. In other words, there is no wider significance in the dark utopia of neoliberal capitalism that projects everything into work, consumption, the abstract individual, and market intelligence, and finds no fault with massive levels of inequality, misery, and despair. But this is, of course, not where the utopian vision of political economy starts out. Although Popper (2002a) accuses Plato of political hubris in the design of his ideal city, it is possible to argue that Plato's initial objective was the organisation of a social economy subordinate to philosophical and political principles. Plato's (1991) division of labour, and economic model, was defined by the principle of beauty, where beauty was equal to the ideal of justice rather than the ideal of the free market. While the free market entails the separation of price from value, since there can no absolute relation between the two because price fluctuates on the basis of the supply of and demand for valuable objects, Plato's objective was to collapse price into value in order to assign objects a place in his ideal city where everything finds its correct position. Against the modernity of the free market, where the relation between price and value shifts endlessly because of the fluctuations of the market, the objective of Plato's (1991) ancient model was stability and the management of change.

Popper's (2002a) critique of Plato in this respect concerns the latter's suppression of political dissent in the name of the vision of the philosopher kings who are able to decipher the significance of the forms in order to translate these theological symbols into worldly order. But where this critique of Plato centres

around an excess of vision or transcendent symbolism, the problem of Popper's open society, which has clearly come to the fore in contemporary neoliberal society, resides in its absolute lack of vision and its psychotic overcompensation for the total absence of a transcendent frame that could offer existential or even everyday significance. In Plato's (1991) vision, economy was never meant to carry this burden. What mattered to him was the Socratic pursuit of knowledge. Economy was simply a reflection of the cosmos. In this way we might find a reflection of Plato's ancient utopia in Marshall Sahlins' (1974) idea of Stone Age economics, where the motor of modern dynamism, lack, is taken away by the reduction of desire in traditional society organised around limited objectives. For Sahlins the primitive economy is domestic, based upon what he calls an obstinate, communistic way of living, and there is no relationship between exchange and profit. This is partly because Sahlins' primitive nomad cannot own very much and does not work the land, which he moves through rather than occupies for any length of time, but also because he has little sense of the value of things in themselves. Akin to Platonic (1991) man, who sees the pro-fanity of things by comparison to the divine forms, Sahlins' primitive man is no fetishist and has no interest in making a killing. Indeed, Sahlins (1974) compares his Stone Age economist to Hobbesian man, who is always looking to gain the upper hand in his relations with other men, when he contrasts Hobbes' (2008) asocial warre of all against all with the primitive worldview organised around the principle of exchange of all with all.

Of course, we might imagine that Sahlins (1974) wants to project capitalism back onto his primitive economy, and suggest that the Stone Age economist was some kind of ultra-capitalist, but this is not the case because the exchange he refers to is exchange without profit. On the contrary, where the capitalist, particularly as defined by Marx (1990), is always on the look out to make a profit, and must somehow give the other back less than he deserves, Sahlins' (1974) economy is characterised by the primitive practice of gift exchange, where men must always look to give back more than they receive in an economic form that is less about profitability and more about excess and expenditure. In this economic form that places friendship and generosity over war and competition, Sahlins explains that the gift must always be repaid in a more excessive present in the practice of what he calls generalised reciprocity. This contrasts with the capitalist mode of exchange, or negative reciprocity, where the objective is the miserly necessity to profit and the attempt to obtain something for nothing. In order to show how primitive, Stone Age economics differs from its modern counterpart, Sahlins (1974) evokes Marcel Mauss' (2000) work on the gift, and particularly potlatch, to show how the obligation to reciprocate in the institutionalisation of generosity creates a durable and robust social form. Where capitalism is characterised by alienation, anomie, disenchantment, and social relations that only really endure because of legalisation, Sahlins shows how primitive economy functions on the basis of spirit of necessary interdependence. In other words, there is a sense in his case studies, including Malinowski's (2014) work on the Trobriand Islanders, that primitive

man understands his phenomenological being in the world in a way that modern capitalist man has completely forgotten.

II Generosity, Indebtedness, and the Fear of Totalitarian Economics

Where the modern, and certainly postmodern, neoliberal capitalist man is first and foremost an individual who meets others in a spectral space of collective intelligence, the market, that requires nothing of him but more individualism, primitive man must continue to give in order to be part of the universal, the cosmos. This is the significance in Sahlins (1974), but also in Mauss (2000), of the Trobriand Islanders' concept of the Kula, or circle, which is perhaps the best symbol of the utopian form in anthropological literature. While modern economy maintains its dynamic form through profitability, which entails the receipt of something for nothing and the reinvestment of this surplus in order to generate modernisation and further gains, the primitive, Stone Age economic form is similarly dynamic, but in this case dynamism emerges from excess, expenditure, and sacrifice. This is, of course, how Georges Bataille (1991) conceptualises the sacrificial general economy which starts with the sun, which radiates energy and warmth, and leads him to conclude that existence itself is a form of excess. In other words, while the capitalist is miserly, and bases productivity in frugality, austerity, and punishment, Bataille's primitive general economist revels in luxurious expenditure. Now, this is not to say that Bataille's consumer accumulates fine things, because he is no capitalist who attaches worth to possession. Instead Bataille's man glorifies expenditure, consumption, and the process of passing away that gives birth to the new, which passes in turn, and so on until there is no more and existence itself will flatline. Although this existential flatline is inevitable, and Bataille is close to the Buddhist vision of existential suffering, he remains fascinated by the moments of incandescence that consumption creates. For example, in the first volume of his *The Accursed Share* (1991), he recalls Blake's (1970) 'Tyger Tyger, burning bright, in the forests of the night' and compares the tragic majesty of this beast to the sexual act and the little death that takes the lovers one step closer to their own end.

The comparison and contrasts between Plato's (1991) original utopian city, where stability is everything, and Bataille's (1991) notion of excessive economy is striking. Where Plato sought to arrest change in a Spartan utopia of order and organisation, and becomes the target of Popper's (2002a) critique because of his conservatism, Bataille focuses on the primitive practice of gifting and sacrifice which was well known to the Greeks, and particularly Sparta, where no man was worth more than the city, in order to generate a theory of cosmological order from an exploration of excess and expenditure. In other words, Bataille (1991) seems to reach the point of utopian stability sought by Plato through extremity that collapses what the French thinker calls restricted economy into a natural, cosmological whole. But even though is it possible

to understand Plato's (1991) ideal city through the fearful symmetry of Bataille's (1991) lover, Mauss' (2000) giver, and Sahlins' (1974) nomad, who produce their own kind of natural continuous being, I would suggest that this exploration of what we might call primitive dynamic equilibrium, where stability emerges from excess, creates the possibility of the modern, and later postmodern, capitalist utopia, which exchanges the excess and expenditure of primitive economics for the scarcity and lack of the modern economic form where there is never enough. While there is a clear symbolic comparison between the primitive attempt to connect economy to cosmological perfection and the Austrian vision of the market that represents a kind of collective intelligence above and beyond any single individual, the contrasts between these two philosophical imaginaries are also profound.

Although Hayek (2012) uses the concept of *kosmos* to explain the spontaneous order of the market, which simply emerges from the behaviour of free, independent individuals, the difference between the modern capitalist vision of the universal economy and the primitive philosophy of the economic universe resides in the capitalist's translation of the primitive's generosity and understanding that men should give more than they receive into a theory of profitability where wealth creation comes from the exploitation of others who the capitalist pays less than they produce and then pockets the rest in the name of a surplus ready for reinvestment. In a sense Popper (2002a) recognises the weakness in Plato's primitive utopia form, which allows the capitalist translation, when he notes that the enemy of the closed society is nature and the problem of decay. Although he uses the word 'decay' in order to present the ideal city in a state of permanent decomposition and construct Plato as a kind of ancient mortician desperately trying to keep the long since dead corpse looking presentable, one could easily replace the term decay with the idea of expenditure in order to found the stability of the utopian city in the economics of giving and dynamic equilibrium. Following Bataille's (1991) train of thought, this makes sense since the city, civilisation, and communal life are a reflection of the human that is in itself a representation of the excessive quality of nature. However, regardless of the way in which Popper (2002a) reads the utopian nature of Plato's city in terms of decay, decomposition, and decrepitude, he clearly spots the weakness in the primitive economic form and sets about what he calls the closed society from the point of view of his own utopia, the open society, where the individual can think for himself, and most importantly now stands apart from the whole, which in Hayek (2001, 2012) and Mises (2007) he only returns to in the form of the market. But of course, there is no friendship in the market, since this is a condition of individualism—I must insist on my independence and protect this from others who want to infringe upon my personal space—and the result is the decline of ancient reciprocity into a modern dynamic suspicion where the state must step in to mediate between people in the form of money and other contracts (Hobbes, 2008).

This is, of course, the dystopian story told by Ferdinand Tonnies (2010) in his *Community and Association* and Georg Simmel (1997) in his work on the

modern city, where objectivity trumps emotional bonds of friendship every time, and the individual is left in a state of desperate lack. Given this history which we must live every day, it is surprising that Popper's (2002a, b) theory of the escape from the totalitarian closure of the utopian circle remains hegemonic in contemporary culture many years after it was possible to pretend that liberal democracy and capitalism were some kind of utopian alternative of freedom to the horror show of Stalinism that never had much in common with the primitive economy of communistic generosity and was perhaps more similar to the kind of state-led bureaucratic capitalism we occupy today. Even though it is hard to believe in the Austrian fantasy of the free individual in contemporary society, simply because it is clear to more or less everybody bar the super-rich that the monstrous global market dictates to people, and that they do not have very much influence in economic processes that impact their lives, it is shocking that the phobic opposition to the totalitarianism of reciprocity and generosity remains live. We find this fear of the circle of obligatory generosity in Derrida's (1994) *Given Time*, where the late master thinker of deconstruction appears to suffer from geometric claustrophobia, and seeks to break out of the cycle of gifting by pointing out that Mauss' (2000) primitive society made unreasonable demands on men by insisting that they give generously. For Derrida the obligatory gift is a contradiction in terms, an impossibility, and Mauss looks to obscure the hidden charges of reciprocity implicit in his present by calling it a gift.

Against this sleight of hand, which Derrida (1994) suggests imposes a hidden tax upon the receiver who must repay his debt whether he likes it or not, he wants to fracture the social circle of friends with an aneconomic, undecidable gesture. Thus, he returns Mauss' (2000) obligatory gift, and what he considers the unreasonable hidden charge, with Baudelaire's (2009) false or counterfeit coin, which may or may not be real money. While Derrida's point is that the counterfeit coin is an undecidable gift, which may or may not be real and therefore imposes no kind of obligation on the beggar who receives the coin, what he fails to see is that the effect of his response to Mauss' ethic of giving and reciprocity, the counterfeit coin, is to replace the primitive economy of excessive returns with a new asocial form based in formalisation, abstraction, and universal suspicion where trust is in short supply. In contrast to Mauss' (2000) economic form, which formed a topos, or utopos, a good place that is also a no place, Derrida's attempt to break out of the totalitarian circle of the hidden charge casts everybody into Baudelaire's city of evil, undecideability, and unhomeliness, the atopos, the place that is also nowhere by virtue of the fact it is no longer marked out by the human quality of trust in the future. In this respect Derrida's (1994) gesture—he palms Mauss off with Baudelaire's counterfeit coin—introduces instability into the primitive economy, fractures the utopian circle, and opens out onto a space where the other is untrustworthy and it makes sense for everybody to look for competitive advantage. This is the space of modern capitalism, the space of alienation, anomie, and disenchantment, where we should look to profit from every

exchange by giving the other less than we receive. The problem of Derrida's reading of Mauss is, therefore, that because he starts off by taking the gift for a confidence trick designed to impose a hidden charge upon the recipient, he is able to cynically respond with Baudelaire's counterfeit coin, in such a way that confirms that he took the problem of economy from the view of suspicion, cynicism, and what we might call criminal reason, where we look to scam the other in the first place.

Where Mauss (2000) follows the primitive, and wants to give more in order to receive more and generate social bonds, Derrida (1994) finds the hidden charge, and wants to respond with his own confidence trick and give less, give nothing, because he approaches the problem from the modern point of view where the ideas of reciprocity, generosity, and common being are tainted by the history of totalitarianism. However, where bad money may have been reflective of the confidence trick of really existing communism in the 1950s, when Stalin led to the emergence of the view that Marx was himself a totalitarian, I would suggest that there is very little that is rebellious or radical about the confidence trick in neoliberal capitalism. In the contemporary moment on the other side of the cold war and the end of history, to meet the kind of generosity that demands a generous response with a counterfeit coin is perfectly normal, rational even, from the point of view of the criminal reason of game theory where the objective is to outplay the opponent and come out of every exchange with a profit in hand. Even better if one can, in the words of Erving Goffman (1952), cool off the marks so that they are happy to lose out on the deal because they are completely unaware of the sleight of hand that has taken place. Is this not precisely what Popper (2002a) achieves when he attacks Plato's (1991) utopian city on the basis of its decrepitude that could equally be understood in terms of its propensity to excess and generosity and what Derrida (1994) enacts when he introduces asymmetry, uncertainty, and mistrust into Mauss' (2000) primitive economy in the name of individual freedom?

The truth is that this individual freedom, and mistrust of others who need our attention, is perfectly normal under conditions of neoliberal capitalism that regards collective and communal institutions, including state and economy, in terms of cybernetic structures best placed to support a kind of autistic individualism unable to understand others. In the face of this situation, a far more radical gesture would look to recuperate Mauss' (2000) economy of excess and take steps to save the *spirit* of Plato's (1991) utopian city—which was that the individual is made in his relation to others whom he cannot escape—from the oblivion of the neoliberal revolution that seems caught under the spell of the Stalinist monster that it grows more like every day. While Stalinism sought to destroy the individual through totalitarian bureaucracy and the reach of the state that was in no way reflective of Marx's (1988) original vision of primitive communism, neoliberal capitalism buries individuals in indebtedness that means that the freedom they possess is only ever the freedom to work, make money, and repay debts that lock them into neoliberal subjectivity long into the future. In this respect it may be possible to read

Derrida's (1994) attempt to fracture primitive economy in a way that is critical of the obligations debt imposes upon the future, and recognise his relationship to Nietzsche's (2003) critique of theological debt in his *On the Genealogy of Morals*, but even here I would suggest that it is important to be able to critique financial debts that destroy futures in the creation of restricted horizons organised around endless work and debt repayment and at the same time save the broader concept of debt that enables an understanding of humans' common participation in being. This form of debt, which we should understand ontologically, represents what Merleau-Ponty (1969) calls the flesh in his later works in order to explain the relationship between self, other, and world, and is very different to financial debt, which we should think about in ontic terms, that effectively individualises people and confirms that they are on their own.

While individuals own their ontic financial debt in such a way that defines their horizon and limits their future, the ontological conception of debt that we can derive from phenomenology explains how what we might call individuals participate in a form of being that is continuous, boundless, and is never the property of anybody or anything. Indeed, this form of debt that flows through people, confirms their identity, interdependence, and immersion in the world, only ever appears in the form of debt from the perspective of individuals who have come to believe that they are somehow outside of relationality and dependence on others and the world. Akin to Mauss' (2000) ethic of generosity, which appears to be about unfair hidden charges from the point of view of a modern schooled in the political philosophy of suspicion, the infinite debt that we owe to being is no kind of debt from the perspective of the person who recognises his inescapable immersion in the world that gave birth to him, conditions his present, and enables his future. Where this vision of debt, which David Graeber (2011) understands in terms of the very basis of social life, differs from the financial conception of the debt relation that we find in the work of Maurizio Lazzarato (2012) and others is that ontological debt is universal, infinite, and inescapable, and as a consequence a condition of existence itself. By contrast, the ontic version of debt, which emerged with the money economy and has taken on new, democratic form in neoliberal society, is never universal, even though it seems to suture everybody into the late capitalist economy, because this world is made up of two classes, creditors and debtors. In much the same way that this new debt relation is particular, it is also finite in the sense that there is a view that eventually every debt must be repaid in full and debtors will escape their bonds, even if the state of indebtedness seems to stretch far off into the future.

In this respect the ontic condition of indebtedness is never final, which may appear to offer a utopian horizon of hope but in fact only confirms the misery of subordination to the debt that remains in place and leads the figure Lazzarato (2012) calls the indebted man to view social relations in terms of a hierarchy of morally sanctified punishment and abuse. In other words, it is the very possibility of freedom, which seems ontologically viable in the distant future, that confirms the indebted man's misery in his present state of indebtedness that

never ends. By contrast the ontological conception of debt we can take from Merleau-Ponty (1969) frees the subject precisely because debt vanishes into its very universality, infinity, and necessity. Where the modern caught in ontic debt looks towards the utopia of the individual who is free from the restriction of others for some sense of hope, the man who recognises his ontological indebtedness finds his freedom in his relationships with others and the world, which is precisely what Mauss (2000) explains in his work on reciprocal generosity and Derrida (1994) and Popper (2002a) fail to recognise because of their cold war, anti-communist worldview and opposition to collective forms of humanity. The central political effect of Austrian theory, which we can trace further back to Smith (1982) and perhaps before Smith to the original contract theorists Locke (1988) and Hobbes (2008), is therefore to normalise the decision to take the ontic level of financial debt, where the individual believes it is possible to escape the condition of indebtedness, over the ontological truth of existential debt, where there is no escape because debt is a necessary condition of existence, and maintain the utopian belief that the latter state is simply a condition of the former position of an individual caught in the red.

The alternative to this utopia, the capitalist, financial fantasy of irresponsible debt-free living, is truly radical. What would happen if we were to truly assume the ontological nature of indebtedness? The answer is that the ontic level of debt, where we assume payment in full is possible, would become impossible, and every loan would essentially become a primitive gift paid in response to the essential indebtedness to others and world. Under these conditions the Austrian utopia of the free individual who only ever meets the other in the abstract space of market exchange would collapse, and it would be impossible to sustain the belief in the possibility of living in the black. From the point of view of this new perspective, which is in itself primitive, ontic debt cancellation would occur by virtue of the emergence of the assumption of ontological indebtedness that is in reality little more than a recognition of limitation in others and world. It is truly ironic that Derrida (1994), the master of deconstruction, who spent a career looking to undermine self-identical fantasies, failed to recognise that Mauss' (2000) gift economy, which he takes for a utopia of self-enclosure, is in fact based in a recognition of indebtedness of self to other and the world that sustains life and that this is in itself a commentary on the tragic limitation of humanity. However, this position is only problematic when we start from the position of the individual who wants to escape closure—which is precisely what Derrida looks to achieve since he finds hidden charges everywhere—and we transform indebtedness into a financial evil that we must tolerate but eventually escape for a utopian space of free individualism. Where excess in the first, primitive system resides in the other, who constitutes the self through their primal interaction, and the world, which enables both self and other to exist, in the second, modern system, the self looking to escape, the self-identical individual who wants to be on his own, seeks to quantify indebtedness in order to emphasis his separation from others and world.

Under these conditions the self is a creditor, the other is a debtor, and the distance between the two economic actors is founded in the contingent nature of their relation that will not last forever. Where the social relation based in the obligation to generosity is essentially horizontal and recognises interdependence, the contract organised around debt repayment is hierarchal, punitive, abusive, and rooted in the desperate desire of creditors to assert their individualism and independence relative to the other, who is considered morally defective by virtue of his indebtedness. In Freudian terms, the other needs to move through the Oedipal phase and stand on his own two feet, but when he is not able to do this the creditor piles on the pain in the form of interest upon the debt he owes. The purpose of interest is, of course, to mark the contingent nature of the loan and signify that there is nothing necessary about the debt relation. Interest signals to the debtor that he needs to repay the creditor's loan and then some because his need to rely on the other is wholly unnatural. On the creditor's side interest emphasises independence, because it not only signifies the temporary nature of the relation to the debtor, but also strengthens the creditor's claim to individuality through the sadistic attack on the other, who must pay even more than he took in credit in the first place. The creditor thus imposes shame upon the debtor, who feels the immorality of indebtedness, and we enter Nietzsche's (2003) vision of the horror of the debt relation from *On the Genealogy of Morals*. However, what we can see is that long before this moral system emerges, which takes debt to be a kind of contingent state that we must feel shame about, a more basic, natural, ontological vision of indebtedness needed to be screened from view in the ideological shift that took place in translation from ancient or primitive socio-economy to modern political philosophy which based economy upon the free interactions of individuals.

If we consider Aristotle's (2009) *Politics*, and particularly Chapters 8 and 9 of Book I, what we find is a vision of the problem of the transition from socio-economy, where money is concerned with equal exchange, to a new kind of individualised system, which assumes that social relations are contingent, and that money can create more money in the form of interest. In other words, indebtedness becomes about profitability. Writing from the perspective of the primitive economy, Aristotle condemns the perversity of the economy that makes money from money, because this practice has no foundation in the real world. However, this dynamic system where money performs the essential function of making social relations possible and drives productivity would become the core belief of the capitalist utopia of individuals who meet in the modern utopian space par excellence, the spontaneous order of the free market. If we say that Plato's (1991) ideal city represents the first truly worked-out ancient utopia, then we might claim that Thomas More's (2008) *Utopia* represents the last moment of the primitive socio-economy. Where the real threat to Plato's city was the kind of individualism characteristic of Atlantis, where people had no sense of their necessary relation and indebtedness to others, More's problem was the realisation of this individualism in the form of early capitalism and particularly the enclosure movement that meant that the very ground of universal

indebtedness, the commons, was in the process of privatisation. Although Marx (1990) would call this process of the seizure of common land primitive accumulation and paint a picture of the destruction of necessary relations between self, other, and the world in the form of social land, the first truly modern philosophers of the capitalist utopia understood the privatisation of land and the emergence of the new economy in a very different way.

In Thomas Hobbes' (2008) *Leviathan*, perhaps the key work of the figure Leo Strauss (1996) understands as one of the first modern philosophers, there is no assumption about primitive economy and necessary exchange. Instead, the first men inhabit a state of nature and must fight to survive. It is only when they realise the futility of this condition of what we might call natural hyper-individualism, or a form of individualism that cancels itself upon the collapse of freedom into the unfreedom of universal fear of others, that they decide to contract in order to generate sovereign authority, the living God, the Leviathan. Under these new conditions, which Hobbes associates with the emergence of political society proper, men trade some of their freedom for security and obey the rules of the sovereign. However, absolute control is impossible, since men remain wicked creatures by nature, and the living God creates a space of safe competition, the economy, which absorbs violence and ensures that society endures. Here, individualism is prior to relationality which must be created in order to manage the natural violence of men who would otherwise murder each other in the name of their own survival. While there appears to be very little one could call utopian about Hobbes' vision, especially if we compare his anthropological fantasy of the state of nature to ancient conceptions of the good society, I would suggest that his image of what we might call the 'good enough society' forms the basis of the history of liberal and contract-based utopias which culminate in the contemporary neoliberal imagery of a kind of cybernetic globalisation where humans and machines work together in the production of endless surplus value.

From Hobbes (2008), through Locke (1988) and Mandeville (1989), to Smith (1982) and into the 20th century with the Austrian and Chicago School thinkers, I would argue that it is possible to trace the evolution of a capitalist utopia that ironically starts from a position characterised by deep pessimism about the wickedness of humanity and ends in the construction of a quasi-theological machine that promises to deliver the good life on a global scale. The striking irony of this construction, revolving around the resolution of deep pessimism and avowed pragmatism in a more or less theological vision of spontaneous order, is in a sense what ensures the great durability of this utopian model, because this remains a utopian fantasy, perhaps the only truly global utopian fantasy, that cannot speak its name. The reason for this failure is founded in the history of this utopian form, which starts with the modern critique of ancient idealism. As Strauss (1996) notes in his work on Hobbes, modern philosophy starts with the critique of the ancient attempt to build cities on the basis of how men *should* behave, and the resolution that what needs to be done is the construction of a political philosophy grounded in a

historical understanding of how men *actually* behave and what they are really like in practice. The value of this shift, which we find in Hobbes' assumption about human wickedness, is that philosophers will be able to give up trying to build impossible cities, which only ever result in horrendous violence, and concentrate on the dirty business of creating the best possible society instead. This is, in a sense, the position of the contemporary liberal philosopher John Gray, who writes about the horror of the history of utopian experimentation across a number of books including *Black Mass* (2007), with the important qualification that he recognises that liberal democratic capitalism has itself become a utopian nightmare in the late 20th and early 21st century.

Essentially, this is what separates Gray (2007) from Popper (2002a) and the Austrians who thought that the free individual and the emergent spontaneous order could evade the worst excess of totalitarianism. Although his story takes in Plato, Hegel, Marx, and what he considers the fantasy of the perfect society, he explains that the nightmare of utopia was not consumed in the ovens of Auschwitz, but rather re-emerged in the liberal and neoliberal capitalist form that Fukuyama and the post-cold war Anglo–American political elites found at the end of history. In *Black Mass* (2007) Gray calls utopia an apocalyptic religion and suggests that the global war on terror may be the final moment in the long history of the quest for perfection, simply because there is nowhere else to look for the ideal once we proclaim the end of the end of history in the deserts of the Middle East. According to this view, the failure of the American neoliberal vision under Bush and Rumsfeld is significant because what this signifies is the recognition of the impossibility of the perfect circle of utopia on a global scale. Here, the round world, the ultimate island, lost in the infinite blackness of space, is the final utopian place, and when this fails there is nowhere else to project our human vision of perfection but off world in the shape of extraterrestrial, sci-fi fantasies, including Martian colonies. In this respect Gray (2007) imagines that the war on terror represents the end of terrestrial utopia because of its global scale, but it remains debatable whether the sci-fi utopia would fare better, because it also suffers from what he thinks is the principle problem of utopia— that is its obsession with the enemy that needs to be eradicated in order to enable the realisation of the new world. This was, of course, a condition of the creation of America and remains the American problem today. Gray explains that we find the same problem of enmity in the French Revolution, Bolshevism, and other revolutionary movements including the Khmer Rouge, Baader Meinhof, up to contemporary radical Islam and the Islamic State. There is no doubt that the same problem haunts sci-fi, where the alien is normally a monster that wants to destroy humanity and corrupt our world.

III Lockean Money and the Violence of Spontaneous Order

Gray's (2007) story moves from a discussion of apocalyptic religion through the modern utopias of Stalin and Hitler to the postmodern version of America

where individualism and market forces take precedence over every other relation. However, his recognition that the rage of the post-colonial revolutionaries, from Fanon (2001) through to the Islamic State, have their own utopian visions means that the drive to perfection has no future. But it is this terminal condition, which finds representation in the contemporary obsession with dystopia and the apocalypse that imagines the strike-through future for a world which no longer believes in anything but endings, that Gray (2000) thinks will open a space for a new form of liberalism, what he calls natural liberalism in his book on the two forms of liberal thought. Against the Enlightenment model of liberal thinking, which he thinks ends up in contemporary America and the attempt to totalise its own social, political, economic, and cultural structures, he turns to a natural form of liberalism that foregrounds pluralism and understands that there can be no ultimate truth. Of course, the problem with this position is that it never escapes the logic of totalisation. This is the case because Gray's view that we must construct a society of tolerance assumes that what is intolerable is intolerance, with the result that his perfectly open, plural vision of society closes towards a utopia of liberal tolerance or we might say a utopia of capital which is entirely indifferent to difference, simply because difference is everywhere, and hangs together on the basis of the reduction of quality to base quantity that enables commensuration and exchange. Finally, Gray's (2000) vision, which collapses towards Simmel's (1997) cold world of objectivity and indifference, is problematic because its commitment to individualism reproduces the problem of contemporary neoliberalism concerned with its phobia of ends and the assertion of values which is contained in the utopian ideal that the only legitimate value is the tolerance of a plurality of values.

The reason Gray's (2000) prohibition of ends is fatal to his project is because it is precisely the ban on the creation of values, utopian imaginaries, and sci-fi futures that generates the desperate need for these new worlds which often takes the form of extreme consumerism, what we might call the privatisation of utopia, in a universe where the social is a phobic object with totalitarian associations. We can, therefore, see that the liberal utopia has a kind of ideological gravity that Gray cannot escape, and that it is this situation on the very edge of the utopian form that means that capitalism, and particularly its hard neoliberal form, is a strange paradoxical kind of pragmatic utopia that imagines its own cynical realism in such a way that its transcendental, idealistic assumptions fade from view. In light of this recognition, it may be appropriate to think about contemporary neoliberal capitalism less in terms of a kind of hard pragmatism, which has no ideological faith, and more through the lens of Elizabeth Hansot's (1975) theory of perfection and progress, where she sets out two forms of utopia. Beyond the ancient classical utopian form of Plato (1991) that we can trace through to More (2008), Hansot outlines the existence of a parallel modern dynamic version of utopianism that dispenses with the idea of some kind of final telos and instead founds the idea of perfection in progress or dynamism. While Hansot explores this modern utopian form through reference to H. G. Wells' (2005) *A Modern Utopia*, I would suggest it

is possible to project the same kinetic model through to an exploration of Bolshevism, Nazism, and further late capitalism. While Bolshevism and Nazism took the basic Platonic principle of the beautiful, just, ordered society, which they read in terms of class and racial purity, they also subjected the primitive idea of stability to modern, technological reality in order to develop an idea of dynamic equilibrium, where order was possible through ceaseless movement and development into the future.

In Bolshevism this concern with technological emergence grew out Marx's Prometheanism and a recognition that development was necessary to move the Soviet Union from a largely agrarian to industrial society. By contrast, the Nazis sought to chase down the primal fantasy of the *volk* through techno-logical mastery in the ideological form Jeffrey Herf (2008) calls reactionary modernism. In both cases American capitalism, and in particularly Fordism, became a model of how perfect order could emerge from dynamism in order to produce a kind of processual utopia. As such, it may be the case that the meaning of the modern, kinetic utopia resides in the way in which the ancient, Platonic view of the perfect city, which fed through into theological thought in Augustine and Aquinas in their works on the heavenly city of God, found new form in the emergence of capitalism. While More's (2008) work may be understood in terms of the final moment of the old vision of stable perfection, and Hobbes (2008) began to generate the new kinetic model where conflict could be overcome and sublimated in the dynamism of economic competition, I would suggest that it is also important to understand the role of the work of John Locke (1988) in the emergence of the capitalist utopian form. In Locke's work, and particularly the *Two Treatises of Government* (1988), the key issue of More's utopia, land, becomes the wellspring of the new kinetic model. Where More champions the principle of the commons and ends up trans-forming his ideal city into a kind of totalitarian nightmare in order to defend the principle of the public, Locke starts out by reading the commons in terms of waste land. In other words, where More finds ideal space, Locke sees noth-ing, waste, and most importantly an affront to God.

When More's (2008) explorers find utopia off the coast of America, what they stumble upon is new common land free from the enclosures of early modern capitalism, but when Locke (1988) looks to America what he sees is the origin of the world and empty space that must be worked in the name of God. In Locke's work God means man to survive and live off the land. In order to achieve this end, God's plan is that man should subdue and discipline what is useless and unproductive in the name of development and the avoidance of waste which is wholly immoral. In this way, Locke (1988) shifts the ancient idea of justice, which was mainly concerned with distribution, towards a new conceptualisation of the just concerned with utility and productivity. In this view justice is about making the best use of resources, and the labour that makes this possible is a wholly moral act. Indeed, the idea of labour is essential in Locke's (1988) work, and he originates his labour theory of value from the vision that moral men should mix work with land in order to create private property. Again, this theory represents

a sea change from the ancient view of distributive justice, where enclosure becomes about excess, gluttony, and tyranny, because in Locke's view private property and the private possession of land is not simply legitimate but actively moral and the realisation of God's will. The critique of this view, which we can find in Domenico Losurdo's (2011) work on the other side of liberalism, is that the creation of the concept of the waste land ended up justifying colonialism, primitive accumulation, and genocide. Despite this, however, Mark Neocleous (2014) explains that Locke's utopian vision of the civilisation of land in a kind of moral frontierism continues to animate Anglo-American thought in its endless war on primitive communism, which means economic forms that fail the test of the free market, the desert, which refers to spaces where waste is everywhere and growth is nowhere, and nomads, or those who refuse to base their existence in the accumulation of private property.

But Locke's (1988) contribution to the emergence of the capitalist utopia involves more than a moralism of productive land, because he also develops a theory of money, which in a sense connects substantive labour in the world or on the land that then becomes human, civilised, and worldly, with the purely abstract form of money that ends up floating off on its own in the late 20th century that saw Nixon's suspension of the convertibility of money into gold, until it comes to form a postmodern virtual utopia, perhaps the utopian form par excellence, in the shape of global finance that is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. For Locke the essential problem of productive land, and the limits of this model, resides in the issue of over-production. What happens when men who work the land produce too much, more than they need, and the goods they produce end up waste? The problem of spoilage is, therefore, representative of the limit of Locke's (1988) theory of land and labour, and it is only through the mechanism of money that he escapes this bind. In Locke's view the value of money resides in its ability to convert goods that may be subject to the problem of spoilage into a commodity that can be exchanged for every other good and most importantly never spoils. Under conditions of the money economy, the man who works the land and produces too much can spread the fruits of his labour out into society through the mechanism of money in order to contribute to the common wealth. Money means that he no longer needs to worry about surpluses and spoilage because he can sell what he produces but does not need in exchange for currency that means that he can buy other goods. By contrast, others benefit from money because they can purchase the goods made by their fellow men and sell the surpluses they themselves produce.

In this way money, which is itself extracted from the earth in the shape of the gold that confers value upon the abstract idea of currency, ends up becoming the mechanism that allows Locke's (1988) virtuous utopia of labour to become a truly capitalist system based in over-production and the management of surpluses. When people sell their surpluses, what they obtain from others in the form of money becomes capital that they can spend or reinvest in the name of further growth. Thus money solves the problem of spoilage and opens up a

space for endless productivity. In Locke's view this is what God requires of men and in this respect money becomes a kind of divine symbol. As Phillip Good-child (2002) notes, money becomes godly in capitalism and structures a new kind of piety. In this way, to say that we believe in money, or to assert in the words of Michael Douglas' Gordon Gekko that 'greed is good' (Stone, 1987), is not simply to make a glib statement about the way modern capitalists idolise accumulation, but rather to signal the trace that exists between theology, labour theory, and the importance of money in making sure it is possible to carry out God's divine plan for men. Whether this has been forgotten or not today, and whether or not we can understand the relationship between money and God's work, it is clear that money retains a kind of theological unconscious that we might date back to Locke and that structures out belief in value of currency today. Against the biblical view that the love of money is the root of all evil, Locke's (1988) God is a good capitalist who understands that money and the circulation of money is the engine of growth and the key to the development of the waste land he gave to men to make their own. As such, money also becomes a mechanism for individual development.

In their infancy men have nothing and rely on God for survival. In other words, they rely on the vicissitudes of the environment, other men, and animals that also have to struggle to survive. At this point men exist in nature, which is no kind of world in the phenomenological sense of a human space. But labour enables men to make the earth into a world, become human, and stand on their own two feet. Money enables them to continue to grow, develop the world, and themselves. Thus we encounter the utopia of capitalism, the capitalist, and the self-made man that starts with Locke and endures in contemporary postmodern society in the form of the entrepreneurial individual. Of course, the difference between the 17th century and the contemporary period is vast, and there is no doubt that Locke's work must be understood in the context of early modernity when capitalism was in its infancy. As Goodchild (2002) points out, ecological finitude represents the limit of the Lockean model. However, the other side of this critique is that Locke's (1988) vision of the civilisation of waste and his related theory of money enables a recognition of the reasons why capitalism is unlikely to respect the outer limits of the planet's potential for development and modernisation. On the one hand, waste is an entirely subjec-tive category, and colonists have never been too keen to weigh the relative merits of different visions of civilisation, which means that endless development and redevelopment of existing lands is morally unproblematic from the capitalist perspective. On the other hand, money represents, especially in its contemporary virtual form shorn of its reliance on precious metals and even material cash, a kind of infinite horizon that transforms the tendency towards growth into a theoretical, if not practical, absolute. When we read these two approaches to overcoming natural finitude together, what we start to see is the emergence of the late capitalist machine set up for the extraction of value from the world, men, and animals that respects no limits because the monetary form has been transformed into a kind of theological symbol.

In the 17th century this emergent cybernetic system, which unites men and their environment in a machine for the production and exchange of goods, made use of money to manage the problem of over-production in economic exchange, while in late capitalism, pure or virtual money, which no longer has any anchor in what Lacan (2007) calls the real, becomes the driver of the productive process in the form of financialisation and investment designed to stimulate and impose the demand to produce. In the first instance the prime mover of productivity was God, who wanted men to produce in order to make the world and become independent, and money represents the solution to the natural limits of productivity, but in the second case, money stands in for God, and the circulation of money in the shape of finance enables investment and the need to produce and over-produce in the name of the extraction of further surplus value. For Locke (1988) human labour eventually ends in the production of money through the creation of material surpluses, but in contemporary capitalism virtual money feeds productive systems that look to extract ever more value from natural resources in the form of human, animal, and what we might call bio-capital, where even the very cells of organisms become potentially valuable. However, there was, of course, mediation between Locke's 17th-century model of capitalism based in labour theory and contemporary financial capitalism that entailed the development of the cybernetic model of capitalism that was eventually expressed in Mises (2007) and Hayek (2012) and completely realised in the global financial system.

But long before the realisation of the utopia, which eventually collapsed in the emergence of the abyss between virtual money and the productive economy that was considered largely irrelevant but that ultimately conditioned and supported the hubris of the financial system, the original theorists of what we might call cybernetic capitalism, which entails the more or less mysterious coordination of men in a kind of economic machine, were Adam Smith (1982) and Bernard Mandeville (1989). In Mandeville's famous work, *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (1989), the cybernetic metaphor emerges from the way insects represent the organisation of men in the early capitalist economic machine. Later in the eighteenth century, Adam Smith (1982) translated Mandeville's organic, insectoid metaphor into a theological story in order to complete the cybernetic construction of economic coordination that now stretched from the insect world through men towards God and His divine kingdom. In both Mandeville and Smith, the story of economic organisation entails the pursuit of self-interest that coordinates in spontaneous order. While Mandeville's bees find their place in the hive, Smith explains that individual economic activity leads to social coordination through the machinations of an invisible hand. However, the difference between the two positions resides in the role of government, which Mandeville (1989) considered necessary to the coordination of the wickedness of men, and Smith (1982) thought was unnecessary to the emergence of spontaneous order. Indeed, for Smith, government intervention in market forces was ill advised and the state should allow economic processes to play out under the

guidance of the invisible hand, which was representative of providence, or God's will in the world. But what is strange about Smith's (1982) utopia, which translates the cybernetic economic system into a theological machine of cosmological span, is the way in which it develops on the basis of the kind of post-humanism that it is possible to identify in contemporary neoliberal economics.

We can see Smith's (1982) post-humanism very clearly when we consider his concept of sympathy and think about how this contrasts with Spinoza's (1996) understanding of the same idea, and the way in which his vision of individualism feeds into what Mike Hill and Warren Montag (2015) call laissez-faire necro-economics, which is utopian only insofar as it commits the totalitarian crime of the subordination of human life to the demands of some supra-individual abstraction, in this instance the market. According to Hill and Montag's interpretation of Smith's idea of sympathy from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (2010), there is no trans-individual basis to his understanding of market society, because his theory of the sympathetic interaction of people is founded in intra-individual processes which mean that there is always an abyss between people. In other words, Smith's capitalist individual does not connect to the other directly, but is instead a kind of Kantian individual who experiences the other in his own terms. In this respect the other in Smith's concept of sympathy is never the other in itself, but rather the other subjectively experienced in the imagination of the individual who can never really know the other or understand the other's plight. Given the essential gap between self and other, which can only be bridged through the sympathetic imagination where the self tries to put itself in the shoes of the other, Smith turns to Stoicism in order to suggest that the other should maintain a state of reserve and calm in the face of the turbulence of life, because complaint causes revulsion and strains the bonds of civilisation. The reason reserve and calm are important to Smith is because these forms of behaviour represent what they came to symbolise for the famous Roman Stoic Seneca (2010, 2014), self-mastery in the face of the stresses and strains of life. For Seneca these stresses were irrelevant in the cosmological scheme of things, and what we find in Smith is a modern, capitalist update of this thesis concerned with command of the self. In Smith the Stoic philosopher who transforms himself into an empire becomes the capitalist individual who remains calm in the face of the turbulence of the market, which becomes the cosmos which is indifferent to pain, suffering, and misery.

It is for this reason, explain Hill and Montag (2015), that Smith was suspicious of the conception of sympathy found in Spinoza's (1996) work, because this led to the emergence of the multitude, or mob, which could take on a mind of its own and threaten cosmological or, in his view, market forces. In light of this, Smith insists on the sanctity of laws of private property and maintains that these must hold in the face of claims based in trans-individual connectivity. As long as the trans-individual claim that justice relates to the necessary interconnection of people is kept off the table by laws around

individual private property, Smith saw that the capitalist cosmos could continue to operate. It is, however, no wonder Smith recognised the threat of multitude, since his faith in the capitalist cosmos led by the invisible hand resulted in the horror of what Hill and Montag call necro-economics, where the poor and destitute should be left to die in order to allow market forces to balance resource, price, and population. Developing the idea of necro-economics, Hill and Montag (2015) read Smith's faith in the market through Foucault's (2004, 2008) theory of biopower, where the state no longer puts criminals and out-siders to death but rather abandons those who are pathological to the state of nature in order to develop a bio-economic cybernetic theory of the market. According to this view, market forces must be allowed to dictate to price of food. Those who cannot pay this price, the waste of humanity, will die of starvation and in this way balance the market. In this respect death is a utili-tarian principle in the necro-economic system, where machines, men, and nature are integrated into a cybernetic, cosmological unity that works. It is in order to secure this system that Smith insists that the state must ensure that the farmer has immunity from the trans-individual claims of the masses and defend the market from calls for a right to existence.

For Smith the effect of government intervention into the mysterious pro-cesses of the market would be catastrophic, because this would distort prices and effectively mean that useless masses would eventually drive the productive farmer out of business, leading to a situation where starvation would become a widespread problem. Hill and Montag (2015) note that Smith found support for this view in a theory of the relationship between Chinese despotism and famine culture. Reading Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's (2009) *The General History of China*, Smith sought to defend the state of the poor in capitalism through comparison to the nightmare of China, where famine was rife and periodi-cally threatened the entire population, rather than the unproductive poor who made little economic sense. In order to understand the violence of Smith's necro-economics, Hill and Montag (2015) look to rethink Giorgio Agamben's (1998) figure of *homo sacer*, or the criminal who could be killed with impunity because he was outside of the law, in terms of Abbe Roubaud's *les malheureux*, or the unfortunate victims of the benign neglect made necessary by the defence of objective processes that secure utopian balance in the overall economic scheme of things. It is precisely this vision of objective justice, which looks to the defence of the beauty of the whole and neglects the concerns of the individual who is understood in terms of personal freedom, that we find in the early neoliberalism of the Austrians. As Hill and Montag (2015) point out, Mises thought that there could be no right to subsistence, or idea of social justice geared towards equality, because this would infringe the principle of freedom embedded in markets and disrupt the mechanics of spontaneous order that Hayek (2012) found in capitalism.

It is this concern with the invisible hand of spontaneous order that I believe defines the modern utopia, where freedom, innovation, development, modernity, and the drive towards the new result in the emergence of a novel dynamic

form of organisation. Although Mises (2007) and Hayek (2012) explain the formation of this unity in terms of the price mechanism, what we find in Smith's (1982, 1999) work is the fundamental importance of what we might call a theological unconscious that finds expression in the notion of providence. Unlike the classical utopias of Plato (1991) and More (2008), there is no telos in the kinetic utopia of Smith (1982), Locke (1988), Mises (2007), and Hayek (2012), but the good is present, and beauty is in evidence, and this is manifest in the mystery of the market that works. Thus we can see that the morality of this new utopia is utilitarian, post-human, harks back to the Stoicism of Seneca (2014) who saw that the cosmos is indifferent to the suffering of men, and in this respect deeply theological because it imagines that objective order is in the universe. This is precisely Agamben's (2011) point in his history of economic reason. He starts off by reading economy back into the Greek idea of *oikonomia*, which refers to household administration, before showing how this reflected back onto the Aristotelian view of nature. He notes that even though this is God's order, God is the prime mover who is not inside his own machine. Nature and the economy are, therefore, never really disenchanted, because God still reigns when he does not govern. This is why the symbol of the economy is the empty throne, the invisible hand, or spontaneous order, because what these images represent is the God who is simultaneously every-where and nowhere. In this respect Agamben disagrees with Weber (1992, 2010), who understands modernity in terms of progressive disenchantment, because what the progressive retreat of God from view really means for Agamben is that He is now everywhere and only becomes invisible by virtue of His absolute presence and visibility in the orderliness of economic life.

This is an important point that must not be overlooked, because it essentially determines whether capitalism, and especially contemporary neoliberal capital-ism, is a utopian economic system, which means a system organised around fundamental assumptions about the good that can be subject to critical inter-rogation, or whether it represents the end of utopian thought, and the end of human imagination about the good, and simply represents a degeneration towards a kind of obsession with administrative, instrumental reason. The problem with the latter view, which I do not believe the exploration of the history of the emergence of capitalism in thought can sustain, is that it becomes impossible to find space for critical engagement with economy because it is post-political and simply reflects the working out of administrative problems. This is essentially the problem with Jamie Peck's (2013) recent account of neoliberalism, which explains that there is no real neoliberal ideology, but instead a much more mobile neoliberal reason or stratagem that responds to problems on the ground without recourse to some transcendental ideal. The reason I find this position problematic is that what the idea of a neoliberal strategy really describes is a model of ideology realised or completed that is only nihilistic and post-political by virtue of the fact that it is has either forgotten its own deep theological history or repressed this towards what Samo Tomsic (2015) calls 'the capitalist unconscious'. It is the dirty secret or repressed

history of this capitalist unconscious that critical thinkers should look to unearth, because it is only by revealing the utopian assumptions of the contemporary neoliberal system that it will become possible to question theological notions such as the spontaneous order which first emerged in Aristotle's (2009) philosophy of household management.

When we say that neoliberal capitalism is a kind of pragmatism, and that the attempt to label this new form of economic reason is problematic because it has no ideological unity, I think we betray the history of thought, and fail to see that these ideas come out of a long philosophical, historical process and that they will be superseded in turn, once critical thinkers escape from the sticky, smoky atmosphere left behind by Fukuyama's (1992) triumphalist declaration of the end of history. Given this claim, and the clear utopianism of the Bush/Blair period, it is shocking that there are those who imagine that neoliberal capitalism is no more than a post-ideological stratagem and cannot see that the contemporary global economic system represents the totalisation of Smith's (1982, 1999) fantasy of the invisible hand and Hayek's (2012) neoliberal corrective where the role of the state is to ensure that competition remains possible and the God/less machine survives. It is precisely the God/less nature of this system that Will Davies (2014) misses in his truly dystopic vision of neoliberal capitalism which he seeks to capture in the idea that the neoliberal is the destruction of politics by economics. Although this may appear to be the case, and there is no doubt that contemporary neoliberal management screens out political alternatives, this is because economic reason is a kind political theology that is no longer up for debate. While Davies suggests that the crash and subsequent government bank bailouts show that neoliberalism is now a purely authoritarian system organised around Schmittian (2007) decisionism, and that this means that contemporary capitalism lacks legitimacy, one could also argue that what the decisive action of the Schmittian sovereign really points to is that cast-iron belief in a system has enormous affective power, regardless of its pragmatic utility.

Of course, the other side of this fundamental belief in manufactured spontaneous order, a notion that in itself reveals the pure irrationality of the neoliberal advance on laissez-faire, is a failure of the critical imagination to think otherwise that one often finds in utopian-cum-dystopian visions. In neoliberal capitalism the individual is essentially a competitor who thinks through the lens of a kind of economic physics able to rationalise a state of pure war restrained by legal regulation. In a world where the key thinkers are Norbert Wiener (2013), originator of cybernetic theory, and John Von Neumann (Von Neumann and Morgenstern, 2007), who wrote the book on game theory, there is little room for thought that steps outside of calculative reason. According to Goodchild (2002), the calculative space-time of late capitalism screens out the possibility of the transcendence of thought. Under these conditions the original thinking behind the superiority of the market and the belief in the transcendental power of spontaneous order have become immanent, because of what we might call their globalitarian diffusion, to the extent that they

now reflect the strange geometry of a kind of flat abyss or abyssal surface. That is to say that there is nothing more than neoliberal capitalism, but that this 'nothing more' that is neoliberal capitalism is somehow more than nothing, which is precisely what enables this system to retain its effective power. It is precisely because of this minimal difference inside neoliberal nihilism, which separates its God/less reason from itself in order to reveal its deeply theological utopian roots, that it is possible to hollow out a space of critical freedom and political possibility in a cybernetic machine that seems otherwise closed to every possible alternative on the basis that they fail to make sense within its paradigmatic boundaries. It is precisely this sense of closure, and strange con/fusion of belief and unbelief in fundamental economic reason, that means that we should talk about the really existing neoliberal capitalist utopia and lead critical thinkers to recognise that this God/less machine must be engaged on a number of levels, including the historical, philosophical, and theological, in the name of the unfortunates who are the collateral damage of this system and should form the basis of an alternative utopia organised around a theory of distributive justice and trans-individual, phenomenological interconnectivity.

Filmography

Wall Street, 1987, Oliver Stone, 20th Century Fox.

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3 The Late Capitalist Utopia in Power

I What Is the Meaning of Money?

In the last chapter I explored the origins of the contemporary capitalist utopia through an exploration of the notion of spontaneous order that emerges in liberal thought and eventually leads to Smith's (1982) vision of the invisible hand. In the conclusion of this exploration I suggested that the normalisation and diffusion of the idea of spontaneous order may have resulted in the creation of a theology of unbelief, where belief seems to collapse towards a state of nihilistic disenchantment precisely because it is already everywhere and nowhere. The result of the emergence of this (un)belief is that the capitalist utopia exhibits a level of durability which is hard to understand in light of market turbulence that seems to indicate that spontaneous order is at best a post-human form which would then, presumably, have limited value for humans. The reason for this durability is, from the point of the view of the theory of theological unbelief, the result of a belief that cannot speak its name, denies its own existence, masquerades as reason, and is, as a consequence, more or less immune to reasonable critique. In this chapter, I propose to move my exploration of capitalist utopianism forward to take in the rise of neoliberalism and the development of the theory of cosmological spontaneous order across the 20th century. Although I offer a discussion of the Austrians, and in particular their adaptation of Weber's (2013) theory of methodological individualism, in my exploration of the origins of the capitalist utopia in this chapter I examine these writers in context and look at the paradoxical idea that grounds neoliberalism, the state-managed free market, in terms of its historical situation both pre- and post-World War II and finally in relation to cold war political culture. Specifically, I propose to follow Daniel Stedman Jones' (2012) suggestion, and separate neoliberal history into three stages marked by the Austrians, and specifically Hayek, Mises, and Popper, the Americans, and particularly Friedman, and finally the expression of these ideas in global politics to the contemporary end of history period, or what we might now call the end of the end of history in the wake of the global economic crash. Regarding the shift from Smith's (1982) vision of spontaneous order to the utopian image found in Friedman (2002), Hayek (2012), through to advocates of global

finance, I follow Phil Mirowski's (2002) thesis that it is possible to understand the development of late capitalism through its embrace of techno-science and specifically cybernetic theory over the course of the 20th century. While spontaneous order was a theological metaphor in Smith (1999), my suggestion is that in the 20th century, this vision was filtered through techno-science, with the result that the neoliberal conception of the economy starts to represent a man-machine assemblage. In Mirowski's (2002) work on the utopian con/fusion of cybernetics and economy in the 20th century, key figures include Norbert Wiener (2013), who first proposed the idea of cybernetics, which refers to the interaction of man and machine in a system organised around principles of command, control, communication, and computation, and John Von Neumann (Von Neumann and Morgenstern, 2007), whose work on game theory transformed Smith's rational individual into a kind of mathematician able to weigh risks and probability in order to gain competitive advantage.

In seeking to think through the implications of this shift, I explore the ways in which neoliberal thought conceives of economy, and by extension society, politics, and culture, in terms of techno-scientific machines completing with cybernetic minds and bodies that respond to stimulus in more or less rational ways. Here, I suggest that the shift from the Austrians to the Americans represents an important moment, because where Popper (2002a, b), Mises (2007), Menger (2009), and Hayek (2012) imagined a rational economy, society, and political system through the image of spontaneous order, it was the Americans, and specifically the Friedman-era Chicago School, that transformed economics, economy, and as consequence society into mathematics and mathematical objects. Under these conditions the role of politics becomes about technical management of the cybernetic system, with the result that democratic participation in consideration of decisions around fundamental goods starts to take a back seat and freedom moves towards the space of the private sphere of individuals who express their self through their consumption choices and the development of a kind of doomed market subjectivity. The reason this new market subjectivity becomes an ethical problem, perhaps *the* ethical problem of the 21st century, is because the mode of individualism, which is never complete but always desperately in search of completion through the symbolic systems of the market, is fated to a life of endless work, terminal consumerism, and eventual burnout and exhaustion. This form of subjectivity, which Dardot and Laval (2014) call ultra-subjectivity, is therefore always late, in the sense that it is doomed before it has even begun, and represents the dystopic counterpoint to the neoliberal capitalist utopia that relies on ultra-subjectivity to maintain its hyped-up form of dynamic equilibrium. The real affront of the neoliberal utopia is, therefore, that it lives off the imposition of a dystopic form of subjectivity defined by the progressive destruction of mind and body and hides this behind its techno-scientific computational aesthetic that suggests objectivity, neutrality, and the impossibility of alternatives.

What is more is that the prospects of salvation are not good for the ultra-subject because what characterises neoliberal capitalism as late capitalism is the

problem of growth, vitality, and dynamism, which was sustained by world war and recovery from world war across most of the 20th century, but today is exhausted by ecological finitude and technological limitation. Under these conditions, growth and the maintenance of the dynamism of the neoliberal utopia will only come from the modernisation of the south, which produces new limits in the form of ecological destruction, the progressive mechanisation of the worker in the cybernetic economy where every aspect of life becomes a site of possible value, and the increasing virtualisation of the economy that further condemns human subjectivity to marginality, meaninglessness, and transformation into waste. Following the elaboration of this thesis through reference to Dardot and Laval's (2014) work, I turn to the issue of the progressive objectification of value and the virtualisation of capitalism in the form of the stock market, which is the topic of Chapter 4. Here, I consider the translation of economy from a sphere of thought through the philosophical image of the invisible hand in the laissez-faire, liberal, political economics from the 18th century to the early 20th century to the mathematical, computational conception of a cybernetic networked order in the neoliberalism of Friedman (2002) and the Chicago School from the 1950s onwards, in order to advance a theory of the capitalist utopia realised in a kind of techno-scientific sublime. In other words, the invisible hand, or spontaneous order, is no longer simply a metaphor, but rather a computational matrix realised across the global network in the neoliberalism of Friedman and the Chicago School that captured the world powers and major global institutions and subsequently transformed the sphere of international relations into a space of economic contestation and competition.

In order to try to capture this vision of the globalisation of the really existing neoliberal late capitalist utopia, I conclude the chapter with an exploration of the ways in which utopian order and dystopian disorder play out in conceptualisations of stock market trading, which shifts from a space of American frontierism, speculation, and high risk in the 19th century to a supposed closed universe of riskless risk in the late 20th century and early 21st century when the practice of securitisation led to the ultimate capitalist utopian vision—the economic, mathematical absolute where it is possible to hedge against the inevitable fluctuations in price and as a result escape the vicissitudes of time and the future itself. While this vision of the cancelled or what I want to call the strike-through future (future)—because this kind of utopianism paradoxically recalls the sci-fi fantasy of a high-tech world far off in the future—represents the utopian idea par excellence, since it is spatially contained by virtue of its global reach and temporally limited through techniques that make it possible to hedge against the radical uncertainty of the future, it is also reflective of a dystopian nightmare because the kind of dynamic equilibrium it suggests represents the opposite of what Bataille (1991) and Mauss (2000) wrote about in their theories of the cosmological primitive economy. Where they made generosity, the limited needs of humanity, and, in Mauss at least, redistribution the condition of an economy of excess, the late capitalist, neo-liberal utopia disappears or vanishes humanity and the human body beneath

a cybernetic dystopia, which is comparable to the kind of totalitarianism found under Stalin and Mao, with the only difference being that the Soviet and Chinese communists destroyed humanity through politics, while the neoliberal utopians suggest that the market decides, and imagine that this somehow makes the destruction of body and mind by the objective violence of the techno-scientific economy more bearable.

Of course from the point of view of the starved body and ruined mind, it makes no real difference, and offers no real compensation or comfort, to say that its executioner is sat behind a console in a London investment bank. This is no better, or somehow more defensible, than to look for the architect of monstrous violence behind a desk in CCP headquarters in Beijing. This difference makes no difference, which is precisely why the Chinese communists have found the transformation from communism to capitalism so very easy to make. Although this thesis suggests a hopeless, post-political future, where late capitalist utopianism transcends divisions between left and right, and even unites American Friedmanites and Chinese post-Maoist marketeers, it is the very completion and realisation of this cybernetic utopian machine that opens up a space to consider its potential dialectical negativity. This was revealed in 2008, when it became clear that the overconfidence, and utopian hubris, of the market fundamentalists who imagined the condition of riskless risk was their greatest enemy. At the same time that this hubris threatens to undermine the late capitalist utopia in power, and has today led to discussion of zombie politics and zombie economics, resistance to the neoliberal utopians who remain in love with their system post-mortem will require the imagination of a new utopia, or fundamental good, which should emerge from the very human condition neoliberalism ignores. The human body that suffers may very well become the new utopian figure of the 21st century which will enable the construction of a new ethics to oppose the post-human, cybernetic, utopia of capitalism. Finally, and in order to think through the possibility of the emergence of the critical space necessary to articulate this vision, in the conclusion of the chapter I set up a consideration of theories of market turbulence, including Benoit Mandelbrot's (2004) theory of the inherent wildness of markets, in order to, first, comment on the crash of 2008, and second, show how the impossible durability of the capitalist utopia may well be threatened by its neoliberal, ultra-rational formulation. Here, I open a space to consider Quentin Meillassoux's (2009, 2015) work on the limitations of the idea of finitude in order to show how the inherent hyper-chaos of markets opens a space for potential utopian change which is necessary because of the ways in which the hyper-rationality of the late capitalist mathematical utopia violates and humiliates the human body in pursuit of value. In this respect, I move into the discussion of financialisation, the stock market, and the potential collapse of the mathematical sublime in Chapter 4.

Beyond the Hobbesian (2008) state of nature, where savage violence is the normal state of affairs and men must fight to survive, perhaps late capitalism's most durable origin story is that of Carl Menger (2009), who writes about

the function of money in the evolution of society in his essay *On the Origins of Money*. Without money, Menger explains, men would have been unable to exchange goods effectively, since barter requires direct exchange, and they would have struggled to locate, first, producers making exactly what they needed, and second, producers making exactly what they needed who wanted what they had to offer. Under these conditions one can imagine that economic exchange in the state of nature would have been sporadic, uncoordinated, and highly unlikely to solve the Lockean (1988) problem of spoilage through circulation. Following Locke's turn to money to solve the problem of over-production, Menger (2009) suggests that without money that economy and society would have struggled to emerge, because money solves the problem of the uncoordination of wants through the provision of a universal means of exchange able to mediate between every other good. Thus money solves the problem of the double coincidence of wants and allows economy and society to take off because men can now trade freely. Moreover, money also solves the problem of incommensurability, or the incomparability of diverse goods, because it allows immeasurable quality to be measured through a universal mediator that translates singular qualities into comparable quantities according to a purely neutral, objective measure, market value, that never passes judgement on quality itself. In other words, the measure of the value of a particular good is found in its price, which reflects its value relative to every other good available on the market. What dictates the translation of value to price is never related to some sovereign decision about inherent quality, but rather market demand for particular goods and the ways in which this demand is either sated or thwarted by relative supply. In this way it is clear how Menger's (2009) Austrian origin story plugs into Smith's (1982, 1999) invisible hand, which describes how self-interested individuals find social coordination through the price mechanism, and connects to Hayek's (2012) theory of cosmological spontaneous order that formed the bedrock of early neoliberal thought. What Menger's vision of a primitive barter society, which makes the leap to money in order to enable the coordination of diverse wants, shows is that early market thinkers, including Mandeville (1989) and Smith (2010), had no need for the passions or a concept of trans-individual sympathy, because self-interested reason was enough to produce effective social interaction on its own. What we find here, therefore, in one of the key texts of early neoliberal thought is the move that, first, sets up the evolutionary origins of the market in the need of men to trade in order to sustain their existence, and second, rationalises this procedure in such a way that it is possible to see how the human would later disappear in the late 20th-century and early 21st-century model of Friedman and the Chicago Friedmanites.

While it is possible to identify the roots of the neoliberal utopian form in Menger's (2009) short paper, consideration of the work of one of his contemporaries, Georg Simmel (2011), enables one to start to critique this model of social organisation that takes off from the abstraction of humans in the universal, empty mediator—money. In Simmel's classic work, *The Philosophy*

of Money (2011), which he presented in sketch form to an audience of Austrian economists that included Menger in 1896, he shows how the money economy represents the modern form of society in that individuals interact, find their identity, and create society through economic relations. However, following Marx (1988), who explored the way modern capitalism proletarianises the worker, Simmel explains that the market is a reified, total system, what he calls an 'autonomous cosmos', that violates the inner life of the individual who suffers under conditions of objective culture, where abstraction, hyper-rational exchange, and high-speed circulation rule. Where Menger and the Austrians have no problem with the subsumption of the individual in the thing called the market, because they imagine that the individual remains free throughout the procedure of exchange, Simmel's (2011) objective was to look beneath the surface of the modern economy in order to consider its impact upon the mental life of the individual. In his classic paper on the psychology of the modern urbanite, who he thinks is uniquely exposed to a modern economy that finds its home in the city, Simmel (1997) finds man transformed into a rational thing, an object, that regards others with blasé indifference and, under conditions of extreme proximity, revulsion and horror. Akin to Rodin's sculpture, which Simmel thought captured the dynamic quality of modernity, modern economic man is simultaneously in a state of constant motion and, precisely because of this mobility, hardened, and paradoxically strangely immobile (Frisby in Simmel, 2011).

In much the same way that Freud imagined the new split subject, where the ego forms a kind of exoskeleton or body armour to cover the id, unconscious, or libidinal self, Simmel (2011) argues that modernity has left the subjective self, or the inner self, behind. While Freud turned to psychoanalysis to excavate the inner life of the subject he thought was necessarily repressed by Oedipus, Simmel found the processes of alienation in modernity and looked for traces of the inner life of the individual in every detail which, in his view, could reveal the truth of the whole and the totality of meaning in a world that seemed progressively meaningless. Herein resides Simmel's opposition to the Austrians and, I would argue, his sociological utopianism that may be seen to connect him to his student, Ernst Bloch (1995). Following Nietzsche (1993), who bemoaned the oppression of Dionysus under the rationalism of modernity, Simmel's (2011) project concerned the excavation of the utopian unconscious hidden beneath the progressive abstraction of the money economy. Although money *is* the social relation under conditions of modernity, Simmel suggests that the tragedy of culture, or the translation of quality into quantity and subjective perception into objective fact, hides a deeper level of existential interconnectedness that structures the identity of self and other and makes the individual continuous with the social. In this respect the problem with money resides in the way it translates this social being into the kind of objective economic form Mises (2007), Menger (2009), and Hayek (2012) wanted to defend in the name of the individual, whom they wanted to insulate from others through abstraction. Of course, what they could not see, and would

never see, is that it is precisely this abstract form, which Max Weber (1992) wrote about in terms of the world historical process of rationalisation, that ends up undermining the independence of individuals by transforming them into a part of a post-human cybernetic machine, the modern and later post-modern economy.

The difference between Menger (2009) and Simmel (2011) over modern economy essentially revolves around their disciplinary difference. Where Menger saw money, economy, and the price mechanism as ends in themselves, Simmel wanted to look beneath the abstraction of the economy in order to understand the fate of subjectivity, precisely because his philosophy told him that humans are more than economic actors. This extra-economic dimension was of less interest to Menger, who took the individual for granted and never questioned its transformation into a commodity in a wider system. This oversight is striking because we can only assume that the reason he imagines the outer edge of the money economy, where people must struggle to barter and have no real means of exchange, is because he wants to assert the primacy of the individual who is originally outside the system of exchange that emerges in history. By contrast, Simmel (1910) starts from the opposite position when he questions the very possibility of society only to arrive at the conclusion that self and other are inseparable in an originary universal that it less cyber-netic and more organic in form. The irony of this position, however, is that it is precisely this organic social form that Simmel thinks enables the existence of the individual who can never be completely subsumed into the social whole. What concerns him about modern economy, and by extension the system of spontaneous order we find in the Austrians, is that this insight vanishes into an undialectical apprehension of the absolute divisibility of the individual on the one hand and the abstract socio-economic form on the other hand. The true horror of this position, which separates individual from social in the form of objective self and money economy, is that both disappear in a mutilated, alienated individual that no longer recognises itself and a reified economic form that is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere.

Since Simmel passed in 1918 and Menger died in 1921, they ushered in the interwar period which would supposedly consign laissez-faire to the past and leave Menger's followers, Mises and Hayek, out in the cold. Although Menger's essay, published more than a century after Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, would eventually found what would later become the neoliberal utopia in power, by the early 21st century the classic laissez-faire model of capitalism had been abandoned in the name of state regulation of markets. From the point of view of Simmel's (2011) theory of money and markets, the problem with the economy, which became very clear in the early 20th century, is that it had floated off and become a kind of autonomous cosmos, beyond the reach of individuals, but, perhaps more importantly, political leaders, who realised that the 19th-century liberal view of the invisible hand was no longer fit for purpose in the 20th century. According to Rosa Luxemburg (2003), who published *The Accumulation of Capital* in 1913, and Lenin (2010), who published

his *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* in 1917, the problem with laissez-faire capitalism was that it was driven by the kind of relentless need to accumulate capital that Marx (1990) and Simmel (2011) identified in their works. In both Marx and Simmel, modern economy is a pitiless machine that transforms everything it meets into objective quantity, capital, or waste product on pain of its own death. For Luxemburg and Lenin it was precisely this need to move or die trying that had led to the emergence of the expansionary or imperial capitalist state organised around the need to seek out colonies in order to secure access to raw materials and open up new trade routes. The rest is history—the history of the form of capitalism Deleuze and Guattari (1983) write about in terms of a war machine that consumes bodies and land in the name of the creation of surplus value.

The result of the emergence of Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) new industrial capitalist state war machine in the mid-19th century was that the major powers of the period, Britain, Germany, France, Russia, and America, began to come into conflict over their imperial concerns in the virgin lands of Africa and Asia. While this in itself could have been resolved through the proper separation of economy and state in the creation of a truly global market, this was not in place in the 19th century, when capitalist accumulation was reliant on naked state power, and would have to wait until the invention of soft power and cultural imperialism in the 20th century. At this point capital could flow more freely because of the emergence of high-tech forms of communication, but before the emergence of postmodern capitalism, and a more or less networked form of globalisation, the result of state-backed processes of primitive accumulation was that skirmishes between the great powers in colonial space were inevitable and war was always likely. While Germany had designs on becoming an imperial power to rival Britain, and had achieved this to some extent in the early 20th century, its great ally, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was in the process of collapse under the weight of ethno-nationalism stoked by the Slavs' big brother to the east, Russia. Under these conditions the problem for the new industrial powerhouse, Germany, was that its expansionary potential was limited by the French to the west and the Russians to the east. In many respects the situation in Austria-Hungary, and the flashpoint produced by the Serb nationalists' murder of Franz Ferdinand, provided the Germans with the opportunity to try to escape their situation in central Europe through war on France, Russia, and by extension the British, who were locked into the decision to fight the Germans by a series of interlocking treaties with the French and Russians.

Thus, the development and expansion of European capitalism, especially in the case of Germany, which became *the* new European superpower in the wake of unification in 1871, eventually led to World War I and the first moment in the story of the collapse of the laissez-faire model in the fires of 1914–1918. In the wake of the war, the Americans led the attempt to create an interstate system to prevent further global conflict, the League of Nations, and also sought to prop up Germany, which had been squeezed by French

reparations imposed at Versailles in 1919, in order to create a barrier to Soviet expansion. Regardless of the pragmatic politics of American loans in this period, it is possible to think about the transfer of surplus capital to Germany in terms of what Bataille (1991) would later call a profitless operation or sacrifice in the name of the salvation of Germany. However, the problem of American generosity, the Dawes Plan and later Young Plan, which were designed to address the problem of hyper-inflation, was that Weimar became over-reliant on American money under conditions where the American economy was itself on the edge of a crash brought about by excessive consumption and the kind of expenditure that brought the German loans about in the first place. The catastrophic potential of this situation was realised in 1929 when German over-dependence on American money was exposed by the Wall Street crash, which, in the view of Galbraith (2009), was itself the result of a boom in financial speculation or new gold rush in America where everybody thought they could make a killing on the market. The crash, and consequent crisis of liquidity on the American market, led to the immediate withdrawal of financial support from Germany.

While the Great Depression that followed the crash saw the collapse of American industrial production, mass unemployment, homelessness, and starvation, the knock-on effects in Europe saw the German economy flatline, with the result that the crash-era Chancellor Heinrich Bruning imposed severe austerity measures by cutting wages and raising taxes in order to try to ward off the threat of a return to the hyper-inflation of the early 1920s. The result of this approach was, however, further unemployment and the political instability that would eventually propel Hitler to power in 1933. Of course, the Nazi response to Germany's economic situation was to spend in the name of the creation of demand. The early '30s saw Hitler introduce public works programmes, including the construction of the autobahns and the planting of new forests, and force labour upon the unemployed who could not strike and thought better about protest. The Nazi economic miracle of this period, which involved the manipulation of statistics in order to create the impression of more or less zero unemployment, also involved investment in heavy industry, munitions, and arms production in preparation for the imperial expansion that would take place after 1939. In this respect, the Nazis sought to kick-start the German economy in the wake of the crash through the construction of a new war machine, which made economy the handmaiden of the warfare state, and the motor behind the construction of Hitler's totalitarian machine that would soon roll over most of Europe. Nazism was, in this respect, more or less wholly identified with war.

By contrast, in America, where the original market crash took place, FDR's New Deal was based on a similar approach to state spending. However, in this case the American approach to expenditure was based on the principles of social construction in the name of peace. While the banking or Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 sought to prevent a further crash by separating commercial and investment banking practices so financial speculation could not impact

upon the real economy, between 1935 and 1938 FDR sought to spend America out of the Depression through the introduction of the PWA (Public Works Administration) that would cut unemployment through the provision of work on public projects, including the construction of schools, roads, hospitals, and bridges. At the same time, public relief programmes were introduced, in the form of social security and unemployment insurance, in order to lift the very poor out of poverty. Although the cases of Germany and America led in very different directions, with Hitler looking to base recovery on the progress of the war machine and FDR funding social reconstruction in the name of peace, they were similar in their responses to World War I, the Wall Street crash, and the problems of laissez-faire in that they both turned to state intervention and management of economy to solve the crisis of spontaneous order and untamed capitalism. In the mid-1930s Keynes (1946) provided the blueprint for this approach to macroeconomic management in his *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*, which moved away from the laissez-faire view that the principle economic actor is always the rational individual who somehow finds his place through the machinations of the invisible hand. Despite World War II, where the Nazi model of state management of economy drove a policy of totalitarian imperialism and genocidal expansionism, the Keynesian model held up and in the immediate post-war period became the economic ideology behind the reconstruction of British society.

II The Origins of the Neoliberal Utopia

Against the Nazis who rebuilt Germany on the basis of the war machine, Keynes' (1946) solution to the problem of growth was to create demand through expenditure in social reconstruction in order to stimulate further production and so on. As Arendt (1973) explained in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the Nazi state was an evolutionary development of the imperial state, where the problem of expenditure was solved by adventure and conquest in search of new markets. But what FDR achieved in the New Deal, and the Labour government realised in the welfare state, was the opposite of this war machine, and closer to the Maussian, Bataillean approach to economy where surpluses are spent in the form of gift exchange in the creation of a social system based upon reciprocal giving, sacrifice in the name of others, and obligatory generosity. According to Angus Burgin's (2012) history of the rise of neoliberal economics, the period from the 1930s through the 1970s was dominated by the Keynesian view of economy, which suggested that state investment was required to create demand and confidence in order to maintain high levels of employment. He points out that from the 1930s onwards, when capitalism and workers found a consensus position somewhere between laissez-faire and Soviet socialism, the early neoliberals were swimming against the tide of received government opinion. Stedman Jones (2012) supports Burgin's view in his own history of neoliberal political theory. When he divides neo-liberal thought into three periods, which involves, first, the Ordo/Austrian

period from the 1930s to 1950s; second, the Chicago period from the 1950s through to the 1970s; and finally, what he calls globalisation, which involves the realisation of a kind of neoliberal pragmatism on the world stage, he notes that the first stage was concerned with resistance to the Keynesian hegemon. In this period, Stedman Jones (2012) points to three key works, which he thinks characterise the first phase of neoliberal thought. These works are Popper's (2002a, b) two-volume work on the open society, Mises' (1944) book on bureaucracy, and Hayek's (2001) critique of state interventionism, *The Road to Serfdom*. Against the early Chicago School, where Frank Knight saw that state intervention was necessary, Stedman Jones explains that the Austrians were concerned with opposing totalitarian politics in the name of free markets.

While Popper (2002a, b) opposed the closed society of the Plato, Hegel, and Marx and read the history of philosophy in terms of the inexorable turn towards totalitarianism, Mises' (1944) critique of bureaucracy explained that only the market can make decisions about price and that any system based on central planning is doomed to failure. Hayek (2001) reached a similar conclusion, when he employed Max Weber's idea of methodological individualism, to argue that the market is the space of freedom par excellence. This is the case because the market recognises that individual knowledge is always partial and only ever reaches completion in its fusion in the system of prices that defines value. Thus the Austrians saw that freedom resides in the cybernetic, collective, marketised approach to decision making, which meant that a Plato, Hegel, Marx, Stalin, or Hitler could never take possession of power in order to impose his own vision of the world upon everybody else. In this respect, economic theory was always about far more than economy, and became central to the construction of a liberal utopia. However, Stedman Jones (2012) notes that the Austrians were not entirely resistant to the critique of laissez-faire and Hayek at least understood that the free market paradoxically needs regulation in order to ensure it continues to function. Thus Hayek (2001) sought to avoid both laissez-faire and totalitarianism in a form of economic management that avoided bureaucracy and direct state management and instead organised market processes through legal regulation. In this way the Austrians' new liberalism was defined by the imposition of 'economic rules of the road' and the attempt to strike a balance between freedom and regulation.

According to Stedman Jones (2012), it is this model that led to the emergence of Ordo, or order, liberalism in Germany in the wake of World War II. The key assumption of the ordoliberals, including Wilhelm Ropke and Walter Eucken, was that the market itself is not enough and that what is required is social structure able to embed market discipline. Against this conservative approach, where social structure is necessary to support market processes and offset the effects of anomie and alienation, Stedman Jones points out that the second phase in the evolution of neoliberal thought was less concerned with the need to temper freedom with regulation and control. While Hayek and the Austrians wrote under conditions of economic crisis, when capitalism itself

was under threat, the emergence of the later Chicago School, and particularly Milton Friedman, resulted in a more bombastic utopia of capitalist freedom set in the context of 1950s America, when regulation and the limitation of individual freedom were symbolic of Soviet communism. However, it is important to recognise the paradox of the early post-war celebration of freedom, and to some extent qualify the libertarian vision of Friedman's radicalism with a sensitivity to the way in which individualism was and remains largely conservative in American culture. While for the Austrians this turn towards the individual was set against the backdrop of Plato, Marx, and Hegel, in Friedman's post-war America, the defence of the individual and pursuit of the free market in the face of big government was far less radical—and perhaps harked back to a more traditional Americanism of rugged individualism—than JFK and LBJ, who remained committed to Keynesian economics and the approach of FDR that saw relative equality as fundamentally important to social stability.

From the Friedmanite perspective the problem with FDR, JFK, and LBJ was not simply that they spent too much money, and thus corrupted the ability of the market to set prices, but also that they restricted individual freedom through the use of state power. In his short book *The State of Exception* (2005), Agamben explores the history of executive power in the 20th century and explains that apart from the Nazis, it is also possible to find the exercise of exceptional powers in FDR's response to the Depression. In this way the New Deal becomes less about the emergence of a society based in giving and more about the extension of the reach of the state, which in Agamben's view has progressively normalised the conditions of emergency that requires executive decision over the course of the 20th century. What is particularly interesting about Agamben's example of FDR and the New Deal is that Schmittian political theory, which essentially amounts to a defence of authoritarianism, is more normally associated with *political* decision making. However, what the case of the New Deal illustrates is that the same executive power may be evoked in the state management of *economic* policy. Of course, the problem with Agamben's (2005) account of the authoritarianism of the New Deal is that it critiques the obligatory aspect of the Maussian idea of obligatory generosity and forgets about the ethical value of generosity in the creation of a more just society. In a sense, then, his vision of the need to resist Schmittian executive power is in line with the Austrian and Friedmanite critique of the big state with one important exception, which is that the Austrians, and particularly Hayek, ended up recognising the need for the state to regulate the market from an extra-political position.

In this way Hayek's paradoxical vision of a regulated free market is sympathetic about the need for executive power, and this is evident in his later comments about Schmitt's political theory, especially in *The Constitution of Liberty* (2006). In Friedman's work on freedom, there is a clear attack on the big state, but the problem with this vision is that its apparent radicalism sat easily with the American traditions of frontierism, self-reliance, and individual

responsibility and found a place in a new kind of state machine that Foucault (2008) spoke about in his seminar on neoliberal biopolitics. Here, the state oversees the operation of the free market and grows into other areas of society in order to ensure the socialisation of the correct form of individualism. What this entails, then, is the adaptation of the Schmittian (2007) model, which Agamben found operative in FDR's New Deal, to a state-managed form of capitalism that limits the space of freedom to intra-economic interaction and puts the executive in charge of the construction of a competitive, market-based social order in the realisation of what Foucault (2008) calls pastoral power. The reason this sat more easily with Americans is because the cultural tradition of the West, the frontier, and the rugged individual meant that the state-imposed order was never particularly radical in respect of the construction of a competitive system. By contrast to Europe, where the tendency is to critique the neoliberal order from the left and suggest that more state intervention is required in the name of welfare provision and alleviation of poverty, in the American case the opposite is more usually the case, and the pull is to the right and the critique of the state becomes about the way it limits individual freedoms in its perversion of the utopian conditions of the real America of the Old West. This is precisely where Friedman and the later Chicago School thinkers have found themselves in the period following Reagan's election in 1980. On the one hand they have supported the imposition of free market systems in Latin America through the exercise of authoritarian executive power, but on the other hand they have been frustrated by the continued existence of big government in America, which in their view distorts market forces and limits individual freedom.

In this way we might see Friedman's (2002) political position as a con/fusion of the libertarian defence of individual freedom and a more or less unconscious recognition of the need for executive power in order to impose and preserve the market order. From this point of view it may well be the case that the key difference between the European and American neoliberals resides less in their ideas and more in the context in which they have sought to apply them and the language they have employed in order to communicate their thinking. Where the Europeans were clear about the need for regulation of market freedoms, I would suggest that the same recognition of the need for executive power is present in the later Chicago School version of neoliberal thinking. Although Friedman (2002) was absolutely opposed to the imposition of normative values upon individuals, and believed they should make decisions in a market-based system that would then pass judgement, his empiricism—which suggested that theory needs tests, and verification or falsification—tended to support the rise of the expert technocrat. On the one hand, this seems to indicate a preference for the kind of liberal, open society Popper (2002a, b) sought to advance through the process of falsification, where no truth can stand on the basis of power alone, but on the other hand, the shift towards technical evidence and mathematics tended to depoliticise economy and transform it into a technical space beyond the reach of the masses who were

free within this system managed by experts, but had no freedom to make decisions about its wider existence or the thinking about the fundamental goods behind its operation.

In cultural terms Mirowski's (2002) study of the relationship between economics and techno-science suggests that this turn to maths reflects the later Chicago School's immersion in the cold war milieu of Wiener (2013), who wrote the book on cybernetics and imagined the relationship between men and machines in terms of concepts of command, control, communication, and computation, and Von Neumann (Von Neumann and Morgenstern, 2007), who worked on game theory in order to translate social relations into mathematical procedures based in the desire to gain competitive advantage. Read in terms of its historical situation in the period of the cybernetic revolution, we can better understand how Friedman's (2002) free market economics presented a computational vision of freedom and social relations, which transformed economy into an apolitical closed space defined by machinic interactions, cold strategic decision making, militarised risk assessment and management, and a complete lack of empathy for the other who was similarly imagined through the lens of cybernetics. Although Hayek (2012) wrote about the notion of spontaneous order through the idea of cybernetics, I would suggest that it was not until Friedman's turn to statistics that cybernetic economics was realised. At this point the cybernetic machine imagined in Hayek's modern technological re-vision of Smith found form in a knowledge which began to shape the way political leaders and eventually the masses thought about economy, society, politics, and culture. While economy became the space of machinic interaction, society more or less collapsed before the economic—especially when Becker and Posner (2009) made the case that every interaction could be understood in terms of economics—and the political began to resemble a strange, antiseptic, *apolitical* space of technical decision. In this respect we can trace the history of the emergence of the contemporary idea of post-politics back to this period, which was defined by the transformation of embodied human thought into machinic calculation considered superior precisely because of its evacuation of fallible, error-strewn, human elements.

Against the Maussian, Bataillean economy that puts generosity and giving to others front and centre, the cultural impact of the expansion of the Friedmanite model of cybernetic economics can be illustrated through reference to the work of John Nash (2007), Von Neumann's rival in the field of game theory, who produced a strange, asocial vision of human interaction. In Nash's equilibrium theory we face a situation of asocial deadlock, where both participants make the best possible decisions they can, only to find these cancelled by their opponent who similarly makes perfectly rational choices, and the emergence of what he called the non-cooperative game. The sociological truth of the non-cooperative game is, therefore, social participation in a rule-based game cancelled by a kind of rational abyss of existential asociality that we might suggest was the product of Nash's own psychopathology. As we discover in Ron Howard's film *A Beautiful Mind* (2002), Nash suffered from

schizophrenia, and I would suggest that the abyssal asociality we observe in his theory of non-cooperative equilibrium is reflective of the schizophrenic's inability to recognise the world or empathise with others who inhabit some strange space they cannot access. In this respect, Nash's (2007) theory of non-cooperative interaction recalls R. D. Laing's (2010) vision of schizophrenia, where the schizophrenic withdraws into a hidden self in order to escape from the horror of the world. While Deleuze and Guattari (1983) thought that the schizophrenic was a potentially revolutionary figure, precisely because the schizophrenic could not fit into the repressive, oppressive, Oedipal system of capitalism, what the case of Nash illustrates is that there may be a kind of hidden or unconscious relationship between the schizophrenic mind-set unable to perceive or relate to the world of others and the emergence of the form of cybernetic capitalism that Friedman and the Chicago School brought to the mainstream in the early cold war period.

The stunning irony of the emergence of the schizoid cybernetic form is that Friedman was able to communicate free market ideas to the masses in a way that had eluded the earlier neoliberals, who had always considered themselves above the need to meet the masses on their own terms (Stedman Jones, 2012). Friedman was able to take the schizoid utopian fantasy of the new computational capitalism to the masses and explain its core ideas very simply in such a way that hooked into the deep vein of individualism in American culture and consequently contradicted the basic premise of the new capitalism, which was schizoid, autistic, and machinic in its understandings of individualism and social life. In his famous work on autism, Bruno Bettelheim (1972) writes of the empty fortress and describes the condition of Joey, the mechanical boy, who makes up for his lack of others through the construction of a kind of cardboard exoskeleton. Bettelheim shows how Joey built himself this cardboard armour in order to protect his destroyed self and survive his personal extreme situation that the psychoanalyst relates to the condition of the concentration camp prisoner who is powerless and entirely unfree. The only freedom the prisoner has, and Joey responds to his situation in the same way, is to divide his self, and to retreat into his own inner sanctum where he cannot be touched. In many respects this is precisely the process Simmel (2011) describes in his theory of money, modernity, and objectification of the self in the late 19th century and early 20th century and Nash (2007) reflects in his mathematical theory of the non-cooperative relation that emphasises the hell of the other. Moreover, what we find in each of these examples is a sense of barely sublimated warfare that I would suggest has found its home in the contemporary economy, and beyond in society and wider culture.

In the case of Simmel (1997), the experience of the contemporary city was comparable to the situation of the soldier on the front unable to internalise the horrors of war. Following Freud's (2001a) work on shell shock, Simmel's work reflects the psychological process which sees the shocked individual try to save his own skin through autistic withdrawal. Under these conditions the self transforms into the classic psychoanalytic subject comprised of an egoistic

exoskeleton and soft, fluid inside, which Freud spoke about in terms of the unconscious. While Freud (2001b) regarded the unconscious, or hidden primitive, in terms of a space for repressed content and violent tendencies inherent in our prehuman origins, and thought that the ego was necessary to ensure social interaction, it would also be possible to follow Simmel and make the claim that the ego is simultaneously necessary to live under conditions of modernity but also a kind of external barrier that prevents the emergence of true sociality by virtue of the way in which it imposes objective culture upon individuals who would otherwise live in subjective sympathy. In the modern condition of objectivity, the other is no longer sympathetic, or a possible friend, but rather a potential threat, which is precisely the assumption game theory makes in its cybernetic translation of the psychoanalysis of the pathology of social withdrawal (Von Neumann and Morgenstern, 2007). Given this move, the next step from Nash's (2007) theory of equilibrium, where cooperation is no longer possible and social relations fail to offer hope for change and a social future, would be to imagine that the game tips over into a barely sublimated state of war, close to Hobbes' (2008) vision of a minimal form of civilization. I would suggest that this state of ever-present, low-intensity war is precisely the situation that Friedman's cold war economy produced in its turn to militarised cybernetics and game theory.

Caught in a culture of suspicion and paranoia, where the enemy was everywhere, the potential communist other easily became the non-cooperative friend or, by extension, the cooperative enemy, who one must fight in a competitive economic system in order to secure advantage. While the paranoia of this situation of pure war—which Paul Virilio (2008) writes about in terms of the generalisation of the condition of war to a kind of existential principle— was able to slide into American and Western society and later become a kind of global norm, by virtue of its identification with the American myth of rugged individuals who make their own way in the world, the truth of this pathological condition may be explained through the translation of Foucault's (2004) take on Clausewitz' famous statement about the relation between war and politics. Where Clausewitz (2008) thought that we should consider war as politics by other means, and Foucault suggested the reversal of this equation where politics becomes war in sublimated form, I would offer a further extension in a vision of economy thought through the lens of repressed politics which is in itself a condensation of warfare in order to understand the fundamental reality of the cybernetic economy of American neoliberalism. As both Foucault (2004) and later Virilio (2008) explain, it would be a mistake to think about the conduct of war purely in terms of the struggle between self-identical states, because what the history of modernity teaches, from Hobbes through the French Revolution to the contemporary war on terror, is that the sphere of the military is also concerned with the management of intrastate concerns. While Foucault wrote about this history in his *Discipline and Punish* (1977), where the prisoner is subject to military discipline, and also in his seminar series, *Society Must Be Defended* (2004), where he outlines his

theory of the martial state, and Virilio (2008) speaks of pure war and the process of endo- or internal-colonisation of social space, the recent history of the war on terror and the techno-scientific surveillance state shows that the cybernetic revolution takes in war, economy, and society in the transformation of politics into a space of emergency decision (Massumi, 2015).

There can be no democracy in the emergency state, because what matters is the exercise of secret police power in the name of the defence of the social order in the face of the enemy who is simultaneously external and internal. It is precisely this situation which Gregoire Chamayou (2015) writes about in his work on the manhunt which takes the form of the secret drone strike that must remain undercover in order to, first, fight the unseen enemy on its own terms, and second, prevent panics in the wider population which might undermine confidence in the executive, the existence of democracy, social security, and the stability of markets. In this respect I would suggest that the culture of the enemy, and the need to terminate threats to order with absolute impunity, is the open secret of contemporary processes of globalisation, which is identified by Chamayou (2015), but collapses into an apolitical techno-scientific tendency towards existential security, risk management, and immunity that appears entirely reasonable, rational, and objective from the perspective of those caught inside the cybernetic paradigm. As Randy Martin (2007) points out, from this point of view, war, and the strategic execution of war, becomes the model for thinking about risk management in finance and wider social relations subject to objectification under the infinite reach of the money economy. Similarly, it is possible to see that later perspectives, including Becker's (1994) theory of human capital, which translate life itself into a potential source of value, also operate under the spell of a kind of martial rationality. In this respect, notions such as human capital and bio-capital represent the penetration of cybernetic capitalism into life in the form of an existential vision of economics that paradoxically has no concern for human life.

The irony of this inhuman form of economics, which Lyotard (1984) wrote about in *The Postmodern Condition*, is that its sadistic drive to attack the human in the name of the creation of a more competitive workforce in order to extract more value and so on, takes place in the context of a wider political ideology that champions the rights of the individual in the face of the monstrous, totalitarian state. Apart from his concern with the turn to empirical evidence, ironically in the name of hard and fast truths, Friedman's (2002) thought comes from a libertarian desire to defend the individual from the tax and spend state. From the point of view of Friedman's monetarist position, which is most clearly explained in the monetary history of America he wrote with Anna Schwartz (1971), the problem with Keynesian economics is that it puts too much money into circulation, with the result that inflation runs out of control. The monetarist response to this problem is to manage the money supply, drive state costs down, and consequently bring inflation under control. Under these conditions, productivity should not come from the state, but rather the individual, who in the tradition of the American prospector will innovate and drive growth through

entrepreneurial activity. Given this reference to Schumpeter's (2010) defence of the creative individual, it is clear that Friedman's neoliberalism was not simply about economics but also concerned a kind of global social philosophy concerned with the reduction of the state and the need to stimulate individual innovation through tax cuts and a refusal to support the enemies of growth through exorbitant welfare which only created a culture of dependency. Against the evil of welfare, most clearly explained by Charles Murray (1984), the neoliberal version of the commune became the private enterprise zone, or space of absolute market freedom where low rents and low rates are set up in the name of the creation of surplus value.

Although the Austrians, but most especially Hayek (2001), understood the need for regulation of the free market in order to defend competition, the relationship between the Chicago School vision of the free market on the one hand and the very clear bias towards business on the other hand has led the key theorists of the neoliberal project, including David Harvey (2005) and Gerard Dumenil and Dominique Levy (2010), to conclude that the attempt to revive the liberal project in the 1930s has ended up in a class-based project designed to put capitalists firmly in charge of workers who have little union power and have become no more than human capital in the cybernetic machine that is largely indifferent to the situation. For Dumenil and Levy (2010) the shift to neoliberal capitalism would not have been possible without a significant change in the political position of managers, who they take for a kind of intermediary class between capitalists and workers, because it would not have been feasible to realise the neoliberal project, which requires the intensification of work and the transformation of the worker into an entrepreneurial subject, without the evolution of disciplinary management techniques. While managers in the Keynesian period understood the need for compromise and to work with the workforce, Dumenil and Levy explain that the new super managers, who Piketty (2014) suggests are key players in the development of the late capitalist utopia, manage in the name of the production of new forms of performance-enhancing subjectivity. In this respect they have no interest in compromise with workers, who will seek to maximise their own advantage or to maintain the status quo, because this will not enable the kind of growth that supply side economics suggests must come from the development of the workforce. In their classic work, *The New Way of the World* (2014), Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval explain how the neoliberal subject has been engineered in line with the needs of Friedman's cybernetic system where calculation of competitive advantage is what matters.

III The Neoliberal Utopia and Its Discontents

Although Friedman's (2002) Americanism leads to the common-sense view that the kind of individual that neoliberal capitalism needs is somehow reminiscent of Hoover's rugged frontiersman, Dardot and Laval's (2014) philosophical psychoanalysis of late capitalist subjectivity rights this misapprehension. In

their view neoliberal man is not simply *homo economicus*, but rather a far more advanced calculator that resembles Mirowski's (2002) cyborg in its ability to make strategic risk assessments and make hard decisions on the basis of evidence. As such, Dardot and Laval's neoliberal subject is a product of Friedman's concentration on empiricism, but also Wiener's (2013) vision of the interaction of men and the technological environment, and Nash's (2007) and Von Neumann's (2007) hyper-rational approach to social interaction. Where *homo economicus* was a kind of gambler, who gave up on politics for economic gain, neoliberal man is a cyborg, who looks to take the risk out of risk through immersion in the techno-economic environment in order to secure competitive advantage. The key commodity of the neoliberal subject is market information, and agility in response to this data, because it is speed that enables the new economic man to stay ahead of the game. This concentration on speed, which Virilio (1977) considers the master concept of modern warfare, shows how neoliberal man becomes a kind of ballistic subject, a subjectile, but the problem with this new rationality is it has become entirely normalised in its colonisation of more or less every area of existence. For Dardot and Laval (2014), under conditions of neoliberalism, humanity is capital, with the result that the economy becomes a closed circuit, a true utopia, complete with the totalitarian identification of man and machine.

In order to try to understand the origins of the new late capitalist utopia, Dardot and Laval (2014) cycle back to Herbert Spencer and in particular his *The Principles of Biology* (2013), which sets out a natural ecology of competition and survivalism, and suggest that the real achievement of neoliberalism is the creation of a cybernetic system that stretches from heaven, in respect of its technological reflection of Smith's (1999) invisible hand, to earth, in the sense that it simulates Spencer's primal struggle for existence, in the realisation of a techno-cosmological order of divinity and dust. Reading Spencer (2013) through the neoliberal tradition, they take on the German model concerned with the creation of a social environment able to sustain capitalism and offset anomie, and explain that the idea that ordoliberalism is somehow concerned with welfare is a misconception. In their view the core of the German tradition remains the notion of individual responsibility and the concept of the entrepreneurial man. In this respect the German tradition is closer to the later Chicago version of neoliberalism than we might imagine, because individual action remains key. As Dardot and Laval (2014) note, in the German tradition man remains *homo agens*, the man with agency, and his social work is to contribute to the practice of catallaxy, or economy that transforms the enemy into a friend. Under these conditions the role of social policy, and the recognition of the need for order, concerns the need to transform individuals into what Dardot and Laval (2014) call neo-subjects, who recognise that they are responsible and accountable for their own economic performance. In order to achieve this objective, the social state merges with the Benthamite disciplinary state in the name of support for what Marcuse called, in his *Eros and Civilization* (1987), the performance principle. What is particularly interesting

about the concept of the neo-subject that must perform, and eventually becomes obsessed with the idea of performance, is that it represents a move away from the traditional Freudian subject, who was subjected to Oedipal regulation, because the kind of government that the neo-subject follows is a strange paradoxical form of government, what we might call following Foucault (2008) governmentality, that insists on the primacy of freedom. The result of the turn to governmentality is that the neo-subject follows external regulation in such a way that regulation becomes invisible and disappears into the very DNA of the subject itself.

In Freudian terms, we might say that the neo-subject becomes the object of performance through a process of internalisation that penetrates through to its very unconscious in the creation of a kind of ultra-individualism. Since the term 'ultra' means 'more' in Latin, Dardot and Laval (2014) employ this term to signify a form of individualism that is hyperactive and endlessly transgressive. The neo- or ultra-subject is always in excess of itself, endlessly looking to overcome its own limitations, in a world that is similarly unbounded and endless. However, in much the same way that Luxemburg (2003) and Lenin (2010) pointed to the contradiction inherent in the expansive nature of capitalism that remains territorial, the ultra-subject is constrained by its embodied nature that roots it in time and space. Although the new form of neoliberal subjectivity suggests a novel utopian vision of the self able to grow into a kind of infinitely open capital space-time, the truth of the corporeality of neoliberal man means that this is not the case. In this respect the infinite performance principle eventually runs into the organic limit set by Freud's (2003) pleasure principle, which shows how the acceleration of desire in drive ultimately results in the self-destruction, exhaustion, burnout, and what Alain Ehrenberg (2009) calls the weariness of the self. This is, I would suggest, *the* problem of the neoliberal utopia in the early 21st century. What the late capitalist fantasy world has closed off is closure itself, but the problem of the radical lack of boundary is that the neoliberal subject, which comes to imagine its own infinite potential to work and consume, collapses before what Byung-Chul Han (2015) writes about in terms of an abyss of positivity, essentially because it is constrained by organic limits that no psycho-economic ideology can overcome.

Although theories of brain plasticity explored by Catherine Malabou (2008) suggest potential alternatives to this utopian model, which has become a kind of infinite horizon since the 1980s, it may be the case that these ideas will also lead to the emergence of a new kind of behaviourism, or branch of neuro-economics concerned with engineering the ultra-subject at the level of synaptic connection. Against this sci-fi utopianism, which is reflected in recent Hollywood films such as *Limitless* (2011) and *Lucy* (2014), where normal people become superheroes through the use of performance-enhancing pharmaceuticals, I would suggest an alternative scenario, which I think it is possible to support through reference to the epidemic of mental illness, and especially depression and anxiety, in late capitalist society. In this alternative, dystopic vision, synaptic connections start to collapse and break down, in a model of burnt-out, destroyed subjectivity

that responds to the command to 'be more' with social withdrawal, schizophrenic division, and eventually the disappearance of the self. It is precisely this form of destroyed subjectivity Malabou (2012) describes in her work on the new wounded that compares the brain patterns of the human waste of late capitalism to sufferers of Alzheimer's in order to explain how what Han (2015) writes about through the idea of excessive positivity wipes out the self in the emergence of the human clean slate, the utopian-cum-dystopian non-self that is eventually unable to recognise, or feel, its own disappearance. In the end this mental health catastrophe would spell the collapse of the neoliberal utopia, because it would become psychically unsustainable, in much the same way that Zamyatin's *We* (1993), with its vision of destroyed subjectivity, imagined the end of the Soviet utopia long before its slow death even began. But Dardot and Laval (2014) search for opposition before the apocalypse of mental collapse in a politics we might understand through the lens of Melville's (1998) Bartleby, who says, 'I would rather not'. This politics entails refusal of cybernetic hyper-subjectivity, competition, and privatisation in a new ethics of human limitation, cooperation, and commonality.

However, the problem with this suggestion revolves around Dardot and Laval's (2014) failure to recognise the militarised origins of the new form of cybernetic capitalism, which means that refusal would become an existential question that would throw into doubt the individual's ability to survive, since there is no easy way to drop out of the late capitalist machine that seems to have colonised global space-time and written its name into the very code of the contemporary human subject. As Hill and Montag (2015) explain in their work *The Other Adam Smith*, the kind of economy Smith imagines, and the kind of economy that emerges in Mises (2007) and later Friedman (2002), is a necro-economy where those who are too poor, lazy, or belligerent to work must be allowed to die in order to maintain the integrity of the price mechanism. Refusal may well, therefore, become an existential question concerned with survival in a situation where it is moral to let refuseniks fade out of existence on the basis of their freedom to choose their way out of existence. Beyond the very immediate problem of the subject's ability or inability to step outside of the system of wage labour, and to marshal the psychological resources to make this leap into nowhere, the additional problem with escape from the neoliberal utopia is that there is no future where change seems possible in this perfectly realised system, precisely because it is already complete in a kind of infinite present full of sensory stimulation funded by indebtedness.

The state of indebtedness is key in this utopian complex because it is precisely this condition that destroys the future and that should be critically worked through in the name of the freedom of the individual in social context. While it is, of course, always impossible to know the future from the confines of the present, and this is what we master through immersion in social systems that provide a sense of limitation and hope, the evolution of neoliberal financialisation has led to a strange situation where we finance the fantastical present through indebtedness and then suffer the cancellation of the potential future

in debt and debt repayment that mean that the best we can hope for is more of the same. This is where the two models of indebtedness explored in the previous chapter on the origins of the capitalist utopia, which we might also understand through reference of Menger (2009) and Simmel (2011), collide and conflict because sociological indebtedness enables individualism in the sense that it sutures people into structures to enable the emergence of subjectivity able to better handle the anxiety of the future that we must necessarily confront. By contrast, the neoliberal model of indebtedness, which runs through the history of financialisation up to the present, crushes the individual beneath the weight of debt which becomes a kind of inescapable responsibility that stretches off into the future and makes change impossible. While the former, sociological, model maintains a mode of existential openness towards the horizon of the future, which we might understand through the idea of utopianism, the latter, capitalist, system wipes out this possibility in the formation of a true utopia, which stretches out across space and through time in a globalitarian nightmare.

But it is important to remember that neoliberal indebtedness is far from universal, and recall that capitalism strenuously rejects the idea of the universality of indebtedness in the name of the individual that stands alone, which means that the contemporary capitalist vision of debt is rooted in a sadistic creditor/debtor relation that destroys the future of the debtor who is locked into endless debt repayment. This is precisely where the neoliberal, capitalist vision of debt differs from the sociological, phenomenological vision of indebtedness, which is universal and imposes a kind of infinite responsibility on everybody to take care of everybody else in the emergence of the social body that resolves violence in obligatory generosity. This is impossible under conditions of modern, never mind postmodern, capitalism, because the individual must be free and must resist relations that suggest otherwise. This is why indebtedness becomes problematic and a space of violence where sadistic aggression is acceptable on moral grounds. My use of the psychoanalytic term sadism, which Mirowski (2002) employs to describe neoliberal sociality, is important here because what this concept captures is the way in which the creditor retains his freedom through the debtor, who takes the punishment in order that the creditor can retain his position. By contrast, the debtor suffers under the burden of his debt, and recognition of his pathological individualism, which confirms the superiority of the creditor whom he can never repay. If the ideal neoliberal individual lives through a mode of ultra-subjectivity that is always in excess of itself, the debtor represents a kind of minus-subjectivity, or mode of selfhood that is endlessly in deficit, and somehow less than itself. When we take this pair together what we have is a reflection of the sadomasochistic sociality, which is clearly based in a deep revulsion of otherness, which is characteristic of neoliberal capitalism.

Moreover, the existence of this power couple, which was ironically screened out of view by the liberal insistence on the primacy of the objective individual free to contract or walk away that we can trace from Smith (1982) through

Hayek (2001) up to Friedman (2002), was abundantly clear in the response to the 2008 financial crash. Here, bank losses, and the subsequent hole in public finance, were transferred to the indebted masses, who were required to pick up the costs of the financial elites in the form of deep austerity measures, which were sold through the cynical manipulation of the notion of collective responsibility. Under these conditions the sadomasochistic power relation not only survived the crash but in fact emerged even stronger by virtue of a form of discursive escapology, which was in itself utopian in its fantastical construction. That is to say that since utopia, and the utopian imagination, have always entailed making maps and writing plans, I would suggest that the neoliberals' discursive escape strategy from the political consequences of the financial crash should be understood in terms of the history of the construction and maintenance of what I have sought to call the neoliberal utopia, and that what this particular moment in this discursive text represents is the attempt to save this utopian form from collapse into bankruptcy. Regarding the way in which this discursive escape played out, I would suggest is it possible to identify three clear moves where the neoliberals, first, insisted upon the primacy of individualism and self-responsibility in order to escape the widespread politicisation of the crash; second, called for the collectivisation of what was now an apolitical cosmological catastrophe in order to move the burden of private loses onto the masses; and third, enacted a return to the language of individualisation in order to seal the deal, reinforce the apolitical nature of the now public debt to absolve the financial elites of responsibility, and finally moralise the pathological nature of both private and public indebtedness to complete the cycle and return to normality.

In terms of the individual steps in this construction, which has seen the neoliberal utopia emerge from the crash even stronger than before, the first move saw the dissimulation of the social responsibility of creditors to debtors in the maintenance of a stable financial system on the basis of the fantasy that the liberal individual is free to contract or remain free of contractual obligation. This is, of course, fantastical since finance and indebtedness have become necessary for survival in the neoliberal system where the supply side drive to increase productivity entails the reduction of wages in order to increase profitability. In other words, there is no choice but to contract to debt in the name of survival in a low-wage society, where privatisation means the public sector no longer provides social security. On the other hand, the financial sector has made enormous profit from the debtor's need to contract in the form of interest and commission, which means that the creditor should be considered parasitic on the debtor that he sought to exploit in the name of his own profitability. While this power relation, which defines class structure in financialised consumer capitalism, was abolished in the immediate response to the financial crash in a favour of a classic liberal defence of individualism that meant that it was impossible to allocate responsibility on the basis of collective obligation, the idea of collectivity was soon brought back in order to assert the responsibility of society to refinance the creditors and then cover the hole

in public finance through cuts to social goods. Once this collective move had taken place, the individual came back into view, in order to excuse the financial elites from responsibility and attack those who serve and rely upon public services in the name of efficiency and the reduction of waste.

The shocking irony of this sleight of hand, which saw the neoliberals seek to palm off onto the public losses incurred by reckless creditors, is that it sought to simultaneously socialise indebtedness through the claim that the current situation was a collective responsibility, *and* take the liberal line and responsibilise individuals who needed to shoulder the burden. The move which enabled this confidence trick to take place was the relentless sadistic attack on the debtor, who is the pathological other of the neoliberal class system, and the consequent disappearance of the excessive creditor, who was no longer responsible for his own indebtedness to the collective bailout. In this discursive machine the more the poor debtor becomes the target of public fury, the more the creditor—who, we must remember, made a killing off reckless loans to those who live off endless indebtedness—disappears and never faces his responsibility to the other. What this socio–economic policy, which fuses the Keynesian approach to state spending with Friedman's rearticulation of laissez-faire in defence of the financial sector, confirms is the class-based nature of the neoliberal utopia, which Thomas Piketty (2014) writes about in terms of the entrenched inequality of late capitalism. Moreover, Piketty sees little prospect of change where inequality is concerned because the explosive growth of the golden age of capitalism, which he locates between the end of World War II and the late 1970s, is unlikely to return. Where this growth, which enabled accumulation *and* the socialisation of wealth in the most advanced nations, was sustained by, first, the need to recover from the shocks of two world wars, and second, the radical technological development this recovery programme produced, Piketty (2014) points out that contemporary capitalism is far less dynamic, which is precisely what has led to the turn to supply side economics and the need to squeeze ever more productivity out of workers, who must live off debt because they have become the new frontier of innovation, modernisation, and the search for efficiency.

In search of an escape from inequality, Piketty (2014) suggests a global tax on wealth, which would represent a return to Maussian, Bataillean, primitive economy, where surpluses are spent in obligatory generosity, but it is difficult to see how this shift would take place under conditions of the neoliberal utopia, where the fantasy of the self-identical individual who somehow *chooses* to relate to others and live in the world seems complete and unassailable. This is precisely what the case of the financial crash explains, where the neoliberals were able to save their utopia from collapse because of the strength of cultural belief in the individual and resistance to ideas of social responsibility under conditions of Anglo-American process of market globalisation. There is no doubt that the neoliberal political and economic elites have power on their side, and that the indebted masses have little scope for resistance, but it is surprising that more sustained ideological opposition to the late capitalist

utopia has not emerged capable of revealing its bankruptcy in popular con-sciousness. In his book on economy and the future, Jean-Pierre Dupuy (2014) suggests that change is impossible in contemporary global capitalism because economy has humiliated politics in the closure of the future and that means that it has no potential for self-transcendence. When the possibility of self-transcendence collapses, Dupuy explains that the original Hobbesian story, where economy civilises human violence, breaks down and capitalism falls into a kind of hopeless apocalypticism. However, it is exactly when there is no hope that Dupuy thinks hope appears, essentially because, to paraphrase Dostoyevsky, when there is no God, everything is possible.

For Dupuy (2014), it is precisely the fall into despair that generates freedom and the possibility of action, but the problem with this view is that it fails to recognise the strange endlessness of the late capitalist end times, which is the other side of the turn to Schmittian (2007) decisionism that supports emer-gency action in the resolution of potential catastrophe on a daily basis. In this respect, I think it is useful to explore the neoliberal utopia of finance which, from the 1980s through to the present, has become the engine of growth for an economic system that seems to have exhausted the limits of real expansion. Moreover, the value of a consideration of financialisation is that this will also throw light on the causes of the financial crash, which threatened the destruc-tion of the neoliberal utopia, but that was eventually resolved, perhaps tem-porarily, in the discursive confidence trick outlined above that cemented the class division between those who prosper on the basis of the creation of money ex nihilo and those who must live in indebtedness because of the violence of supply side disciplinary techniques designed to engineer ultra-subjects able to work ever more for even less. In this respect what consideration of financiali-sation, and the virtual utopia of late capitalism, will achieve is the completion of my study of the cybernetic economic machine that evolved from Smith's (1982, 1999) invisible hand, through Hayek's (2012) spontaneous order, to Friedman's (2002) con/fusion of pure maths and rugged individualism. Where Locke (1988) wrote through the labour theory of value, and it is possible to find the rearticulation of this in Dardot and Laval (2014) where the ultra-subject is the source of value, the exploration of financialisation enables understanding of the other side of the cybernetic body of the man-machine. While Locke's men worked the land, and ultra-subject works upon himself, financialisation describes the cosmological dimension of late capitalism which Smith (1999) captured in the invisible hand, Hayek (2012) imagined through spontaneous order, but the theorists of finance capital have realised in the form of advanced statistical modelling that is no longer metaphorical or metaphysi-cal, but rather real in its mathematical perfection. In this respect, finance represents the realisation of the earlier capitalist utopian forms, which expressed in theory what the theory and practice of the trade in stocks and shares makes manifest in mathematical equations. It is, therefore, representative of a kind of economic absolute that is simultaneously perfectly virtual and virtually perfect. This is the financial utopia.

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4   Global Finance, Utopia of Beautiful Numbers

I What Is the Financial Sublime?

I began Chapter 2 with an exploration of the way modern economy emerged from its primitive predecessor where exchange is organised around generosity. Although Sahlins (1974) and Mauss (2000) present primitive exchange through the utopian figure of the circle that never ends, the truth is that the commitment to excess built into the practice of potlatch, where I am obliged to give more generously than the other who gave to me, creates the space for the emergence of the properly modern economic form, where I seek to give less than the other and take a surplus from our exchange. It is possible to see this shift in action in Derrida's (1994) discussion of primitive economy in his *Given Time*. In this work Derrida objects to what he thinks is Mauss' (2000) sleight of hand, which sees him palm off the idea on his reader of a gift that actually takes the form of a kind of obligatory generosity, through a comparable con trick. From Derrida's point of view, Mauss' 'hidden charges', that mean that self must repay other with interest, create a split between the appearance of the gift that should require no repayment and the reality of the situation that locks the recipient into a system of obligatory generosity. Derrida exploits this gap between appearance and reality through reference to Baudelaire's (2009) counterfeit coin, where the gift appears to be 'more than', but may in actual fact be 'less than', in order to free the beggar from the obligation to repayment. In this way Derrida (1994) frees the beggar from his indebtedness and makes him stand on his own two feet. However, Derrida's favour is a strange one, because what this bad gift also achieves is the introduction of a culture of suspicion into the practice of exchange, since it is no longer possible to trust the other to repay generosity, and the emergence of the horror (a)society Simmel (2011) explored in his philosophical exploration of money. Where Derrida responds to what he considers the simulation implicit in Mauss' vision of the giving society organised around the 'hidden charge' of necessary generosity, what we find in Simmel is an exploration of the space produced by the modern break with the primitive economy of excess. Against Menger (2009), the father of the Austrian School, who presents economy in terms of absolute rational exchange enabled by the universal

mediator, money, Simmel shows how the objectivity of money replaces sub-jectivity and what we might call the necessity of the social relation that makes the self the self, with an asocial order shot through with suspicion, paranoia, revulsion towards otherness, and a broken, fragmented form of individualism. While Derrida (1994) critiques Mauss' economy in order to break out of what he thinks is a kind of totalitarian cycle of necessary generosity, and pushes this even further in his effort to destabilise the money form itself, what he effectively describes is Simmel's (2011) society of technological alienation. While there is no doubt that money is counterfeit in this system, and Menger (2009) himself writes about money in terms of its empty, universal form that enables it to stand in for every other good, moderns behave *as if* money is a thing that accurately reflects value for the sake of its functionality. In other words, they need money to work because they can't trust each other.

In this respect what Derrida (1994) inadvertently shows in his critique of Mauss (2000) is the way in which the counterfeit nature of money translates into modern social relations shot through with suspicion about the other, who we imagine always wants to give 'less than' in order to put one over potential friends. In other words, the modern exchanges bad money—and money is always bad—for the bad social relation, because they need to believe in money, and can live with the bad social relation, so long as they continue to believe in money, which, of course, makes anonymous, alienated exchange possible. It was precisely this shift from Mauss (2000) and primitive economics, where we must give more in the face of the other, to modern money, where the other vanishes from view to be replaced by an objective measure that every-body knows is empty, which opens this space of universal (a)social suspicion, because there is always a gap between self and other, the modern gap in individual freedom. It was in the wake of this turn from primitive to modern economy that Hobbes (2008) came onto the scene. Where the ancients had based their political philosophy on what men and society should be like in light of a vision of cosmological order, Hobbes' modern, anthropological take on the wickedness of men suggested that they are always on the take and need to be controlled through state regulation that could take the edge off their violence in the creation of a minimal kind of civilization. Given this setup, where the purpose of society is to protect men from each other, Hobbes' follower, Locke (1988), starts from the point of view of the individual who works the land in the name of productivity. Since God wants men to make the most of the earth, money emerges in order to overcome the problem of spoilage. The productive man can now exchange his surpluses for money that never degrades in order to enable reinvestment and ever more productivity.

That the other has no real place in Locke's (1988) system is clear from the way his theory of money was taken up by Smith (1982, 1999) in his vision of spontaneous order. Here, men produce and trade, and the invisible hand oversees the emergence of a market society, but there is no place for the wasteful, unproductive poor, who threaten to undermine the price mechanism. This is why Smith (2010) opposes trans-individual sympathy and wants a kind

of stoic reserve in the face of the miseries of capitalism, because welfare, charity, and giving to the poor threaten to undermine the way value is expressed in price that is itself a product of the objective interactions of supply and demand. The hyper-rationality of Smith's system, which translates into the dominance of objectivity over subjectivity in Simmel's cold modernity, concludes in the view that economic elegance matters more than life itself. It is this idea, which Hill and Montag (2015) write about through the concept of necro-economics, that translates through Mises (2007), who argues that there can be no right to subsistence, and Hayek (2012), who writes about Smith's cybernetic system and confirms the post-human utopianism of capitalism that solves the tragic problem of human finitude through economy that makes men infinite in their exchange function. The cost of this escape from finitude into economic infinity was, however, more clearly revealed in Austrian, and later Chicago, neoliberal ideology. Where Hayek (2012) captured the cybernetic dimension of economy, which bound men to a kind of cosmological machine, Friedman (2002) and the later Chicago School expanded upon this insight when they built upon Wiener's (2013) theory of the man–machine and Von Neumann and Morgenstern's (2007) rationalisation of human interaction in the game in the production of a cold war militarised version of capitalism that hide its cold, instrumental rationality beneath the American ideals of pragmatism, individualism, and freedom. Where individualism was concerned, Friedman (2002) plugged into the American tradition of the rugged individual, the self-made man, and the frontier when he spoke of freedom in a way which could be understood by the masses.

However, this vision of laissez-faire was contradicted by the turn to a kind of mathematical abstraction in neoliberal thought that realised the theory of spontaneous order in the form of numbers. On the surface the turn towards maths represented a pragmatic concern with evidence and proof in the face of elite theory, but the truth was that what Friedman's realisation of the cybernetic system in numbers really achieved was further dislocation of the objective utopian form of capitalism from the real world of subjectivity and the reinforcement of the subordination of men to machines in the new scientific fantasy world (Mirowski, 2002). Under these conditions, which have been progressively globalised since the late 1970s and the early 1980s when the Anglo-American neoliberals came to power, economic calculation is true, the 'be all and end all', and there is no need to even think about the fundamentals that concerned the ancients. In this new post-political situation, economy has become a kind of transcendental force that recalls Kant's (2007) theory of the mathematical sublime from his *Critique of Pure Reason*, which means that there is no easy way to challenge economic logic that seems to come from somewhere else. But where? In light of the fact that it was Friedman and the later Chicago School thinkers who first realised this purely abstract economic utopia, it is worth thinking about the history of the experience of the sublime in American history, which in David Nye's (1996) view informs the importance of technology in the land of the free. For Nye, Kant's

theory of the sublime, which describes the experience of the infinite that escapes comprehension, has a particular place in American history that relates to the original colonists' experience of the New World. In other words, America's first Lockean men confronted the land with a kind of awe reflective of its divine origins and sought to live up to the sublimity of the landscape through the conversion of its monstrous endlessness into a world they could recognise for its theological beauty.

While it is possible to observe this effort to transform the endless monstrosity of wasted land into a more beautiful form appropriate to the imagination of its divine giver in American landscape art, in Nye's (1996) view the true model of utopian artifice in American history is technology. The reason Nye makes the leap from the monstrous natural sublime, which was impossible for the new settlers to comprehend, to the fantastical technological sublime, which would essentially prove equally incomprehensible but would impose a kind of temporary, rational unity upon God's infinite gift, is because of the structure of Kant's (2007) theory of the sublime that takes in two forms, the dynamic sublime and the mathematical or reasonable sublime. While the first experience of the sublime occurs when men experience immensity in the world that they cannot comprehend, the second form reflects the way in which they translate their failed efforts to imagine immensity through the power of intuition into reason that allows them to develop visions of sublime magnitude that stretch off into infinity. Where comprehension and intuition fail, apprehension, reason, rationality, and the mathematical prevail and men imagine the immense proportions of the world in numbers. Of course, the problem with this solution is that it threatens to replicate the problem of the dynamic sublime that issues from the human inability to comprehend immensity in the mathematical sublime where the measures of reason themselves become impossible for men to conceive precisely because of their infinite reach. Under these conditions, the experience of sublimity passes from the inability to comprehend the thing itself to the inability to comprehend the apprehensive attempt to capture the thing itself in reason, rationality, and mathematics.

This is precisely what Nye (1996) means when he talks about the American technological sublime. According to his theory, the original American utopians, the good Lockean men who sought to work on God's land in order to give it human form, transformed the sublimity of the earth that they could not comprehend, through their reasonable, rational, mathematical, and perhaps centrally technological apprehensions of the natural in their own constructed spaces. However, what Kant (2007) explains about the mathematical sublime, and we can observe in the history of the Nye's American technological sublime, is that men end up taking the infinite nature of number for a finite totality, a kind of finite infinite, in order to counter the way the new rational sublime starts to overwhelm them in its own constructed immensity. What we observe in the American case, then, is the Promethean apprehension of the incomprehensible natural sublime in reason, rationality, mathematics, and technology that then produces its own form of sublimity, the mathematical

or technological sublime. In other words, the machine becomes unknowable, a kind of fetish object, which men cannot understand, which is precisely how Marx (1990) conceived of the notion of alienation. Given the invention of this mathematico-technological form of sublimity, Nye (1996) then reads the history of America in terms of the endless attempt to re-apprehend the incomprehensible apprehension of the natural sublime, or God's land, in the new technological environment through endless technological development, which, of course, only generates further incomprehensible technological apprehensions, further efforts to produce apprehensive fixes, and so on ad infinitum. This is Nye's vision of American modernity.

Although it may be possible to read the entire history of modernity through this theory of progressive technological apprehension, which is more or less what Simmel (2011) achieves in his work on the endless objectification of humanity, where America differs, and advances the culture of mechanisation of modern Europe, is in its lack of a comparable experience of secularisation that imposes a vision of an earthly telos upon this process. Where the continental Europeans sought to resolve the experience of the technological apprehension of the dynamic sublime in the fantasy of what we might call the social sublime, the ideal city or community, the American alternative, which eventually found its ultimate form in the liberal/neoliberal tradition of Smith (1982, 1999), Friedman (2002), and Hayek (2012), kept the individual front and centre in a kind of dynamic model that prohibited the identification of a collective telos. While the Europeans thought the final purpose of technological apprehension was the creation of a utopian society, which was, of course, always a kind of representation of the perfection of ancient form, in the American experience the technological apprehension of the incomprehensible immensity of nature runs through the individual, and the meeting place of individuals, the free market, which eventually becomes the site of the production of technological development and innovation, but never a thing called society that was always secondary to the ultimate space of freedom, the market. What we can see from this comparison, therefore, is that America's ultimate technological sublime, that resolves the incomprehensibility of the natural sublime through progressive machinic apprehension, is the market, because what the market achieves is the preservation of the individual who works the land, and consequently resolves its natural sublimity into reasonable human apprehension and the provision of an objective means of exchange to enable further apprehension made necessary when the original effort to resolve divine sublimity into Promethean productivity runs into its own incomprehensible limit.

In this respect the market becomes a man–made cosmos somewhere between subjectivity, and human finitude, and objectivity, and the space of the infinite, the sublime. Moreover, the final result of this thesis, which reads Kant's (2007) philosophy of the sublime with Locke's (1988) theory of labour value in a vision of an American economic sublime, is Mirowski's (2002) machinic dream that saw Friedman (2002) and the Chicago School imagine the market in terms of an absolutely transparent technological form that subsumes the

incomprehensibility of the natural sublime in apprehensive mathematical reason that finds pragmatic application in the new economics. What this thesis illustrates, culturally speaking, is how Friedman's mathematical, cybernetic neoliberalism was able to find a place in America where the individual is king and pragmatism matters, because what his Lockean-Kantian reason achieved was the fusion of American nationalism and a vision of mathematical, technological reason that seemed to respect, and indeed champion, individual freedom in the world through reasoned labour and making. However, the problem with Friedman's (2002) Neo-Kantian vision, which sought the apprehension of the incomprehensible in a form of mathematico-economic reason that imagined the finitude of the infinite and, as a consequence, the resolution of the monstrous endlessness of the sublime in the finite, organisational beauty of the economic system, is that it ended in the emergence of a nationalistic, paranoid totality fearful of the outside. This is, of course, reflective of the cold war context of Friedman's market utopia that led John Nash (2007) to imagine the non-cooperative game and (a)social equilibrium based upon the generalisation of the inability to communicate and move forward together. While the sociological manifestation of this condition was the everyday low-intensity war Virilio (2008) writes about in terms of pure war, Friedman's (2002) economic justification was based in a critique of the Keynesian social state. From Friedman's monetarist perspective, the Keynesian economic model was unsustainable because state spending flooded the market with money and led to exorbitant inflation. Against this approach to the creation of demand, Friedman sought productivity through freedom and innovation, and freedom and innovation through the creation of a more effective business environment defined by low taxation and more accessible, cheaper labour. While these supply side measures could make business more profitable, and as a result lead to more demand, finance became important to enable start-ups in the first place.

In this way the idea of the non-cooperative situation was never problematic for neoliberalism, and in fact made ideological sense, because what this vision of the (a)social condition suggests is a collection of discrete individuals living and working in a state of perpetual economic competition, able to drive innovation, development, productivity, consumption, and so on. Furthermore, this vision of social and economic struggle sat easy with Americans who imagined the competitive individual in terms of the self-made man who made use of cheap finance to buy his own piece of utopia in a return to the foundation myth of the early colonists. While the idea of a land- or property-owning democracy took America back to its philosophical roots in Locke's (1988) theory of the worked environment, it was also perfectly suited to the cold war milieu captured by Nash (2007) and Von Neumann and Morgenstern (2007). Buying into property enabled the middle classes, and later on in the 20th century, people further down the socio-economic food chain, to play out their own American dream and make it in the land of the free. However, property and home ownership was also a mechanism to enable American man to escape the other side of the new hyper-competitive system, which was the

omnipresent threat of civil war, through the transformation of the home into a space of high security that could effectively buy the individual out of the social (Davis, 2006).

What we can observe here is the way in which Simmel's (2011) objectified modern money society began to revolve around a new ideological complex defined by, on the one hand, the celebration of individual achievement in a competitive socio-economic environment and, on the other hand, the attempt to escape from the worst effects of individualism through the flight from the other made possible by the very money economy that had led to the alienation of self from other in the first place. Since Friedman's (2002) monetarist turn away from Keynesian state spending and the inflationary expansion of the money supply meant that government could not pay for self-realisation, the mechanism which would allow this new (a)social individualism to play out was carefully controlled credit. The key to this policy was to make sure sufficient money was available to enable investment but prevent exorbitant lending that would create a bubble economy and invariably lead to bust, bankruptcy, and recession in the future. Of course, the problem with this model, which was that it was limited by the need to keep the money supply more or less in line with productivity, was precisely what Friedman's turn to mathematics enabled the finance sector to solve through the creation of derivatives able to hedge against the possibility of future losses and as a result take away the possibility of loss on the side of the investor. Although individual debtors could still default if they took on more debt than they could repay, the impact of hedging on neoliberal finance was to take away the risk of the lender, who could insure against loss in such a way that effectively floated the financial system free of a concern with the productive economy. While the worker remained locked into the need to produce in order to make money in order to repay debts necessary to live the dream, the possibility of default was no problem for the creditor and simply part of the broader socio-economic state of nature.

On the side of the creditor, real productivity, or the labour theory of value, became passé, because finance was reflective of the sign system explained by the father of structuralism, Ferdinand Saussure (2013), where the connection between the signifier and signified is entirely arbitrary and conventional, and taken up by the postmodernists keen to explore the effects of symbolic floatation on the constructedness of the world. In the works of Jean Baudrillard (1988), for example, the impact of this process of the postmodern dislocation of signs from referents was the emergence of hyper-reality, a purely virtual utopia, which found its home in the land of neoliberalism and financial innovation, America. However, while Baudrillard found hyper-reality in the abstraction of the sign from its referent, which consequently enables a vision of the absolute virtuality and the transcendental quality of finance, it is possible to develop an alternative reading of the nature of the neoliberal financial utopia through a consideration of the work of Alain Badiou. In Badiou's (2008) work, the mathematical is less reflective of absolute abstraction and virtuality, which would produce a postmodern reading of finance, and more a symbolic expression of the essential, ontological

sphere of existence itself. The mathematical is, therefore, real in such a way that captures the Friedmanite and Chicago School confidence in the pragmatic nature of the mathematical turn in economics. But where Badiou (2008) recognises that the number is real, and ontological, because it reflects the infinite nature of existence or being, the comparison with the operation of the financial system becomes problematic.

Although finance makes use of the ontological and infinite properties of the number in pursuit of the creation of money ex nihilo, what it also seeks to achieve is the limitation of this infinite or, in the language of Kant (2007), this sublime through the hedge where the objective is to transform the endless possibility of price, and as a consequence the potential for monstrous fluctuation, into a kind of infinite totality, where everything is predictable and already decided in probability. This is precisely the operation Kant (2007) explains in his exploration of the mathematical sublime, where men attempt the apprehension of the failed comprehension of nature in the mathematical that then fails in the creation of a new reasonable infinity, which results in the emergence of a kind of fake finite infinity that saves men from the horrors of the void. From Badiou's (2008) point of the view, this is precisely the defensive move contemporary capitalism enacts in its turn to the tyrannical regime of numbers that represents the reduction of the ontological sphere of the infinite number in a kind of mathematical utopia that is entirely predictable across time and space. Again, the problem with this arithmetical utopia is that it opens the space of the infinite number, in order to create money ex nihilo through the practice of leveraging, but then closes the void through the regime of numbers, which finds form in the hedge, and the creation of a finite system based upon the endless repetition of particular techniques able to reason away potential chaos. In other words, the only way is up! In light of this endless positivity, the utopia of finance is, therefore, beautiful, rather than sublime, because it tends towards the same in the cancellation of the radical potential of the number. This sense of closure is, of course, a key element of every utopian form, and the financial utopia is comparable in respect of the way it cancels future possibility, through the practice of insurance that means that even though prices fluctuate there is no chance of the creditor taking a hit, and squeezes out the potential existence of alternative spaces where these practical truths fail to apply, because the abstract model of financialisation applies on a global scale. Finally, high-tech speed, and the velocity of financial calculation and transfer, collapses distance into temporality in the emergence of the utopia of global finance, and the neoliberal fantasy world is complete.

However, Badiou's (2008) point is that the realisation of the utopian symbolic order represents a form of excessive signification or, in this case, numerical accumulation that always reveals a deeper, ontological state of lack. Under these conditions of what Badiou calls subtraction, the regime of numbers becomes endlessly vulnerable to the ontological event of the number, and this is clear in the case of the contemporary financial utopia where, for example, high-frequency trading, which enables the light speed coordination of global

finance space-time, also creates the possibility of market crashes, or events, based in automated fire sales produced by the very algorithmic technologies that make the global financial utopia possible in the first place. Where the fantasy of the hedge is based in the vision that it is possible to create mathematical models to ensure immunity from these kind of irruptions of the real, from Badiou's (2008) Lacanian point of view it will never be possible to entirely repress the infinity of number beneath the finitude of numbers, because the very practice of repression through excessive symbolisation produces its own other in the emergence of a lack or void in the centre of the (financial) system that represents the ontology of number and beyond this the infinite material multiplicity of being itself. Following Badiou's philosophy, then, I think that it is possible to suggest that what irruptive financial events enable is the critique of the symbolic space of numbers in the name of the ontological universe of the number, which is also coincidentally a universe characterised by the materialist plurality of being, and a recognition of the problem of the real of the productive economy that concerns the worker's body that lives, loves, labours, burns out, and eventually expires in silence.

II Number, Numbers, and the Utopia of Finance

It is this thesis that I want to develop in this chapter through a consideration of Ole Bjerg's (2014) work on finance and financialisation, before moving on to show how this utopia of numbers is vulnerable at the level of ontological number through reference to the work of Badiou's student, Quentin Meillassoux (2009, 2015). What connects each of these thinkers is their reference to the later work of Lacan (Liu, 2010), whom Bjerg employs through Žižek's use of the three registers of the real, symbolic, and imaginary, and who opens a space for a critique of neoliberal capitalism and financialisation because of his own adoption of cybernetics in the mid-1950s and vision of mathematical ontology in the same period. Where Friedman and the neoliberals would translate Smith (1982, 1999) into a cyber theorist and their mathematical models created the space for complex financialisation, Lacan (1991) made Freud's primal space of the id, or it, into the cybernetic unconscious outside of people, with the inadvertent result that psychoanalysis became a theory of late capitalism, and particularly late capitalist subjectivity, and late capitalism became a model for psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic understandings of the self. On the one hand this led to the problem we found in Derrida's (1994) *Given Time*, which is that the post-Lacanian, post-structuralist attempt to escape from totalitarian order ends up in the mirror image of late capitalism that needs to differentiate in order to survive. But, on the other hand, this equation of Lacanian psychoanalysis and cybernetic capitalism equally creates a privileged space of critique, which it is at once more possible to observe in Derrida's (1994) work, through reference to the idea of the free play of signification.

In the first instance, Derrida (1994) fractures Mauss' (2000) circle of obligatory generosity in the name of freedom only to reflect the post-human condition

of Simmel's (1997) urban economy, which is, of course, captured in his reference to Baudelaire (2009), who was one of Benjamin's (1999) favourite subjects. But this is not to say that Derrida is some kind of Friedmanite, because what we find in his theory of the free play of signification is a game that threatens to transgress the neoliberal financial project that seeks to contain the movement of numbers within a system that hedges against loss, lack, and failure. Following Lacan, it is precisely this possibility that Derrida (1984) seeks to keep in play through, for example, his exploration of the cryptic significance of 'a' of the word 'différance' that is written, but cannot speak its own name. For Derrida, the silent, secret, 'a' of the word 'différance' marks the moment of encryption, the moment of the loss, lack, and failure, hidden inside the play of signification that prevents totalitarian transparency and connects the system to the other that remains somewhere outside. This other represents Badiou's (2008) infinite number beyond the beautiful system of numbers and the general instability of the code in the cybernetic financial system, but also recalls the work of earlier cold war proto-postmodernists, including William S. Burroughs (2013) and William Gaddis (1993). Recall Burroughs' (2008, 2013) works in which he raged against what he considered the cybernetic control machine through the monstrosity of bodies, junk, and a kind of dark economy based in the con and hustle. In the same period, Gaddis' (1993) works reduced Friedman's utility function to the madness of the gambler. In his classic work *JR* (1993), the reader meets a confusion of voices that effectively destroys the self caught in the market that has become a post-human machine.

Following these critiques of the cold war cybernetic universe, perhaps it is easier to understand the objectivity of Derrida's (1994) project which, on the one hand, breaks open Mauss' circle of obligatory generosity and, on the other hand, threatens the capitalist machine that attempts to close down the radical nature of mathematics in a finite version of infinity through the exposure of its own desperate excesses designed to hide its inherent lack. That it is possible to read deconstruction in this apolitical manner surely illustrates the problematic origins of Derrida's work in Lacan's (1991) take on cybernetics that was always beyond the space of the political itself and has found application in every aspect of life since its emergence in the 1950s. But if Derrida's project is reflective of the power of the cybernetic revolution which shaped the turn to neoliberalism that organises our world today, it is possible to argue that deconstruction failed in the same way that capitalism and, eventually, the neoliberal utopia will fail, in that it cannot respond to Nietzsche's (1991) question about what fills in for God when He leaves the scene. Beyond the theological cosmos, Weber (1992) imagined that progressive rationalisation would eventually lead to a kind of spiritless nihilism. It was in this empty space, where there is no law beyond the law to make a killing out of the other, that Melville (2008) lost his faith in a vision of everybody on the take in the 19th century. While American capitalism sought to solve this problem of godless immorality through the invention of various technologies able to rationalise the market—so the communication of price on the stock exchange shifted from writing numbers on chalkboards

through the first ticker in the 19th century to high-frequency trading (HFT) and algo trade in the late 20th century and finally the emergence of Friedman's cybernetic machine explored in the previous chapter—there is no sense in which these innovations have completed the capitalist utopia, because the virus of uncertainty, the virus of the number, remains in play.

It is this radical uncertainty that I want to pick up through my reference to Badiou's (2008) theory of the number and towards the end of this chapter in a discussion of Quentin Meillassoux's (2009, 2015) works on the mathematical opposition to Kantian correlationism. Centrally, what I want to show here is how Meillassoux (2009) finds the origin of being—what he calls the arche-fossil—through mathematical science and then projects this identification of origins through into a theory of hyper-chaos that insists upon the pure contingency of both beginnings and endings. It is on the basis of this theory of hyper-chaos, which describes a situation where the only necessity it is possible to identify is the necessity of contingency, that Meillassoux (2015) takes off into a theory of what he calls extro-science fiction, or science fiction that suspends the laws of science and as a result imagines the entirely new. The purpose of my reference to this work is to imagine a new form of economics, what we might call extro-economics, where the rule of financial hyper-chaos and the recognition that market turbulence is necessary result in the suspension of the techno-scientific cybernetic order invented by Friedman and the later Chicago School thinkers and escape from the post-human nightmare of the post-political end of history that says that there is no alternative (Fukuyama, 1992). In other words, I move from Badiou (2008), and the theory of the ontological dimension of mathematics, through his student Meillassoux (2009), and his work on the arche-fossil and hyper-chaos, in order to oppose the mathematical utopia of late capitalism, the beautiful financial system, on its own terms.

The objective of this work is to imagine a new science fiction, a new utopianism, extro-economics, which suspends the cybernetic universe in order to imagine the new based in precisely what the contemporary socio-economic system disallows despite its apparent pragmatism and concern with response to need—the essential materiality of existence. However, before I reach an exploration of Meillassoux's (2009, 2015) work, I want to cycle back in order to outline the framework I propose to employ in order to understand finance, and in particular Kant's (2007) theory of the sublime and Badiou's (2008) work on mathematical ontology, which shows how the financial utopia that hangs over neoliberal society comes from the struggle between the contained form, where the potential infinity of the number is contained in the endless proliferation of numbers, and the uncontained, excessive force of the event that threatens to destroy the symbolic system of numbers in the revelation of the material multiplicity of being. What I have sought to explain above is that it is possible to explain the financial utopia through Kant's (2007) idea of the mathematical sublime, where the monstrous experience of the infinite we encounter in nature resolves through the human application of reason that imposes order upon everything. The problem with this is, however, that reason itself leads to

complexity and becomes its own sublime. Kant (2007) calls this reasonable form of the experience of transcendence the mathematical sublime in order to indicate the way that numbers that allow the calculation of natural enormity lead to the identification of a new kind of infinity and shows how the response to this situation is the imagination of the infinite in terms of a closed totality. In this respect, the infinite no longer reflects endless distance, but becomes its own boundary. It is precisely this situation—which I believe it is possible to apply to global financialisation in order to understand the way that central bankers and finance ministers seek to resolve more or less infinite economic complexity in a finite, manageable system through the application of hedges and derivatives—that I want to critique through reference to Badiou's philosophy.

But why Badiou? I want to refer to Badiou's (2008) work in order to critique the Kantian (2007) mathematical sublime of the global financial system because Badiou works off a theory of the relationship between mathematics and ontology. Indeed, Badiou (2008) says that mathematics is ontology. What this means is that being can be found through mathematics, which is a sign system without culture, history, or embodied significance. For Badiou—who, I want to suggest, took this vision of maths from his teacher Lacan (1991), who himself picked this up from his reading of the American cybernetic theorists in the 1950s—what numbers can allow is access to the material multiplicity of being. The irony of his position is, therefore, that the number, which is always infinite, because like Kant's (2007) mathematical sublime it has no end, results in a conclusion that reveals the primacy of the material and the multiplicity of this material condition, simply because there is no transcendental anchor. There is no God, but rather the number, and the number is no thing. The number is zero, a circle that simultaneously represents the utopian enclosure of being that recognises that there is no big Other, and the void that (un)grounds the infinity that opens out through the numerical representation of existence that knows no bounds. Where Badiou (2008) develops Lacan's (1991) development of the cybernetic theorists, who he read through his 1954–1955 seminar in the construction of cybernetic psychoanalysis organised around the language of probability, feedback, and entropy, is in the way he shifts his teacher's vision of the cybernetic self onto a philosophical level able to understand social, political, and economic conditions.

For Lacan, the matheme emerged in order to represent the universality of psychological process, and particularly the construction of the symbolic order that works on the basis of a structuralism that recognises the primacy of binary code, that is entirely beyond people. The unconscious is, therefore, outside, and operates on the basis of associations comparable to the zeros and ones of binary code, but Lacan (2007) recognised that the real is always present and fractures the symbolic fantasy of the self-identical, imaginary self we see when we observe ourselves in the mirror. Badiou's (2008) reading of Lacan projects the theory of the three registers towards social, political, and I would suggest economic structure, in order to say that numbers represent a kind of symbolic system that makes sense of the world. Although the number has no origin

and no end, since it is a no thing, a zero, and as consequence stretches off into infinity, the symbolic system of numbers imagines, in respect of the Lacanian imaginary, a vision of completion, which reflects the Kantian (2007) fantasy of the beauty of finite infinity, and the financial utopia built upon the idea of endless capacity to hedge in the name of stability. Given this setup, Badiou's (2008) version of the Lacanian real is, therefore, the number, zero, which is no thing, that (un)grounds the endless contingency of the system built upon its impossible foundations and conditions the infinite that stretches out into the future. Since the transcendental level of representation is, under these conditions, endlessly contingent, what Badiou (2008) reveals is the essential possibility inherent in the global social, political, and economic system that has no anchor and only opens out onto the materiality of being. Of course, in exactly the same way that Lacan's subject lives through the symbolic order, and paradoxically imagines that the real is completely unreal, Badiou's number, the symbol of the void and the multiplicity of being, is endlessly hidden from view by the proliferation of numbers that form a kind of metastructure, what Badiou calls the state of the situation.

Given Badiou's (2008) Lacanian theory of the relationship between void and situation and number and numbers, I want to argue that the contemporary neoliberal utopia of finance, which in many respects represents the Smith-Hayek vision of spontaneous order in the perfectly virtual space of money, is a symbolic structure that seeks its own finite infinity in the practice of the hedge that seeks to ensure it is absolutely resistant to the revelation of its own ontological lack. That is to say that the financial utopia seeks to insure against the revelation of the inherent instability of price relative to value that originates in the labour of bodies and to hide this truth behind a vision of oneness and financial excess. However, what Badiou's (2008) thesis allows the critical thinker to understand is the way in which excessive symbolisation, meant to overcome the problem of lack, simply reinforces the condition of lack, which, remember, is the nature of being, because there will always be elements that the system of symbolisation fails to pick up. In the case of finance there are, for example, always those who are unworthy of credit; and in the American case, where credit was extended to include everybody in the infamous practice of the NINJA (no income, no job or assets) loan, the effort to totalise the symbolic system simply led to its more or less complete collapse. In this situation where the truth of lack, or the void of being, that exists beneath the symbolic state comes to light, Badiou (2006) talks about the event, the revelation of the infinite, and the realisation of the primacy of the material. In Lacan's (1993) work, this kind of symbolic break reflects the onset of psychosis, which is precisely why Deleuze and Guattari (1983) turn the schizophrenic into a kind of revolutionary hero, and Badiou takes the same line. While the failure of symbolisation, and the realisation of the contingent nature of reality, may appear fatal from the perspective of those who profit from the state of the situation, from the far side of this utopian form the collapse of the symbolic system into a blizzard of uncoordinated signs rep-resents the emergence of immortality, infinity, and the truth.

While morality is a property of the system which imposes finite limits upon reality, Badiou's (2006) view is that the event that explodes this system reveals the immortal truth of materiality that knows no God. Where the former is concerned with repetition within the same fixed coordinates, and in this case recalls Freud's (2003) theory of the inertia of being and the compulsion to repeat from his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Badiou's vision of the materiality of being is far more mobile. The difference between Freud and Lacan and Badiou on this issue concerns the concept of trauma, which exerts a kind of infinite gravitational pull upon the Freudian and Lacanian subject, but Badiou (2006) escapes through a kind of post-psychoanalytic vision of subtraction that consists in the refusal to recognise traumatic anchorage. In other words, Badiou's subject escapes trauma, and instead plays off the subtractive logic of the void of being, that means that it is endlessly productive and progressive and develops through a process of realisation and actualisation that leads off into the future. This how Badiou (2006) reads Lacan's concept of the real—if the real is the void that forms the core of being and subjectivity, then being, and consequently the subject, is endlessly contingent and must be understood in terms of potential. By contrast, the symbolic order, the state of the situation, and by extension the contemporary late capitalist utopia of finance, are essentially defensive, concerned with limitation, and what Badiou (2008) writes about in terms of the tyranny of numbers over the void of number that threatens to reveal the ontological truth of multiplicity, where oneness, held together through reference to the idea of a structural anchor, no longer holds. Where number is no thing, and represents immediacy and immanence, numbers are always a form of symbolic alienation that hides the truth of being, which is exactly what Jean-François Lyotard (2004) says about signification in his work on libidinal economy.

In Lyotard's (2004) work, signs hang over existence and create a kind of nihilistic world where the positivity of libidinal energy has no place. Under these conditions the sublime represents a violation of human existence that fractures experience and creates a crisis of perception. Where the original experience of the sublime was reserved for the enormity of nature, Lyotard (1994) follows Kant's idea of the mathematical sublime in his formulation of a kind of everyday, or immanent, sublime which we find in forms of abstraction and technology that empty lived experience of significance. However, while Lyotard (1994) is critical of the sublime in the sense that it reduces the importance of existence before what becomes the reality of symbolisation, he also recognises the potential power of the experience of the sublime in the fracture of the beautiful, symbolic system that imposes consensus upon reality. In this respect, the Lyotard (1994) of *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* understands the radical potential of the sublime, which comes to represent dissensus and resistance to the beautiful fantasy of the totalitarian system, and makes a similar argument to the one made by Badiou (2006, 2008) about the ability of event and the realisation of the void of number in the destruction of the closed state of the situation and tyrannical rule of numbers. Moreover, where Badiou identifies number and the void with the revelation of the

material multiplicity of being, Lyotard (1994) rethinks the revolutionary poten-tial of the sublime through reference to its affective, experiential dimension that cannot be captured in reason or rational thought. Of course, this is pre-cisely what Kant (2007) sought to achieve through the application of mathemat-ics to the incomprehensible experience of sublimity, and then restated in his theory of the mathematical sublime that resolves into a kind of finite vision of infinity. But, for Lyotard, the sublime is always beyond reason, and for life, and cannot be contained by strategies of apprehension.

Is this not exactly the way Badiou (2008) theorises number, which represents the contingent anchor of the tyrannical regimes of numbers, and opens out onto the void of being, which is true in its multiplicity, materiality, indistinc-tion, and refusal of the count? In this respect Badiou's (2008) number, which symbolises resistance to numerical objectivity and quantification in the name of material subjectivity and qualification that ends every attempt to impose significance with the qualifier 'but', is extremely dangerous to the contemporary financial utopia which is predicated on the process of translation of qualifica-tion into quantification through the practice of valuation, the transformation of value into price, and finally the relative stabilisation of price through risk assessment and the hedge that captures the radical potential of number in numerical finitude. This is essentially how I read Ole Bjerg's (2014) vision of the global financial system in his work *Making Money*, which forms the basis of my own theory of the neoliberal utopia of finance. Although Bjerg never mentions Lacan or Badiou in his account, his use of Žižek (1991) and the Lacanian theory of the three registers suggests a relationship between his account of finance, the cybernetic vision of neoliberal capitalism I set out in Chapter 3, and finally Badiou's (2008) critique of numbers in the name of the void of the number.

While the connection between Bjerg's (2014) vision of a kind of unified financial system and cybernetics comes from his use of Žižek's (1991) Lacanian thought, which relates to the American cybernetic revolution through Lacan's (1991) techno re-reading of Freud in the mid-1950s, the relevance of the Lacanian Badiou to his position starts early in his book when he focuses on the distinction between value—which he relates to the real, but we might also talk about in terms of number—and price, which concerns the symbolic order, but would equally relate to Badiou's theory of the symbolic situation. From this point on, I think, Bjerg (2014) constructs a vision of the late capitalist financial utopia of numbers, which perfectly captures the idea of the imposi-tion of finitude upon the infinite, and enables the reader to understand the way this system floats above the universe of value and hedges against any contact with what Žižek (1991) writes about in terms of the real and Badiou (2006) captures through the idea of the void. In a sense I think this is how we must understand the idea of the late capitalist, or neoliberal, utopia today, because what Bjerg's (2014) work captures is pure virtuality and idealism of this system that seeks to escape the real of productivity and the productive body and never look back towards the real economy where limitation and

exhaustion, but also transgression and infinite potential, remain possible. As Bjerg (2014) shows, and I propose to explain in my account of his work that follows, the problem with the financial utopia is twofold. On the one hand, it escapes the political problem of exhaustion for a new kind of fantastical creativity, which refuses to recognise the real of value that comes from working bodies in the magic of making money ex nihilo, and on the other hand, it limits the potential of real bodies that work in the world through their subsumption under the regime of numbers that, first, makes them largely unnecessary, and second, ties them up in debt that constrains their future.

Of course, the spectre of the financial crash haunts Bjerg's (2014) work and looms into view in his final chapter, because the causes of, and response to, this situation really reflect the state of the political struggle between the neoliberal champions of the utopia of finance and those who think that productivity emerges from the work of bodies in the world that need consideration by virtue of the fact that they suffer, burn out, and eventually expire. Whereas the former want to isolate their beautiful system from the shocks caused by the asymmetry of their virtual machine and real productivity by passing the costs of its maintenance on to people who must pay the price in material terms, critics of the financial utopia take the view that it is no longer possible, if it ever was, to sustain the fantastical utopia that makes money ex nihilo off the backs of people who must suffer in the world. It is this political situation, and the prospect of radical change, that I propose to pick up in the final section of this chapter, and then explore in the next chapter. But before I make this move, I turn to Bjerg (2014) in order to outline his theory of the contemporary financial system. Bjerg starts his exploration of contemporary finance by showing how the creation of financial surpluses resides in the essential separation of price from value in the marketplace. Since value remains entirely subjective from the point of view of the market, it takes on a price by virtue of what a buyer is willing to pay. In this way Bjerg (2014) brings Žižek, and consequently Lacan, to the table in order to explain that it is possible to understand value in terms of the concept of the real, which always escapes full symbolisation, and price comes to resemble the idea of the symbol, which imperfectly captures the value of value through a process of alienation. Since the transformation of value into price is never absolutely about the valuable object itself, but rather what the buyer is willing to pay relative to other valuable objects on the market, the valuable object has no price in itself, but only ever in relation to other valuable things. Thus, the symbol—in this instance price—finds significance in its relation to other symbols, or prices, in the formation of what Lacan (2007) calls a symbolic order, Badiou (2006) calls the state of the situation, and, in the context of economy, is called the price mechanism.

III The Financial Utopia and the Possibility of Extro-Economics

In terms of the operation of the market trader who wants to profit from exchange, Bjerg (2014) explains that his game must be to either discover the

fundamental value of an object in order to assess whether there is profit to be made in the difference between its current price and what he takes to be its real value, or track the movement of prices in isolation from any assessment of value in order to try to predict market fluctuations that will allow him to buy now and sell later for a higher price. However, Bjerg is clear that the world of the market would collapse into chaos if there was no kind of stability around the relationship between price and value, and he presents three developments in financial theory which have provided this sense of stability. In line with the emergence of cybernetic, neoliberal theory in the 1950s, Bjerg (2014) points to Eugene Fama's concept of the efficient markets hypothesis (EMH), which suggests that there is no way for the trader to make a killing on shifts in the relationship between price and value, because what he could potentially know about this difference is already common knowledge on the markets and, therefore, must already be factored into the particular price under consideration. Speculation is, therefore, impossible on the market because common knowledge means that there is no way to take advantage of insider information. Where the idea of the EMH makes it difficult to see how it is possible to make money on the market, the next innovation Bjerg (2014) focuses on shores up price, and particularly investor's stake, from the other side. That is to say that Markowitz's theory of portfolio management and diversification of stock holdings offers a strategy to ensure that investors are able to offset losses on one particular stock through gains in another in order to ensure that the value of their overall portfolio remains largely stable. In this way, where Fama sought to take away the reality of price instability through an idea of universal knowledge, Markowitz looks to diversify the reality of turbulence out of existence.

Finally, in the early 1970s, the stabilisation of the financial system through the management of price relative to value was complete in Black, Scholes, and Merton's model for the creation of options and derivatives. According to Bjerg (2014), the key function of Black, Scholes, and Merton's work was to track the fluctuation of price over time in order to generate a range of probability relating to potential fluctuations to enable the creation of options, derivatives, and other instruments to allow investors to buy in the event of price rises and hedge against potential losses in cases where prices fall. Although Bjerg (2014) never explains the connection of the contributions of Fama, Markowitz, and Black, Scholes, and Merton in terms of the emergence of a kind of financial utopia, I would suggest that it is possible to read the framework built through these three theories in this way because what they led to was the development of a kind of closed system of price able to hedge against potential turbulence at the level of real productivity where value is made. Bjerg's (2014) triumvirate of Fama, Markowitz, and Black, Scholes, and Merton, thus, led to the financial landscape of riskless risk that evolved through the neoliberal period stretching from the late 1970s through to the present, where the idea was and remains that mathematical models, Badiou's (2008) numbers, can rationalise the real, and contain the Kantian (2007) sublime that escapes human comprehension in a kind of techno-scientific vision of finite infinity.

In this setup Badiou's (2008) point about the groundlessness of number, meaning that there is no way to calculate contingency out of the system, is lost in a theory of the ultimate reason that operates on the basis of mechanical principles. In other words, whereas Badiou's theory of the number rests on a Lacanian (2007) idea of the irreducibility of the real which is in itself an adaptation of Freud's (2001) notion of the unconscious that cannot be absolutely repressed, finance seeks to hedge the instability of value that resides in the universe of the void, the real, and the unconscious out of the picture through notions of the universality and transparency of information and knowledge, the essential reason of traders, and the predictive power of rational thought. However, for Bjerg (2014) the symbolisation, or virtualisation, of economy in financial structures is not simply about the creation of a kind of hyper-rational market that sees price become more or less free of changes in assessment of value, but he also shows how the emergence of finance transformed the nature of money itself. In this respect he starts by asking about the identity of money. What is money? His answer is that in the first place money was symbolic of gold that worked as a type of universal mediator able to bridge the abyss of differential values in a process of the quantification of qualification. At this point he recalls Menger (2009), who thought that money solved the problem of barter and the double coincidence of wants, and Simmel (2011), who argued that money entails the objectification of subjective value. Beyond this idea of commodity money, Bjerg (2014) also refers to Georg Knapp's state theory of money, which explains how money is the creation of government to enable trade across a particular territory, before taking up credit theory, where money is no longer backed by precious metals or the state, but comes into being in the form of credit notes concerned with the promise to pay in the future. The basis of credit theory, first outlined by Henry Macleod in the late 19th century, is that money starts to circulate through trade in the form of credit notes that become general tender and generate an economy reflective of relative value of productivity. Given this economy, those who hold the most credit become creditworthy on the basis of their ability to repay loans, and banks, which become institutions for the circulation of credit, lend to them in return for repayment in full, plus interest.

But Bjerg (2014) explains that fractional reserve banking, based in confidence in the bank's ability to pay its depositors on request, means that the bank can issue loans well beyond the value it holds in its vaults. On the basis that banks are able to lend money they never had which then comes back to them plus interest, he explains that they are able to make money ex nihilo. In the contemporary financial utopia, Bjerg (2014) makes the point that the immediate accessibility of cash from ATMs sustains the fantasy that the bank holds reserves equal to total deposits, but this quickly collapses if depositors seek to convert their holdings into cash. He notes that what prevents this situation, the bank run, from taking place is circumstances where depositors are able to maintain confidence in the bank's ability to pay. It is this confidence that allows the bank to leverage against its reserves in the creation of credit money. However,

in cases where the bank over-leverages and is unable to meet depositors' need for cash, its ontological insolvency is revealed on an ontic level, and Bjerg (2014) explains that the state must step in to act as the lender of last resort. Under these conditions, the state must meet the shortfall in the bank's reserves in order to ensure cash is available in order to prevent deep recession caused by a general lack of confidence in money. Once confidence is restored, and money is available, the bank can start to lend once more, and leverage its reserves in the creation of credit. Of course, it was precisely this situation that occurred in 2008 through state bank bailouts designed to restore liquidity to the markets when the general insolvency of the banking system was revealed in mass default on the American housing market. This situation was so severe because, in Bjerg's (2014) view, banks had shifted towards what he calls post-credit money, which involves a degree of leverage that effectively entails the creation of money without cash support.

For Bjerg (2014), this process of the floatation of money, in the form of numbers communicated through the computerised global financial system, was made possible by the original floatation of cash, free from gold, in 1971. Following Nixon's suspension of the gold standard, money was no longer bound to materiality, and the management of supply came down to state institutions, such as the Fed and central banks, that ensure that the money supply does not run out of control. This is, of course, the basis of Friedman and Schwartz's (1971) monetarism and what we might call cybernetic, tech-nocratic post-politics designed to manage the flow of money through the market in order to ensure finance remains available. However, the problem with this model of economic management is that processes of deregulation, which were organised to enable banks to create money in order support investment and so on, led the state to lose control of money supply through, for example, interbank lending practices, where banks seek to distribute their risk in ways which simply enable reckless over-leveraging of reserves. While the aim of the practice of the interbank loan is to disappear risk, the deriva-tive market, which enables banks to hedge their bets, was designed to achieve the same objective in order to enable endless financialisation and leveraging of ever decreasing reserves. In instances where financial assets, such as mort-gages, can be used to issue more finance, the virtual circle of financialisation is complete and value creation seems limitless. In this situation it appears that there is no limit to the ability to make money, because the financial market seems to have no connection to the real productivity of bodies, but instead orbits around the real economy in a kind of zero-gravity environment.

Given the events of 2007 through to the contemporary moment, it is hard to understand the hubris of the neoliberal commitment to financialisation, and in particular the idea of riskless risk, but what is clear is that the frame-work that comprises the work of Fama through to Black, Scholes, and Merton led to the belief in the absolute security of the symbolic utopia of late capital-ism that would only ever make money. Despite Badiou's (2008) theory of mathematical ontology, which suggests that number will always break through

the fantastical system of numbers to reveal the void in the centre of the idea of mathematical necessity, Friedmanite neoliberals remain convinced of the ability of the cybernetic system, which we can read back through the Austrians and before Menger (2009) to Hayek (2012) and Smith (1982, 1999), to create order from disorder and beauty from chaos. However, in the case of the stock market, the German theorist Urs Staheli (2013) shows that the idea of the conversion of the madness of pure speculation into the rationality of what we might call cybernetic calculation has a long history. In his excellent work, *Spectacular Speculation* (2013), Staheli shows that it is possible to understand the history of market capitalism through the drive to rationalise the idea of speculation in order to create a vision of secure investment. In his view the emergence of the rational market analyst, who buys and sells on the basis of precise calculation, from the suspicious figure of gambler, who makes bets on hunches and is always on the make, was never an easy process, simply because the ideal American was the frontiersman, the Californian who takes a chance on the possibility that he will strike it rich. Although it is clear that this figure was always present in the ideal capitalist man of cybernetic neoliberalism, and this, for example, helps to explain how Friedman (2002) was able to sell his message of individual freedom to the cold war masses fearful of commies, Staheli (2013) argues that the evolution of the market involved the need to control this wild figure who was likely to take uncalculated risks and lose everything on a sure thing.

While it may have been useful for Friedman (2002) to play on the unconscious fantasy of the gambler in his popular communications about the value of free markets, what we know from his turn to mathematical models is that he was committed to the attempt to establish statistical certainty in a way that supports Staheli's (2013) theory of the rationalisation of the speculator. The problem with the speculator was, in Freudian (2003) terms, that he was caught under the spell of addiction, and the compulsion to make a killing, that meant that he was unable to think in rational terms. As Freud (2003) notes in his classic work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which concerns the compulsion to repeat, when we are in the grip of compulsion, or what it later turns out is the death drive, we seem to be under the control of a kind of unstoppable demonic force. In other words, we are out of our minds and cannot make reasonable decisions. Although Freud (2003) thought that thanatos was a universal condition, so that nobody escapes the death drive, Staheli (2013) explains that discourses around the utility of the stock market emerged in 19th-century America in order to oppose the vision of the criminal reason of the speculator. Against Melville's (2008) desperate, faithless story of America in the *Confidence Man*, where it appears that more or less everybody is on the take, Staheli (2013) argues that narratives about the social value of the market played on the claim that what traders produce is prices, which create the price system, and result in the stable market where supply and demand coincide in such a way that everybody benefits. Beyond this story about stability, the trader's social function extended to the way in which he could shape the

future by weighing costs and benefits and making prudent decisions about where to make investments.

Although these investments would be made in the name of self-interest and the maximisation of profit, there was no doubt that the rationality of the trader would enable him to steer clear of reckless gambles that would result in wider economic instability and social chaos. Staheli (2013) points out that in this respect the speculator's obsession with risk became the analyst's risk aversion that would steer society into a prudent future, in a revision of Smith's (1982, 1999) image of the invisible hand where social good comes out of individual calculation. However, this is not to say that the analyst became somehow less of an individual, because, Staheli notes, his expertise was founded in his ability to manage his emotional response to others that could lead to the pathology of overconfidence or panic in the face of the crowd. The threat of the mass was, thus, ever present for the analyst, who had to evade the temptation to fall into the crowd and conform to its stupid reactivity. In order to support this need for rationality, Staheli (2013) points out that the invention of the ticker system by Edward Calahan in 1863 and its widespread use by the 1880s meant that the analyst no longer needed to work with others, but could retreat towards a kind of cybernetic relationship with the machine in order to make technocratic assessments about future value. Indeed, the invention and use of the telegraphic ticker machine on the stock market may be representative of a key moment in the emergence of cybernetic capitalism, which I have read from Smith (1982, 1999) through Hayek (2012) to Friedman (2002), because this tech, which was based in the transmission of binary code, was, arguably, the first step in the development of the global network economy that collapsed space into time in the creation of a market utopia. Even here, however, there were risks that had to be driven out of the picture, and Staheli (2013) points out that the problem for the analyst was how to read the machine and decrypt its signs without completely losing himself in the endless procession of numbers that could hypnotise him in a state where the medium becomes the message/massage (McLuhan, 2001).

It is on the basis of this turn to media communication in the emergent cybernetic economy, where money starts to become a kind of pure sign without substance, that Mark C. Taylor (2004) reads the history of capitalism through the lens of modernisation, but more especially postmodernisation, where distinctions between reality and fantasy and truth and falsity collapse into pure signification and construction that passes or fails on the basis of confidence. Given this new environment where signs float free of potential material anchorage, Taylor (2004) updates Melville (2008), and feeds into a reading of a range of thinkers including Derrida and Baudrillard, with the claim that the counterfeit no longer exists. There is no fake, because there is no original, but only an endless procession of copies or, in Baudrillard's (1994) terms, clones. Taylor's point is that in this environment it is pointless to talk about value and imagine that there is some kind of fundamental basis for valuation, because there is no more than price, the symbol of value. For this reason Taylor (2004) makes the

leap from Baudrillard's (1988) ur–space of postmodernism, Las Vegas, to the centre of global financial capitalism, Wall Street, in such a way that threatens to unpick the history of the rationalisation of the analyst Staheli (2013) presents in his work. As Baudrillard (1988) shows in his *America*, and before him Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour (1977) explored in *Learning from Las Vegas*, Vegas is a mythological space that reconstructs the myth of America, where everybody can make it big.

But if Vegas is the unashamed space of Elvis, Sinatra, and the fantasy of the big win, the space of the American utopia carved out of the primal wastelands of the Nevada desert that never pretends to be anything else, Wall Street is its unconscious truth that imagines its role in global economic management, but where it really is possible to make a killing on the market, and make the transition from nobody to somebody and back again overnight. While Taylor (2004) evokes Melville's (2008) desperate story of *The Confidence Man* and Gaddis' (1993) vertiginous *JR* to critique the disorientation of the empire of signs, it is, of course, also possible to point to Wall Street's big winners, those criminal entrepreneurs, Bernie Madoff and Jordan Belfort, who traded on the confidence of a rising market. Although both Madoff and Belfort went to prison for their confidence tricks, the truth is that in the utopian space of pure money, where there is nothing underneath the sign, the idea of financial crime can have no real significance. What does it mean to become Madoff or the Wolf of Wall Street when there is no real distance between money and Boggs' representations of money? The answer is that it means very little, if anything, when the difference between real money and Boggs' work is that real money is in a sense less real, since it never leaves the space of pure sign, whereas what Boggs at least gives to us has some material thing. If we believe Bjerg (2014), this is how we must understand cash today in any case—cash is little more than a kind of material distraction that draws our eye away from the real action where money takes the form of pure circulation. Under these conditions, we might suppose that Smith's (1982, 1999) invisible hand belongs to Hermes, Greek god of markets, messages, and all kinds of confidence tricks, and speculate that this economic god is now online, on Baudrillard's screen, the postmodern version of the ticker, space of HFT, algo trading, the blizzard of monetary signs, and the ecstasy of economic communication. However, as Baudrillard (2012) shows in his critique of excessive communication, and Serres (1983) also explains in his work on Hermes, there is no complete or total form of communication, because noise will always return to corrupt the system precisely when it seems most secure.

This is exactly what Baudrillard (2012) means when he writes of ecstatic communication, which communicates nothing but the fact of communication itself, and Serres (1983) reflects upon when he explains that all technical sys–tems point towards entropy, noise, and the black depths of the universe. What this means is that the absolute security of the market, the realisation of Platonic form in the financial utopia that led Ben Bernanke and others to speak of the great moderation, is also Badiou's (2006) void, the black screen, the moment

the numbers no longer seem to add up or make sense. For mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot (2004) the connection between these two moments, the point of total securitisation and the black screen of nonsense, runs through the accumulation of an endless number of small events that come together to create a systemic tipping point. In his view these small deviations occur because the logic of financial securitisation is fundamentally flawed. In his work on the unpredictability of markets he asks, for example, what happens when the trade in derivatives and options starts to feed back into the valuation of stocks and shares to such an extent that price becomes absolutely distorted? What happens when it becomes clear that probability is incapable of predicting the future because it is based on calculations premised on the fantasy that what has happened in the past will continue to happen in the future? Thus Mandelbrot's (2004) point is that probability theory is ineffective in a highly complex system because there are too many variables and too many interactions to be able to base prediction about the future in an assessment of the past. In this way his fractal theory, which he names in reference to the Greek *fractus* that means 'to break', presents a picture of systemic uncertainty, unpredictability, and potential collapse that contradicts the standard picture of cybernetic economy where calculation and the ability to hedge against fluctuation enables the maintenance of stability and order.

By contrast to this utopian image of the stable economy that makes money and never breaks down, Mandelbrot (2004) argues that the global financial system is like any other complex system—it is organised around roughness that it is not possible to smooth out in the long run simply because it is *rough in itself*. What this means is that in contrast to the utopian capitalists, from Smith (1982, 1999) through Hayek (2012) to Friedman (2002), who take instability in microscopic cases because they believe this turbulence will eventually smooth out in the expansion of economic activity across space and time, Mandelbrot (2004) suggests that this never happens because roughness is a systemic property that stretches from the micro through to the macroscopic and cosmological view. In other words, the economy is, like every other complex system, rough and turbulent, and the idea of stability in the long run is a fantasy premised on a belief in the future that will eventually see instability even out towards some kind of equilibrium. In order to illustrate his thesis, Mandelbrot (2004) explains the condition of the global economy through the metaphor of the three states of matter—solids, liquids, and gases—and says that the complexity of the contemporary economy means that its properties are comparable to those of gases, where molecular organisation is highly unpredictable. Beyond Bauman's (2000) vision of liquid modernity, then, Mandelbrot's (2004) global economy is gaseous in the sense that its movements are uncertain and resistant to management over the long term. This is why, for Mandelbrot, the foundations of financial theory are fantastical. For example, he explains that Fama's EMH cannot rely on the idea of the absolute transparency and universality of information to structure price, because it is impossible for information to possess the clarity the efficient market theory requires when

there are so many variables on the table and these expand through endless global interactions across space and over the course of time.

Given the speed of global processes, which is, of course, driven by cybernetic innovation and the expansion of computational power, it is clear that it is more or less impossible to imagine transparent and universal information and that the very technologies that made the late capitalist utopia possible have now begun to undermine its integrity. At this point we enter the space of what the late Ulrich Beck (1992) writes about in terms of global risk, Paul Virilio (2007) explores through the idea of the integral accident, and Ian Goldin and Mike Mariathasan (2014) examine in their work on the butterfly defect, which plays on Edward Lorenz' chaos theory and the madness of hyper-connected, complex, nonlinear systems. What Beck (1992) and Virilio (2007) show in their respective works is that the management of the inherent instability of the complex global machine has led to a kind of arms race organised around the need to defend the integrity of the system in the face of the endless threats that it seems to produce. Given this situation, where the inevitability of the accident, risk, and instability lead to an obsession with security, insurance, and immunity, the war on threats to systemic integrity becomes generic and applies to economic instability, terror attacks, global pandemics, the computer virus, and a range of other risks that interact in order to represent interdependent global threats. Since the system is global, and stretches out across space and through time, these threats are, as both Baudrillard (1993) and Derrida (2014) point out, problems of auto-immunity, and therefore cannot be destroyed without threatening the integrity of the system itself. The reason for this is that where the cybernetic machine relies on communication and control, the problem of the intra-systemic other introduces the problem of progressive uncontrollability through viral contagion. There is no easy way to oppose the translation of communication into con-tagion, but the systemic fix recommends the acceleration of information transmission in order to resolve the problem of complex unpredictability, which, of course, leads to further mechanisation in the form of black box, algorithmic exchange in economics and the rise of the drone in the execution of war that never ends.

But where is the human, and the body in the world, in this situation, which only seems to generate ever more risk in the form of automatic fire sales and more suicidal terror? The answer is that the human, bound to the body that cannot escape its reliance on the world, is nowhere in particular, because humans are simply part of the global, cybernetic machine that makes money and wages war for no particular reason. Perhaps the post-human horror of this situation, which collapses economics into war into social life in a post-political world where culture becomes little more than a blizzard of zeros and ones, has been coming since Smith (1982, 1999) wrote about the invisible hand that could somehow bring men together who were already in the process of making themselves machines impervious to the pain and misery of the other. Although the Stoics made a case for reserve in the face of misery, we must recognise that

in the instance of Seneca (Romm, 2014), this was the result of his situation in the court of the tyrannical Nero. In much the same way that he thought we must bravely endure pain because we have no choice, he also thought that escape from the horrors of life could be found in the open vein of suicide. Given this history, it is possible to shine a very different light on Smith's support for individualism, which clearly came from the necessity of the acceptance of misery and starvation, and imagine the monstrosity of the invisible hand that, Jonathan Sheehan and Dror Wahrman (2015) note, may have inspired Horace Walpole's gothic horror, complete with a giant armoured hand that comes to earth in the name of the imposition of order upon chaos.

But if Walpole's (2008) hand may be seen to represent the gothic other side of Smith's (1982, 1999) vision of the capitalist utopia, the truth of the contemporary system would be the cybernetic arm from the future that enables the invention of the supercomputer that eventually destroys humanity from the classic sci-fi film *Terminator II* (Cameron, 2001). The wrinkle in this story is, of course, that the arm—which the scientist who eventually invents the AI that terminates humanity keeps in a glass case—comes from the original terminator sent back to the past in order to assassinate the leader of the human resistance that defeats the machine to end the cybernetic war sometime in the future. What this means is that the supercomputer somehow gives birth to itself, that it is truly godlike because it has no other, and no real sense of purpose other than to work and expand its reach—we learn early in the film that when the machine becomes self-aware it decides that it has no need of the humans who imagine they are its masters and decides to wipe them out. What we never discover, of course, is precisely how the machine would choose to spend its time in the wake of human extinction. We encounter this same issue in the Marvel Avengers film *The Age of Ultron* (Whedon, 2015), where Ultron turns on humanity. But how would Ultron live without humanity? There is no answer to this question, beyond the meaningless conclusion that he would simply continue to work, which captures the dystopic truth of the contemporary cybernetic order—that is, that it has no significance beyond its post-human functionality and utility, because it is difficult to sustain the view that the global machine that prohibits trans-individual sympathy in the name of economic stability is effective from the perspective of humanity. In light of this, we must ask Lenin's question: What is to be done?

Following Badiou's (2008) work on number and numbers, where the hyper-extension of the symbolic system of numbers creates the space of lack, the void of number, and the event that opens out onto the multiple materiality of being, Quentin Meillassoux (2015) suggests a theory of extro-science fiction of which we might make use in the imagination of a new utopianism of extro-economics. In much the same way that Badiou (2008) employs mathematical abstraction in the service of immediate, immanent materialism that is beyond representation, Meillassoux (2015) seeks out the unknowable through techno-science in order to escape the virtual utopia of Kantian correlationism in the name of what he calls the great outdoors. The basis of Meillassoux's (2009) work resides in his

attempt to escape from Kantian subjectivism, which suggests that the world is always the world for me, and the structure of limitation found in his vision of the mathematical sublime, where the contingency of the infinite collapses towards the finitude of a kind of infinite totality. Meillassoux (2009) achieves this through reference to what he calls the 'arche-fossil', which provides evidence of the origins of the universe (13.5 billion years ago), the earth (4.5 billion years ago), and humanity (3.5 million years ago), in order to take humans beyond the Kantian circle into a kind of post-human materialism. For Meillassoux (2009), this post-human thought—which relies on Badiou's (2008) vision of the onto-logical reality of mathematics and is also importantly the language of markets and contemporary economics—is able to think origins and must, therefore, also be able to think endings. But this absolute, where the absolute ending par excellence is human, planetary, and finally a kind of universal death, must remain entirely contingent and a pure possibility. On the basis of this thesis, Meillassoux (2009) sets up the idea of hyper-chaos, which relates to the idea of the necessary contingency of endings (we know death will come, but it is in itself unknow-able) and beginnings (we have evidence of the origins of the universe, earth, and humanity, but have no sense of the wider reasons for these origins), that means that every moment in between is also shot through with a kind of essential contingency. What, then, is the importance of this assertion of funda-mental contingency?

Basically, the effect of this monstrous thought of the Kantian system is to break open the utopian circle that limits possibility in the apprehension of a finite vision of the infinite, and for our purposes, suggest a means of escape from the late capitalist utopia of numbers, by virtue of the way this mode of thought floods the cybernetic system that seemed virtually perfect and perfectly virtual with potential events. In his work on what he calls extro-science fic-tion, Meillassoux (2015) suggests the political value of his vision of hyper-chaos through reference to Isaac Asimov's story *The Billiard Ball*, and the way this can be understood through reference to a conversation between Hume and Kant about the reason billiard balls move in predictable trajectories. How is movement predictable? According to Meillassoux (2015) movement is predict-able because it is governed by laws, which can be thought and rethought through Popper's (2002) theory of falsification, until science holds a complete picture. However, where this concerns the comprehension of motion, or, in other words, an issue of epistemology, Meillassoux's (2015) question regards what happens if the movement of the billiard balls concerns the breakdown of the laws themselves, rather than simply the human ability to understand what is happening. What if there is no order? What is there is nothing more than a jumble of events—necessary contingency? Meillassoux (2015) explains Kant's answer. The scene of the movement of the ball relies on the same laws which govern the movement of the ball, therefore, if the rules behind the movement of the ball collapse, the scene itself would collapse, in which case it becomes impossible to imagine the problem in the first place. Thus Kant rejects the possibility of necessary contingency on the basis that the failure

of the laws of motion would collapse the scene, the space of the observer, and existence itself. Meillassoux's (2015) response is to suggest a middle way between absolute necessity and total chaos in the imagination of extro-science fiction, where order exists but remains subject to the emergence of what he calls insurgent events where everything suddenly shifts and changes. In extro-science fiction there is no simple choice between necessary law or absolute chaos, but rather a fusion of the two states, necessary contingency, where change is possible within the context of a law-like situation. Given this vision, I think that it is possible to apply Meillassoux's (2015) theory of extro-science fiction, which is concerned with imagining potential change within a law-bound state, to the study of markets in order to create a novel form, what we might call extro-economics, where it is possible to think about the new from within the closed, globalitarian space of the cybernetic, neoliberal, financial utopia. It is this possibility that I seek to explore in the next chapter, where I consider the possibility of the translation of the utopianism of neoliberal economics into an alternative form of thinking of ecological interaction based in Merleau-Ponty's (1969) theory of the flesh of the world and Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) work on geophilosophy and what I want to call earthbound being.

Filmography

Avengers: Age of Ultron, 2015, Joss Whedon, Walt Disney.
Terminator II: Judgment Day, 2001, James Cameron, Guild.

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5   The Minor Utopia

I What Is the Minor Utopia?

In his *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (2009), Slavoj Žižek picks up Marx's (2012) reference to Hegel in his *Eighteenth Brumaire* where the latter explains that history is ultimately repetitious in nature. According to Hegel everything happens twice, but Marx suggests that Hegel forgot to specify the form of this repetition, where events take place first as tragedy, only to be repeated later in the form of farce. For Žižek (2009), it is possible to project Marx's Hegelian insight forward into history in order to understand the events of the early 21st century. If 1989 represented the celebratory moment when the American empire and the American way of life finally won out over really existing communism and ended the long cold war, and the 1990s saw the globalisation of the American life world through processes of neoliberalisation, then the period since the year 2000 has seen the slow collapse of this utopian model of social, economic, political, and cultural form. In Žižek's (2009) account, the first moment of this collapse was represented by 9/11, when bin Laden and the radical Islamists of Al Qaeda struck at the heart of empire and provoked the global war on terror that continues to rage to this day. The tragic nature of this event was that it symbolised the first moment in the decline of American power, even though its initial effect was to cause Bush to pursue full spectrum dominance, which is precisely what has been played out in the years since 2001. That is to say that America was found wanting, unable to fight a war on two fronts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and in no place to absorb the long-term costs of this new form of global neo-colonialism.

If 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror might be understood in terms of tragedy, where tragedy refers to the ancient dramatic form which follows the hero's fatal rise and fall in the face of his inherent limitation vis-à-vis the omnipotence of the gods, Žižek (2009) writes about the global economy through the idea of farce, or comedy, where the key protagonist is the idiot who finds himself centre stage unable to comprehend or influence events taking place around him. In comedy the idiot is simply not up to task or able to handle the situation he finds himself in, and in Žižek's work this idiocy reflects the impotence of the global financial elite who designed a system

based in the notion of securitisation that could not fail, only to find that what they had actually engineered was a global financial order that would necessarily produce systemic crisis in the future. Given their hubris, the comedic idiocy of the financial elites was, and to some extent remains, rooted in their inability to think their way out of their situation. Centrally, however, these two events which might be seen to herald the destruction of the last modern or postmodern utopia, the global military-financial empire of the late 20th century, are not unconnected in the sense that the slippage from the tragic to the comic was present in the American response to 9/11, which saw Bush and particularly Donald Rumsfeld present their utopian hubris in comic terms. Despite their high-tech war machine, Bush and Rumsfeld seemed to be unable to decide whether the Iraqi insurgents were located in the north, south, east, or west of the country, and it soon became clear that the Iraq War was a black comedy without end played out in the blank, post-human spaces of the desert (Featherstone, 2007).

On the home front, the comic tragedy of the war on terror was mirrored by the tragic comedy of the great moderation that saw Bush hype up the American housing market and encourage further democratisation of home ownership. The tragedy of this situation, which saw lenders make NINJA loans to poor borrowers on the basis of processes of securitisation that meant they thought they could not lose out on the deal, is that people lost their homes to utopian hubris and ended up homeless and unable to support their families. By contrast to the comedy of the crash and subsequent fallout that saw the elites stumble around clueless about how to save the global financial system they imagined foolproof, the tragedy of the collapse of the markets was, therefore, that it had impacts for real people who had bought into the neoliberal utopia of individual self-realisation premised on home ownership, consumption, and debt. This utopia was itself based in the very modern fantasy of endless growth projected onto the level of postmodern neo-Baroque symbolic inflation, where the numbers only ever go up and increase in value, regardless of what happens in the real economy where people work. But what is the value of this exercise in genre confusion that complicates Žižek's (2009) original connection of Marx's reference to Hegel to capture the slow collapse of the final utopia of the 20th century? The answer to this question is that what the confusion between tragedy and comedy signifies is the difficulty we face in the wake of the failure of the final utopia in being able to map out potential futures through generic forms that no longer seem to make sense in a world where complexity undermines the potential of individuals to act in meaningful ways in environments that appear beyond comprehension.

In this respect, the global present is necessarily both tragic and comic, since we are always tragic heroes trying to act in the face of fatal situations *and* comic fools caught up in a maelstrom of events beyond our understanding, with the result that the possibility of utopia, the future, and beyond this culture itself, which serves the function of mapping the present in order to imagine what comes next, start to appear impossible, representations of science fiction

completely cut off from the reality of today. This is in a way precisely the problem faced by those who responded to the global financial crash, such as Occupy, who knew what they did not want but were incapable of putting together a worked-out vision of what they did want. While this inability to present a plan was, to some extent, the result of a commitment to anarchism and direct democracy (Graeber, 2013), I would argue that it was also the result of a wider crisis of thinking produced by global complexity that I think has been underestimated in contemporary social and political thought. In the case of Occupy, and related leftist (dis)organisations, the problem of alternatives was, and remains, twofold—first, how to imagine an alternative beyond the state of what currently exists, and second, how to realise an alternative without reduction to the level of the existent, or what Alain Badiou (2006) calls the state of the situation. While extra-state movements, such as Occupy, have, in my view, been wholly unable to respond to these questions, the crisis of thought into practice, or praxis, caused by complexity has also destroyed the potential of the party to actually act in a way that exceeds the automatic function demanded by the global system that translates independence into interdependence and precludes the exercise of unilateral power beyond the space of warfare. In this respect the problem for Žižek (2002) is, therefore, that his call for a return to the Leninist party form seems impossible to realise today, since the moment the party engages with the state of the situation it finds itself locked into global processes that limit the potential of independent action.

   This is, I would argue, precisely the problem of the present, which is what Syriza faced in their attempts to escape German austerity, and the British sought to address by voting to leave the EU, with similar results defined by an inability to imagine alternatives. In the case of the Greeks, Syriza pulled back from the brink in order to save the people in the short term. By contrast, the British leapt into the black hole under the impression that Brexit would mean total withdrawal from global complexity without a clear plan about what would happen next. The problem of 'the next' is, therefore, perhaps the contemporary manifestation of the post-political impasse of late 1990s where the problem was that there seemed to be nothing outside of the neoliberal programme that simply worked, even though this was clearly to the detriment of the majority. In the wake of the collapse of empire in the tragicomedy of 9/11 and the financial crash, the problem of post-politics is the problem of imagination in a state of complexity that no longer works and has become a kind of dysfunctional global dystopia, where the original Platonic (1991) signifiers of utopian order, including beauty and justice, have been replaced by the grotesque and division, where thought no longer makes sense and has consequently given way to stupidity and a kind of anti-intellectual tendency to refuse to think big thoughts (Featherstone, 2007). There are, of course, no answers to the gloomy post-political situation in the closure of the mind to the outside under pressure of anxiety about mind-bending complexity. The refusal of the world, even in its threatening complexity, will only create more anxiety and more fear, especially when the outsider, who comes from nowhere

and thinks differently, ranges into view. This is the road to a revived, 21st-century version of fascism that will only bring generalised conflict and produce a future characterised by war. What, then, is the way forward?

In my view, a new utopia, or more properly a new utopianism, fit to address the contemporary impasse would need accept that Hegelian-Marxist dialectics have now more or less completely given way to complexity in terms of their ability to imagine the present and the ways in which the now might become the next. On the basis of this painful recognition, the new utopia, what I will call a minor utopia for reasons that will become clear through my discussion, would start from a place that understands the irreducibility of the global economy, where economy is understood in its broadest, Platonic sense that shades into consideration of ecology by virtue of the common root of the English 'eco' in the Greek word *oikos*, which means home. Since *oikos* referred to the most basic unit of the Greek city-state, the home that produced and reproduced life, the form of utopianism I want to explore through the concept of the minor utopia—which takes in issues of complexity, economy, and ecology—moves beyond the restricted politics of the contemporary green movement (though these may well relate to my vision of a new utopia) and refers instead to a phenomenological politics of life, where life reflects the metabolic, economic, and fundamentally ecological mode of being of humanity in the world. The essence of these phenomenological politics of life would involve an explicit recognition of the centrality of human suffering, pain, hunger, thirst, and despair to economic-ecological relations between self, other, and world and an understanding that addressing these experiences should take priority over abstract concerns such as macroeconomic growth that may be sold on the basis that it represents a common good, but is, in reality, concerned with the maintenance of profit, inequality, and the miserable state of the world for many of its inhabitants.

The value of the phenomenological political project of the minor utopia would, therefore, be (1) that it would simultaneously undermine the reified global financial system, which renders real experience subordinate to abstract concerns that only matter to those seeking profitability, because it would put the experience of suffering at the heart of an economic-ecological politics and (2) that it would overcome the impasse of the post-political present, related to the above reification of abstract financial concerns, by resituating the imagi-nation, or more properly the political imagination, in the pre-cognitive space of the body that feels, perceives, and thinks by virtue of its necessary relation to others and the world that form the basis of its existence. In light of these points, it would be necessary to qualify my view that minor utopianism would need to move beyond Hegelian-Marxist dialectics by pointing out that what the turn to phenomenological politics really entails is a return to Marx's (1988) early vision of man who lives and works in the world and produces economic reality on the basis of this labour. The problem of economics from Smith (1982, 1999) onwards is, thus, that what is hidden by the cybernetic construct of the economy that is beyond every man is the phenomenological relation

of humanity in the world and beyond this earth. It is precisely this problem that minor utopia seeks to address through the valorisation of life, and the suffering inherent in life, in order to put human experience back into the politics of economy and ecology. Moreover, from this point of view, it would be possible to replace Žižek's (2009) Hegelian-Marxist vision of the tragic-comedic collapse of empire with a Freudian (Freud and Breuer, 1991; Freud, 2001) theory of the same slow apocalypse based in the idea of trauma that enables a similar process of event, delay, and effect, but which is more squarely rooted in the phenomenological relation and interaction between man and world. This is the case because Freud's bio-medical-philosophical project of psychoanalysis imagines trauma in terms of the intrusion of a violent, external event into the life world of the self that employs processes of repression in order to defend its integrity only to suffer traumatic effects later under the law of the return of the repressed that explains that nothing can be hidden away once and for all.

According to this thesis, which draws upon Freud's early conceptualisation of trauma in his work with Breuer (Freud and Breuer, 1991), the events of 2008 might be seen to represent a global trauma that has only now begun to take effect after a delay or interval explained by Freud's concept of *nachträglichkeit* or afterwardsness, which shows how traumatic experiences always hit home later on, long after their actual occurrence. In the case of 2008 the interval, when the significance of the event was repressed and everybody tried to carry on as if nothing had happened, took the form of a period of *post*-postmodernism that we might capture through the idea of the post-mortem, where the neoliberal financial system sought to stagger on in its zombified form, even though the end game of financialisation had already been played out. Under these conditions debt continues to pile up, but there is no utopian fantasy of endless growth that promises the ability to keep up repayment. This was, of course, the hidden utopian conceit of the global financial system. Lenders could create ever more debt on the basis of their ability to leverage limited assets, and this debt could be repaid through endless economic growth which would open up a space for more debt creation and so on into the infinite future of (manageable) indebtedness. Unfortunately, the problem for this financial futurism was that the gap between real production and financial debt became an unsustainable, unmanageable abyss, and the utopian form Baudrillard (1996) spoke about in terms of inconsequential exorbitance was transformed into a dystopian nightmare, a dead weight that dragged the neoliberal utopians back down to earth.

However, it is precisely this transition from a politics of the ideal, or the abstract financial politics of the '80s through the '90s, to a politics defined by the collapse of empire and the material weight of debt, which opens up a space for the articulation of a new kind of utopianism organised around the primacy of the experience of suffering—pain, hunger, thirst, despair—and the importance of seeking economic and ecological solutions to these experiences. Since the interval, the period between the occurrence of the event and the manifestation of its traumatic effects, has been about the attempt to hide from

the effects of the crash and escape the full consequences of the failure of empire, what follows will be characterised by the attempt to find a way to move forward and escape from these traumatic effects. In the face of the bankruptcy of the old system, it would seem to me that this flight could take the form of *either* the kind of minor utopianism I want to suggest here, where the key principle becomes economic and ecological limitation based in a need to reduce suffering, or an entirely different form of escapism that I think we find reflected in the contemporary Republicanism of Donald Trump, the politics of Brexit, and even recent speculation by Stephen Hawking. While the former models of escapism are based in limitations, and escape from the dead weight of debt and the anxiety of complexity through withdrawal into nationalism of one form or other, Hawking's recent speculation about the possibility of exo-planets and exo-colonisation suggests a different route out of the contemporary global impasse.

   While Trump, the leaders of Brexit, and other nationalist opponents of the EU think that the way to oppose global default is to withdraw back into the safety of the homeland, Hawking wants to strike out and abandon the exhausted world, the world defined by processes of globalisation that seem to have hit their limit, for some other place on a far-off planet (Ghosh, 2016). Where the nationalists hark back to the past, and a period before the onset of modern globalisation, the physicist thinks ahead into the distant science fiction future in order to imagine escape. Both of these approaches represent utopian imaginaries, but they seem either politically unrealistic, since I cannot understand how retreat from globalisation is possible without an unethical rejection of otherness living in proximate space, or philosophically problematic, because humans are part of the world or, even more essentially, the earth and could not simply take off for some other planet without consequences that would mean that some futuristic Heidegger would have to theorise the other-worldliness of humanity. Heidegger (Withy, 2015) theorised the ontological uncanniness of humanity, and though it would be possible to stretch this out to imagine people living on other worlds, what this uncanny nature also enables is a level of reflexivity that means humans can rethink their situation in their own world before they start to think about the need to abandon ship. This is precisely what I try to achieve is this chapter through the idea of the minor utopia which suggests that a new utopian solution to the problems of the present must recognise complexity and global economy but make use of this understanding of interconnectedness through the development of a socio-ecological vision of the phenomenological relations between self, other, and world sensitive to suffering, limitation, finitude, and vulnerability. The politics that would issue from this vision would, therefore, be utopian in their sensitivity to embodied conditions and their need to address the pain that results from an economy that has become reified and lost touch with humanity and their understandings of the ecological interconnectedness of life both in the human world and non-human earth that has been progressively transformed into a standing reserve for use and abuse under conditions of modernity (Heidegger, 1977).

The result of these politics would, therefore, be a minor utopia, defined by a recognition of what Merleau-Ponty (1969) might have called the pain of the flesh of the world, sensitive to both the particular rhythms of life, which to some extent mark out its limitation, and its perceptive depths, which are infinite and preclude the possibility of any kind of totalitarian final solution to the meaning of existence set out by, for example, both the Nazis (race) and neoliberals (profit). While the ethical minor utopia would oppose these 20th-century utopias through its respect for life in its phenomenological materiality and its rejection of abstractions such as the racial type or worker profitability, it would also oppose both the contemporary nationalist and sci-fi solutions to the claustrophobic impasse of global complexity through its recognition of the eco-phenomenology of global interconnectedness that cannot ethically be reduced or philosophically exceeded, but rather must be addressed in its ontological necessity. In what follows I propose to develop a worked-out theory of the minor utopia from the bottom line of the contemporary global system that seems bankrupt, unsustainable, and which has, paradoxically, confronted humanity with an impasse that also opens a space for critique. In this respect, the present offers up the potential for the critical rethinking of fundamental social, political, economic, ecological, and philosophical questions, which is precisely the terrain of utopian speculation.

Moreover, it is this critical moment, where the contemporary global system seems bankrupt but workable alternatives seem further away than ever before, that the spectres of post-capitalism, or, in a different language, communism have returned to fore. In the next section of this chapter I propose to engage with the possibility of post-capitalism through Paul Mason's (2015) work, *Post-Capitalism: A Guide to Our Future*, in order to open up an exploration of the neo-Spinozan theory of the networked utopia of the multitude set out by Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009) in their Empire trilogy of the last decade. Beyond this discussion, I propose to leap to an exploration of the theory of semio-capitalism, theorised by Marazzi (2008), Guattari (2009), Lazzarato (2014), Berardi (2015a), Raunig (2016), and others. The purpose of this work is to contextualise Mason's utopian vision of the post-capitalist society and show that the problem with this theory is that it fails to address the violence of technological alienation and the abuse of materiality characteristic of the contemporary post-industrial, post-Fordist, postmodern, post-mortem world. In order to build upon the phenomenological critique already present in the autonomists, in the next part of the chapter I turn to a discussion of the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1969) and Michel Henry (2015) in order to show how they can shed light on both the possibility of an ontological utopia that respects the reality of the flesh of the world and the violence that results from the rejection of this ultimate truth. Here, I extend Henry's (2014) discussion of the capitalist death world, which ignores lived experience in the name of quantification and profitability, into an exploration of the war on terror, where terrorism concerns the terror of life found in both American drone warfare and the radical Islamic pursuit of martyrdom. In this situation

war becomes about a struggle between two ideal, abstract visions of utopia. On the one hand, the drone opposes life in the name of the kind of technology that Heidegger (1977) linked to modern nihilism, while on the other hand, the apocalyptic beliefs of radical Islamists, such as the Islamic State, look to destroy life in the name of a God who loves death.

In order to explain the struggle between these two utopian forms, which are actually dystopias of death, in the context of the contemporary war on terror, I refer to Reza Negarestani's (2008) classic work, *Cyclonopedia*, and seek to theorise the war between the Anglo-American neoliberal utopia of nihilistic technology and the radical Islamist theocratic fantasy of the caliphate in terms of the cyclone, or the cyclical death drive found in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2003). In this classic paper everything comes back to the lost object of love—mother, whom Freud's grandson seeks to control through the game of *fort/da*—and in a sense the same drive for the lost object is hidden deep inside Negarestani's cyclone. In this case the utopian turn to idealism, which we find in both the American drone state and the jihadist's drive towards the caliphate, obscures the reality of what Negarestani (2008) calls anonymous materials—the ground, or, in Schelling's language, unground of terrestrial existence that we seek to deny in our desire to become more than earthbound creatures (McGrath, 2012). Indeed, in much the same way that Freud's mother becomes an ambivalent figure, who is loved and loathed, desired and feared, in equal measure, simply because she represents home for the child in the process of becoming individualised, Negarestani's (2008) anonymous materials capture the ambivalence position of humanity in the world or, perhaps more accurately, on the earth. On the one hand, humans are part of nature and immersed in their environment, but on the other hand they presume to rise above their animality and want to escape their reliance on their environment. In this context, the horror of Negarestani's (2008) anonymous materials, such as oil and dust, is that they represent the death of the individual, the death of the organism, and the reality of humanity's objective existence on the terrestrial plane of immanence where everything connects to everything else.

That this deep truth is revealed in war, which reduces everything to so much rubble and dust, is captured in Negarestani's (2008) concept of blackening. Blackening describes the process by which the singular, individualised organism decays, and is ultimately destroyed, in the horror show of war that also opens up a space for thinking about a new kind of ecological politics. In this way Negarestani's (2008) theory of blackening projects Freud's (2003) theory of the death drive onto the level of warfare and then seeks to mobilise the potential of the destruction of the organism in the name of what Deleuze and Guattari (1983) might call a schizo-strategy capable of opening out onto a recognition of the reality of life beyond the idealistic utopias of the drone state and caliphate that are essentially premised on a Freudian politics of individualism and egoistic integrity. Moving beyond a consideration of Negarestani's (2008) work, I seek to follow this logic through by expanding my account

of Merleau-Ponty's (1969) phenomenology into theory of life premised on the breakdown of the individual into, first, the dis-individual, who represents the pathetic failure of neoliberal capitalism, and second, the figure Raunig (2016), following Deleuze (1997), calls the dividual that opens out onto others and world and recognises his reliance on the outside. In order to explain what a world based upon dividualism, rather than aggressive capitalist individualism, might look like, I project my phenomenological work into a theory of red-green Marxism and the ecological self which is communistic in its acceptance of social interdependence and ecological immersion.

From this perspective the thingness of the body, which is obscene for neo-liberal capitalism that seeks to commodify corporeality in every possible way, and the earth, which is civilised, used, and abused in the name of profit, become objects of respect, and Negarestani's (2008) object-orientated ontology of horror is transformed into a minor utopianism of life. Here, the thing, the body, the earth are recognised for what they are—the source of life—and the basis upon which it is possible to build a good world. In this way, the living thing becomes Winnicott's (2005) object that offers an anchor for the construction of a different kind of subjectivity that no longer lives in fear, but is able to live ecologically in a secure world based upon respect for the natural conditions of existence. This is precisely what neoliberal capitalism—which is, in a way, the final moment of modern hubris that saw men first deny their place in the world in the early 16th century—refuses to recognise in the name of its inability to understand limits, fragility, and vulnerability. In the final section of the chapter, I oppose the barren world of contemporary capitalism, which confronts people with terrifying complexity and leaves them feeling entirely exposed before an alien world, with a minor utopia reflective of Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) theory of geo-philosophy from their final work, *What Is Philosophy?*

At this point my use of Deleuze and Guattari (1994) is based upon a desire to show that the reconstruction of a more human world, a workable environment, what Von Uexkull (2010) calls an *umwelten*, a life world, need not fold back into a form of Cartesian subjectivity where men come to see themselves as the centre of the world. This is precisely what Deleuze and Guattari (1994) oppose when they oppose the organism. On the contrary, geo-philosophy is about the embrace of Negarestani's (2008) anonymous materials, the earth, and humanity's place within the terrestrial meshwork of interrelations. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call this system, if system is the correct word, the body without organs or the plane of immanence, and it is this figure that reflects what I mean when I refer to the minor utopia/nism—that is a utopian form that understands humanity's place on the earth and builds a world founded upon a recognition of ecological limits. While utopia is, in many respects, a major, paranoid form in that the genre tends to seek to create a total or world picture of reality, the minor utopia is paradoxical in that its construction of a new terrestrial ideal is based upon materialism founded in a recognition of the limits, fragility, and vulnerability of life.

II Post-Capitalism and Its Discontents

In his recent high-profile work, *Post-Capitalism* (2015), Paul Mason paints a picture of global capitalism on its last legs. Following Piketty's recent *Capital* (2014), which presents a similarly grim vision of the future of capitalism, Mason explains that capitalism has run out of space for development. In his view, the utopian principle of growth, which has sustained capitalism from its origins in modern Europe up to the present day, is over. As Piketty's (2014) work shows, the problem with the principle of growth is that it was always a utopian ideal. Growth was assumed to be infinite, but what became abundantly clear in the early 1970s and has become ever more apparent since is that capitalism has been pushing up against its technological and environmental limits since the late 19th century (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, and Behrens, 1972). While the early modern limits of national economic space were escapable through imperial adventure, which enabled capitalists to drive down costs and increase profitability in the name of further development, the devastation of two world wars created a space for growth through reconstruction. At the same time, the American century took off and new technology opened up a new frontier for further modernisation. Although the turn to postmodernism challenged the modern conceit that development necessarily equalled progress, and to some extent imagined the end of capitalist modernisation, the postmodern turn to signification, and the related transformation of the real into a kind of excremental remainder, created the conditions for the kind of financial innovation that would eventually form the basis of the final modern/postmodern utopia—the global financial system. The rest is, of course, history. While the happy '90s saw the articulation of a new form of cyber-utopianism, which was not only good for the elites who could now play the stock market with wild abandon, but also everybody else who could create and recreate their identities free from the miserable limits of their bodies, what the collapse of empire Žižek (2009) writes about really entailed was the realisation that this virtual, informational utopia was no longer sustainable. After the destruction of the Twin Towers in September 2001, which represented the power of global capitalism, the financial system itself crumbled in 2008 under the weight of excessive debt, which should be understood in terms of the return of repressed materiality of the world. The problem of the massive debts racked up in order to sustain development under conditions of neoliberalism was essentially that they relied upon growth to remain serviceable, and this is precisely what had become problematic in the period since the 1970s.

Although the Chinese and Indians have become engines of growth since the 1980s because they are playing catch-up on Western modernity, the West appears to have become senile through a lack of long-term prospects for increased productivity and a related failure of innovation capable of making a real difference in the material economy. This is precisely what financialisation was able to achieve from the 1980s through the early 2000s, but the problem of this innovation is that the financial elites forgot that ultimately

their empire of signs was premised on real productivity to service debts to enable further debt creation, ever more innovation, and ultimately growth in the real economy. While there is a case to be made that collapse was produced by the greed of elites, who pushed debt creation to extremes that meant that it became unsustainable, there is also a sense in which the problem of the final utopia of financialisation was that it was fated to collapse from the very beginning because its commitment to endless virtual growth was produced by and based in a system that had ultimately run up against its limits in the materiality of the world. It is precisely these limits that came back in the form of the materiality of debt in the crash and continue to haunt the global economic system today. In terms of possible futures, Mason (2015) explains three possibilities. He says that the elites might seek to keep the current global capitalist system on the rails and continue to extract profit from a low-growth situation by driving wages down and pushing the masses further into poverty. While this is possible, and precisely what we see happening across the world simply because there is no sense of a workable alternative to modern/post-modern capitalism based in the endless expansion of production/consumption, Mason points out that eventually the masses will start to revolt in response to their increasing immiseration. At this point, the masses will start to vote for either extreme left or extreme right political parties, and the neoliberal consensus that has held since the 1980s will break down. Mason (2015) worries that this will result in the end of processes of globalisation—which is exactly what we see in the cases of Trump, who wants to build a wall around America; separatist nationalist challenges, such as a movement to take the UK out of the EU; and ISIS, who think it is possible to turn back the clock to the medieval period of history and refound the caliphate based in sharia law—and that this will create conditions for endless warfare.

In many respects this thesis was developed by thinkers such as Zygmunt Bauman (2002) and Paul Virilio (2008) long before Mason saw the collapse of the global consensus into a neo-medievalism, but what interests me about his work is his exploration of a potential way out of the nightmare that threatens a rerun of a long 20th century made up of 1914–1918, 1939–1945, and 1949–1989. Mason (2015) calls this alternative post-capitalism and starts his account of this new form by explaining that what has destroyed contemporary capitalism is new technology and specifically information technology. From this point of view, capitalism made use of new technology, and the postmodern turn to signification over materiality, to enable financial innovation and maintain growth in the face of falling rates of productivity, but also—and herein lay Mason's key idea—created a new form of value, information, that is essentially impossible to effectively privatise. Of course, the capitalist system sought to make use of technology to further discipline the worker, through the creation of the techno-proletariat chained to their workplace wherever they happen to be at whatever time of day or night, but Mason's (2015) point is that even these strategies are unable to completely enclose information and suppress the potential of the commons inherent in the new

network society. While these disciplinary tactics represented, and continue to represent, an attempt to squeeze as much productivity as possible out of the worker in the name of profitability and growth, Mason (2015) points out that it is no coincidence that social media, and platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, took off in the wake of Lehman Brothers' collapse in 2008. Even though these platforms have also sought to develop ways to monetise information, and essentially transform communication into data useful for corporations looking to sell to consumers, Mason does not think it is possible to completely contain or capitalise the ideal economic figure Drucker (2007) talks about in terms of the totally networked person.

The reason Mason (2015) believes that the totally networked person will always exceed capitalism and capitalist attempts to monetise communicative labour is because it is ultimately impossible to absolutely privatise digital information that does not degrade with use, but rather remains absolutely reproducible. In Mason's view, it is precisely this feature, which we might talk about in terms of the excessive quality of information that means it can never be made scarce, that opens up a space for a new economy based on sharing, common innovation, and social forms of production. Although Mason (2015) would not dispute the late capitalist truth that society is a factory, his question is about what kind of factory we occupy. In his view the late capitalist informational factory is no longer a factory where it is easy for capitalists to extract profit from productivity, because privatisation is extremely difficult to achieve in a world where everybody and everything is online. As a result Mason thinks that the basis of struggle in contemporary society revolves around the potential of capitalists to privatise and monetise information in the face its inherent reproducibility and tendency towards commonality. In this respect Mason (2015) rehearses the kind of techno-Spinozan theory of the potential of the multitude developed by Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009) in their Empire trilogy, where the workers are effectively able to opt out of capitalist processes and form their own circuits of production on the basis of the reproducibility of information, but it would strike me that what this theory lacks is a theory of power, and particularly the power of information—rather than knowledge, which I would suggest is information incorporated or incarnated—to destroy subjectivity and render individuals unable to orientate themselves in their world. It would seem to me then that the problem with Mason's (2015) account, and also the work of Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009), is that it underestimates the destructive power of information, particularly when this confronts the individual who is unable to translate this new data into embodied knowledge.

What Mason (2015) lacks, therefore, is a phenomenology of what Negri's Italian colleagues call semio-capitalism, which in a sense refers to the kind of network economy he thinks will produce a post-capitalist society. Unfortunately, the theorists of semio-capitalism are not nearly so optimistic, precisely because of the phenomenological roots of their work, which leads them to emphasise the catastrophic consequences of the late capitalist reduction of the

material, embodied, and natural to a kind of excremental remainder of the economic ideal—abstract symbolic, semiotic value without the material remainder of quality to obstruct the exchange of pure commensurable quantity. This is the dark other side of Mason's (2015) positive take on the infinite reproducibility of information that he thinks will eventually ensure its democratic commonality. In other words, it is precisely the infinity of digital information, the fact that it never wears out and can be reproduced without end, that reveals the horror of the capitalist machine, particularly in its neoliberal form, that takes materiality for something that needs to be destroyed in the name of creation of monetary value. It is this vision that means that late capitalism will never stop searching for ways to increase productivity and squeeze profit out of the beleaguered worker and shows that opposition to this monstrous system should come less from the side of infinite information which, in my view, is representative of the space of neoliberalism itself, and more from the exhausted, excremental other of materiality that insists upon the quality, fragility, vulnerability, and humility of life itself.

This is precisely the view that, I think, it is possible to find in the works of the Italian autonomist thinkers, Marazzi (2008), Lazzarato (2014), Berardi (2015a), and their German colleague Raunig (2016). The key point, it seems to me, in their work concerns the way in which capitalism has developed into an ideal, symbolic form that ignores the reality of materiality that remains the essence of production, and it is for this reason that reference to their work is essential today. The reason for this is simple—the current crisis is first and foremost a crisis opened up by the realisation of the chasm between symbolic value (abstract, deregulated, money) and its material equivalent in the world (labour, productivity). In a sense Mason (2015) picks up on this problem in his book on post-capitalism when he points to the difference between Marx's (1990) labour theory of value and Walras' (2010) marginal utility theory, where the contrast is between a form of value concerned with the productive body and one that pushes the arbiter of worth towards the market. In the latter view there is no inherent value, but only what the market will pay, which is a price that can be arrived at on the basis of calculations around supply and demand. However, while this contrast shows how economics was able to start to decouple value from materiality, since the input of the worker is no longer a guarantee of worth, Mason (2015) never really runs with this point in order to illustrate the problem of the late capitalist form Berardi (2015a) and the autonomists talk about in terms of semio-capitalism, which is precisely the way in which it ignores materiality for a kind of abstract, ideal conceptualisation of value that holds its worth essentially because it lacks reality. Here, unreality is valuable because of its emptiness, its elegance, its beauty, and its lack of weight. By contrast, this is the reason Berardi (2015a) writes of the monstrosity of the post-human semio-capitalist economy that has no body and is allergic to the thickness of the thing.

For Christian Marazzi (2008, 2011) it is this allergy to thickness, thingness, and the slowness of materiality that underpins the violence of financial

capitalism. He points out that even though money was always symbolic, ever-increasing abstraction has meant that money and the value that inheres in the form of money has now vanished into an entirely ideal mode of expression that is set up against material worth which was, in traditional economy, the real guarantee of value. The reason for this is that material worth is in a sense always contextual, since it is valuable somewhere to somebody, and this is essentially an obstacle to absolute commensurability in a global marketplace where any contextual limitations block access to the smooth spaces of the wide open spaces of what Guattari (2009) wrote about in terms of integrated world capitalism. From this point of view, what is most valuable under conditions of semio-capitalism is what is absolutely shorn of all material, contextual, worldly value and can be exchanged in totally abstract capitalist space without impediment. Semio-capitalist code is, therefore, not a thing itself, but rather the reduction of thingness to the state of colourless, tasteless, meaningless nothingness that paradoxically carries maximum value on the basis of its blank, bleak mediocrity. The problem for Marazzi (2008, 2011) with the absolute semiological destruction of quality in blank quantity is that the material world starts to become meaningless because humans live in semiotics webs that they use to describe and make sense of their world. What happens, then, when these webs are reduced to code, a series of zeros and ones, in the name of the absolute communicability of value? Marazzi's (2008, 2011) answer is to return to Marx (1988) but extend his original problem of estrangement. It is now not only that the worker is estranged from the means of production, with the consequence that he becomes a beast, but that the speaking, cultural human is cast out of language, which transforms into a means of economic calculation, where he becomes a stupid animal. In Heideggerian (2001) terms, man becomes poor in world, unable to properly think about his environment or conceive of a future beyond the present he currently occupies.

The irony of the situation Marazzi (2008, 2011) explains is, therefore, that the contemporary semio-capitalist society is simultaneously marked by a crisis of significance and an absolute proliferation of communication. In Berardi's (2015a) view, these two movements, which seem to pull in opposite directions, are not unconnected, since the lack of significance contained within language is directly related to the proliferation of the quantity of signification which overturns the old relationship between language and world in the name of abstraction and commensurability. Under these conditions where language seems to lose its purchase on the world, and fails to describe our situation in the world, Berardi (2015a) argues that signification proliferates. Words, signs, symbols, concepts become meaningless, so they proliferate in a desperate attempt to capture the meaningfulness of the world, which was, of course, lost in the turn to semio-capitalist abstraction where signification is about the communication of empty value. Berardi (2015a) writes of this paradoxical process that opposes lack to excess and degradation to exorbitance in terms of the semiotic inflation of the postmodern neo-Baroque. Here, he compares the present to the Baroque, which saw the failure of the old world and the opening

up of the new, in order to explain why more words, more signs, more symbols appear in order to capture the significance of experience in the world that appears meaningless. Of course, the difference between the two historical moments, the Baroque and neo-Baroque, is clear. While the Baroque was concerned with the attempt to make sense of the new modern world, the semiotic inflation of the neo-Baroque emerges from the degradation of language under conditions of abstract capitalism.

It is this process, that is to say the translation of all signification into markers of monetary value, that creates the conditions for the neo-Baroque and semiotic inflation related to the desperate attempt to impose significance upon the world. In this way the problem of complexity in contemporary global capitalism is not simply about our inability to think through and understand the speeds and connectedness of the world, but also about the way that the rise of semio-capitalism has transformed language into a worldless carrier of abstract value. Given this new, degraded form of language, is it any surprise that complexity seems incomprehensible? For Berardi (2015a) it is possible to trace this problem back to Nixon's floatation of the dollar in the early 1970s. In Berardi's view what this achieved was the deregulation of money, its decoupling from material referent, and its translation into pure sign. The knock-on effect of this was twofold. On the one hand money became worldless and able to effectively colonise the entire planet by virtue of its ability to invade every sphere of life. On the other hand the monetisation of every sphere of life started to undermine the meaningfulness of the world, with the result that the new global situation began to confront people like a monstrosity—a nightmarish abstraction they could not understand, but which seemed to control their lives from afar. The fatal response to this condition has been to generate ever more signification in an attempt to effectively understand the world, even though the means of cultural representation and reflection have already been degraded by the imperialism of the abstract money form.

For Berardi (2015a), then, it is no coincidence that Nixon's deregulation of money and the rise of financial capitalism—where money is simply a sign with no reference to cash or other material symbol of value—emerged in the same period that saw the computerisation of the world. Following Lyotard (1984), who first identified the importance of the computer to contemporary capitalism in his *The Postmodern Condition*, Berardi (2015a) writes of the computer in terms of a calculating machine. Where the abstraction of money derealises significance, deterritorialises value, and essentially un-worlds, the computer seeks to calculate, evaluate, and produce programmatic responses to the new un-world of late capitalism. However, this process of abstract un-worlding and computational calculation is fatal because there is no possibility of the emergence of sensuous meaningfulness. Everything takes place at the level of abstraction, which is why, even when the computer appears to systematise the world—in the case of, for example, the great moderation—there is no sense in which the world feels any less alien. This is, in a way, the fundamental problem of Mason's (2015) vision of post-capitalism. That is to

say that the problem with his utopia is that it seems absolutely premised on the emergence of a kind of techno-Spinozan multitude formed through the Internet or social media that would not address the problem of the unworldliness of contemporary capitalism. Instead of setting about the re-creation of real worlds, it would seem to me that what the techno-Spinozan multitude would achieve would be a kind of degraded, alienated community of people who share likes on Facebook but never reconnect to each other or their world in a more meaningful, phenomenological sense. In this respect, the problem of Mason's (2015) account is less concerned with economics, and more about the way he misses the essential violence of semio-capitalism, which is precisely about its allergy to materiality, quality, and life that cannot be commodified, quantified, or rendered absolutely commensurable. What Mason (2015) misses, therefore, is the violence of semio-capitalism that attacks singularity and translates real life into the meaningless shit of a system that has no time for the world beyond numbers.

In his recent works on indebtedness, Maurizio Lazzarato (2014) refers to Deleuze's (1997) short paper on the control society in order to argue that the violence of finance is founded upon the way it subjects quality to quantity and destroys life in the name of the obligation to balance the books. Following Deleuze, Lazzarato explains that the indebted subjects—which include more or less everybody in financialised capitalism—are enslaved to their obligation to repayment. Under these conditions, the freedom the subjects might have had in democratic society to decide upon alternative futures disappears and they become part of a cybernetic machine concerned with the service of endless debts. For Lazzarato (2014), Berardi (2015a), and the other autonomists, this situation of enslavement to numbers stands in stark contrast to the situation in the child prior to processes of Oedipalisation. Before induction into the nightmarish society of control, the child possesses what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) write about in terms of machinic subjectivity, which sees alternatives everywhere and wants to explore the world. It is passing of this utopian form of subjectivity into the maturity and enslavement of Guattari's (2009) integrated world capitalism that, I would suggest, forms the centrepiece of the autonomists' critique. Of course, late capitalism valorises creativity, imagination, and thinking otherwise, and it is easy to identify this ideology in the Californianism of, for example, Apple and Google. But for Berardi (2015a) there is a qualitative difference between the form of mock creativity we experience when we pick up the latest Apple product and the imaginative production Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987, 1994) prioritise in their works.

In his recent book, *And: Phenomenology of the End* (2015a), Berardi captures this difference through reference to notions of conjunction and connection. While the former idea, conjunction, represents true creativity, in that the subject changes through his interactions with others and world, Berardi thinks connection is a debased, ultimately defensive, mode of conjunction, where the individual reaches out but never really engages with otherness. Where conjunction is an open process, which is essentially decentred, for Berardi

connection, and connectivity, is closed and based upon a programmatic centre that dictates the terms of contact. In Berardi's (2015a) view this is how we relate today, and this is how we should understand the Californianism of Apple, Google, and the other techno-utopians who promise to transform people into creatives who open out onto the world. Reading Berardi (2015a), it becomes clear that this cannot be the case, because real openness to the world would take place through the unmediation of our corporeality which is already in the world. This is, of course, precisely what Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 1994) mean when they refer to the plane of immanence. By contrast, what computational technology achieves, when it places a media device between self, other, and world, is the disruption of the consistency of the world and the alienation of the machinic subject in the Californian individual who thinks he is creative because he connects to others programmatically. Although Apple and Google imagine that they connect the world, there is no ontological or ecological depth to their work, but instead the (dis)integration of lonely individuals into a cold unity that promises some relief from alienation through desperate connectivity. That is to say that the lonely individual, cut off from others and world by semio-capitalism, reaches for the alienation of programmatic connectivity in order to survive. It is this desperate, defensive strategy that accounts for in turn what Berardi (2015a) refers to through the idea of the swarm effect, where the simulation of integration appears on the basis of mass programmatic dis-individualism and the fascistic brand loyalty tech corporations, such as Apple, are able to command, simply because they offer some sense of consistency in a world that seems alien and meaningless.

This is, however, a terminal strategy in light of the way connectivity defends against unworldliness through a denial of the incalculability of materiality, what Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987) variously call the schizophrenic and the machinic, and further disassociates self from other and world. Although the disorientation of the self is endless, Berardi (2015a) explains that semio-capitalism is in the process of seeking to rewire human hardware so that there is no gap between the technological system and human responses to the environment. Writing of what he calls neuro-totalitarianism, he points out that humans are currently unable to cope with the complexity of their world and the abstract code given to them to make sense of their environment. Humanity's organic neural networks are out of line with the technological networks which have evolved through processes of globalisation. Although our brains are plastic, and can evolve within reason, for Berardi (2015a) we have reached the limit of organic humanity in contemporary cyber-time. In the face of the lightning speeds of semio-capitalism, he explains that a range of psychological/neurological problems have emerged: dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder, and a range of addictions concerned with a desperate need for stimulation. Consider the example of sex addiction. In Berardi's (2015a) view, sex addiction is the result of the loss of the other brought about by late capitalism. In the face of endless work, which saps energy, and instrumental rationality, which destroys the possibility of eroticism, sex transforms

from an affective relation in the world to an objective encounter fetishised by the misery of loneliness and fantasies about the pleasure of the other. However, the sex addict, who occupies the space of drive and is only really concerned with his own trauma, takes the other for an object. The other is a commodity, an object, a despised thing, which is precisely why the other can never really solve the addict's problem—the loss of human orientation towards the other and beyond this, the world itself.

Unfortunately, Berardi (2015a) cannot even find potential salvation from this horror show in the figure of a mother who might provide children with a more sensuous, affective, and essentially human introduction into the world, because he notes that contemporary kids tend to learn their first words from machines. The problem here is that words learnt from machines fail to establish a relation between language, touch, and the sensuous world, but instead induct kids into a monstrous world of abstraction where words have no real connection to things and thus never provide them with the machinery to reflect back upon their own experience. While Merleau-Ponty (2011), the philosopher who casts a long shadow over this theory, finds the roots of the alienation of self from world in the modernity of Descartes, Berardi (2015a) looks to the origins of America and the Puritans who were already out of place and ended up despising life itself in the name of abstract perfection. In his view we can, therefore, find the roots of semio-capitalism in the original American settlers who, he explains, invented the cybernetic figure of the more than human neo-human. From this perspective, the history of modernity through post-modernity, and the history of capitalist economics from Smith (1982, 1999) through Friedman (2002), might be re-read in terms of the evolution of the neo-human who finally finds his un-home in the neoliberal society. As such, Berardi (2015b) thinks the 1970s realised what started in early modern America, and captures this through reference to Bowie's enigmatic *Heroes*. Here, Bowie's line 'We could be heroes . . .' is simultaneously a recognition that there will be no more heroes in the new programmatic society where everybody is a pseudo-individual, and a desperate call for heroism in a world marked by depression, despair, and the end of utopian hope.

Despite the rise of the neo-human, represented by the fantasy of the always-on worker who spends his days and nights searching for new ways of making money, and the collapse of real heroism into the fantastical celebrity, the media star Adorno and Horkheimer (1997) explored in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, humans are not machines and cannot live without others and world. In this respect perhaps the best representative of the horror of the neo-human in semio-capitalism is the Japanese *hikikomori* who cuts *himself* (because the shut-ins are usually young men) off from material interaction with others, but then reaches them through machines—the various computers and new media technologies that form the monstrous architecture of his semio-capitalist womb. Although the *hikikomori* retreats towards this techno womb in order to escape the horror of the world, which seems frightening and threatening, the problem with his strategy is that it offers no escape. As Berardi (2015a) notes through

reference to South Korea, the most connected society in the world, which also has the highest suicide rate, the hyper-connective environment is unliveable. Under these conditions, where the connected are cast into a living death by technology that transforms them into tech-no-bodies, suicide seems like the only way out. The real alternative, disconnection from the machine, seems impossible and largely unimaginable. However, for Berardi (2015a), this is precisely what must happen through, first, the poetic reclamation of language able to express the sensuous, affective materiality and depth of life beyond measure, and second, the reconstruction of the real world through this new language which is itself founded upon the perceptive interactions of self and other in the environment.

When Berardi (2012) writes of the uprising, then, what he means is opposition to the deregulation of reality in semio-capitalism. We could say that what Berardi proposes here is the schizophrenic deregulation of late capitalist deregulation, which has led to the post-human territoriality of abstract economics and neo-human nobodies, and the reconfiguration of new ecologies based upon the ontological relation between self, other, and world that are irreducible and real beyond the dire constructed, symbolic order of capitalism that imposes a false order of scarcity and excess upon humanity. While Mason (2015) founds struggle upon enclosure, the problem of private property, and capitalism's need to generate surplus value, Berardi (2015a) shifts the terrain of battle towards ecology, environment, and the human life world that semio-capitalism seeks to destroy in the name of abstraction. This is why Mason's (2015) utopia of open source connectivity is not enough from Berardi's point of view. From this perspective the Californian utopia of Apple, Google, and info tech is in reality a dystopia of absolute capitalism that transforms the embodied human into the abstract neo-human and then sells the desperate, disassociated self a fantasy of interaction, interconnectivity, and creativity, which it invariably consumes in order to try to ease the pain of mutilation and loneliness. Against the fantasy world of Steve Jobs and the other virtual utopians, Berardi (2015a) finds the truth of the semio-capitalist utopia in the paranoid dystopias of the other Californian, Philip K. Dick, where technology is never a route to some happy, creative dreamworld, but instead the gateway to the kind of neuro-totalitarianism he identifies with Google's latest attempts to translate reality itself into a live data set. However, the situation is far from hopeless because, in Berardi's (2015a) view, paranoia, which derealises the normal utopia of semio-capitalism into a sinister dystopia, and depression, when the future looks bleak and we cannot see a way forward, create the conditions for the new on the basis of their destruction of the constructions of the present.

Through reference to Guattari's own winter years, Berardi (2008) argues that depression has the potential to produce political change. Although depression and despair are more normally associated with exhaustion and an inability to act, Berardi suggests that the desperation of depression, the very lack of future, may produce the will to change, precisely because no external possibility of change seems present. In this way Berardi (2008) connects depression

and despair to voluntarism and the revolutionary will and argues that alterna-
tive worlds might be born in the darkness of misery. Akin to Philip K. Dick,
and perhaps the 20th century's most famous paranoiac, Daniel Paul Schreber,
Berardi suggests that other worlds grow out of disassociation from the now
and a refusal to accept reality in its present configuration. In his own dark
fantasy, semio-capitalism is really a kind of thanato-economics, which destroys
the individual who cannot sleep for electronic images flashing before his eyes,
that pushes towards the critical point Guattari (1995) called the chaosmic
spasm suggestive of a new kind of reality. Although Berardi (2008) never really
spells out what this new reality would look like, my sense is that where his
critique of semio-capitalism leads is Deleuze and Guattari's (1987, 1994) plane
of immanence or the body without organs where the self is immersed in the
other and world and reality is based upon anonymous flows of perception
that meet in the formation of subjectivities comfortable with openness. In his
book *After the Future* (2011), Berardi tells us that the future expired sometime
in the 1970s, around the time the Sex Pistols closed their *Anarchy in the UK*
with the refrain 'No Future', because this is when language started to collapse
into abstract signification. Shorn of the ability to write the present, or effec-
tively remember the past, the future began to disappear, especially for the
young, because there was no way to construct temporal trajectories out of
the now.

    In this respect Berardi's (2011) vision of the horror of neoliberalism is very
close to Bernard Stiegler's (2009, 2010, 2013) account of the problem of
disorientation. Similarly, Berardi and Stiegler are also more or less in agreement
about how to respond to this situation. Where Stiegler (2013) suggests political
struggle over the status of knowledge, which in his view must be wrestled
away from technocrats who are only interested in instrumental rationality so
that it can enable people to better understand their world, Berardi's (2012)
turn to poetry and sensuous thought is about the reclamation of language in
the name of the reconnection of speech, writing, and body that perceives.
Only when this happens, and there is a relationship between embodiment,
perception, suffering, thought, and articulation in language and culture, will
we be able to escape the horror of the permanent present of semio-capitalism
where humans have been reduced to the status of soft machines and language
is little more than a tool for keeping accounts. In a sense, then, it is clear that
Berardi is, like Stiegler, keen to protect the human, and the humanist tradition,
from the post-humanism of techno-semio-capitalism. However, it is also clear
that he has little time for the possessive individualism that conspires with the
nihilism of capitalism and prefers instead the kind of eco or geo-philosophy
Deleuze and Guattari (1994) wrote about in their final work, *What Is Philoso-
phy?* I think the reason for this is clear. Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of
the plane of immanence and the body without organs have the potential to
translate the destroyed capitalist self, who is defined by lack, despair, and
indebtedness, into an ecological subject founded upon its relation to others
rooted in the environment.

With regard to the way in which the shift from semio-capitalism to a more ecological, material world might take place, there is once more common ground between Berardi (2011, 2015a) and Stiegler (2014). For the latter, late capitalism has exhausted itself in instrumental rationality to the extent that the very spirit that supported its progress into the future has vanished. The critical moment this loss of spirit produces is, for Stiegler, a moment of catastrophic possibility. The same is the case with Berardi who, in works such as *After the Future* (2011) and *And* (2015a), presents the collapse of the future and the destruction of the self in depression and despair in terms of a schizophrenic strategy where the autistic semio-capitalist individual might open out onto the complicity with everybody and everything that surrounds them. Unlike Stiegler (2013), who takes his lead from Derrida, Berardi's (2015a) theory is straight out of Deleuze and Guattari, who imagined a similar schizophrenic cartography. More specifically, Berardi (2008) draws on Guattari's theory of transversality, which he developed in his work at La Borde, in order to think through the possibility of a new flat ontology. Here, human psychology is no longer premised on Freudian Oedipal relations between Mom, Dad, and me, but rather self, other, and a new third object capable of opening up schizophrenic possibility. Given Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) geo-philosophy, Guattari's (2014) late concern with ecology, and Berardi's (2015a) own focus on the importance of materiality, my view would be that this third object must be world, or perhaps more properly earth, since earth is where humans find their ontological roots. It is impossible for humans to survive without earth, and it is on the basis of their perception of earth that they develop culture and create life worlds. The problem with the current, semio-capitalist, world is, however, that earth and human perception have been abandoned for abstraction and this has led humanity into crisis, where the global social, political, economic, and perhaps centrally cultural system no longer works.

According to the German thinker Gerald Raunig (2016), the problem of the present is precisely the militarised neo-human, the individual, who resists the truth that he is born and lives in others, worlds, and earth. Reading Raunig's recent work, it is clear that the late capitalist individual—who evolved out of a long history of attempts to theorise the self-identical self stretching back to Descartes (1984)—is essentially a paranoiac, living in a delusional universe where there is a very clear line between self, others, and world. In this respect we confront the solipsistic dimension of paranoia, which seems to throw Berardi's (2015a) view of the use value of paranoid thought into sharp relief, where the traumatised self cuts himself off from the world in his own fantastical private space. However, in much the same way that Berardi (2008) seeks out the possibility of depression, despair, and withdrawal from trauma, which is, of course, a key strategy of Italian workerism where the key idea was to refuse labour, Raunig (2016) thinks that the militarised, neo-human individual is representative of the final moments of the self-enclosed, solipsistic self and that breakdown will ultimately result in the emergence of a new form of ecological subjectivity he writes about through the anthropological idea of

dividualism. While Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987), and following them Berardi (2015a), rely on the figure of madness, the schizophrenic, to capture subjectivity beyond individualism, Raunig (2016) refers to anthropology, and shows how non–Western primitive society is defined by dividualism. Here, where the gift economy prevails, there is no sense that there is an individual who can balance his books and somehow extract himself from society, but rather a recognition of dividualism, where the self is naturally divided in origins, reliance, and future potential in others and the environment. While this form of interdependence and reliance has become a symbol of weakness under conditions of Western modernity because of its associations with vulnerability and fragility, Raunig's (2016) suggestion is that dividualism is the truth of the world and that the armoured self, the Freudian ego, that confronts the environment through military operations is an unsustainable fantasy.

III What Is the Flesh of the World?

In respect of the common focus of Marazzi (2008, 2011), Berardi (2011, 2012, 2015a, 2015b), Lazzarato (2014), and Raunig (2016), who similarly write of the destruction of materiality by semio–capitalist abstraction that hides the reality of the complicity of self, other, and world, it is clear that their master sources are Deleuze and Guattari's (1983, 1987) anti–Oedipal works, their later work on the value of philosophy (1994), and Guattari's (2014) own works on ecology. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, the autonomists find a utopian alternative to the violence of semio–capitalism in the schizophrenic collapse of self-identity and the radical openness of the plane of immanence. In a sense this vision captures the meaning of the minor utopia I want to outline in this chapter, because it emphasises the excessive dimension of lack that endlessly opens out onto otherness and refuses the hubris of self-identical states of subjectivity in a humble utopianism that recognises the truth of material vulnerability and fragility, but I believe it is possible to trace the philosophy of this perspective back further than Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987, 1994) to the work of the philosopher of embodiment and perception, Maurice Merleau–Ponty (1969). Although my sense is that the work of Deleuze and Guattari, and following them Berardi, Marazzi, Lazzarato, and Raunig, contains an implicit recognition of the importance of the body and the relationship between the body and world, I also think that this embodied dimension is played down in their writings, primarily because of their opposition to the self-identical organism which might become the centre point of a new paranoid philosophy of identity. While it is no doubt important to resist the organism in the name of resistance to the possibility of the self-identical individual, my view is that it is a mistake to overstate the extent to which Merleau–Ponty (1969) thought the body was a self-identical thing, and that it is possible to see the basis of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) body without organs in Merleau–Ponty's (1969) philosophy of the flesh, despite the more explicit influences of Artaud and Klein. Given this possibility, in the final

section of this chapter, I want to explore the possibility of what I have sought to call the minor utopia, which I think we find in Berardi and the autonomists, and before them Deleuze and Guattari, through reference to Merleau–Ponty's (1969) theory of the flesh of the world.

Following an exploration of Merleau–Ponty's (1969) key ideas, I will seek to situate his ontology in Michel Henry's (1983, 2014, 2015) work, centrally because he reads Merleau–Ponty's (1969) late concept of the flesh and his critique of cybernetic reality in terms of a critique of social and political systems committed to abstraction. Since Henry (2014) wrote his book on these destructive social and political systems in conversation with celebrations of the end of history, his focus is really existing communism and capitalism. In light of this focus in the heady days of American empire, the purpose of my discussion is to project Henry's (2014) critique of abstract death worlds forward to consider the thanato-politics of the war on terror when empire appears in a state of collapse. Here, I pick up Reza Negarestani's (2008) classic Deleuzo-Guattarian *Cyclonopedia* in order to show how the contemporary American drone state and Islamic radicals, such as the Islamic State, are complicit in the emergence of a global, cyclonic death drive that threatens to destroy life itself in the name of abstract idealism. Here, abstract utopia becomes about the destruction of materiality, and it is precisely this dystopian turn that Negarestani (2008) seeks to exploit in the name of schizo-strategy. That is to say that he employs the ideas of the blackening and leper creativity to suggest that processes of apocalyptic desertification and objectification might open the way for what he calls complicity with anonymous materials, which I take to refer to the (un)revealed earth and the possibility of a new ecological contract between self, other, and environment humbled by suffering and the final humiliation of all-out war that reveals the absurdity of the hubris of abstract utopianism. It is on this basis that I close the chapter by projecting my reading of Merleau–Ponty (1969), Negarestani (2008), and Henry (2014) forward into a sketch of the minor utopia that relies on reference to Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) final work on geo-philosophy, *What Is Philosophy?*

In his final, unfinished book, *The Visible and Invisible* (1969), Merleau–Ponty famously outlines the concept of the chiasm, or the flesh, which refers to generalised, anonymous, material existence. Although the flesh is before every world, since it names the original, ontological state of the earth where flows of perception are everything, Merleau–Ponty's phenomenology explains that every singular individual participates in the chiasm and contributes to the formation of worlds on the basis of this participation. This is how speech, writing, and culture emerge. Language and expression more generally name flows of perception across the flesh and create a sense of a visible world. However, the essence of Merleau–Ponty's (1969) project is to explain the ontology of the flesh in relation to the problem of intellectualism that takes the semiotic expressions of perception, casts them out of context, and uses them to create a vision of reality that is cut up into individual elements that then become originary. Under these conditions, which Merleau–Ponty (2011) connects to Descartes' modern

philosophy that locates truth in cognition, thought loses touch with the earth, which becomes a monstrous object that needs to be studied from somewhere else, namely the external vantage point of the cogito. From Merleau-Ponty's (2011) point of view, the failure of Descartes' philosophy was that he missed the truth of the world in the flesh and perception and instead sought out the final, object, scientific truth, which is impossible to obtain because of the abyssal nature of reality that can never be known. But simply because reality cannot be known once and for all does not mean that it is somehow a monstrous alien, and Merleau-Ponty (1969) affirms this idea in his theory of the reversability of the flesh, where the organism becomes complicit in nature by virtue of the undecideability of the relationship between the being who simultaneously touches and is touched. This sensuous interaction, which necessarily opens the individual up to embodied perception, ensures participation in the flesh and enables the empathetic connection between self and other. Against this world, the truth of the world, that Merleau-Ponty (1969) names the invisible, and that is always in some ways intimate, the earth only becomes a monstrous object, an alien to be studied, puzzled over, and reduced to the status of the abstract concept, from the point of disembodied cognition that denies its participation in the flesh in the name of the fantasy of certainty beyond perception. Long before Berardi (2012) imagined the political potential of the poetic, Merleau-Ponty (1969) had written that painting was able to articulate the abyssal nature of reality. In this respect he thought that it was a far superior mode of cultural expression than the abstract sciences that sought to mutilate reality in its transformation into conceptual truth because it could represent the world without killing it.

Building upon Merleau-Ponty's (1969) work, Michel Henry (2015) writes of processes of incarnation, where the world finds provisional embodiment in the self, in order to describe a kind of phenomenological unconscious or psychoanalytic ontology. In this way the world perceives through the self, feels hunger in the stomach of the starved, suffers in the embodied pain of the desperate, and imagines utopia in the hopes of the destroyed in hopeless situations. This is precisely how we must understand Merleau-Ponty's (1969) vision of the invisible, or dynamic matter, and how perception and expression contribute to modernity. Perhaps it is this complicity of life that the schizophrenic, who is unable to understand the boundary between self and world or reality and fantasy, recognises, and this is why schizophrenics have a utopian function in the Cartesian (Descartes, 1984) strategy concerned with the normal derealisation of the world into abstraction. The function of abstraction is, of course, to fend off doubt, and this is precisely what Descartes thought he had been able to do, until the abyss came back locked in a staring contest with Nietzsche (2003), who was able to recognise the limits of reason. While modern science took off into abstraction, what Dillon (1998) writes about through the idea of the fatal semiotic reduction that invariably spins off into unreality, Merleau-Ponty (1969) emphasised the primacy of what he called autochthonous organisation, or a kind of ecological ontology where everything touches and is, in turn, touched by everything else in a kind of inescapable

relation of universal perception. For Merleau-Ponty (1969) this is the flesh of the world, the gestalt of the earth, that comes before reflection. When we take thought to be somehow prior to perception, we miss the way in which ideas and concepts flow through people in much the same way that the earth writes poetry through the poet, paints pictures through the painter, and imagines new worlds through the utopian thinker.

By contrast to Merleau-Ponty's (1969) Cézanne, who captured the flesh of the world in still life, the problem with science and abstraction resides in the way in which it seeks to refuse its relation to the world in the hard and fast subject/object relationship that defines scientific methodology. However, in much the same way that Lacan (2007) contrasts the originary body in pieces to the developmental imaginary self visible in the mirror, Merleau-Ponty (2011) suggests that the scientific self develops through alienation. Before socialisation Merleau-Ponty's (2010) child perceives the fleshy truth of the world and feels the reversability of self, other, and environment. For Merleau-Ponty (2010) the child's thought is, therefore, fundamental thought, and should not be understood in terms of lack. Instead, what the child's perception of the endless reversability of the world that is always in excess shows is that the abstract reduction of reality which we find in, for example, Galileo is a flight from abyssal nature of truth (Dillon, 1998). For Henry (2015) the problem with the modern tendency to abstract truth, which cuts reality up into pieces and then tries to insist that this is somehow real, is that it is unliveable in the face of the flesh of the world. Following Merleau-Ponty (1969), he explains that reality is incorporation, Heideggerian *mit-sein*, and there is no way to assert independence, separation, superiority, and inferiority. In fact, in his view, it is precisely this modern tendency to translate reality into abstraction that led to the emergence of what he calls death worlds, Nazism, really existing communism, capitalism, where an idea, such as race, class, or profit, becomes a utopian principle that turns out to be more important than life itself and ends up becoming an excuse for the translation of humans into things that can be exterminated, destroyed, or used up in the name of some higher truth (Henry, 2014).

Although Henry (2014) wrote his book on the 20th-century empires of death in the happy days of the end of history in order to warn the post-communists that they would not find life in the West, where everything is subordinate to the abstract god of profitability, I think it is possible to project his critique of utopias of death forward into the contemporary to better understand the philosophical significance of the war on terror in what might be the dying days of American empire. In much the same way that Henry (2014) warns the old communists about the thanatological nature of the West, one might say the same to the contemporary radical Islamists, who think they can export death to worlds where people are in love with life in order to win the war on terror. They could not be further from the truth, because, from the point of view of Merleau-Ponty (1969) and Henry (2014), the West loves the death of life in abstraction that is more real than reality itself. This, in my view, is the secret complicity that binds the West, which loves the death of life in techno-scientific

capitalist abstraction, and the jihadists, who seek death in the name of their own utopia of the long lost medieval past, in the war on terror and explains why Reza Negarestani's (2008) obscure work, *Cyclonopedia*, which captures the deep metaphysical truth of this war of modern utopians, is the most insightful account of the struggle for dominance in the deserts of the Middle East. For Negarestani (2008) the war on terror cannot be understood through modern dialectics, where thesis meets antithesis to produce a collision into the synthetic future, because both parties share a secret complicity that means that their confrontation in the desert should be understood through a different figure, the figure of the cyclone, which finds its best articulation in modern thought in Freud's (2003) theory of drive. We find Freud's theory of drive, or more particularly the death drive, in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2003), when the child seeks to offset the trauma of separation from mother by endlessly playing *fort/da*, which the founder of psychoanalysis takes for a representation of the inertia of being, where what is born seeks its own death in order to escape the horror of life for the ecstasy of nothingness.

Negarestani (2008) never really explores Freud's paper in his strange book, because Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 1994) remain his master thinkers, but I think the concept of the death drive, which is useful in the psychoanalysis of addiction or other behaviours concerned with the symbolic escape from trauma, casts a long shadow over the mythological symbol of the cyclone. What is the cyclone of the war on terror if it is not a mythic manifestation of Freud's death drive on the level of global war in the deserts and destroyed cities of Iraq and Syria, those ruined places and spaces of emptiness, loneliness, and despair? In these ruins the complicity between the American military and Islamic State is manifest in the former's strategies of techno-desertification, where expressions of life are transformed into objects to be targeted in the name of the creation smooth space more suitable for battle, evaluation, and economic exchange, and the latter's apocalyptic jihadism, which reduces life itself to little more than an interval in the inexorable movement towards martyrdom and heaven. Under these conditions everything is transformed into a miserable object subordinate to the abstract utopian fantasy. In the American case Negarestani (2008) points out that everything leads back to oil, which is similar to Freud's (2003) spool or the addict's narcotic in respect of its symbolisation of the flat line, though in this case the equation of materiality and death is literal. What is oil but the decay of the world transformed into the fuel to drive the great postmodern consumer society complete with its financial system and will to escape the horror of materiality?

Given this will to destroy the world in the name of a utopia of abstraction, it is not surprising that the transition from Bush to Obama, which was supposed to represent a scaling back of America's global adventurism, has actually ended up becoming about the automisation of the war through the use of drones. In this respect America has taken its men and women out of the theatre of war in the name of the turn to what Chamayou (2015) calls necro-ethics. Here, the abstract machine without a body confronts the hostile environment of the world

in the name of the exercise of complete control. As such, necro-ethics becomes less about the destruction of the enemy, but instead concerns the objective neutralisation of uncontrollable matter and its transformation into manageable material. As Brian Massumi (2015) explains in his recent book on contemporary American approaches to warfare, the perception of the threat environment requires the exercise of onto-power, which is power imposed upon the world through the Cartesian (Descartes, 1984) logic of abstraction. What the military must work on is the earth itself before the emergence of world in order to overcome the enemy in their ontological relationship to their environment. The reason for this is that the environment is, of course, the space of terror and fear, which is why the drone operator is a kind of militarised shut-in (*hikikomori*). They never set foot in real battle space because the whole point of the war on terror is to try to win the struggle for ontological power in order to define the other's relationship to their environment. When the enemy holds the upper hand, the Westerner lives in fear, which is why the Islamic State has sought to reimagine the violence of Al Qaeda in order to raise the stakes and redefine the normal consumer's relationship to their environment.

In much the same way, then, that the American war on terror is driven by the need to subdue the Islamic radicals through the destruction of their onto-logical relationship to the earth in the name of the wider project concerned with the endless abstraction of semio-capitalism, the motivation of the Islamic State is the destruction of matter and the introduction of fear into every circuit of the enemy's life world in order to open the way for apocalypse. This is the real objective of the grizzly utopia founded by al-Zarqawi while he was imprisoned in the Jordanian desert—apocalyptic destruction in the name of the return to the medieval past. Indeed, biographical interpretations of al-Zarqawi suggest that his drive towards apocalyptic destruction might have been rooted in his own personal death drive organised around an absent father and a mother fixation (Warrick, 2015). From a Freudian point of view, we might, therefore, conclude that al-Zarqawi's obsession with death, murder, and torture was the result of resentment towards the external world and that what he really wanted was to return to Mom through the wholesale destruction of others who were really only ever fleshy symbols of his own self. In this respect, al-Zarqawi was perhaps always a masochist acting out the role of sadist, and we might risk a similar claim about his baby, Al Qaeda in Iraq, which later became the Islamic State. According to the psychoanalyst of Islam Fethi Benslama (2009), Islamic identity has always been defined by what he calls the torment of origins brought about the encroachment of Western modernity. Here, Benslama's point is that modernity destroyed the original form of Islamic identity, but, at the same time, transformed it into a kind of utopian fantasy of the lost past, which has become the rallying point of Islamic radicals ever since. In this way Benslama (2009) supports the Freudian reading of al-Zarqawi's death drive, because what his position effectively shows is that radical Islam is a thanatological movement concerned with the destruction of the present in the name of a return to the future past of the medieval caliphate and

beyond this the nothingness of heaven where God awaits. This is why the colour of the Islamic State flag is black. The black flag signifies the painful loss of the past which haunts radical Islam, the desperate desire for revenge against Western modernity, and finally the void of death, the nothingness that will finally resolve the torture of lost origins (Freud, 2003).

But for Negarestani (2008) the abyss of war is not entirely hopeless, because what he calls the blackening or leper creativity, which refers to the thanato-logical destruction of matter in the name of the utopia of nothingness, offers the potential to think through the objective anonymity of the earth and its creatures beyond the worlds of Western modernity and radical theocratic thought. In this respect, Negarestani transforms the blackening of war which pushes towards the void of death into a schizo-strategy that might enable humanity to rethink its ontological relation to the earth and imagine a new world based upon organic limits, vulnerability, fragility, and the essential rela-tion of the self to other through the mediation of the environment. As such, I think that Negarestani's (2008) esoteric interpretation of the war on terror which employs schizophrenic strategies to push towards recognition of the irreducibility of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987, 1994) plane of immanence is also essentially concerned with thinking through the possibility of escape from Cartesian idealism for Merleau-Ponty's (1969) flesh of the world. The problem with Cartesian idealism, which we also find articulated in work by Paul Burkett (1999) and John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark (2011) on Marx's theory of nature, is that it introduces an ecological rift, to use Foster's term, and effec-tively destroys humanity's ontological relationship to the earth. Under these conditions humans lose sight of the ground of existence and reconstruct their worlds through machines. Thus, Foster and Burkett show that the techno-scientific world, which becomes about truth, is in reality a fetish object, and the real truth of the world resides in the metabolic relationship between humanity and the earth.

From the Marxist point of view of Burkett (1999) and Foster and Clark (2011), this ontological relation is the ground of the commons and the reason why the problem of capitalist enclosure in the name of private property is a philosophical error reflective of a faulty understanding of the nature of reality, rather than simply an ethical or political problem. Shorn of the basis of the earth, Foster's and Burkett's work show why the capitalist enclosure of reality in the abstraction of evaluation is simultaneously thanatological, since it destroys the thing itself, and infinite, because there is no ground able to contain its endless speculation. This is precisely what money symbolises and demonstrates why the phenomenological project concerned with the ecological rediscovery of the earth upon which humans might build better worlds must also run through the politics of class struggle, since those who are locked in the privacy of abstraction oppose those who work upon the earth and are engaged in the kind of metabolic interactions Marx (1988) understood to be foundational to what it means to be truly human. This is the case because the humanism of the worker is based upon participation in worlds firmly rooted in interactions

with the earth, rather than a tragic, utopian attempt to take off and leave the earth behind for some imaginary world founded in abstract thought. It is the latter, practical, attitude that I think describes what it means to participate in the commons and, beyond this, support the social and political project of communism, which Marx (1988) wrote about in his critique of estranged labour in terms of communion with in turn self, other, materiality, and the earth itself. In this respect I think it is possible to draw a line from Marx's (1988) theory of the commons and communism through to Merleau-Ponty (1969) and the concept of the flesh of the world and finally Deleuze and Guattari's (1987, 1994) ideas of the plane of immanence and the anonymous body without organs.

Each of these thinkers contributes to the notion of what I want to call the minor utopia, which is opposed to the kind of hubris usually associated with the idea of the utopian and instead describes a kind of humble, ecological vision of the ideal world where humans recognise their terrestrial, earthbound nature and build new worlds on this basis. Before Marx (1988), I think we find a similar ecological vision of reality in the work of Spinoza (1996), who famously asserted the identity of God and nature, and, following Spinoza, Schelling (2004), who wrote of the impenetrability of nature in order to show that the turn back to earth should not entail the articulation of the kind of miserly, austere politics of limitation. Although Spinoza, Schelling, Marx, Merleau-Ponty, and Deleuze and Guattari can, in my view, be placed within a tradition of what we might want to call the univocity of being, this does not necessarily mean limitation; though, of course, this is precisely what it means from the point of view of abstraction and economy concerned with endless accumulation. From the perspective of the ontological relation between human and earth, however, there are no limits, since perception and interaction are endless. This is, I think, what Schelling meant when he wrote of the abyssal unground, which is simultaneously necessary and a kind of vortex that enables freedom (McGrath, 2012), and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) captured through the concepts of the plane of immanence and the body without organs which endlessly deterritorialises. In their final work, *What Is Philosophy?* (1994), Deleuze and Guattari wrote that science seeks to translate the utopian move-ments of deterritorialisation into function in the name of the management of chaos. In this way science ejects humanity from the world and places the scientist in a godlike position. By contrast, they explain that philosophy seeks consistency and understanding and write of the philosopher in terms of the superject who seeks to think about the earth conceptually in a philosophical world that does not destroy its movements.

Finally, Deleuze and Guattari refer to art, the figure of the artist, whom they call the inject, who plunges into the sensuous and seeks to represent the infinity of perception through finite means of great work. Reading back into their works on capitalism and schizophrenia, perhaps they might have added a fourth form of engagement with what they call the chaos of the earth, which is capitalism or the system of dejection that destroys the individual and

leaves him worldless, like Heidegger's (2001) rock. The value of the introduction of this fourth term would be to connect *What Is Philosophy?* (1994) to their earlier works but also to establish the grounds of geo-philosophical politics today, which are, in my view, about the struggle over home and what it means to live in a good home, or a utopian society. From the point of view of capitalism, the good home consists of abstraction, calculation, predictability, a refusal of the organic, and a rejection of the earth. But where does this leave humanity, which is organic, rooted in the earth, and characterised by its ability to perceive? This is where we can usefully refer to Heidegger's (2001) work on the fundamental concepts of metaphysics and particularly his discussion of world and worldliness. Heidegger (2001) explains that rocks are worldless, since they are entirely enclosed and unable to relate to the world, while animals are poor in world, because they relate to the earth, but never transcend their immersion in their environment. It is only humans that are world forming, in Heidegger's view, by virtue of their ability to shape their own world. While the problem of rocks and animals is one of captivation, whereby they are enclosed in nature, the human advantage resides in the distance of what he calls the present-to-hand that suspends behaviour and enables action.

The problem of this state is, however, that it plunges humanity into uncanniness, which, when we read Heidegger, is less a kind of psychological experience, and more an ontological condition concerned with 'throwness' and fundamental alienation (Withy, 2015). Given this situation, the error of what I have sought to call above capitalist dejection is that it emphasises this alienation through a will to technological abstraction. This is precisely the drive to technological enframing Heidegger (1977) associates with the forgetting of being and modern nihilism and Merleau-Ponty (1969) seeks to escape through his emphasis on the flesh of the world. But while the use of the idea of the flesh saw Merleau-Ponty push towards the kind of post-human ecological anonymity that might open up a new way of being, it is possible to argue that Deleuze and Guattari (1994) sought to radicalise Merleau-Ponty's vision through their geo-philosophy, where earth replaces world, which is already far too human to capture the nameless identity of everything with everything else on the plane of immanence. It is only under these conditions, where world becomes earth which exposes the terrestrial nature of humanity, that it will truly be possible to construct a new world, what Von Uexkull (2010) called a life world, on the basis of the kind of social, political, economic, and ecological constraints revealed by the contemporary moment Žižek (2010) writes about in terms of the end times. This new world, which I have sought to capture through reference to the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of the minor utopia, would recognise the ecological limits, vulnerabilities, and fragilities of humanity grounded in terrestrial space, and in this respect require the end of the infinite expansion of abstraction, economy, and consumption. However, by contrast to the necessity of the imposition of an austere economics of un-growth, the humble minor utopia of limits would also entail a profound rearticulation of what it means to be human, and centrally an assertion of the

primacy of perception and the deep engagement with others on the basis of a recognition of common earthbound nature. In this respect, the minor utopia would not simply be a miserable place, defined by lack and austerity, but rather representative of the emergence of an infinite utopianism concerned with the abyss of perception and the possibility of humans to understand through sensuous experience.

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6 The Lost Child of the Dystopian City

Nicolas Winding Refn's *Drive* and *Only God Forgives*

I The Lost Child in the Angelic City

In this chapter, and the chapter that follows, I propose to take up the politics of the environment explored in my work on the minor utopia through a consideration of, first, urban abandonment and the possibility of post-growth earthbound being, and second, alienation, estrangement, and the re-emergence of politics in a conflict-based recognition of inequality and division. In the first instance, I turn to the cinema of director Nicolas Winding Refn in order to explore the problem of abandonment in the contemporary city. Reading his recent films *Drive* (2011) and *Only God Forgives* (2013), I show how Winding Refn captures the horror of estrangement and alienation through an exploration of the politics of the destroyed family and the abandoned child. Where *Drive* leaves its protagonist, the nameless Driver, lost in the post-human city of things where nobody really matters, I turn to *Only God Forgives* to show how Winding Refn imagines escape from this horror through Buddhist philosophy and a vision of the extinction of drive in the destruction of the self. Although *Only God Forgives* imagines the annihilation of the driven self from the inside, there is a sense in which the other side of Winding Refn's horror show is the minor utopia from the previous chapter, and it is this catastrophic potential I pick up in the next chapter, *Dis-United Kingdom*. Following the current chapter I leap from Winding Refn's dystopic imaginary of the global city (Los Angeles to Bangkok) to contemporary British politics and the abandonment of youth and, as a consequence, the future, which it is possible to explore through discussion of the August 2011 riots in London and other major British cities. The objective of this chapter is to take the problem of abandonment found in Winding Refn's cinema and think about it through the political situation of contemporary Britain in order to show how the economics of contemporary capitalism have created the conditions for the re-emergence of what I want to call the encounter. In this context the idea of the encounter refers to the revelation of irreducible social relations and the problems of inequality and abandonment that destroy the potential of the future in conflict that necessarily emerges from the failure or refusal to face the ecological fact of social relations which characterises neo-liberal political thought and practice. It is these problems that, in my view, the

conflictual encounter challenges in the name of a new utopian politics where the neoliberal self, the possessive individual who lives through drive, gives way before the kind of ecological being organised around recognition and respect for psychological, social, and terrestrial limits set out in Winding Refn's horror show and on the other side of this nightmare of the extinction of thirst, the minor utopia.

In his recent neo-noir films, *Drive* (2011) and *Only God Forgives* (2013), the Danish-American director Winding Refn has captured and distilled the dystopia of the contemporary city through his cinematic construction of two imaginary urban deserts, Los Angeles and Bangkok. While Winding Refn's vision of the city is in many ways a 21st-century take on the representation of urban space found in the classic noir of the 1940s through to the 1960s, where his construction of the space of human interaction evolves beyond what we find in classic noir is in the mythic or religious dimension which his films evoke. Both Los Angeles and Bangkok are *angelic* cities, places where the profane world of man *lifts* towards the meaningful universe of God and there is hope for the future, but what we discover in *Drive* and *Only God Forgives* are spaces of cosmological fatalism, apparently devoid of significance. While classic noir constructs similar fatal places, and the noir city is always a horrific second nature, the urban wilderness in Winding Refn's films takes on mythological, religious, and existential import, precisely because the angelic origins of his, and perhaps all, cities is made clear to the viewer through a process of dialectical suggestion. Of course, the Californian myth of the frontier, the gold rush, and 'making it' conditions every noirish representation of LA, *the* failed utopian city of the late 20th century, and Bangkok is possibly the other world city where utopian possibility, in this case the sexual utopia of desire unleashed, rubs up against dystopian horror, and the descent into meaningless, utterly profane metabolism, where identity becomes about fucking or being fucked.

In *Drive* the utopian possibility of LA is a kind of spectre that haunts the story of the main character, the anonymous Driver, and his symbolic family, single mother Irene and her young son Benicio, who he finally tries to save by leaving them a bag of dirty money. In James Sallis' (2006) book of the same name the story plays out slightly differently, because Irene is killed in gang violence and Benicio is sent away to live with his grandparents, but Winding Refn's screenplay saves both characters and leaves them to live out their lives in a fatherless family. In this respect, there is some sense of escape from the horror of the nihilistic city in *Drive*, but this is a debased, lonely form of salvation. In the case of Driver, escape means loneliness, and consolation in machines. As both Sallis (2006) and Winding Refn (2011) emphasise, he drives, and that's all he does. At the end of the film we realise that he drives, and merges with the endless cycles of the engine, because he has nothing else, and no sense of human community. The city in *Drive* is, thus, a lonely, alienated space where all human relations are broken, if not completely destroyed.

Switching from West to East, Winding Refn's vision of Bangkok in *Only God Forgives* (2013) is no better. Here, the mythological, cosmological

dimensions of the story are ramped up, and the main character, Julian, who oversees a trafficking operation for his dead Dad, absent Mom, and psycho brother, sees no exit from the cycle of drugs, prostitution, and violence that swallows him and his dysfunctional family. However, it's not strictly true to say that Julian has no way out of his noirish predicament, because Chang, the demonic cop, who steps into the role of the disciplinary father in the film, is on hand to sort everything out. Unfortunately, what the film shows is that the only escape from the eternal return of suffering in desire and violence resides in brutal Oedipal violence. As the story evolves, Chang, who Winding Refn calls 'the angel of vengeance', takes the hands, arms, and, in one case, eyes of the various criminals he encounters, in order to restore karmic balance in the city of angelic salvation, hope, and possibility. But what kind of possibility is this? Essentially, the mythological dimensions Winding Refn constructs in *Only God Forgives* (2013), and the dystopia and consequent dark utopian hope he offers, are Buddhist in nature. The endless cycle of profanity, drugs, prostitution, fighting, and abuse are reflective of the Buddhist philosophy which understands existence in terms of endless suffering. We thirst, we desire, and we suffer. Escape is possible in Buddhist thought through enlightenment and the transcendence of material concerns, but what *Only God Forgives* shows is what this apparently utopian moment looks like from the perspective of the profane individual who lives through the cycles of drive. Of course, it does not look like a good place which is also a non-place, because neither self nor place exist in Nirvana. From the point of view of the profane individual, this mode of escape is no utopia, but rather hellish violence, and discipline which effectively destroys the self. In this respect, Winding Refn's Bangkok is perhaps the classic Freudian city, the kind of space where the father of psychoanalysis might have written *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2003a), in light of his fatalistic vision of utopian escape through thanatological self-destruction.

In seeking to understand the dystopian, and perhaps dark utopian, dimensions of Winding Refn's films in this chapter, I focus on the problem of loneliness and the ways in which this condition is reflected in his construction of the urban spaces of LA and Bangkok. Reflecting upon the situation of Winding Refn's main characters, Driver and Julian, within these alienated spaces, I want to suggest that it is possible to understand his work through the idea of the lost child who grows and becomes a lost man or alienated individual within what we might call the dystopian anti-city. At this point I will comment upon the remarkable performances of Winding Refn's leading man, Ryan Gosling, who captures the childlike quality of the lost man who seems incapable of social relation. In order to trace the reasons for this situation, and set up a psychoanalysis of Winding Refn's films, it becomes important to explore the histories of his lost men, and in particular look for instances where family relations went wrong or left the boy in a state of traumatic loss. In both cases Winding Refn's works suggest moments of trauma, which leave his main characters without parental support and especially the firm but fair hand of Dad, and might explain why they struggle to orientate themselves in

the world. In *Drive* (2011) the main character, Driver, is anonymous, which immediately suggests his alienation, and captures the loneliness that pervades his life to the extent that he barely communicates with other people. While both Sallis' (2006) book and Hossein Amini's script suggest this loneliness, it is only in Winding Refn's film, and Gosling's performance, that the existential dimensions and the full horror of Driver's alienation comes to the fore.

In the screenplay and the film itself there is little sense of the cause of this situation, and we are left with the suspicion that Driver's failure to relate to others is somehow a reflection of the wider urban malaise of the dystopic LA he inhabits. But Sallis' (2006) book provides a deeper insight where we learn that Driver comes from a destroyed family which collapsed when Mom murdered Dad with a bread knife. No wonder Driver lives out his life in a state of post-traumatic withdrawal. Out on his own, without the support of Mom or Dad, Driver lacks identity and we never learn anything about him. Winding Refn's film tells the story of his search for a sense of self in a new family. First, Driver finds a father figure in Shannon; then he discovers what he hopes will be his own family in the form of Irene and Benicio before Standard, the real husband and father, comes back on the scene. Finally, Driver finds himself trapped in the criminal family of Nino and Bernie Rose, who replay the original violence from his childhood. What follows is an orgy of violence that leaves more or less everybody dead and Driver on his own with only his car for company. While Driver projects his traumatic lack and destroyed self into the violence that consumes everybody in *Drive*, his final escape is symbolised by the roar of the engine that accompanies the end of the film. As *Drive* fades to black, Winding Refn opens a new front in the lost child's struggle to find some sense of identity in the Thai capital of *per*version, Bangkok.

In Winding Refn's follow-up to *Drive*, *Only God Forgives* (2013), main character Julian runs the family trafficking business with his psychotic brother, Billy. Mom is back in America. We later learn that Dad is six feet under and Julian is laying low for his murder. Although we discover that Julian killed Dad for Mom, which repeats the patricide of Driver but this time puts the murder on the son, we never learn about Dad's crimes. However, when Mom eventually shows up in Bangkok, we realise that Dad must have been bad because she is the classic Freudian women who can't let the men in her life have their own living space. She blames everything on Julian, and it's clear he will never be his own man while she is on the scene. Enter Chang, the angel of vengeance, who fills in for the missing father, and eventually gives Julian a way out of his hopeless situation. In Winding Refn's original screenplay, Jenna, the tyrannical Mom, walks away, but in the film itself Chang kills her, before subjecting Julian to Oedipal discipline, in order to seal the deal and leave us in no doubt about the cop's role in saving his foster son from his violent mother. The fate of Oedipus, and Oedipal violence, is thus the resolution of the family violence that pervades the film. Gosling's depiction of Julian is, similar to his Driver, perfectly reflective of the character's existential condition. He is thrown, lost, largely silent, boyish, and childlike. Yet his calm betrays his fatal resignation to his situation. He is

hopeless in every sense of the word. But where he lacks the reason of a grown-up is not in his perception of his situation, but rather in his inability to think through a possible escape route. Thus Julian's childishness resides in the same lack which conditions Driver's life. Without parental support to place him in the normal symbolic order where it becomes possible to relate cause to effect in order move into the future, Julian cannot escape from the reactive, regressive modes of behaviour that trap him within the cyclical orbit of drive. Under conditions of drive everything becomes about reaction, revenge, and equality of exchange—women, drugs, and violence are all subject to the logic of equivalence, and only God, or the angel of vengeance, forgives, and therefore offers a way out through a divine calculus beyond the painful profanity of economic value.

This is, I think, the precise problem of urban or post-urban space in Winding Refn's work. On the one hand what we learn from Lewis Mumford (1968) is that the city is *the* essential utopian—indeed, human—space, which makes culture, language, history, and significance itself possible. For Mumford urban space humanises man, places him in a state of security, and opens up possibility beyond metabolism. Beyond the fatal cycles of nature, where life consists of the endless struggle to survive, man is projected into culture, where he can become human and sublimate his libidinal energy into the construction of civilization. In this respect, the city represents Oedipus, and Oedipal discipline in concrete form, simply because it takes man out of nature and locates him within the cultural sphere of language. Where Winding Refn intervenes in this story is in his vision of the city, which evolves beyond security and culture and becomes a new urban jungle. Under these conditions, which were similarly imagined in the late 19th-century and early 20th-century European context by Durkheim (1984), Marx (1988), and Simmel (1997), the hyper-rationality of urban culture reinvents the violence of nature within the space of the city itself. In this situation, the city, the original space of security, becomes a modern or, in Winding Refn's (2011, 2013) case, postmodern jungle, and man enters a new phase where he must fight to survive in a violent, precarious form of civilisation. Thus, in much the same way that Marx (1988) imagined his proletarians, whose lives were conditioned by basic, animalistic needs, the characters in Winding Refn's films live through drive. They are caught in fatal cycles of perfect exchange without end, where women, money, drugs, and violence are absolutely commensurate, and can only harbour fantasies about escape. While Irene and Benicio represent Driver's fantastical escape through the reconstitution of family in the lonely anti-city, the fatal truth of his dream comes to Julian in the shape of Chang, the angel of vengeance, who takes his arms and casts him into the darkness of the Oedipal city, which is, ironically, a kind of gloomy utopia.

My view is, therefore, that Winding Refn's dystopia, and what I call above his dark utopia, is concerned with a psychosocial story of civilization in a state of collapse under conditions of postmodern urban development. LA and Bangkok become the backdrop for his reflections simply because they capture the drama of the transformation of the city into a kind of postmodern anti-city—LA is,

of course, *the* space of urban dreams become nightmares for the 20th century, while Bangkok projects the fatal dystopia of drive, where the realisation of fantasy ultimately results in frustration, onto the metaphysical, religious plane of Buddhism. In this chapter my objective is to take two of Winding Refn's films, *Drive* (2011) and *Only God Forgives* (2013), and treat them through a social and political psychology based upon the classic Platonic view of the interconnection of man and city. For Plato (1991) the truth of man, and his temper, could be observed in the city, which was an architectural representation of the psychological state of man. On the other hand, Plato also saw that the good city could produce good men who would in turn reinforce the needs of the good city and so on. What we find in Winding Refn's film is, in many respects, the dystopic alternative to this utopian circuit, where the postmodern anti-city produces destroyed men who simply reinforce the negativity of the urban space they move through. Essentially, I think that this is the problem that both *Drive* (2011) and *Only God Forgives* (2013) reflect and, at the same time, resolve through a Freudian preoccupation with Oedipal themes.

In both *Drive* and *Only God Forgives*, Winding Refn makes use of what Alain Silver and James Ursini (2004) call the noir style in order to establish the Platonic connection between man and city. As Silver and Ursini note in their book on noir style, the objective of noir stylisation was to capture the psychological state of man in the representation of his environment. According to Silver and Ursini (2004), this update of Plato's psychology of the city, which connects internal states to external environmental conditions, can also be found in the works of Edvard Munch and the German expressionists, who inspired the noir style in the first place. This style, which captures states of decay, dislocation, and alienation through the use of chiaroscuro, or light/dark, imagery, was first developed by the expressionists, who sought to use deep contrast and shadowy imagery to capture the trauma of Weimar Germany. From Silver and Ursini's (2004) perspective, noir cinema employed similar stylistic devices in order to represent the psychosis of American society, and particularly American society rendered in space, in the early post-World War II period. For Kelly Oliver and Benigno Trigo (2002), the reason this particular period of history threw up noir was because it was a moment of enormous change, and perhaps the era that saw the shift from modern to postmodern forms of social organisation. The result of this post-war period of change was, for Oliver and Trigo, the emergence of a diffuse or ambient form of social anxiety, centrally revolving around white male fear of others, including women and ethnics, who white men felt were in the process of undermining their natural social, political, economic, and cultural authority. According to this account, then, we might suggest that whereas expressionism represented the post-World War I German trauma related to loss and an inability to mourn, noir followed hot on its heels in order to capture the American anxiety about the enormous social changes produced by World War II. In the case of noir, Oliver and Trigo (2002) argue that this free-floating anxiety—because anxiety is, of course, fear without a clearly defined object—took the form of a fear of the femme fatale

and the conspiratorial foreigner who endlessly threatened the lonely hero or what I call in this chapter the lost child. In Oliver and Trigo's (2002) work *Noir Anxiety*, noir is, therefore, centrally about white male America's castration anxiety in the face of the emergence of postmodern society.

In his work on the urban condition in noir cinema, Edward Dimendberg (2004) builds upon this perspective by showing how the essence of noir resides in the situation of the hero thrown into the technological nightmare of the late modern/postmodern city which has no interest in humanity. Recalling Simmel's (1997) famous work on urban alienation, which was coincidentally written in the Weimar era of expressionism, Dimendberg argues that noir imagined urban space in two ways. First, the city was a centripetal place, where the self was crushed by over-proximity, density, and speed, and second, it was also a centrifugal space, characterised by loneliness, alienation, and distance. Although the two positions appear contradictory and incommensurable, what Simmel's (1997) Weimar work *Metropolis and Mental Life* shows is that the modern city was simultaneously dense, crowded, and overpopulated, and at the same time dispersed, lonely, and alienated, on the basis that the latter state represents a psychological reaction to the former condition. Consider Alberto Giacometti's expressionist *City Square*—the square, the ancient meeting place of the community, is populated, but there is also a deep sense of separation and alienation about the figures, who are blank, anonymous, and have no relation to each other. Thus, Giacometti sought to capture the condition of modern urban space and show how the growth of the city, increases in urban density, and the mechanisation of modern life led to psychological withdrawal from others resulting in the kind of indifference Simmel (1997) talks about in terms of the blasé attitude. Here, urbanites live in a grey world where, precisely because of the endless newness and shocks of their environment, they remain impervious, armoured, and closed off to external stimulus. In a sense, then, it is precisely this stark division between self and environment, and the resultant loneliness and paranoia of the modern self living in a state of constant unease, uncertainty, and anxiety, that noir captures through its use of chiaroscuro style which represents the world in terms of sharp contrasts between light, dark, overexposed spaces, and shadowy corners.

For Simmel (1997) the contrast between the over-proximity and alienation of the modern city led to the emergence of the psychological condition of loneliness, whereby the self is simultaneously absolutely free in an environment that seems oblivious to its existence, and yet also imprisoned in a kind of suffocating anonymity that constantly throws it back upon itself. Moreover, this condition of loneliness also made the modern individual susceptible to psychopathological forms of solipsistic introspection, thus creating the pathological mode of reflexivity Freud (2003b) refers to through his work on paranoid schizophrenia and others, such as R. D. Laing (2010) and Deleuze and Guattari (1983), would take up in the 1960s and 1970s. There is no doubt that this schizo-paranoid psychology is present in noir, which, as Silver and Ursini (2004) show, regularly employs the effect of the prison bar in order to capture the

protagonist's fatal situation, and there is little sense that this feeling of hopeless-ness has receded or declined in contemporary neo-noir films, including Winding Refn's *Drive* (2011) and *Only God Forgives* (2013). This historical connection is important, because Dimendberg (2004) suggests that the end of classic noir and the rise of neo-noir from the 1960s onwards can be traced to a bicoastal shift in American urban development from East Coast verticality to West Coast horizontality. Put another way, Dimendberg's argument is that the centre of noir shifted from New York, which had in a sense held together the bipolar opposites of centripetal and centrifugal space, towards Los Angeles, where the centripetal concern with density and over-proximity collapses before the centrifugal ten-dency to endless extension, expansion, and resultant alienation. Under these conditions, Dimendberg suggests that the noir gives way to neo-noir and the new space of urban or perhaps post-urban horror becomes somewhereville, which is also anywhereville, which is also nowhereville. The central Platonic question would be, then, whether this shift in urban structure impacted upon the psychological condition of the protagonists or whether the shift from New York to LA, verticality to horizontality, and noir to neo-noir left the modern or postmodern self in the same alienated predicament.

I would suggest that this is the case and that the core psychological prob-lematic of neo-noir remains the same as that of its classical forerunner. That is to say that regardless of this shift away from over-proximity towards the alienation and separation of sprawl, it is clear that paranoia, anxiety, and the fear of the other remain central to neo-noir, perhaps precisely because the other is now more distant, unknown, and unseen. If we consider David Lynch's neo-noir LA trilogy, which spans *The Lost Highway* (1997), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and *Inland Empire* (2006), it is clear that the psychological effect of sprawl of the City of Angels is simply to intensify the hopeless position of characters who cannot change their situation or escape from themselves pre-cisely because their environment offers no well-defined points of orientation to begin to map the process of change or foundation upon which to rethink their identity. In this respect, we might conclude that the psychosis of Lynch's cinema resides in the way in which he casts his characters into the meaning-less spaces of LA sprawl and then confronts his audience with the same lack of symbolic narrative structure that faces his protagonists. Although Lynch's neo-noir works knowingly make use of stylistic devices employed in noir film, and thus situate the viewer in a very particular world, the psychosis of his texts themselves—and perhaps his sprawling *Inland Empire* (2006) is his classic work of post-urban psychosis—constantly disorientate his audience. In other words, noir tropes remain and are recast in new form, so, for example, the sharp contrasts of the chiaroscuro style are replaced by what we might call colour consciousness, where deep red signifies madness and so on, but these stylistic sign posts are constantly undermined by Lynch's endeavour to represent psychosis from the inside and in this respect radicalise the noir commitment to capture internal states in the construction of the external world. In this sense Winding Refn's works are perhaps less radical than Lynch's neo-noir

films, simply because they maintain narrative coherence and step back from the representation of post-urban psychosis, but for this very reason I think that it is possible to argue that they construct more coherent images of contemporary urban dystopia than we find in Lynch, where the urban is itself only really present in its negative form, a psychotic ruin of its former self.

II Drive and Despair: On the Dystopia of Post-Urban Loneliness in Winding Refn's LA

Based upon the novel of the same name by James Sallis (2006), Winding Refn's (2011) *Drive* tells the story of the otherwise anonymous Driver, played by Ryan Gosling. Driver lives alone and works on Hollywood stunts. In his spare time he is a getaway driver for hire, hence his name, which signifies his complete identification with his role and the machine he drives. Upon meeting crooks to organise a robbery, Driver explains his role—he drives, there is no more. That's all he does. Driver's loneliness, and in Sallis' book we are told that he enjoys the anonymity of LA, is perfectly captured by Gosling, who radicalises the personality of the character in the novel by suggesting a kind of autistic withdrawal from social engagement. While the book provides explanation for Driver's condition, through his memory of Mom's murder of Dad, the film itself never frames his blank, mechanistic, behaviour. However, it is clear that Driver is compelled to tentatively seek out others, and upon meeting Carey Mulligan's Irene and her young son Benicio, he seeks to form relationships and become a family man. Although this attempt to become a husband and father is thwarted when Standard, Irene's real husband and Benicio's father, returns home from prison, Driver maintains his commitment to them. Against his better judgement, he helps Standard commit a robbery in order to buy his freedom from his previous employers and become a better husband and father. Unfortunately, the robbery is a setup and Standard ends up shot in the neck. As a result, Driver finds himself on the run with a bag full of dirty money, and everything unfolds from here. Driver wants to return the money to the gang in order to save Irene and Benicio, but ends up on a killing spree when they refuse to let him off the hook. After killing various hoods and the bosses Nino and Bernie Rose, Driver realises that there's no way out of his situation and he can never see Irene and Benicio again. He has to disappear and live out his tragic life alone.

On the basis of its focus on urban alienation, loneliness, amorality, fatalism, and criminality, the story of *Drive* (2011) is organised around the classic themes of noir cinema. However, there are important differences between the book and Winding Refn's film, which centrally revolve around the morality of Driver, who Winding Refn transforms into a kind of moral hero who fights to save Irene and Benicio. Sallis' character is in a sense less driven by moral concerns and perhaps more focused on self-preservation. He loses Irene to gang violence, and Benicio is taken away to live with extended family. While this takes away Sallis' character's moral cause, Gosling's Driver maintains his commitment to his

adopted family throughout and they become the only good thing in his life. In a sense they represent his symbol of hope, and the principle of utopian good-ness, which he fights for in an amoral world characterised by cyclical violence that has only one end—the accumulation of money. In this respect, *Drive* (2011) contains a classic noirish critique of the city and, in this case, LA, which becomes a hellish dystopia, where the only thing that matters is circulation. From the first moments of the film, it is clear that Gosling's Driver is caught inside this endless fatal cycle. The film begins inside a car engine and establishes Driver's identification with machines on this basis. Akin to Bruno Bettelheim's (1972) mechanical boy, Joey, who sought to transform himself into a robot built from cardboard boxes and aluminium foil in order to escape the horror of parental indifference, Gosling's Driver takes cars over people every time. This is why the cars in the film are never simply cars, but rather imbued with personality and a clear sense of identity. Even though we learn that Driver's car, the Silver Chevy Impala, is the most popular car in America, and will thus blend in or at least not stand out, the identification of the car, and focus on its identity, provides it with a personality within its anonymity. In this respect, the car is similar to Driver himself, anonymous, seeking some kind of identity. Indeed, the film stretches the comparison between Driver and his car through his function—'He drives, that's all he does'—and intimate knowledge of the machine—'The only thing he knows is cars.' Akin to the machine, which does not need to sleep, Driver suffers from insomnia, and never sleeps. In order to emphasise his mecha-nisation, in the first scene of the film we see his face lit by neon, the symbol of the postmodern city that never sleeps and works on the basis of post-human rhythms.

After the film establishes Driver's mechanisation in its first scene, *Drive* (2011) builds its story of its main character's alienation from other people. Even when Gosling's Driver seeks out others—his father figure Shannon, Irene, Benicio, Standard—his personal attachment ends in either their death or fear of death and he is left isolated, alone. In order to emphasise this point, the film ends in a car park and a maze of indistinct cars. Driver starts his car, the engine roars into life, and he drives away. The film ends. Thus the final message of *Drive* is that Driver is on his own, thrown back upon his machines, which symbolise his traumatic past, and endless attempts to repair himself through, first, protective identification with technology which *holds* him, and second, tentative attempts to establish relations with others which always crash upon the rocks of the postmodern urban condition that prohibits emotional connection. What this shows is that even though Driver drives, and is essentially in control of his machine, he is also driven by unconscious trauma, what Freud called the com-pulsion to repeat, which forces him into the future to order to try to repair his damage. The image of the engine, which opens the film, and the sound of its roar which closes Driver's story, are, therefore, symbolic of the centrality of psychoanalytic drive to his and every other human life. In much the same way, I would suggest that this symbolism also captures the essential mechanisation of humanity, which Freud (2003a) explained through the unconscious compulsion

to repeat, and appears absolutely alien to us precisely because we believe we are in control of ourselves. It is, of course, only in extreme cases, such as Bettelheim's (1972) Joey and Gosling's Driver, where severe trauma results in disassociation from self and others that the essential mechanisation of life becomes explicit and takes on the form of identification with the repetitious nature of machines. Apart from cars, Driver's alienation from himself and others is also reflected in *Drive*'s construction of urban or post-urban space, the sprawl of LA. Although there are debates about the extent of sprawl in LA, and Ed Soja (2014) argues that the city is also characterised by high levels of density that counteract the effects of suburban expansion, and the American imaginary LA will always be the city of sprawl, anywhereville, nowhereville, and the existential void of the post-urban condition.

In *Drive* (2011), the endless horizontality of the city reflects Driver's alienation from the world in that he spends his time either chasing or being chased by others whom he either wants to love, destroy, or escape. In Husserl's *Ideas* (2012), the horizon is essential for progress through life, and this futuristic, if not futurist, vision was taken up by Norman Bel Geddes, who was the man behind Futurama and the 'City of Tomorrow' in the late 1930s (Albrecht, 2012). There are no people in Bel Geddes' vision of the future, and the urban is a kind of mechanical organism that simply works. The car is, of course, central to his idea of the new world. Akin to Le Corbusier's modernist machine for living, estrangement was written into Bel Geddes' vision, simply because humans where nowhere to be seen. If this was the future, then it was a lonely place, which suggests the engineer's view that machines were more rational, predictable, and clean than humans, who were the primary cause of the problems of Depression-era America. However, the problem of the seductive idea of a future without humans, which essentially remains the ultimate paranoid fantasy, is that the future is in itself impossible for the last man standing. As Bernd Jager (1971) explains in his paper on the lived experience of dimensions, without the other who provides us with a sense of objective and significance, the horizon becomes a symbol of infinite regress and endless frustration. Movement is impossible under these conditions. On my own, I vanish into the future without significance, direction, or landmarks. On this *lost highway* my life becomes a chase, where I am either chasing some sense of meaning or being chased by some other who wants to hunt me down. This is exactly how Driver experiences the road and movement towards the horizon in *Drive*. As Virilio (2005) explains in his *Negative Horizon*, the vehicle is essentially a machine for the organisation of speeds into the future, and this is precisely the role the car plays for Driver—it organises his movement, but it never provides him with a sense of direction which he essentially lacks because he has no other.

Driver's problem is that Mom's murder of Dad left him without a significant other to structure his horizon from very early on. Thus, Driver drives, but he never really gets anywhere, which is why the symbol of the car, and the engine, pretty much sums him up—they work, they move, they drive, but

they have no direction of their own, and require otherness to plot their course. This is why Driver is a lost child, a man who never really grew up because he was unable to resolve the problem of childhood trauma, or perhaps what Jager (1971) calls a delinquent, the person who never had parental guidance to structure his movement into the future. In Laurence Rickels' (1991) psychoanalysis of California, the psychopathology of the lost child essentially characterises the people and culture of the Golden State. In his view, this state, born in the infantile fantasy of omnipotence, and the dream of 'having it all' in the 1840s, has never really grown up. Of course, Californians must be born, and they have parents, but Rickels' point is that the parental function, which explains that we must live out a life of lack that makes us human, has never worked on the West Coast, primarily because the origin story of the place itself is that it really is the dreamworld where you can have what you want. For Rickels, California is, thus, a death world which, like the Donner Party, is set to eat itself, run by a death cult, which thinks that total consumption is the route to some kind of permanent, flatline state of peace and happiness. The essential European reader of America, Baudrillard (1988), supports this thesis when he notes that America is a utopia realised in the process of becoming a dystopia. On the space of desire, and desire reduced to the fatal circularity of drive, he explains that Americans believe that dreams can come true. Whereas Europe is the space of tragedy, where utopian fantasy crashes upon the rocks of reality, the terrible truth of America is that it fails to recognise the irony of utopia and makes it real. Given that California, the Golden State, is America's utopia, it is, therefore, no surprise that both Rickels (1991) and Baudrillard (1988) find the consequences of its happy nightmare here in the shape of what the latter calls the thanatological desert form.

Under conditions of Baudrillard's (1988) desert form, the Californian seeks out peace, happiness, and endless freedom and refuses anything that looks like limitation, including the other, which puts a new spin on the idea of the frontier. On the frontier of escapism, place, which is by nature defined, limited, and enclosed, is abolished in favour of space, and what would become Bel Geddes' fantasy of the post-human metabolic city, where one feels like the sole survivor. In this post-apocalyptic, post-mortem state where the limitations of life collapse before the furious revolutions of the technological death drive, Rickels (1991) explains that everybody is dying to be reborn. In other words, the Californian personality is organised around a new age, Western perversion of the Buddhist idea that one can escape oneself for the nothingness of the void. On the basis that this vision displays the infantile, or at least immature, tendency to believe in the lack of lack of kids, Rickels points out that the essence of the Californian is the desire for endless youth. However, since youth is wasted on the young, and kids are endlessly preoccupied with the freedom of grown-ups and never really fantasise about their own youth, he also explains that there is a deep sense of desperation about the Californian obsession with youth which comes from an unconscious recognition of the inescapable truth of trauma, lack, and decay. For Rickels (1991), then, the Californian mentality

can only be explained by shifting through the gears of what he calls Freud's two systems. The first system incorporates *Totem and Taboo* (2001), where the primal father who tyrannises everybody is overthrown by his kids, who become a kind of friendship group that ends up being similarly tyrannical on the basis of peer pressure that says that it's hip to be square.

In what Rickels (1991) calls Freud's second system, which revolves around *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2003a), the kids feel lost because Dad is no longer in their lives, and start to search for some new sense of significance. This is where desire comes into the picture. However, the catch is that because Dad is dead, and the kids are living in a world where everything is possible, desire quickly becomes drive, and the friendship group forms around a cultural belief in 'making it', finding endless love, complete happiness, and total satisfaction. For Rickels (1991) the horror of California is, therefore, that it's based upon a kind of infantile suicide pact, where everybody agrees that it's time to escape into love, happiness, and peace which excludes others who generally fuck things up and cause the misery of limitation. On this basis, Rickels (1991) writes about California's happy suicidal tendencies and presents a deeply ambivalent, noirish image of the Golden State. Following Adorno and Horkheimer (1997), who fled to the land of the free in the 1930s, he suggests that Americans, and particularly Californians, look to fill in for the lack of Dad, and the relation to others that Dad would make possible, through consumerism and what McLuhan (2001) calls gadget love. For McLuhan, gadget love involves a process of self-amputation, whereby the technological environment becomes too much for the cyber-man, who responds by seeking escape into fetish objects, which mean that he no longer needs to deal with the real world. In Adorno and Horkheimer's account things work slightly differently, because the escape into the world of things is premised on the attempt to escape the misery of production and the loneliness of capitalist life where everybody is a competitor. Under these conditions the gadget becomes the best possible buddy because it won't intentionally screw you over.

Either way, in both cases the gadget becomes a perverse version of Klein's (1997) transitional object, which is supposed to help kids move from Mom to others, but here ends up becoming a fetish object, or what Marx (1990) calls a commodity. This is, of course, exactly the purpose the car serves in Winding Refn's *Drive*—it represents a totemic object for Driver, who lost his parents too soon, which reflects his desperate Californian freedom to drive into some future better than the present he currently inhabits. Since the American car is never simply a car, but rather a Chevy Impala or some other *name*, Driver, much like every Californian, identifies with his machine, and the psycho-cultural capitalist complex it represents. He lives through this complex. Indeed, for Rickels (1991) this structure represents the psycho-political challenge of LA: the struggle to live in the face of drive which pushes Californians towards their happy demise in thanatological utopia. Moreover, reading Reyner Banham's (2009) classic study of LA, *The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, it is clear how this psychopathological immersion in drive maps onto space.

Of course, for Banham, who explains that LA prioritises mobility over monumentality and writes about the city in terms of *autopia*, endless roads are a positive invention because they capture the spirit of the frontier and the West in concrete form. It is only really towards the end of his account that Banham compares LA to the red planet from Ray Bradbury's (2008) *Martian Chronicles*, and even then there is very little critical discussion on this dystopian spin. Following the work of David Nye (1996), we might conclude that Banham was in awe of the technological sublime and for this reason failed to see the problems of the urban or post-urban horizon.

Devoid of landmarks or significance, there is no real progress in LA, because it is a space of endless circulation, and essentially empty. In the wake of Baudrillard (1988), who makes the point about LA's origins in the deserts of the West, perhaps the best way to understand the City of Angels is through Paul Virilio's (2000) logics of disappearance and desertification in his essay 'Twilight of the Grounds', which shows how high-tech speed, movement, and circulation eventually destroy time, space, and dimension in the emergence of a postmodern void. Picking up where Banham (2009) left off, perhaps Baudrillard's (1988) desert form and Virilio's (2000) logic of desertification represent the truth of LA the author of *The Architecture of the Four Ecologies* sought to capture through his reference to the similarity of the city to Bradbury's Martian landscape. In both Baudrillard and Virilio's work, the desert represents the coincidence of opposites, and thus a kind of terminal space, which we should understand in terms of both origins and endings. Again, in both cases the key to the abolition of distance is technological speed. In Virilio's (2000) work speed destroys the three bodies that make up the world, namely the territorial body, where the environment has human significance; the social body, where other people matter; and the animal body, where biology is necessary for movement. First, speed collapses territory because here becomes there without the necessary space of identification in between, second, speed cuts out the other who becomes an obstacle to free movement, and third, speed mechanises biology because the animal body tires and is too slow even in top condition. This is, in essence, the desert form Baudrillard (1988) writes about in his *America*, which he associates with California and LA, and which we find in Winding Refn's *Drive*, where Driver abandons the city to pure movement without destination, lives out a life without others who represent dangerous baggage, and finally identifies completely with his car, a condition perfectly captured by the first and last moments that bookend the film. In this way perhaps it is not really science fiction to say that the final moments of the film, when Driver takes off into the wilderness, represent Virilio's (1999) last vehicle from his book *Polar Inertia* that concerns the high-speed collapse of time and space into the void Baudrillard calls the desert form.

While the concept of the desert is in many respects the dominant idea in critical writings on LA, such as those of Soja (2011) and Dear (2001), who emphasise the decentralisation of the city relative to the classic American modern city of Chicago, there is also a sense in which the theme of

postmodern disorientation and displacement, which Jameson (1991) roots in Bunker Hill, connects to the other central problem of LA urbanism, asociality, or, worse, hyper-division. On the basis of the problem of spatial dislocation and the consequent condition of homelessness, the Durkheimian (1984) idea of the collective conscience collapses, and LA becomes a space of suspicion, violence, and crime, which is precisely the kind of environment which Winding Refn evokes in *Drive* (2011). Of course, this noirish view of LA as a space of violence and criminality is supported by both Mike Davis (2006) and Norman Klein (2008) in their respective histories of the city. Against Banham's (2009) utopian image of autopia, Davis (2006) builds upon Peter Plagens' (1972) theory of the ecology of evil and suggests that LA is, much like Rickels' (1991) sunshine state, an infantile fantasy. For Davis the City of Angels is a commodity, sold to people like any other commodity, which offers people escape from their insecurities. Thus LA offers the fantasy of the perfect sunny lifestyle—the perfect body, which we can make in cosmetic surgery; perfect sex, which we can find in the hardcore porn of the San Fernando Valley; and perfect spirituality, which we can discover in the positive psychology of the city and its culture. However, for Davis the problem with this vision is that it is essentially a mythology, comparable to the Californian fantasy Rickels' explores, and the reality of the LA drive to 'make it' is that it burnt out long ago and became an empty promise of utopia. As Wim De Wit and Christopher Alexander (2013) explain in their history of LA utopianism, the problem with drive is that it can easily become overdrive, and overheat, destroying the engine of progress itself.

Although De Wit and Alexander (2013) take up the metaphor of the engine in their discussion of the futurism of LA, there is no sense in which they recognise the psychoanalytic dimensions of the concept of drive, which Freud (2003a) unpacks in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. However, consideration of their history of utopian disappointment in light of Winding Refn's story of Driver's endless search for escape from loneliness suggests the moment when drive, and the attempt to obtain utopian closure, becomes overdrive, and collapses into the kind of obsessive mechanisation which works without belief or illusion. In psychoanalysis, of course, there is no concept of overdrive, because there is nothing beyond drive itself but the moment of thanatological burnout and destruction. However, perhaps what De Wit and Alexander's (2013) idea of overdrive captures is the moment when the utopian belief of desire folds into the obsessive repetition of drive itself where there is no belief in fulfilment, but only desperate, empty mechanisation. This idea is, I think, central to the histories of both Klein (2008) and Davis (2006). Beyond the utopianism of the booster myth, Davis, in particular, finds a dystopia of gutted urbanism and social division. Akin to Soja (2011) and Dear (2001), Davis' LA is a city which has been destroyed by the shift from industry to post-industry which left the poor, mainly black, working classes largely redundant. For Davis, the narcotics industry grew up in this vacuum and became *the* employer for black working-class men. The result of this was not to solve the problem of

alienation, but to contribute to the creation of a postmodern neo-noir ecology of fear, which Davis says hangs over LA like thick smog.

In Davis' (1999) book on the anxiety and paranoia of LA, the ecology of fear represents a sense of impending doom, which links to the environmental situation of the city that makes it susceptible to wildfires, droughts, and earthquakes, but also captures the horror of otherness that pervades the city. In the second half of the book, Davis tracks the history of LA fear in fiction, and refers to the noir tradition, including *LA Confidential* (1997), as well as sci-fi films such as *Independence Day* (1996), where LA becomes the centre of a hostile alien takeover of the entire world. It is, of course, easy to update Davis' story and refer to more recent films such as *Battle: Los Angeles* (2011), which replaces Islamic radicals with alien invaders and projects the urban war in Iraq onto the streets of LA, and *The Purge* (2013), where criminality and the urban war of all against all is legalised for one night only and ends up spilling out into the suburbs and coming home to of all people a security expert and his family. Winding Refn's *Drive* (2011) is part of this tradition, and it employs the motifs of division, violence, and low-intensity war, which *Battle: Los Angeles* and *The Purge* focus upon, in order to create the backdrop for the loneliness of Driver, who realises it's better to keep himself to himself. While there is no war between aliens and others or desperate middle-class homeowners fighting to survive in *Drive*, its neo-noirish world is premised on a vision of the essential corruption of the social body, where even criminals rip each other off at every turn. Davis (2006) picks up this idea in his history of LA, *City of Quartz*, and especially in his chapter on the fortification of the city. Against the alienation, and subsequent suspicion of others, that characterises LA, Davis argues that the city has become obsessed with defence and fortification. Writing in the late 1980s when the walls between East and West were in the process of collapsing in Europe, Davis points out that walls were being built across LA. He explains that this is the built expression of sadistic space, or space organised around cruelty and power, and refers his reader to the buildings of Frank Gehry to support his theory of military urbanism. In this context, Gehry's Danziger Studio becomes a dumb box, a kind of oversized panic room, while the Frances Howard Goldwyn Library represents the architectural equivalent of a .44 Magnum.

In his focus on the destruction of public space through the creation of a military architecture of division and defence, Davis' (2006) work captures the noirish ambience of Winding Refn's *Drive* where everybody is on their own and trust is a utopian concept in short supply. However, whereas Davis provides a political vision of the post-urban condition of LA by suggesting that the city is divided between police and gangs, Winding Refn's film is unusual because of its more or less total lack of police. Following the first scene, where Driver outruns the LAPD in order to demonstrate his prowess behind the wheel, the film focuses on his relationships with his potential family and criminals. While Davis' (2006) focus in *City of Quartz* is the problem of sovereignty, or, in the language of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the way the

lords of social order, Mitra and Varuna, structure the anomic spaces of the city, *Drive assumes* that there is no structure and that corruption is more or less total. This is not entirely surprising, since, as Davis (2006) notes, one of the core political functions of the LAPD in the neoliberal period of the 1980s has been to criminalise the poor, black youth, and welfare moms and transform these people into outlaws. Given Driver's homelessness, it is no surprise that the story of this orphan revolves around his relationships with other lost souls and criminals, and that the police who organise social structure barely feature, precisely because there is a sense in which the firm but fair Oedipal power of the police is precisely what has been withdrawn from the streets of the city, leaving it to become a kind of urban or post-urban jungle in the neo-liberal period. Left to his own devices, then, Winding Refn's Driver lives somewhere inside Davis' (2006) dialectic of noir and sunshine. *Drive* itself trades on the desperate allure of LA, of the dream gone sour, but Driver himself occupies the psychotic space of the social without authority, devoid of organisation. Driver's LA is thus Baudrillard's (1988) nocturnal inferno, which the French critic compared to a postmodern version of a picture by the Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch, where the luminosity of neon takes over from the natural light of the sun, and human relations collapse before the dumb horror of mechanisation without reason. This is neo-noir LA, the anti-city which will become the post-urban dystopia of Ridley Scott's (1982) *Blade Runner*, where traffic is a kind of living thing and there is no escape from the drive to reach the other and the despair of homelessness.

III 'Wanna Fight': Oedipus Comes to Bangkok in Winding Refn's *Only God Forgives*

In his *Only God Forgives* (2013), Winding Refn extends his exploration of the lost child in post-urban dystopia, shifting the setting of his story from LA to Bangkok and introducing the figure of the law in order to show how the alienated man can find his place in the social order. In *Only God Forgives*, the lost child—again played by Ryan Gosling, with the same sense of estrangement with which he developed *Drive*'s main character—inhabits the endless city of Bangkok and struggles to find his place in the world. Akin to *Drive*'s noirish LA, there is no real social structure in Winding Refn's Bangkok, and what order exists is organised around perversity. Centrally, the economy governs social relations, but this is not the official economy of normal buying and selling, but rather the shadow economy of women, drugs, and gambling, which is overseen and governed by deadly violence. In shifting the scene of his story from LA to Bangkok, Winding Refn alienates his viewer from the traditional noir setting of LA to the site of what we might call Bangkok noir and sug-gests a form of urbanism which resembles the kind of city that might emerge at the end of Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (2010). Written towards the end of his life in the late 1920s, *Civilization and Its Discontents* represents Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2003a) lifted towards sociological

speculation. In other words, Freud sought to imagine what would happen if men who live through the compulsion to repeat, drive, and the desire for self-destruction were suddenly thrown into society. The answer is they would annihilate themselves and—via the mechanism of projection which shifts the desire for self-destruction onto the urge to destroy the other—each other. On the basis of this insight, Freud reached the conclusion that society was essentially a defence mechanism against violence and that the various social rules and so on that humans live by are essential to the preservation of life. The catch is, of course, that these endless rules make humans miserable because they limit their ability to get what they really want—self-destruction. Hence, for Freud, civilisation, and society itself, must be miserable. However, the problem with this situation, and with keeping society miserable, is that it relies on misers who prohibit sex, violence, and basically whatever it is the kids want to do. The patriarch is, thus, essential to Freud's system. But we know what happened to him.

In this way it is possible to say that we might extend Rickels' (1991) theory of Freud's two systems by suggesting a third moment. Beyond *Totem and Taboo* (2001), where the kids kill Dad, and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2003a), where the kids seek out eternal peace in thanatology, we can introduce *Civilization and Its Discontents* (2010), where Freud desperately searches for Dad and tells the kids to wait until their father comes home. The problem for Freud was that there were no suitable fathers in, of all places, the home of modern European civilisation, Germany, and the site of expressionism spiralled into psychosis. In the wake of Weimar, Hitler came onto the scene, a kind of perverse father, who was full of childish resentment about the hurt he felt about his own early years, and the 1930s saw the rise of a new kind of society organised around the normalisation of criminality. While the Nazi version of this criminal society was essentially austere and stripped back to bare metal in its commitment to the mechanisation of sadistic violence, the later American version of this fatherless, thanatological society found and normalised the escape from pain in consumerism, rock 'n' roll, and the pleasures of the flesh. Unlike the Nazis, who sought to hang onto a kind of Lutheran austerity, inadvertently sexualising the movement in BDSM gear, the post-Freudian Americans made no bones about their commitment to escapism through the body. As Robert Merton (1938) would explain in the 1930s, the rules of American society were there to be bent and everybody was in on this game. For Merton, the success theme, 'making it', was everything in America, to the extent that if you could not make it by fair means, people would look to make it by playing dirty. What is noir if it is not the cinematic representation and critique of Merton's anomic America? In *Only God Forgives* (2013), Winding Refn takes this Freudian vision of society balanced on the edge of civilisation, and the economy of women, drugs, and violence that makes the world turn, and explores its borderline situation through the figure of Julian, Gosling's lost child who is caught between fatherless psychosis and determination by the law of the surrogate father. The additional dimension here, and what really

makes the dystopian imagery of *Only God Forgives* special, is the introduction of a Buddhist vision of the world, which reframes the psychoanalytic notion of drive in terms of the Buddhist cycle of the eternal return of the same, and thus interprets the noirish urban prison through a theory of the misery of existence or cosmological fate, which the protagonists can only escape through transcendence of the body and its thirsts.

Regarding the plot of Winding Refn's film, *Only God Forgives* (2013) tells the story of Julian, who is the second of two ex-pat American brothers living in Bangkok. The brothers run a small-time criminal operation, trafficking drugs and running fighters on the Thai boxing circuit. From the very start Julian is more or less mute, lost in himself, a picture of existential homeless-ness. By contrast the elder brother Billy, who does not last very long, is a psychopath, and we are led to the conclusion that part of Julian's job is to look after his wayward brother. In the beginning Mom and Dad are absent, but we later learn that Dad was a nasty piece of work who was murdered by Julian in defence of Mom. As the film develops we see that Julian is stuck in the Oedipus complex—isn't everybody?—and can't escape the gravitational pull of his mother, who treats him like a chump and idolises his psycho brother. Julian is very much Avital Ronell's (2012) loser son, and he can't form proper relationships. He tries to relate to Mai, a Thai working girl, but he's emotionally locked in, and she can't reach him because Mom is always in the way. In the face of this treatment, Julian has nowhere to go and he knows it, until Chang, the ultra-violent cop and stand-in father figure, arrives on the scene. Chang is Winding Refn's symbol of the paternal law, where the law refers to more than bureaucratic rules and captures Dad's role of the communication of moral regulation and moral authority, and his task is to put Julian in his place. But apart from being a psychoanalytic symbol, Chang is also a Buddhist figure, who imposes karmic order upon the world and gives Julian a way out of his life of crime through the discipline of drive and the abandonment of his self. Unfortunately for Julian—and this is the additional dystopian aspect of *Only God Forgives* (2013)—the escape from drive which Chang offers is not exactly painless, and perfectly captures the horror of Oedipal discipline and Buddhist annihilation. This is gonna hurt.

In the end Julian finds some kind of inner peace, Nirvana, which Freud (2003a) linked to self-destruction in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, but he is not the man he was before his confrontation with Chang. Before Julian meets Chang, the story winds up a situation where the exchange of violence for violence makes sense. The first brother, Billy, runs amok in a brothel and kills a prostitute. The police arrive to find Billy covered in blood with the dead girl. Chang calls the dead girl's father and leaves him with Billy so that he can exact his revenge. The girl's father beats Billy to death, but then Chang asks him how he allowed this to happen in the first place. Why was his daughter a working girl? The girl's father realises his mistake, and tells him he won't forget, but Chang imposes Oedipal discipline to be on the safe side. Chang tells him he knows he will remember and then cuts off his arm below

the elbow with a sword which is not exactly police issue, but rather a symbol of phallic power. Following his murder, Billy's mom, Jenna, arrives looking for answers. Who did this? She is the picture of the sadistic mother, possessed by the female Oedipus complex that makes her want to crush everybody in sight, and she leaves Julian in no doubt that he's to blame for her favourite son's death. When she eventually works out that Chang was to blame, she puts a hit out on him, which ends badly for the assassins. Now Chang wants to know who hired the potential killers. In a key scene, Chang tracks down the handler of the hitmen and violently murders him with metal skewers. Chang is getting closer to Julian and Jenna. When he finally meets Julian, Julian tells him he loves violence, and we know that what he really loves is the endless cycle of misery. He can't escape. He asks Chang if he wants to fight—perhaps the key line of the film is 'Wanna fight?'—to which Chang agrees, and the Oedipal struggle between surrogate father and son ensues.

In Winding Refn's screenplay the fight takes place in a more or less formal boxing venue with a crowd and so on, but the film strips the scene back, so that its symbolic dimension is absolutely clear. In the film there is no crowd to witness the Oedipal struggle, and the fight itself is highly stylised. It takes place against the backdrop of the image of the dragon, which symbolises eternal recurrence, primordial origins, and the mother who swallows. However, from Eliot Smith's (2008) study of dragon mythology we learn Eastern cultures take a less one-sided view of the original aquatic monster. According to Eliot Smith, the Eastern dragon is not only a symbol of Mom, but also a sign of sovereignty, authority, and Dad's rule. Thus it is possible to say that the key fight scene represents a custody battle over little Julian. Although Julian is in the ring with Dad, this is really about a struggle between Mom and Dad over the boy's soul. Is he going to be swallowed up by Mom or is his new Dad going to subject him to Oedipal regulation? As it turns out, Chang wipes the floor with Julian. In the screenplay Julian lands a couple of shots on Chang, but the film is more decisive and Chang's superiority is absolute. Following the screenplay, the film perfectly captures the ceremonial aspect of the fight, which suggests that this Oedipal struggle revolves around Julian's initiation into a more enlightened situation rather than any real contest, because there is no real sense that Julian is ever likely to beat Chang. Indeed, we are left with the conclusion that the fight between Chang and Julian is always a mismatch between a man and a boy who really wants to be shown the way, regardless of his superficial protests. However, Julian's problem is that he's still under the thumb of his mom, Jenna, and so he seeks out Chang's family. He needs revenge. As a result he kills Chang's wife, but leaves his daughter to live out her life without her mother. At the same time, Chang confronts and kills Jenna, and we realise that Julian's murder of Chang's wife was in effect symbolic of his desire to kill his own mom.

Finally, the two men, surrogate father and adopted son, meet and Chang imposes Oedipal discipline upon Julian. The symbol of the sword returns and Chang takes both Julian's arms—again, below the elbow. This act symbolises

Julian's psychoanalytic castration and his recognition of the phallic power of the moral law. The arm is important because throughout the film the image of Julian's forearm and the clenched fist represented his commitment to violence, struggle, and infantile omnipotence. You can't tell me what to do! Chang frees Julian from this need to fight and the economy of violence which had characterised his life in Bangkok. Beyond the psychoanalytic dimensions of Chang's violence, which symbolise castration and the imposition of the paternal law, there is also a sense in which his actions must be understood in terms of their Buddhist and Thai context. Chang imposes Buddhist karmic order upon Julian and in a sense breaks the cycle of violence which he had previously lived through. In this respect Chang sends Julian to Nirvana, which was a concept the father of psychoanalysis knew, recognised, and, of course, explored in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2003a), even though the central principle of Buddhism is essentially that one must find one's own way. The qualification to this is, of course, that the concept of Thai kinship is centrally concerned with the statist defence of Buddhism, and therefore the relationship between Buddhist thought and authority is more complex and the two cannot be simply separated out. In a sense Chang represent the Buddhist sovereign, or the Vedic god complex Georges Dumezil (1990) explores in his *Mitra-Varuna*, where Mitra represents normal social order, and Varuna the terrible sovereign who steps in to bind outlaws to the system of rules and regulations when they step out of line. In *Only God Forgives* this process of binding takes place through the separation of Julian from his infantile commitment to omnipotence and the drive towards death which had already taken Billy. It is, thus, important that Chang does not execute Julian, but rather forgives him, saves him, through extreme violence, because death itself is no guarantee of Nirvana, since one will continue to return if karmic balance is not in place. In this way we might say that Chang saves Julian from Freud's self-destructive Nirvana complex, so that he might show him the true light of peace, balance, and a life without thirst.

In much the same way that LA is central to the storyline of *Drive* (2011), in that it provides the perfect backdrop for Driver's homelessness, Bangkok is key to the narrative of *Only God Forgives* (2013), because it captures the hellish cycle of drive and Buddhist existence which defines Julian's life. While Chang represents the Buddhist way of escape from this cycle, the criminal city that Chang polices represents the space of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) war machine which exceeds state order and organisation. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in their follow-up to *Anti-Oedipus* (1983), *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), the Vedic Mitra-Varuna god complex relies on the warrior god Indra to wage war on its others, but the problem with Indra is that it is itself endlessly transgressive and problematic for those who seek to maintain order and stability. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987) the objective of Mitra-Varuna is to establish defined space, or place, and impose rules and regulations, whereas Indra, the god of the war machine, is nomadic, and moves across frontiers and boundaries. Indra is, thus, the god of the transgressive, the outlaw, the criminal

gang, and kids who will not listen, and he moves through the smooth, unregulated spaces—the river, the open road, the desert, the oceanic space. It is this struggle between the forces of Mitra–Varuna, which we can associate with Freud's Oedipus, and Indra, which refers to infantile rebellion but also outlaws of every kind, that defines Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) Anti-Oedipal project of the late 1960s/early 1970s and characterises Winding Refn's image of contemporary Bangkok.

In *Only God Forgives* (2013), Bangkok is a city of transgression, but centrally a city where transgression has become normal, and the law appears on the periphery in order to try to restore some kind of order. This city of vice, this city of horror, is a dystopian representation of Julian's psychology turned inside out, or conversely Julian represents the human embodiment of this evil city which Chang seeks to clean up. These are the key coordinates of Winding Refn's psychoanalytic/Buddhist utopia/dystopia. However, *Only God Forgives* is more than simply narrative, and neo-noir style is central to the power and impact of the film. The central function of the style of the film is to throw its viewer into the nightmarish city, which is comparable to the inferno of LA in *Drive* in the way it presents its protagonists with a Sartrean (1989) situation from which there is no exit. The use of colour to capture the mood of the city, which in turn reflects the mood of the key protagonists, compares to the colours of Chris Coles' (2011) images in his collection *Bangkok Noir*, where the City of Angels becomes a city of demons and infernal drives that have no end. Akin to Coles' representations of Bangkok and its inhabitants, Winding Refn's city is inspired by expressionist imagery. This is black hole urbanism, where the city is a kind of vortex, organised around a nihilistic economy, and lit by neon glow which advertises hopelessness, despair, and disappearance into Freud's (2003a) thanatological nowhere. In this respect *Only God Forgives* conjures feelings of madness, passion, frenzy, and despair through its use of colour, and particularly deep reds and purples, which transforms Bangkok into the cinematic equivalent of Mark Rothko's nightmarish Red pictures.

The Buddhist frame of the film only deepens this sinister effect. While the absolute profanity of this dystopia, where people are meat and everybody is for sale, would be bad enough, the sacred symbolism of the city creates a scene where despair is existential and cosmological in nature. The irony of Winding Refn's Bangkok is, therefore, that this most materialistic of cities, where people live through corporeal sensation, also takes on existential, cosmological significance and confronts its viewer with not simply the hopeless, desperate dystopian now, but also meaninglessness and nihilism of existence itself. Although Julian is a small-time drug trafficker, and Chang is a middle-rank cop, their confrontation thus takes on enormous significance. This is not simply noir, but rather the eternal struggle between freedom and fate played out against the backdrop of the urban inferno. According to Barry Bell's (2003) exploration of the symbolism of Bangkok, it is possible to argue that this eternal conflict between the human transcendence of metabolism and the mute violence of nature which Winding Refn captures is written into the very fabric of the

city itself. Indeed, when we read Mumford's (1968) classic *City in History* we are led to conclude that the battle between humanity and nature is written into the form of every city, and in this respect the Bangkok of *Only God Forgives* is no different. Akin to the modern European cities of Simmel (1997), Benjamin (1999), and Tonnies (2010), and Winding Refn's LA, the picture of Bangkok that Bell paints is that of a chaotic, formless city on the edge of collapse. He contrasts the speed of movement through Bangkok's urban space with its grinding traffic and the brutal materialism of the city's sex industry with its religiosity which suggests salvation from the violence of nature. For Bell (2003), Bangkok's lack of form, its lack of order, its profanity, which we find expressed most perfectly in the sex precincts of Patpong and Pattaya, is always in conflict with its Buddhist identity and the sacred Wats, such as Wat Pho, which capture potential salvation and escape from this earthly life through the symbol of the mandala. While LA expresses this division between the profane and sacred through the way the city seeks to raise itself above nature which in turns invades its urban spaces in the form of the post-urban desert, Bell (2003) explains that Bangkok's perilous position somewhere between transcendent space and materialist void is defined by its aquatic nature: built upon water, the water culture of the city captures the endless, and tragic, struggle of humanity to impose order and form upon the disorder and form-lessness of nature. This is the despair, but also hope, of Bangkok.

The waters of Bangkok have special significance. As Mircea Eliade (1959, 1991) notes, water symbolises human origins and the primordial void which saw the creation of the world itself. In this way the watery nature of Bangkok captures the moment of divine creation, which gave birth to both city and humanity, and suggests the fatality of this endeavour, which is endlessly threat-ened by the void of nature. On the basis of this interpretation we can see why Bangkok's urban waters produce an ambivalent effect. On the one hand, the city's water is endlessly reflective, a pure surface, which suggests that there is no more, and nothing beyond the profanity of the material, but on the other hand, they conjure the image, and idea, of abyssal depths, and infinite signifi-cance. Ironically, the illusion of the abyss creates the tendency to imagine transcendence and escape from base materialism. In other words, there is some hope in this hopelessness. In Bell's (2003) view, this sums up Bangkok, a liquid city organised around a deeply religious mode of thought, Buddhism, which imagines infinite peace in the return to the nothingness of cosmological origin. While the void threatens, and looms over the human city, the Buddhist world-view suggests the embrace of disappearance and the final, once and for all, escape from the endless cycles of creation, decay, destruction, and recreation. Thus Bell's Bangkok becomes a thanatological city, organised around Freud's (2003a) death drive, and the pursuit of Nirvana, even though this precludes suicide or violent self-destruction, which would simply result in eternal return and more misery.

Centrally, I would suggest that Winding Refn's (2013) film captures the mytho-logical dimensions of Bangkok and employs them to represent its protagonist's

psychological conditions. In this way Winding Refn follows the classic noir tradition, where urban space becomes a screen upon which to project internal psychological states. However, it is also possible to suggest that his representations of Bangkok also show how individual psychology is never simply a matter of material or biological conditions, but rather an effect of culture, so that individual psychopathology can be understood in terms of deeper, spiritual concerns and problems. Writing in the wake of the work of Carl Jung, the philosopher of religion Mircea Eliade (1991) makes this point when he suggests that Freud's symbolism of mother, and consequent concern with Oedipus, should not simply be understood in terms of the desire for the mother herself, but rather linked up to the wider cultural significance of maternity, which symbolises creation, emergence, and birth, and also the terrifying escape from trauma, pain, and suffering into peace, pleasure, and the flat line of non-existence. Although I would suggest that this symbolic understanding of the figure of the mother, and psychoanalysis itself, was always present in Freud, and that he was never simply a materialist, I would support Eliade's view of the importance of symbolic psychology, and argue that the power of *Only God Forgives* resides in the way in which Winding Refn captures this symbolic dimension, where Mom represents the terrible centre of the universe and possible escape from the karmic cycles of the city which is the principle site of Julian's pain and suffering. However, it's important to think about both Mom and Dad here. Where Jenna represents one mode of escape for Julian, which essentially entails the *profane* destruction of his self which goes nowhere, Chang symbolises an alternative, sacred way out of his situation, which reframes everything in terms of annihilation in Nirvana. Where Jenna is a sign of flow, the waters of annihilation, the primordial dragon, and the Freudian (2003a) nightmare of the Nirvana principle, I would suggest that surrogate father Chang reflects the Great Vehicle of Buddhism and the possibility of the end of desire, drive, and thirst in the peace of immobility, disappearance, and Nirvana. Centrally, where Jenna offers no deeper significance, what Julian finds in Dad's story is some reason for his pain. There is something else.

In this respect *Only God Forgives* (2013) turns on Julian's forced choice between two parents, Mom or Dad, and two deaths, the bad death of the eternal return and endless revenge or the good death of the final escape from the karmic cycle of misery, pain, and suffering into the peaceful nothingness of Nirvana. Of course, Julian chose Mom in the past, and did away with his own Dad, but following the logic of Buddhist thought he has to choose all over again, but this time in the capital of *pere*version and Buddha. Caught between a rock and a hard place, because both alternatives entail extinction, Julian eventually realises Chang represents the only way out. Only God forgives. In the world of Mom, where he can never be his own man, corruption is essential. Here, sex, drugs, and violence are everything, and nothing transcends material value. Ironically, the city, which is meant to bring people together, is absolutely divided, because it is a city of drive, where you take what you want now. Men and women are worlds apart and only come together through the medium of money. In the words of Lacan (2000), there is no sexual relation, since commodified sex is

simply masturbation with a live partner who is no more than the kind of fleshy commodity Benjamin (1999) found in 19th-century Paris. This much is evident through older brother Billy's psychotic murder of the prostitute, whose life is meaningless, and Julian's own tragic efforts to relate to women, including Mai, whom he cannot reach because he cannot see beyond their base materialism—her debased objectivity. Of course, when Julian desperately tries to show Mom that his relationship with Mai is serious, Mom scoffs, and immediately puts the girlfriend back in her place. She's a whore, a commodity, and she can be fucked, but not taken seriously like a real person. In Jenna's eyes, the very fact that Julian wanted to relate to Mai is evidence of his weakness, his inability to take the world for what it is, a cruel economy of more or less valuable things. He needs to internalise the reality principle of postmodern Bangkok.

But what a hellish reality principle. Surrogate father Chang captures the problem of Bangkok in one of several scenes where he sings karaoke Johnny Cash:

> I fell into a burning ring of fire,
> I went down, down, down,
> And the flames went higher
> And it burns, burns, burns,
> The ring of fire, the ring of fire.

Against the burn of the inferno, Chang also offers Julian escape from the horrors of the ring of the fire through Oedipal castration which the film also codes in terms of the Buddhist extinction of thirst. In the final scene where Chang takes Julian's arms, the cop asks about his very first memory. Julian responds that he remembers the darkness, nothingness, and the void, presumably of life in utero. Following his revelation of this memory, which is symbolic of life lived with Mom, Chang takes Julian back to the darkness through the Oedipal cut, which is also the symbol of Buddhist salvation, and the film fades to black. In this respect Chang, the angel of vengeance, is representative of what we might call the paternal, Buddhist, death drive for the City of Angels, which is also the city of the maternal, Freudian, death drive where revenge never ends. The essential message of Winding Refn's *Only God Forgives* (2013) is, therefore, that the male child, lost in the maelstrom of the post-urban condition, must submit to the pain of an alternative form of Oedipal discipline in order to save his soul. While *Drive* leaves Driver lost, back on the road, *Only God Forgives* (2013) saves Julian through an Eastern mode of Oedipal discipline, which is also the Buddhist destruction of drive or thirst in Nirvana. Centrally, both *Drive* and *Only God Forgives* revolve around the situation of lost men in what we might call fatherless dystopias. Whereas in *Drive* (2011) the key female character, Carey Mulligan's Irene, ultimately fails to save Driver, the same can be said for Mai in *Only God Forgives* (2013). However, Mai's role in Julian's life is largely incidental compared to the presence of Jenna, his demonic mother who embodies the horror of the post-urban, psychotic condition Winding Refn represents in both

films. Against Jenna's maternal dystopia, Chang steps in to offer Julian an escape route into a perhaps no less terrible phallocentric utopia of Oedipal power. This is, essentially, Winding Refn's dark utopia for the 21st century, which sets up the stark choice between Mom and Dad that faces the lost child, only to resolve his psychotic freedom in a terrible utopia of immersion in the whole, which may very well look like some kind of perfect state from the perspective of the man who has left his self behind, but remains a scary prospect for somebody caught under the spell of trauma, desire, and drive.

Filmography

Battle: Los Angeles, 2011, Jonathan Liebesman, Sony.
Blade Runner, 1982, Ridley Scott, Columbia–EMI–Warner.
Drive, 2011, Nicolas Winding Refn, Icon.
Independence Day, 1996, Roland Emmerich, 20th Century Fox.
Inland Empire, 2006, David Lynch, Optimum.
L.A. Confidential, 1997, Curtis Hanson, Warner Brothers.
Lost Highway, 1997, David Lynch, Polygram.
Mulholland Drive, 2001, David Lynch, Universal.
Only God Forgives, 2013, Nicolas Winding Refn, Icon.
The Purge, 2013, James DeMonaco, Universal.

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7 Dis-United Kingdom

Division, Encounter, and Utopianism in Heterotopic Britain

I There Is No Social Relation: Neoliberalism and Heterotopia

In this chapter I propose to pick up on ideas of abandonment, conflict, and utopian politics explored in the previous chapter through an exploration of urban unrest in contemporary Britain. In this context, I seek to explore contemporary neoliberal Britain as a socio-economically divided nation, characterised by class conflict deferred by spatial and discursive strategies organised to deny the reality of inequality and injustice, and show how this Dis-United Kingdom has started to break down before the revelation of the irreducibility of social relations based in the catastrophic economics situation post 2008. In the first section of the chapter, I discuss the nature of asocial relations in neoliberal space, explaining the ways neoliberalism denies inequality in a theory of objective, competitive asociality, through a consideration of Robert Sampson's (2012) recent work, *The Great American City*. Noting the theoretical connection between Sampson's theory of space, the postmodern urbanism of the LA School (Dear, 2000), and the idea of the neoliberal city as a spatially disorganised city, I move on to refer to Loïc Wacquant's (2007) concept of advanced marginality. Here, and on the basis of Wacquant's view that American urban marginality is coming to a city near you in the near future, I suggest that theories of American urbanism may be appropriate for studying neoliberal space in contemporary Britain. Building on this idea, and extending Sampson's postmodern theory of the neoliberal city, I turn to Foucault (1986), Lefebvre (2003), and the idea of heterotopia or other space to explore contemporary Britain as fragmented urban space. First, I take Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia, which refers to the modern attempt to territorialise economic circulation and thus defuse potential social turbulence in a strategy of spatial organisation, as a mode of governmentality which can be seen to police the neoliberal denial of social inequality, and particularly the abandonment of youth, through a strategy of division, separation, and segregation. Second, I use Lefebvre's (2003) notion of heterotopia, which represents a space of encounter and possibility, to oppose this Foucauldian construct and open up possibilities for rethinking the social condition of the contemporary British city. However, rather than discuss these theories in isolation,

and in order to create a dialogue, and situate them in a discussion of contemporary British urban society, in the second section of the chapter I focus on the heterotopic dimensions of the 2011 riots. My suggestion in this section is that the riots may be seen to represent the breakdown of the Foucauldian model of spatial governance under severe economic pressure and the violent emergence of Lefebvre's space of social encounter and utopian possibility. Finally, and recognising the ways in which the riots opposed the neoliberal denial of social inequality, I spend the final section of the chapter considering the political response to the events of August. Here, I seek to show how the British government sought to pathologise the rioters, and thus render their ethical challenge irrelevant. However, my argument is that this failed to effectively defuse the contemporary political moment, caught somewhere between neoliberal separation and social encounter, and Britain remains in a state of social, political, economic, and cultural crisis, most clearly revealed by the protest vote that led to the decision to leave the EU in the summer of 2016. It is this space of crisis, this space of conflict in between division and sociality, which I seek to capture in the title of the chapter, Dis-United Kingdom (Charlesworth, 2007).

But first, and before considering the heterotopic politics of the riots, I want to turn to Robert Sampson's (2012) work, and consider his discussion of the urban politics of neoliberalism from his *Great American City*. In his recent book, *The Great American City*, Robert Sampson (2012) argues that the neoliberal orthodoxy has emphasised the importance of the individual to the detriment of sociological thinking and any sense that place or environment impacts upon life chances or outcomes. The central objective of his work is to not only provide a global perspective on Chicago in the early 21st century, but also to more generally oppose the neoliberal hegemon by showing how individuals are rooted in community, society, neighbourhood, and more broadly webs of social relations. In short, Sampson wants to restate the importance of space, the environment, and the city itself, where this is understood classically in terms of human community. In Sampson's view, the problem with the neoliberal vision of the city, which is largely premised on the idea of urban space as a machine for the production of surplus value, is that it is largely placeless. Instead of understanding the city as a place which contains individuals and enables and disables their lives, the economistic view of the city reduces the urban to abstract space which atomised individuals move through with more or less resistance generated by competition with other atomised individuals. In this view, the city is flat space, a geometric abstraction, which individuals traverse with relative success on the basis of their individual abilities or powers. From a sociological point of view, Sampson recognises the problematic nature of this vision of urban space, which is that it reduces individuals to self-possessed atoms which are completely untouched by environmental factors, such as community, neighbourhood, or wider social conditions, and throws them back upon themselves and their own self-possessed abilities. According to this position, there can be no social inequality, because the individual exists in abstract flat space, and the environment itself is a kind of colourless background. Under these conditions

the playing field is always level because it is a geometric abstraction based in economic calculation and the only explanation for the differences between people is that they have differential abilities, potentials, and motivations.

In opposing this view, Sampson's (2012) work draws on a massive amount of empirical evidence to show why place, environment, and the city matters. This evidence, which shows how place impacts upon levels of poverty, crime, life expectancy, community organisation, and moral cynicism, explains that individuals are more or less an effect of their environment, which is itself path dependent and thus not easily affected by social change. What this means is that poverty, crime, life expectancy, and other neighbourhood effects are durable. As a result, when they are understood through the lens of neoliberal thought, or ideology, which takes the city for a flat space, they start to look like natural effects, which are somehow the result of individuals making their environment in their own image. In the neoliberal view, therefore, it is not that I am my place, but rather that my place is me. Against this view, Sampson is clearly rooted in the Chicago School tradition of thought, whereby individuals are an effect of their environment (Dear, 2002). I would, however, dispute that this makes him an environmental determinist. It is not, therefore, that the city is some kind of quasi-natural environment that simply exists. Essentially, this is the neoliberal view. Here, the city is abstract space, which simply exists, and must be managed to be more economically productive. Centrally, these management techniques would in no way skew the environment or produce unjust or unnatural inequality. Instead, they should make the urban environment more productive for everybody, enabling the economic system to function more efficiently, with the result that inequalities emerge as a by-product of the free and fair competition between individuals who naturally possess differential abilities, potentials, and motivations.

Contrasting this position, Sampson's (2012) view is that the individual is an environmental effect, that this environment is itself a product of a society, which is organised in particular ways on the basis of particular pre-existing social formations. In other words, there is no sense in which it is possible for individuals to simply make their own way in some kind of quasi-natural environment, because they do not exist in a pre-social void or economic state of second nature, but rather live in urban places, which have been made by humans and developed historically on the basis of political decisions. Thus, the theoretical basis of Sampson's work is that individuals exist, and live in a human-built world, and if their lives are to change or improve, it takes more than basic individual activity, meaning that changes to an individual's life chances largely rely on macroscopic social and political decisions. In other words, the individual is made in his environment and is an effect of society, politics, economy, and culture. Thus, my environment more or less makes me. In this way, Sampson presents a classic defence of sociology and sociological thinking against the neoliberal hegemon which repeats the Thatcherite mantra that society and centrally social space does not exist. 'Do not blame others for your plight.' 'Do not blame your environment for your situation.' Sampson disputes this view. Politically speaking his position is that in order to address social inequalities, which are centrally no

longer an effect of basic natural differences between people, the state must commit to social welfare, and addressing the unevenness of the urban environment, rather than simply regarding the city as an objective engine for the production of economic profit that simply works.

However, having said this, Sampson's (2012) vision of the city is much more complicated than the original Chicago School image of urban space, which famously explained the concentric zone model of Chicago that was then later exported for the study of other modern cities, and it is this that renders his social and political position more problematic. Against the original Chicago School model of urban space, which was distinctly modern in the ways in which it showed how the city was neatly divided between large concentrations of class which reflected the organised nature of Fordist production techniques (Dear, 2002), Sampson's vision of Chicago and particularly his idea of neighbourhood is premised on a postmodern vision of the city in line with the post-Fordist condition of late capitalism (Dear, 2000). Centrally, I would argue that his new Chicago is understood through the lens of the postmodern theory of urbanism developed by the Los Angeles writers, such as Dear (2000), Davis (2006), and Soja (2011), where advantage and disadvantage are spatially distributed in a far more disorganised manner than was the case in the modern city of Park and Burgess (1925). Here, I would argue that Sampson's city is somewhere between the old industrial Chicago and the third city utopia of neoliberalism (Bennett, 2010), meaning that inequality persists, but that this is no longer uniformly distributed across the city in easily discernible patterns of haves and have nots. Instead, what we find in this new postmodern city is pockets of breadline poverty in close proximity to areas of enormous wealth and affluence, and a form of informal or neighbourhood segregation which is generally understood to represent postmodern urban geography (Dear, 2000; Davis, 2006; Soja, 2011).

In the American experience, this form of neighbourhood segregation is, of course, premised on the historical experience of race and the ghetto, which Wirth (1956) famously explored, and Wacquant (2007) rethought in his work on advanced marginality and the hyper-ghetto. For Wacquant in particular, it is primarily because of this history of racial segregation—which has seen the state abandon particular areas of the city, leaving them to generate their own social, economic, and cultural modes of existence in the formation of the hyper-ghetto—that it is not possible to directly translate the American experience of urban division across the Atlantic and develop a comparable European theory of urban segregation. In his view, the French banlieues and British council estates are not comparable to American hyper-ghettos because the historical form of racial segregation is simply not present in these environments. Having said this, the other core concept of his *Urban Outcasts* (2007), the notion of advanced marginality, offers a counterpoint to his theory of the hyper-ghetto, which differentiates the American from the European experience of urban division, because it suggests that America's present is Europe's future. Thus, the idea of advanced marginality explains that the theory of marginality, where this means that the urban poor are socially, politically, economically, and

culturally marginal to society, must not be taken as an archaic leftover of an industrial past which will soon disappear under conditions of neoliberalism with its economic dynamism and value generation. On the contrary in Wacquant's view, advanced marginality means that marginality and urban inequality are effects of neoliberalism, which does not generate wealth and value for the sake of some kind of socialist principle of equality premised on social and economic planning, but rather creates surplus for the sake of enabling the most able to exercise their abilities to make money with the view that some of this wealth will eventually trickle down to the poorest members of society, thus raising the economic level of the society overall. This is, of course, a generous and apolitical reading of neoliberalism premised on classical liberal economic theory, and one which opponents of the neoliberal model, such as Bourdieu (1998) and Wacquant (2007), would reject.

Extending Sampson (2012), who wants to socialise neoliberal thinking by subjecting it to an idea of the importance of understanding the relations between individuals in space, the position adopted by Bourdieu (1998) and Wacquant (2007) is that neoliberalism must be understood as a 'utopia of unlimited exploitation' where the rich are allowed or enabled to monopolise value on the basis of a theory of quasi-natural competition which is in reality an effect of a history of capitalist exploitation, class struggle, and state manipulation for the sake of business interests. According to this view, then, we must see the contemporary neoliberal city of Sampson and Wacquant as a melting pot of barely concealed class exploitation and inequality distributed across space in an variety of disorganised ways according to the history of capitalist urban development and concealed by an ideological commitment to the theory that space is no more than the objective backdrop to free and fair competition between competing atomised individuals. Adopting this idea, and in light of Sampson's theory of the need to socialise neoliberal thought, and Wacquant's theory of advanced marginality which suggests that the American urban experience is coming to a city near us soon, my objective in this chapter is to consider how we might understand the British urban experience through the lens of the postmodern theory of urban space as divided, separated, and segregated in disorganised ways. In order to achieve this, I want to build upon the insights of Sampson and Wacquant concerning urban disorganisation and neoliberal exploitation, by turning to the spatial theory of heterotopia explained by Foucault (1986) in his work on other spaces and Lefebvre (2003) in his work on the urban revolution, which captures the idea of divided, separated, and segregated space in a variety of ways useful for understanding the contemporary British urban experience from a broad sociological perspective. Although there has been work on the postmodern and divided nature of British urban space in recent years, including most popularly Anna Minton's *Ground Control* (2012), my reason for turning to the concept of heterotopia and Foucault and Lefebvre for my theoretical toolbox is that they offer a general theory of space that comprises notions of neoliberalism, governmentality, territoriality, biopolitics, abnormality, isotopia, abstraction, and utopia, which I want to draw upon in my discussion.

In building upon this discussion in the next section of the chapter, I intend to develop a general theory of the heterotopic state of contemporary British urban space through Foucault's (1986) theory of the concept in the context of his wider works and particularly his Collège de France lectures on abnormality (2003), security and territory (2007), and biopolitics (2008). The purpose of my turn to Foucault is to show how the concept of heterotopia can be employed to understand the divided, separated, and segregated condition of urban space under conditions of neoliberalism where the city is characterised by what we might call a geography of disorganisation (Dehaene and De Cauter, 2008). Here, my thesis will be that this condition of spatial disorganisation, which distributes inequalities unevenly across the city, and is the result of neoliberal approaches to value generation through development, speculation, rent, and so on, is subject to attempts to manage social space through biopolitical approaches to governance, what Foucault calls governmentality, and the sorting of individuals into broad categories of normality and abnormality on the basis of their relationship to the economy. The result of this situation, which occurs in the context of the neoliberal view of the city as abstract smooth space which individuals move through in free and fair competition with other individuals, is that inequality is naturalised as the result of inherent abnormality and the fragmentation of the urban into heterotopias of absolute wealth and breadline poverty is understood as a condition of the objective process of competition in the capitalist environment. Returning to Sampson (2012), what this means in its most basic terms is that the disorganised and unequal urban environment which is created by neoliberalism is subject to processes of governmentality that transform those who inhabit this environment into the architects of their own situations in disorganised and unequal space. Here, the truth that I am made by my space which is made by neoliberal speculation is transformed into the ideological fiction that I make my space and my own environmental situation on the basis of my self-possessed abilities.

Following this work on the applications of the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia to British urban space, I then turn my attention to Lefebvre's (2003) idea of the same concept to consider the possibility of heterotopia as a utopian space of social encounters, connections, and collisions. Here, I propose to insert Lefebvre's concept of heterotopia into a framework comprising ideas of isotopia, which refers to contained space, and utopia, which, in his view, means virtual space or space to come. In this complex, heterotopia, or other space, is the opening or crack in isotopic, or contained space, which throws open the possibility of the creation of some new kind of space of sociability in the future. Here, I propose a dialectical shift from Foucault (1986) to Lefebvre (2003) which takes place when Foucault's notion of heterotopia, or other space, which I take for a divided, separated, or segregated place, becomes Lefebvre's notion of isotopia, or closed space, which is then itself subject to transformation into some other heterotopia under particular social conditions, thus opening the way for utopian possibility and socio-spatial reconstruction. Centrally, I take this dialectical process which turns through

heterotopia, isotopia, and utopia to represent Lefebvre's (2003) concept of the urban as urbanisation, his related idea of the urban revolution, and a contemporary example of the intimate connection between utopian thought and urban space, which we might trace back to Plato, More, and Augustine (Eaton, 2002). Updating this connection, I focus the next section of the chapter, which seeks to show how British urban space may be understood through Foucault (1986), Lefebvre (2003), and the idea of heterotopia, on a discussion of the spatial significance of the August riots of 2011, which I take to be important because of the way they expressed the violent asociality of neoliberal society under pressure of economic recession.

II Theorising the Encounter: Understanding the 2011 English Riots as Heterotopic Collision

Essentially I would argue that the English riots of 2011 revealed the existence of a deeply divided Britain, what Disraeli (2008) called in 1845 'the two nation divide', or more recently Simon Charlesworth (2007) spoke about in terms of a 'Dis-United Kingdom'. Although the riots took place specifically in English cities, essentially London, Birmingham, and Manchester, I think that it is difficult not to see them as symbolic of the divided and spatially segregated nature of contemporary Britain under conditions of economic stress, where it is far more difficult to manage inequality through the policing of asocial division, separation, and segregation in space. Although the idea of a divided nation is no kind of news (Hutton, 2010; Dorling, 2011b), I think that the depth of this division is often underestimated because the excluded, or what Alain Badiou (2012) calls the inexistent, are by definition more or less invisible, largely silent politically because of a lack of adequate mainstream representation, economically disadvantaged and redundant, and culturally deviant in relation to the established values of so-called *normal* neoliberal forms of behaviour. In addition to this level of political, economic, and cultural invisibility, I would suggest that social marginality is cemented by spatial separation and segregation, where the abnormal are *enclosed* or contained on geographically peripheral housing estates or areas outside of the circuits of exchange where concentrations of neoliberal socio-economic power are found (Minton, 2012). Consider London, where Tottenham and the Broadwater Farm estate rub up against Crouch End village, or Tower Hamlets, one of the most disadvantaged areas in Britain, which borders Docklands, one of the centres of neoliberal power in the capital city. Further north, consider Liverpool. Here, the purpose-built shopping utopia, Liverpool One, has been specially designed following principles set out by Oscar Newman (1973) to exclude the neoliberal poor from consumption and the spaces of economy and push them back towards inner city heterotopias of poverty, such as Toxteth (Minton, 2012).

Although these spaces of breadline poverty and enormous wealth occupy more or less the same geographical location, and it can be difficult to separate them on a map, on the ground they feel like different worlds (Minton, 2012).

Here, we touch upon one of the key aspects of what I am calling, following Charlesworth (2007), the Dis-United Kingdom, which is that spatial division, separation, and segregation is so effective in contemporary Britain, not because it is somehow formally enforced or policed, but rather because it exists in the ways social, economic, political, and cultural distinctions are expressed in the ideological and discursive construction and phenomenological and existential reality of social space. This is, in my view, why heterotopia is first a form of Foucauldian (1986) governmentality, because what it achieves is the separation of these divergent social, economic, political, and cultural realities in space which essentially enables them to coexist without endless conflict, and second a concept which recalls Lefebvre's (2003) idea of utopia, because this separation is never entirely complete, and there is always potential for encounter, collision, and conflict that may pave the way for radical social change. Given that this level of change is not on the neoliberal agenda, the heterotopic division, separation, and segregation of individuals and communities in space is, therefore, in my view, an essential form of social control in a class society which wants to pretend that class no longer exists and that there is no social inequality. Ironically speaking, I think that this neoliberal fantasy is only possible on the condition of spatial division which hides the reality of the unequal social, political, economic, and cultural relations between people and maintains Disraeli's (2008) 'two nation divide'. In this respect, Charlesworth's (2007) idea of the Dis-United Kingdom is not simply a critical commentary on the divided nature of contemporary Britain but also a reflection on the spatial techniques of separation and informal segregation which are essential to the more or less peaceful maintenance of this division.

This is also why I want to consider the 2011 August riots as potentially utopian revolts, because I think that what was achieved by these events, which occurred when the neoliberal principle of socio-economic asociality in space was undermined by the economic meltdown and subsequent austerity measures, was the transgression, or over-coding, of the normal division between people contained by the heterotopic method of division, separation, and segregation, and the creation of a space of encounter, collision, and conflict comparable to the notion of heterotopia expressed by Lefebvre (2003) in his work on the urban revolution. While the Foucauldian (1986) notion of heterotopia, or the other space, is perfectly adequate for understanding processes of spatial division—because it explains how the economic tendency towards deterritorialisation folds back into social strategies of territorialisation or what Turner (2007) calls enclavement in ways which enable society to persist in the face of economic turbulence, creative destruction, and so on—my view is that Lefebvre's (2003) vision of the same concept enables us to see how the strategy of enclavement, which translates into his notion of isotopia or contained space, may itself explode in the creation of heterotopias of encounter, which open onto new utopias, or spaces of virtuality and possibility. I think that this theoretical model comprising Foucault (1986) and Lefebvre (2003) can enable us to understand the events of August 2011 and allow us to move beyond standard

views about the lack of politics of the rioters or their nihilistic obsession with consumption. Essentially, and most importantly, I think that the essential point of the riots, which has largely been missed in a consideration of new modes of communication, was their mobility, and the way this transgressed the spatial immobility or enclavement of heterotopic Britain that may be explained using the Foucauldian theory of controlled space. Unlike traditional riots, such as the 1981, 1985, or 2001 British riots or the 2005 French riots, which tend to take place on estates or in heterotopias of poverty that are already spatially separated from zones of affluence and power, I want to argue that the novelty of the 2011 riots is that they crossed borders and exploded the heterotopic organisation of British urban space by virtue of their nihilistic focus on consumption (Bauman, 2012; Tester, 2012). Unlike previous riots, which have occurred within the bounds of the normal heterotopic organisation of social space and thus allowed commentators to speculate on their causes through traditional notions of working-class political protest ('The working class is in their environment and protesting about their *situation* in this life world'), because the 2011 riots transgressed the bounds of normal heterotopic spatial organisation and became highly mobile, they created an uncanny effect, where we should understand the notion of the uncanny in terms of Freud's (2003) psychoanalytic concept of the *unheimliche* or unhomely.

Thrust front and centre, roaming free of their normal heterotopic place, the unruly crowd of young people, who had presumably not yet been socialised enough to know their abnormal place, were uncanny, unhomely, out of place, or in Bataille's (1991) language, a kind of accursed share. By virtue of their desire to loot and take what they could not legitimately buy, the mob of failed consumers was thus away from home, outside of their normal place, and it is this that confirmed their identity as a kind of Foucauldian (2003) abnormality, and in my view defined their unknowing ethical challenge to the Dis-United Kingdom. Out of place, the kids from the other space came to represent a dangerous mob, and normal people trembled about what might happen if this mob descended on their neighbourhood. Yet, I also think that the mob forced Britain to confront the existence of 'the two nation divide' and think through the state of society, regardless of whether this was ever on the official political agenda. Although the members of the mob sought to cover their faces and hide from their crimes in a way which confirms the unwitting nature of their ethical challenge, my view is that for four days in August 2011 they brought *normal* Britain, which had previously existed within its own private space, or privatopia, face to face with the reality of abnormality, division, separation, and segregation across the nation. In seeking to understand the nature of this challenge, which took place when the Foucauldian (1986) heterotopia of control broke down under pressure of crash course economics, austerity measures, and realised inequality to produce a form of spatial conflict relevant to Lefebvre's (2003) idea of the other space of encounter and collision, I think we may look to Bauman's (1993) postmodern ethics in the book of the same name. He refers to Levinas to suggest that what we must seek to do in an

individualised society of strangers where we feel no responsibility for anybody is to take absolute and unconditional responsibility for others on the basis of faciality, or our face-to-face confrontation with their misery, poverty, exclusion, and marginalisation.

Unfortunately, and this is the paradox of Bauman's (1993) position, this face-to-face confrontation is precisely what is lost in a society of individuals, where economic, political, and cultural division is hidden in spatially separated spaces, heterotopias of wealth and poverty that never meet despite their suffocating geographical proximity. However, I think that it was precisely this confrontation which re-emerged and hit normal Britain in the face in August 2011, provoking what Badiou (2012) calls the return of history, even if this political moment quickly disappeared back into what he calls the moment of interval, or the ahistorical period where the dominant ideas are considered bankrupt but nobody is willing to admit they are dead or speculate on new macro theories of society for fear of rocking the boat or threatening established power relations. Caught in the middle of this post-mortem period of history, normal Britain may not have literally found itself face to face with abnormal individuals, because the rioters sought to cover their faces to evade the backlash they knew would eventually come, but what *the mainstream* was metaphorically forced to face, and what these uncanny events brought home, was the existence of the previously inexistent other, who was usefully rendered anonymous by his hidden identity, and a situation which absolutely illuminated the divided, separated, and segregated nature of British society. Responding to this situation, the neoliberal elites quickly rejected the unwitting ethical challenge of the marginalised and sought a return to the divided, separated, and segregated norm of the Dis-United Kingdom. This revanchist strategy was achieved by swift discursive and judicial mobilisation which saw, first, a popular 'Blitz spirit' emerge, supported by then Conservative Lord Mayor of London Boris Johnson literally and symbolically sweeping the streets of capital; second, a law and order narrative reinforced by police raids on rioters' houses and harsh sentences handed out to those convicted of involvement in the riots; and finally a neo-conservative social backlash, which saw the coalition government threatening to cut the benefits of rioters and local councils threatening to evict them from their properties.

Moreover, this strategy, which entailed further ostracising the most marginal members of society on the basis that they were beyond the pale and entirely abnormal, was largely supported by the rest of the normal population. The reasons for this punitive popular response are not difficult to understand, and we can refer to Bourdieu's (1998) notion of precariousness, Hall's (Hall and Jacques, 1983) concept of authoritarian populism, and Bauman's (2006) theory of liquid fear to explain how a population caught in a highly precarious social and economic situation defined by high levels of social and economic anxiety might accept and even welcome authoritarian measures set on the definition and exclusion of abnormal others who may be excluded so that they feel more likely to survive the chaos of the economic state of second nature under

conditions of meltdown. Thus, I think we start to approach the psychological basis of the popular support for the Dis-United Kingdom and what we might call the neoconservative society of spite, which entails a kind of puritanical moralism based on the belief that the best way to ensure socio-economic survival is to *condemn* the other, and conditions a deeply worrying authoritarian identi-fication with the over-dog and hatred of the marginal, poor, and weak. It is on the basis of this psychological complex, which I think is entirely comparable to Adorno's (1964) theory of the fascistic authoritarian personality, that David Cameron and the coalition government were able to reassert their authority and re-establish the heterotopic condition of Dis-United Kingdom with the kind of privatopias, fortified spaces, and carceral zones discussed by the Los Angeles urban theorists such as Dear (2000), Davis (2006), and Soja (2011).

Yet, despite this outcome, which saw division, separation, and segregation re-established under conditions of deep economic stress, and taking into account Steve Hall's (2012) view that the riots were characterised by a nihilistic lack of politics, I would argue that the events of August were immensely significant almost by accident because they created a space of encounter and fractured the Foucauldian (1986) order in a moment we might think about in terms of Lefebvre's (2003) idea of heterotopia. Although there was no utopian reso-lution, because the openness of the heterotopia of riots never found expression in a worked-out programme for social, political, and economic change, and the possibility of some other spatial organisation was never suggested, the possibility was clearly there, and was represented in the carnivalesque atmo-sphere which was central to the conduct of the riots. Unlike traditional riots, which may have an explicit political agenda, the accidental politics of these events explain this carnivalesque atmosphere, because they were so clearly based in Bakhtin's (1984) principle of overturning, which he explains in terms of the monstrosity of the medieval carnival when all existing power relations were turned upside down and all social norms and values were suspended. Is this not exactly what happened in the riots when the normal spatial relations of the Dis-United Kingdom—which mean that the haves and have nots are spatially divided and separated in more or less closed heterotopias in order to ignore their inequality—were suspended and the mob ran riot across the economic centres of England's major cities? The accidental nature of this carnivalesque atmosphere, and the reason its political significance was entirely unintentional, was that the rioters wanted to loot and steal, essentially follow-ing neoliberal norms by other means, which is exactly how Robert Merton (1996) explained the normality of crime in America in the 1930s. As such, it would be a mistake to say these events were explicitly political, and disagree with Bauman (2012), Hall (2012), or Tester (2012) who talk about their nihil-ism, because they are correct when they point out that the rioters were simply enacting neoliberal behaviour by other means under conditions of recession and austerity where the possibility of making it by traditional means seems impossible. However, my central point about the politics of the riots would be that it is precisely in this nihilism, in this meaninglessness, that we are likely

to find new politics and utopianism for the future, because where else would it appear in a historical period characterised by exhaustion, immobility, lack of imagination, and the end of history itself?

Against the end of history, and the end of politics, which I have sought to render spatially through a construction of the Foucauldian (1986) notion of heterotopia and spatial immobility, I think that what the riots symbolise is the potential of politics to emerge ex nihilo, the potential of politics to come from out of nowhere, and the encounter of apparently atomised individuals in social space who may not even be aware of the significance of their actions. In my view, this is where we will find our political, utopian resolution to the period of interval Badiou (2012) situates beyond the end of history. In many respects this idea of the riots as a political event occurring behind the backs of their participants recalls the original moments of the Arab Spring, and in particular the Tunisian Revolution, when street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest about the confiscation of his goods by an overzealous state official, even though the original utopian possibility of these events was eventually taken over by the Islamic State. Clearly Bouazizi's protest was not aimed at sparking a large-scale political revolution anywhere, never mind Tunisia or across the Arab world, and yet this is exactly what happened. Similarly, and in much the same way that Bouazizi could not have known the impact of his small protest, the rioters in England's cities had no macro political agenda but simply wanted to be a part of a society, where in neoliberal society this means the ability to consume and have one's piece of the pie. In this respect, I want to argue that the rioters' politics were, like Bouazizi's politics, *objective politics*, which means that they made an objective political statement, regardless of the subjective intention of those making that statement. Although this may not reflect traditional meanings of political behaviour, demonstration, or protest, where people are acutely aware of the meaning behind their actions, my sense is that this form of objective politics is particularly appropriate for a form of society which understands itself in abstract, objective terms, which is exactly what we find with neoliberal society.

Consider Thatcher's famous mantra, there is no alternative, and Fukuyama's (1992) declaration of the end of history, which demonstrated that we had reached the end of everything associated with political division. In the face of this new terminal ideology all that remains is objective or quasi-natural violence, which is essentially the expression of the natural differences between people through economics realised in social stratification, political power, cultural normality or abnormality, and spatial situation. Against this system of stratification, which neutralises all forms of political difference, there is no protest, since any expression of opposition marks one out as either criminal (the rioters, looters), insane (which would be the fate met by a British Bouazizi), or impotent (peaceful demonstration which can be ignored by an elite who believe in the objectivity of the contemporary social order), simply because the neoliberal discursive field has effectively already objectified the economic system and recoded opposition in criminal, psychiatric, and utopian terms. How does one, therefore, oppose

this system? In my view, the reason the rioters or looters, as I will now refer to them, were so successful in their unwitting political demonstration against the exclusionary nature of neoliberal society, especially in its crash era version, is because they unwittingly struck at the heart of the neoliberal machine, the economy, and thus practiced a form of political idiocy, meaning radical politics through over-identification. Discussions of the riots in works by Bauman (2012), Hall (2012), and Tester (2012) have already explained that the rioters or looters were absolutely driven by consumption, and the desire to take what they could not buy, but what has not been noted is that this behaviour, which celebrates consumption outside of the practice of production, struck against the very logic of capitalism, where one produces in order to consume, and in doing so represented a kind of ghoulish parody of the neoliberal mode of capitalism and the behaviour of the banker and developer who are parasitical in their relation to material production.

In reflecting the truth of neoliberal capitalism, then, where one seeks to consume without the effort of production, and showing how this mode of (an)economic behaviour is basically Marx's vision of primitive accumulation dressed up for popular consumption, the rioters-cum-looters demonstrated the reality of neoliberalism in a four-night performance of Hobbes' (2008) fiction of the warre of all against all. However, contrary to Bauman (2012), Hall (2012), and Tester (2012), I do not think that the mob's riotous behaviour was completely negative, because what this surplus humanity, the waste product of British society, also demonstrated was the original meaning of the city, a political space of encounter, and in doing so offered a perverted assertion of their 'right to the city' (Mitchell, 2003) which was objectively critical of the reality of the Foucauldian (1986) city of division, separation, and segregation. While the spatial divisions of the neoliberal city are, in my view, designed to obscure the existence of inequality, the riots offered a moment of Marxist clarity, not because they were explicitly political, but because they were absolutely economic in their pursuit of consumption. In their creation of a new heterotopia, they produced a frozen dialectic and revealed the truth of division, collision, and warre, a negative social relation of the very worst that defines neoliberal society, and leaves little doubt about the need for a new positive politics of social care. In this respect we may follow Frantz Fanon's (1967) view, explaining that the state of emergency produced by the riots was also a state of emergence, a return to the space of the street, a space of encounter, and politics. However, we have not yet seen this political moment evolve into anything meaningful, and the period since the riots have produced a backlash against Badiou's (2012) inexistent who have, if anything, been pushed even further onto the margins of society. That is to say that if the riots represented a turn to Lefebvre's (2003) concept of heterotopia with its utopian possibilities, then the years that have followed August 2011 have seen a return to the Foucauldian (1986) model of enclavement, which is designed to oppose the turbulence of economic circulation with a spatial strategy organised around principles of division, separation, and segregation. In the final section of this

chapter, I propose to explore the neoconservative response to the riots, and explore in more detail the politics of spatial division, before concluding with suggestions about how the riots might be seen to represent the emergence of a new fantastical politics of the city.

III Against Dis-United Kingdom

The dominant political response to the riots involved a medicalisation of the conditions of inequality, deviance, and abnormality in David Cameron's idea of the sick society. In this theory of social pathology, which recalls Bauman's (1991) discussion of the medicalisation of Germany in the 1930s, conflictual relations became evidence of the presence of a deviant hard core hidden within British society. Akin to the Conservative's earlier idea of Broken Britain, which Iain Duncan Smith advanced as far back as 2006, the notion of the sick society in no way implied that society itself was sick, but rather suggested that there was a criminal element within British society that needed to be managed and controlled. In this way, the idea of the sick society was less a challenge to reform social structures in the name of a more inclusive society than it was a call to quarantine the deviant, divide society more rigorously between insiders and outsiders, separate the saved from the damned, and segregate the lost causes in marginal spaces which could be more effectively policed. Against the very idea of society, which implies a recognition of social relations, the implication of the concept of the sick society was the need to reassert the Thatcherite truth that there is no society through the denial of inequality and injustice in the neoliberal discourse that these conditions are somehow expressions of normal competition between people who have different motivation, potential, and ability. On the basis that this is the territory of neoliberal ideology and governmentality, it would be unfair to say that this attempt to fracture social relations in a theory of competition and distance is somehow the preserve of the current coalition government, because it is not and I would argue that Tony Blair's much earlier concern with respect was about exactly the same principle of asociality. In Blair's theory of respect, respect became about the poor and marginalised maintaining their distance from their well-to-do neighbours in a denial of the very violent and aggressive social relations generated by neoliberal capitalism. Given that the marginalised were never likely to suffer in silence, New Labour's response was a raft of antisocial behaviour measures, including the now infamous ASBO, which became about containing the dangerous individual.

In the case of the ASBO or Anti-Social Behaviour Order, the idea was that dangerous individuals needed to be contained spatially. They needed to be separated and segregated and kept away from normal society in a way that perfectly repeats the Foucauldian (1977, 2003) logic of the early modern town under conditions of infection by plague. In Foucault's work, and particularly *Discipline and Punish* (1977), the shift from the leper colony to the plague town represents a shift in the logic of social control from one where the other

was completely excluded and cast out of society to one where the other was partially excluded, quarantined, and governed within particular spaces inside society. This is essentially how Foucault begins his work on governmentality, which is not developed in *Discipline and Punish*, but is more fully worked out in his lecture series of the mid to late 1970s, including the classes on the abnormal individual (2003), security and territory (2007), and finally biopolitics and neoliberalism (2008). Moreover, this shift—which essentially represents Foucault's theory of a mode of specifically modern governance concerned with managing the economic principle of circulation through the control of those elements that circulate but need to be controlled, such as beggars, vagrants, and delinquents—is at the centre of his idea of heterotopia developed in the late 1960s. Here, Foucault (1986) argues that heterotopia is absolutely concerned with *placing* the spaces of economic circulation that disrupted society in the early modern period, which is why I have chosen to think about this concept in terms of socio-spatial organisation in a neoliberal context where class division is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. Here, the Foucauldian (1986) idea of heterotopia becomes about the exercise of what Wacquant (2009) calls the right hand of the state, and the increasing tendency to seek solutions to socio-economic problems in discipline and social control. In David Garland's (2002) view, this tendency has accompanied the rise of neoliberalism in the West, and emerged because of a general lack of belief in the value of the left hand of the state or welfare in solving problems of crime and deviance. According to Garland's thesis, welfare theory, which saw criminals as individuals in need of rehabilitation and normalisation, gave way in the latter part of the 20th century to neoliberal social theory, which adopted a punitive view of the abnormal individual who could no longer be saved, but rather needed to be managed, controlled, and governed in their Hobbesian badness. Although Garland steers clear of the basic Foucauldian (2003) position that questions the very construction of the abnormal individual as an effect of socio-economic power, preferring to explain the way the criminal was treated after the event as either somebody who could be saved or was always already damned, his point about the neoliberal view of the natural wickedness of humanity remains very important for my argument.

The reason Garland's (2002) point about the neoliberal view of the natural deviance of man is important for my thesis is because it allows us to understand why the emergence of what he calls a new iron cage of discipline and governance seems to make perfect sense in the neoliberal universe. Once one accepts the basic neoliberal position on humanity, which if we read C. B. MacPherson's (1986) study of Hobbes and Locke represents a projection of contemporary conflictual relations in a fantasy of savage nature, it is easy to understand how the socio-spatial organisation of heterotopia, division, separation, and segregation comes to characterise the city as space of society and politics, purely on the basis of a discursive construction of the other as dangerous, threatening, and naturally abnormal, a paradox which Foucault (2003) connects to the idea of monstrosity in his lectures on the emergence of the

notion of the abnormal. We can see evidence of this construction of danger-ous humanity in the case of the 2011 riots where the rioters were seen to be driven by 'pure criminality', rather than environmental conditions, crash era economic policy involving welfare cuts, and so on. In his work on these events, David Harvey (2012) reflects upon a piece from *The Daily Mail* which talks about feral youth, and in doing so constructs the rioters as wild animals, completely outside of civilised norms and values. In line with Owen Jones' (2012) work on the chav as a figure of class hate, *The Daily Mail*'s idea of feral youth is a perfect representation of the strategy of scapegoating explained by Rene Girard (1989) whereby the other becomes a container for every evil in society. The Foucauldian (2003) abnormal, the monstrous other, serves exactly the same purpose of justifying division, separation, and segregation and explain-ing away conflict produced by economic inequality as somehow a natural property of particular individuals who are less civilised than those considered normal citizens.

Explaining this biopolitical strategy as the basis of all racist thinking, Foucault (2003) points to ideas of natural deviance and degeneration as concepts for allowing exclusion and creating discourses of abandonment that I have else-where spoken about in terms of hoodie horror (Featherstone, 2013). Although the city remains, under these conditions it is less a place of community, civili-sation, and culture the way it was conceived by the ancients (Mumford, 1968), and more a space of dissimulated conflict, inequality, division, separation, and segregation (Davis, 2006). However, the point of Harvey's (2012) discussion of the notion of feral youth is that the fantasy of the neoliberal city as an abstract space of competing individuals following objective economic rules is becoming more and more difficult to sustain today, primarily because of the expansion of worklessness, redundancy, and precariousness following the failure of the neoliberal credit bubble. Instead, the reality of exploitation, inequality, injustice, and governance through segregation is becoming clear, with the result that social conflict is more difficult to defer in the idea of social mobility sustained by economic growth. In response to this situation, new governmental discursive and spatial strategies are being employed to shore up the structures of neoliberal society, such as reduction of housing benefit for the poor recoded scroungers, which will more rigorously divide haves from have nots in space. However, even these cannot reduce the basic level of antagonism that has emerged as a result of the expansion of inequality and injustice under crash era conditions where the production of value is failing and it is impossible to maintain the fantasy that everybody can have their piece of the pie.

In Harvey's (2012) view, these governmental strategies are the key battle-grounds of politics today, which is why he explains the notion of feral youth as an ideological diversion from the reality of the feral elite and feral capitalism, the animalistic truth of the neoliberal fantasy of fair, free, and objective com-petition. Danny Dorling (2011a) supports this view by marshalling a range of statistics to show why contemporary neoliberal Britain is an unjust and economically, morally, and ethically bankrupt society. Despite the fact that

neoliberal Britain cannot accept its own monstrosity and persists with the view that inequality is the result of objective competition, Harvey and Dorling advance the view that animality, abnormality, and corruption are everywhere and support Foucault's (2003) theory of the organisation of the unjust society in his lectures on abnormality. In these lectures Foucault explains how French society on the brink of revolution was organised around two polarities, which we may call, following Giorgio Agamben (1998), the exclusive-inclusion and inclusive-exclusion, or outsider who is inside and insider who is outside. Expanding his work on these social positions, Foucault tells us that the sovereign, or exclusive-inclusion, was absolutely free of the law and could behave with total impunity. In other words, the sovereign was in society, but operated outside of its laws. By contrast, the lumpenproletariat, or inclusive-exclusion, was totally subjected to the laws of the land, but had none of the protections afforded other citizens and was instead left to roam free like a wild animal. The lumpenproletariat was, thus, essentially inside society, but also completely abandoned as a kind of sociological waste product. In Agamben's (1998) work these polarities, which took the form of the notions of the voracious libertine and popular cannibal in Foucault's (2003) take on revolutionary France, become states of exception, the authoritarian tyrant who makes the rules and *homo sacer* who is more or less outside of society.

In the context of the current chapter, I think that these exceptions can be seen to translate almost directly into the contemporary neoliberal stereotypes of the banker and the feral youth and their spatial correlates, the bank and council estate. While the banker is inside society, but seems to behave with total impunity, the feral youth is outside normal community by virtue of his animality, but still formally a member of society. Reading contemporary neoliberal Britain through Foucault and Agamben, I think these two social types can be seen to define the basic coordinates of social class conflict and consequent socio-spatial organisation, where, for example, Docklands represents a kind of heterotopia of the financial elites and Tower Hamlets a segregated space for the abnormal population (Minton, 2012). Unwilling to accept this relation, however, because of its potential to reveal the reality of class conflict, the neoliberal sleight of hand, and the discursive trick of successive governments identified by Stuart Hall (2011), has been to oppose the *normal*, middle-of-the-road taxpayer to the feral population, the scrounger, in such a way that screens the conflict between two social exceptions and instead opposes a construction of normality to an idea of abnormality and inherent deviance. It is on the basis of this construction that the Conservative government sought to mobilise a populist response to crash era precariousness, comprising *normal* individuals, or those who are inside the neoliberal economic circuit (what we now call 'working people'), against a feral population of scroungers and petty criminals who are seen to exploit welfare in order to live for free. Under conditions of a global economic meltdown where everybody feels the anxiety that accompanies the state of socio-economic precariousness, and especially the middle classes who feel they are least secure in their privilege, it is not surprising that neoliberal Britain has become a society of spite

characterised by hatred of those who are seen to be getting something for nothing and living off society, primarily because they live outside of the normal economic spaces of neoliberal society. It is this asocial relation that, I want to argue, finds spatial form in the Foucauldian (1986) heterotopia, which is simultaneously both inside and outside of normal social space conceived as productive economic space.

The essential political problem with this discursive construction of normality and abnormality, which mobilises spite against the weakest members of society and legitimates a heterotopic approach to socio-spatial relations revolving around division, separation, and segregation, is that there is no longer any sense of inequality or injustice in society and instead a view of normality and abnormality within a discursive space of abstract, objective, asocial relations characterised by free and fair competition. Within this space of competition, where the rules of the game are determined by economic logic, there is no critical sense of social justice, but only calculations of more or less value underpinning a metabolic vision of humanity. In this peculiarly urban view of society, which Simmel (1997) discovered in the early 20th century in his works on the relationship between the city and money, human civilisation fuses with nature in a kind of socio-economic state of second nature. Akin to nature, where there is no history, in the socio-economic state of second nature, there is no motivated change and no democratic participation or direction, but only the endless life cycle of capitalism Schumpeter (2010) called creative destruction, which is defined by the fact that it simply works, where working means turning through economic cycles and producing value. This view of the idiocy of neoliberal society is in line with Foucault's (2008) theory of the origins of modern governmentality, which he roots in a shift from a Greek notion of citizenship requiring a political stance to a Christian idea of pastoralism where the individual is a member of a flock which is directed under conditions of total obedience.

Although Foucault (2008) does not completely explain the political implications of this shift, it is clear that there is no democracy in the pastoral vision of power which he connects to the modern liberal and neoliberal state, but only an authoritarian conception of social relations that is coloured by the idea that economy and the reproduction of life, what Foucault calls biopolitics, is more important than politics in the classical Greek sense, which was concerned with matters beyond economy or *oikos*, the space of the home. What this means, then, is the modern liberal and neoliberal city is no longer the polis, space of political community and social debate, but rather *oikos*, a space of economy and economic calculation concerned with life, living, death, and dying. In short, the neoliberal city is a nihilistic space of biopolitics and metabolism, a space of creative destruction which enables life to renew itself but little more, a static space outside of history, a space going nowhere. As such, there can be no sense of political critique in neoliberal space, or any kind of discourse relating to concepts such as justice beyond economic turnover, because these ideas simply do not make sense in this context. This is

the case because people are no more than bearers of economic value, which renders them fit for either inclusion in the vital spaces of the city, or exclusion to the margins, which Sharon Meagher (2009) talks about in terms of 'urbs sacra', where the city is largely dead, insofar as the neoliberal machine that only values economic production, profit, and growth is concerned. This division describes the contemporary state of exception in neoliberal Britain, and captures the idea of Dis-United Kingdom which I have sought to elaborate through first a discussion of Sampson's (2012) attempts to reconstruct a sociological vision of the neoliberal city, and second an exploration of Foucault (1986), Lefebvre (2003), and their concepts of heterotopia, division, and encounter in the context of the 2011 riots.

Throughout the chapter I have attempted to show that neoliberal British society is a class space, defined by insider and outsider socio-economic positions, which recalls Engels' (2009) classic exploration of industrial Manchester. In this way my analysis relies on Lefebvre's (1991) notion of concrete abstraction, whereby class relations map onto concrete space and the organisation of the city, the space of community and society, to show how neoliberal relations are expressed in a heterotopic urbanism of division, separation, and segregation. However, I have also argued that this model of socio-spatial organisation, which I have sought to capture in Foucault's (1986) idea of heterotopia that reterritorialises social relations in the face of the turbulence of economic deterritorialisation, has been put under enormous pressure because the neoliberal social form Lefebvre (2003) calls the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption is no longer functional in the wake of financial meltdown. In the face of economic failure, and the collapse of the neoliberal profit margin, asocial relations of competition have been radicalised, the precarious majority have been made to feel even more anxious, and the weakest members of society have been placed in an impossible, hopeless situation. Under these conditions, the Thatcherite drive to accumulate profit has been radicalised in a kind of neoliberal death drive represented by the emergence of a Hobbesian (2008) warre of all against all expressed in the urban riots of August 2011.

More specifically what these riots represented was the desire of what Badiou (2012) calls the inexistent, the collateral damage of neoliberal society, to escape from the situation in the heterotopias of abandonment, and find something beyond these hopeless dead zones. In seeking to escape from the horror of being-waste, which was expressed through the neoliberal desire for things, the inexistent established a political social relation inside a society that rejects these kind of relations and threw down an ethical challenge that society must now answer. This is where I sought to use Lefebvre's (2003) concept of heterotopia to explain the leap beyond the heterotopia of control to the other space of encounter, collision, politics, and ethical challenge. Regarding this ethical challenge, I do not think that it is enough to respond with the view that the rioters represented no more than greedy neoliberals. Instead, I think that we must recognise that the rioters' or looters' nihilistic desire to consume represented, and will continue to represent, a sublimated desire for the future, a

desire for some relief from the endless night of hopelessness, a desire for hope, a desire for utopia. As such, what we must do is respond to the heterotopia of collision and the ethical challenge of events such as August 2011 by desublimating the nihilism of the looters, and seizing the opportunity to move beyond the neoliberal society of enemies that has been revealed to be bankrupt in more or less every way. In order to do this we must escape the impasse of the end of history, which is represented in space by the Foucauldian (1986) heterotopia of division, separation, and segregation, and take advantage of the heterotopic moment of collision, conflict, and encounter. There is, I think, hidden somewhere deep inside this negative form of conflictual encounter the possibility of the new politics, a positive politics beyond the mainstream alternatives that remain shackled to the existing state of division that cannot be named, a utopian politics of fantasy and imagination, that we must struggle to realise. In attempting to bring this politics about, and escape from the politics of brute fact that will never lead us anywhere new, we should follow Badiou (2012), who notes that riots are always negative explosions of desire in need of organisation, and found a new politics, a dictatorship of the fantastic that can move beyond the current impasse of neoliberal society. But before we can escape this impasse, and as a first step, I think we must heed the ethical challenge of events such as the riots of 2011, and recognise the socio-spatial injustices of contemporary Britain, which neoliberal ideology seeks to deny in social spaces of division, separation, and segregation. Thus, I think we must recognise the social reality of a Dis-United Kingdom and seek to move beyond this through a politics based in an understanding of the irreducibility of social relations founded in the environment which is more than simply a machine for the production of profit and economic growth.

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Conclusion

The Spectre of Sociology

I 'The Social Relation Is a Spectre'

In the mid-1980s the French philosopher Jacques Derrida enigmatically suggested that 'the future belongs to ghosts' (Derrida and Stiegler, 2002: 115). In the thirty years since Derrida made this statement about the ghostly future and the ten years since his own passing, I believe that this vision has become increasingly true—I would suggest that the relationship between the future and haunting is perhaps even more relevant today than it was in the 1980s when Derrida spoke these words, simply because the late philosopher saw the ghosts of the past of the globalised world coming before they had really made their presence felt. But if Derrida saw the ghosts of the future early, famously writing about them in his book on hauntology, *Specters of Marx* (1994), then my argument is that they are everywhere today and centrally that we, as sociologists, are in a privileged position to listen to their stories and respond to their demands. Following Derrida's occult vision of the future, what I want to suggest in conclusion is that this ghostly future will more or less rely on sociology, or what we might call spectro-sociology, and its potential to haunt, spook, and finally possess the contemporary capitalist neoliberal hegemon, which is defined by its absolute opposition to the spectre of the other, and most importantly the human relation between self and other that transcends the objective economic transaction. This is a grand and perhaps even hyperbolic claim, but we must not forget that in the mid-19th century the founder of critical sociology, Karl Marx, explained that Europe was haunted by a spectre, the spectre of communism. In *The Communist Manifesto* (2004) Marx and Engels conjured the spectre in order to explain that the capitalist system could not continue to abuse the working classes, the proletariat, without producing revolutionary unrest and eventually the dialectical turn towards the absolute form of society, the communist society. In this context the spectre of communism comes from the past, haunts the contemporary moment, and suggests the possibility of a future free from the misery of the present. It was on the basis of this ghoulish vision and Marx's early interest in the ghostly that Derrida wrote his *Specters of Marx* in the mid-1990s. Here, Derrida imagines that the defeat of really existing communism in the Soviet Union

and Eastern Europe, and the subsequent triumphalism of Francis Fukuyama's *End of History* (1992) that predicted the completion of the Hegelian dialectic in American-led globalisation, will inevitably produce a new world of ghosts—the ghosts of the defeated, the destroyed, and the leftovers of the new global capitalist utopia.

The essence of Derrida's argument is that Fukuyama's global liberal, democratic, capitalist utopia is also the exhaustion of Weber's (2010) spirit of capitalism in its complete realisation. Under these conditions, when there is no more ideology, no way to articulate the profound injustices of the *systematic* production of what Žižek (2008) calls objective violence, misery, and despair, Derrida suggests that the spirit of capitalism transforms into its own ghostly other—the spectre, the ghost of the ghost, that refuses to rest or accept the idea of the end. From the perspective of the neoliberal hegemon, and those whose task is to maintain this order, the spectre represents a horror show, because it haunts the end of history paradigm that says that there is no more with its other—the spectre comes from the past in order to represent the horrors of the present and suggest the possibility of some other future. In this respect, Derrida's spectre, the main character in the late capitalist horror show, is also a utopian figure that suggests hope, possibility, and a future in the true sense of the word that addresses the misery of the present in the name of an alternative vision of society. Derrida's Marx is, therefore, an uncanny Marx. Following Freud (2003c), who explained the uncanny in terms of the menacing sense of unfamiliarity hidden within the familiar, Derrida's spectres of Marx emerge from the complete rationalisation of late capitalism, where absolutely everything is subject to the rule of the miserable god of the bottom line—the capitalist calculation of surplus value. In this situation the spectres emerge from the tombs and mummified bodies of Lenin and Mao, where they live on, post-mortem, somewhere between life and death, encrypted, to use the language of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (1994). In this way the spectres represent the dirty secret of the late capitalist machine that the end of history hegemon seeks to endlessly exorcise and condemn to the past. Of course, as the Anti-Capitalist movement, Occupy, Syriza, and seemingly endless protests against austerity across Europe testify, the spectres refuse to die, ironically because they are already dead. This remains the political or post-political situation today—the end of history paradigm suggests that there is no alternative, but the champions of this ideological position cannot effectively exorcise the other, the spectre.

It is on the basis of this situation, Derrida's global capitalist hauntology, that I want to develop my thesis, and suggest that the spectre haunting contemporary Europe, and perhaps global capitalism itself, is not simply Marx and Engels' (2004) spectre of communism, or indeed Derrida's (1994) spectres of Marx, but rather a far more abstract, ideal, or indeed spectral, spectre of sociology, which is less about the return of this or that political movement—although it may well be about this too—and more concerned with the ghostly return of the truth of the basic ontological social relation between people that capitalism, and especially neoliberal capitalism, seeks to exorcise in the name of

the absolutely self-enclosed individual, *homo economicus*. In my view it is this essential truth, the basic interdependence of people in social relations shot through with the possibility of collaboration and collective action, but also the recognition of injustice and deeply unequal power relations, that neoliberal capitalism cannot tolerate and has sought to exorcise ever since the British prime minister Margaret Thatcher announced that 'there is no society', because foreclosure of this space, the space of social relations, *is* the foreclosure of the space of politics, socialism, communism, and more or less every liberation movement which seeks to address inequality and injustice. In terms of the social and political impact of this attempt to disavow the truth of the social relation, Zygmunt Bauman (2000b) has written widely about the individualisa-tion of society and shown how the late capitalist hegemon views the idea of the irreducible relation between individuals as a kind of relic or fossil of the past that is no longer relevant in the liberal present where individual freedom trumps collective responsibility every time. In the face of this vision, which initially emerged out of the postmodern, liberal critique of totalitarianism and the state more generally, I would argue that the situation and status of the practice of sociology is more or less reflective of the situation of the left, and leftist thought, on the contemporary political scene.

While the space of the political left has been foreclosed by the hegemonic position of the end of history paradigm, with the subsequent emergence of Derrida's spectres of Marx, my view is that the space of sociology, focused on the study of social relations, has also been foreclosed, and the discipline subse-quently marginalised in the university, simply because the kinds of truths the discipline can produce, truths concerned with the effects of social relations, have been rendered largely null and void by the late capitalist neoliberal paradigm that cannot recognise the injustice of systemic inequality or objective violence primarily because from this point of view the social relation does not exist, or is at best considered marginal relative to the importance of individual behaviour. However, the refusal to recognise the essential importance of social relations does not make social relations disappear, and it is this ideological move, the foreclosure of the social relation, which, in my view, has led to the proliferation of the ghosts of the present that remind us of the systemic nature of oppression and violence. Thus we should not only speak of the spectres of Marx, or the spectre of communism, but also the spectres of the racialised society, and the spectres of the patriarchal society, because what these ghosts have in common is their refusal of the neoliberal truth of individualisation beyond social relations that simultaneously allow for a recognition of systemic injustice and the possibility of collective, political action. What is the role of sociology within this complex, where the foreclosure of the space of social relations leads to the endless emer-gence of ghosts and ghouls? The answer is that sociology, *the* spectral discipline of the disavowed social relation, must recognise the irony of its marginal position, which is that its situation on the very edge of relevance in the neoliberal knowl-edge machine is in truth a reflection of its central, critical position for the production of alternative futures. What this means is that sociology may be *the*

utopian discipline for the 21st century concerned with the spectral projections of past revolutions that failed; present misery, despair, and injustice; and future hope and possibility.

It is perhaps fitting that I first spoke of the ghosts of 20th- and early 21st-century capitalism and what we might call spectro-sociology in Prague, the city Derek Sayer (2013) writes about in terms of the dark capital of 20th-century Europe. In Sayer's work, Prague is the 20th-century successor to Benjamin's (1999) 19th-century Paris, city of hauntings and future possibilities. In this respect there could be no better place to speak of the emergence, foreclosure, and finally the spectralisation of sociology from really existing Marxism through to the postmodern, post-socialist, neoliberal, end of history period we inhabit today where individuals stand on their own. The final, funereal moment of this story, the moment of neoliberal triumph, comprises the late 20th-century invention of Bauman's (2000b) individualised society of *homo economicus*, the neoliberal self who thinks about the world in terms of costs, benefits, and rational choices. But we must remember that the emergence of this self was explored long before Gary Becker and Margaret Thatcher, when Georg Simmel (Frisby and Featherstone, 1997) wrote about the mental life of the modern urbanite in 1915. Simmel's theory was that in order to live with the endless turbulence of the modern city, urbanites must shut themselves off from their environment, including those other people who exist in suffocating over-proximity, and learn to think objectively so that the only question they ever have to ask concerns price. In light of the way the contemporary neoliberal individual is driven to think in terms of instrumental rationality, costs/benefits, and competitive advantage, it is clear that neoliberal society, or perhaps we should say neoliberal *asociety*, represents a kind of realisation, and radicalisation, of Simmel's theory of the objectification of social relations one hundred years after the theorist of sociation wrote about the violent effects of money upon society. Under these conditions, when the relationship between people is one of price and monetary cost—which Simmel's follower Walter Benjamin (1999) famously understood through the figure of the prostitute—it is no surprise that the true, human, social relation that exceeds the objectivity of money becomes a kind of stain, affront, or offence to the capitalist, and even more the neoliberal self, where every aspect of life has become about the monetary equation.

Writing in the shadow of Freud, Simmel saw that the emergence of money and the modern urban environment created a tendency towards distance, simply because human psychology is not able to absorb and process extreme levels of external simulation. In this way Simmel's self evolved a defensive front, an armour, or in psychoanalysis an ego, which could interact with the world objectively. It is this dispassionate, distanced, and individualised self that has become the ideal of capitalism, and especially neoliberalism, and has understandably led to the reduction of the social relation to the study of economic interaction. Why is this understandable? It is understandable because when the self is simply an objective calculator—that thinks about everything and everybody through the

lens of cost/benefit—economics screens out sociology and the human social relation becomes a profane economic exchange. But what this economic perspective misses, and what constantly returns, is the deeply affective dimension that is impossible to repress, precisely because it is fundamental to what it means to be human and participate in what Marx (1988) wrote about in terms of species being. In his study of ghosts and spectres, psychoanalyst Stephen Frosh (2013) explains that Freud conceived of the irreducibility of the social relation in terms of transference, and beyond this the occult notion of telepathy, which clearly shows the extent to which individualism and the idea of the individualised self had penetrated Western thought—the father of psychoanalysis sought to conceive of the social relation in terms of the occult. But while Freud thought about the social relation through the idea of telepathy, he also recognised that the objective self is an impossibility, and that our interactions with others produce spectres that we can never escape.

In the curved space of Freudian psychoanalysis, which is clearly outlined in books such as *Repression* (2001b), *The Uncanny* (2003c), and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2003a), the dead always return to haunt the living in spectral form. Following the logic of Freud's theory of repression and Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994), I want to argue that we can identify a melancholy of contemporary global capitalism characterised by a procession of ghosts and spectres that can never be laid to rest because they represent the essential truth of the social relation of self, other, world, and beyond this earth—the truth of sociology. On the basis of this vision of late capitalism, I suggest that sociology must realise its spectral position and become a kind of spectro–sociology, less interested in objective truths and more concerned with the voices of the ghosts of the past, present, and potential futures. However, the problem for sociology remains that the spectre and the ghost of the social relation cause deep anxiety within the neoliberal asociety that is resistant to the recognition of its truth because it is premised on the existence of a kind of *militarised individualism* that refuses to recognise the other outside of its base objectivity and equivalence to monetary value—what is *it* worth? As a result, I think that sociology must confront what I want to call the resistance to social analysis, which reflects a sociological version of Freud's (2012) famous resistance to psychoanalysis, the fear of ghosts that represent traumatic events that we cannot face, in the name of the defence of the spectral truths that it is uniquely positioned to receive. In this conclusion I suggest a response to the defensive complex of the resistance to social analysis, but before I reach this final point, I want to talk through, first, the history of the emergence of the neoliberal, antisocial world, and second, the impact of this world upon sociology and the sociological imagination.

II Spectres R Us, or, The History of Neoliberal Individualism

What appear to be the intractable problems of the present—extreme inequality, poverty, and misery—are exacerbated by the despair and hopelessness that

emerge from the failure of the future bound up with the end of history paradigm. This lack of possibility, and the perception that change is impossible, is the result of the failure of our sense of collectivity, community, and cohabitation rooted in neoliberal celebration of individualism and denigration of the sociological imagination on the basis that the social relation is somehow a harbinger of totalitarianism. It is this situation, the end of history, end of hope, and end of the future, which has led to the proliferation of spectres: the spectres of destroyed hope, contemporary despair, and despondency about our common, but entirely individualised, fate. This is why we fear the apocalypse, and the dystopic imagination dominates utopian speculation in contemporary society—because we have no hope, and we refuse to trust the spectres of the social relation that comment upon our essential interdependence. Consider, for example, apocalyptic, dystopian visions of *The World Without Us* (Weisman, 2007), which I would suggest is an eco projection of the destroyed self, or *me without world*, of neoliberal capitalism, which simultaneously reveals and masks the truth of our sociality. But it is not easy to listen to these traces, or spectres, because the history of liberalism, which is also modern history, is the history of the triumph of the individual. While the ancients thought in terms of the polis, and the identity of the micro- and macrocosm that bound man to city to cosmos, Leo Strauss' (1996) original modern philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, made individual conflict, 'the warre of all against all', the centrepiece of his political society. In Hobbes' thought, man is always wolf to man (*homo homini lupus*) and his only hope for survival is the transcendence of the general fear of every other man in the particular fear of one big man—the monstrous Leviathan, the sovereign, political society. In this way Hobbes (2008) explained the emergence of society, a society of uneasy peace and ambient menace, and set the tone for liberal and later neoliberal history to come.

Following Hobbes' dire sociology, which depended on absolute state power to ensure minimal state cohesion, John Locke (2003) sought to limit the power of the state on the basis of certain God-given rights, and centrally the right to private property. In Locke's thought, and particularly his *Two Treatises of Government* (2003), the right to property comes from God, but it is the state's role to ensure the defence of this through the creation of earthly law. What the state must not do, however, is overstep the mark and begin to meddle in the rights of individuals. We find this suspicion of the state, and beyond this the fear of the potential of other people who always represent a limit on individualism, expressed throughout liberal history. For example, in Bernard Mandeville's famous work, *The Fable of the Bees* (1989), which is often considered the first defence of free market economics, the individual must be allowed free rein, because this will eventually lead to public good and society will be a better place for everybody. This is, of course, the classic defence of laissez-faire economics which we find in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1982, 1999), where individual self-interest translates into social benefit through the mechanism of the invisible hand. What we find here, then, is the essential liberal theory that regards economy as a device able to unite individuals around

their basic disunity. Once Hobbes' authoritarian state disappears in classical liberal thought, though the Leviathan would return in neoliberalism, there is no possibility of collective action, because the ability to decide and direct society had been handed over to a benevolent god, the god of the invisible hand. Even in the case of Mandeville's hive, there is no realisation of collective intelligence because no one insect has a vision of the colony, but only its own aims and objectives. Of course, for liberal opponents of authoritarianism and later totalitarianism, such as Karl Popper (2002), this lack of human omniscience was essential, because methodological individualism was a guarantee of democracy. In other words, nobody should be able to claim sufficient knowledge to be able to lead society into the future—the moment anybody obtains this knowledge, that person is likely to become Stalin or Hitler.

While Smith's theory upheld this prohibition on human omniscience through the idea of the invisible hand, where social relations come together to produce a benevolent outcome because of divine intervention, the problem of his identification of theological belief and economics was that it produced a kind of social idiocy, or what Bernard Stiegler (2013) calls systemic stupidity. Against Smith's transformation of theodicy into what Joseph Vogl (2014) calls oikodicy, or belief in the spirit of economy, we may argue that sociology was born in an attempt to understand the way that relations between individuals produce society which in turn shapes individual behaviours. From Comte, who first employed the term 'sociology', through Durkheim, who wrote about 'social science', to Marx, who sought to empower humans through the politics of communism, the purpose of the analysis of the invisible social relation was always to demystify the fetishistic belief in some supernatural prime mover and enable proper motivated human action. Reading Weber's (2010) work on the spirit of capitalism we perhaps find the ultimate theory of systemic stupidity. While Weber reflects Smith's focus on moral sentiment and spirit in the emergence of capitalism, he also recognises that value rationality is ultimately a terminal psychological disposition that will always tend towards instrumental rationality and a kind of spiritless, nihilistic form of behaviour. In the final pages of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (2010), Weber famously captured the nihilism of the properly modern economy through the idea of the iron cage, but we may equally turn to Franz Kafka's (2007) *Metamorphosis* and the tortured figure of Gregor Samsa, or Marx's own mutilated, estranged worker, for evidence of the effects of the hyper-rationalisation of modern capitalism.

My use of the term 'hyper-rationalisation' is key here, because what the English term *hyper* suggests is simultaneously less *and* more than, lack and excess. What this means is that when economic rationalisation finds its realisation in the nihilistic iron cage, and consequently extinguishes its spiritual origins, something returns, the monstrous remainder, the leftover, what Georges Bataille (1991) calls the accursed share in his book of the same name. In this way Gregor Samsa, the bureaucrat who becomes an insect, or Marx's worker, who is estranged from his own humanity, reflects the transformation of Smith's

invisible hand, the original spirit of capitalism, into its monstrous, negative other—the spectre that haunts the godless machine that Marx and Engels write about in terms of communism. When we read Lenin or Luxemburg on the evolution of international capitalism and imperialist adventure, we learn that the stupid, laissez-faire system eventually led Europe into World War I and eventually World War II. The result of this catastrophic period of history was the end of laissez-faire and the turn towards state management in the form of Leninism-Stalinism, Nazism, Keynesianism, and finally neoliberalism. While the communists sought to manage economy in the name of class, Nazi state management took place for the sake of the nation and the purity of the racial type. By contrast, the Keynesian liberals were concerned with pursuing state-managed growth to secure the transcendence of social need. Finally, the neoliberals, and particularly Hayek (2001), attempted to fuse the liberalism of Smith with regulation in order to enable individual freedom. It is, therefore, a mistake to imagine that neoliberalism was ever about the return to laissez-faire, because what we find in Hayek, and what Foucault (2008) illustrates in his seminar on biopolitics, is that the neoliberal mode of governmentality has always been defined by a kind of authoritarian defence of individualism. The individual is free, but only within the economic framework set out by the state in order to ensure competition and profitability.

The history of the 20th century, and certainly the American century from the 1940s onwards, reflects the struggle between the ideological positions of communism, Nazism, Keynesianism, and what we might broadly call neoliberalism, with the eventual result that contemporary global capitalism is organised by variants of neoliberal ideology that think about the role of the state in terms of the defence and organisation of individualism. In the face of the collapse of the totalitarian regimes of Stalinism and Nazism, it is possible to argue that the great epoch of European modernity came to an end and was replaced by the American vision, postmodernity, defined by individualism, consumerism, and a new belief in the power of technology. Since the modern European project of collective progress was considered bankrupt, the American postmodern utopia that was suspicious of the totalitarian potential of collective meta-narratives became the new global hegemon. Of course, the European critique of this model of asocial organisation soon took off, and Adorno and Horkheimer (1997) attacked the pseudo-individualism of the American consumer, but the late 20th century has seen the spectacular erosion of social structure before the key figure of the capitalist individual who pursues his own utopia of self-realisation through the free market. Following Marx and Engels (2004), who wrote about the melting of solid structures under conditions of modernity, Bauman (2000a) calls the new postmodern society a liquid society—that is to say, a society in which it is no longer possible to rely on social structures or social order. In the new liquid society no structures hold, because every order is temporary, contingent on the turbulence of market forces, which represents the only certainty in the new world. That is to say that there can be no sense of stability in the liquid society, and no sense of collective action, because neoliberal ideology demands

that the only constant, the only order, is the order of individual competition that ensures that there can be no totalitarian resolution or stabilisation of social and political structures.

In light of the neoliberal assertion of the order of individual competition, it is possible to understand why Bauman's contemporary liquid society has very little relationship with the idea of freedom—neoliberal freedom represents a novel form of *authoritarian freedom* or enforced market freedom, and this explains why the free global society continues to generate spectres. The neoliberal free market conjures the spectres of failed revolution, thwarted utopian hope, contemporary misery and injustice, and destroyed futures, because the form of freedom it defends is in reality a mystified unfreedom characterised by the right to be poor, miserable, desperate, and the victim of systemic, objective violence, inequality, and injustice. Indeed, the very idea of injustice takes on a very particular significance in the neoliberal society of unfreedom where it comes to refer to market interference, rather than stupid, systemic inequality. Under these circumstances the idea of justice refers to competition free of interference and intervention—which is precisely the reason why neoliberals oppose the formation of trusts and cartels so aggressively—and the maintenance of economic space where instrumental rationality functions effectively. This is why contemporary neoliberalism is more than simply a return to Locke, who similarly opposed state intervention, because what we also find in postmodern capitalism is a kind of computerised Benthamism able to weigh benefits relative to costs and absolutely rationalise decision making in the ways that Jean-François Lyotard (1984, 1993) outlines in his works on postmodernity and the inhuman. The irony of this situation is, therefore, that the much-vaunted figure of the individual that neoliberals defend to the hilt starts to vanish in a blizzard of information that reduces freedom to the necessity of information management. In this situation the individual is a kind of techno-body who must struggle to survive the capitalist second nature that recalls Hobbes' (2008) state of nature.

Since this economic space is organised around Herbert Spencer's (2013) principle of the survival of the fittest, there is no spirit about contemporary, hyper-rational capitalism. Instead the liquid society is characterised by a kind of hard materialism, which is absolutely immobile and precludes meaningful change. This is why Fukuyama's (1992) vision of the end of history in the triumph of the American model of society contains an existential dimension suggested by his reference to the Nietzschean last man, even though this is never really worked through in the book itself. Although Fukuyama invokes the idea of boredom, and suggests the problem of postmodern society where nothing really changes even though society is organised around the celebration of endless innovation, he fails to see the apocalyptic consequences of this situation, which is the kind of de-subjectivisation and de-individualisation Bernard Stiegler (2011, 2012, 2014) explores in his work on disbelief and discredit. In these works Stiegler shows how individualism and the utopia of self-realisation have begun to collapse back in on themselves today because there is no

recognisable social relation through which it is possible to position the idea of a subject, self, or individual. The classic symbol of this process of de–subjectivisation, de–identification, and dis–individualisation is, of course, social media, which, Stiegler notes, is based in the catastrophic failure of sociability. The paradox of social media, what we might call antisocial media, is, therefore, the same paradox that marks the life of Simmel's (Frisby and Featherstone, 1997) urbanite who lives out a lonely existence in the middle of suffocating over–proximity or Baudrillard's (2012) ecstatic mediated individual who cannot stop talking, precisely because he has nothing to say. At the extreme, cutting edge of this paradox we find the contemporary porn addict, who consumes sex online but is absolutely allergic to others, and the Japanese *hikikomori*, who spends his life in virtual communicative space but never leaves his room. However, the distance between these pathological extremes and normal Face-book use is, I would suggest, less qualitative and more quantitative, and defined by the same reversal. As Derrida (1997) notes in his *Politics of Friendship* through reference to Aristotle's enigmatic statement 'O my friends, there is no friend', the proliferation of friends is the destruction of true friendship. Is this not precisely why Facebook is so successful and important?

What we learn from watching David Fincher's *The Social Network* is that Mark Zuckerberg set up Facebook in order to meet women he could never meet in real life. Is it not possible that the popularity of his invention is rooted in this same logic—we make up for what we lack in our embodied lives through the endless proliferation of virtual sociality which never really hits its mark? In other words, the excess of virtual friends never makes up for the lack of the embodied friend, which our virtual lives eventually render impossible, and the problem of loneliness and asociality becomes a permanent fixture hidden deep within the logic of the social network society. This is why I would suggest the turn to the study of big data is a serious mistake for sociology. What can big data mined from Facebook or Twitter really tell us about society beyond a series of frequencies? While the study of what Durkheim (2006) called social facts through the exploration of statistical relationships has always been important to sociology, I would suggest that the field of big data is problematic because of what it represents—the desperate attempt of sociology to map social reality itself through the virtual, which is itself a symptom of the hyper–individualisation of society. In this way I would suggest that it is possible to read the cultural significance of big data through Freud's (2003b) famous case study of paranoia, Daniel Paul Schreber. Where Schreber took flight from the trauma of his childhood into a paranoid fantasy world where he was able to explain everything, in the world of big data we can understand everything about the world through the virtual, even though, or perhaps precisely because, the experience of neoliberal individualism is characterised by anomie where everything, but nothing, is possible. In much the same way that the economic reduction of the social relation to the base economic transaction evacuates the irreducible connection between self and other of its human profundity, which Marx (1988) sought to capture through the idea of

species being and Freud (2001a) explained through the occult notion of telepathy, my sense is that the study of big data threatens to violate the social relation through the transformation of human interaction into objective data.

What is lost here is, of course, the phenomenological depth that exists between self and other that opens up endless creative potential, simply because big data starts off from the profane, materialist perspective of late capitalism— the individual is everything and the social relation is no more than a basic economic transaction. From the perspective of the closed-off, solipsistic, we might even say paranoid individual, the other is no longer constitutive of identity, but rather one more base object in the world. In this way late capitalism transforms the individual into a profane calculator that understands the world in terms of costs and benefits and degrades the other as one more object in a world of things, and the world itself no longer has significance beyond its use value. However, the problem with this situation, which a reading of the work of Jacques Lacan (1997) illustrates, is that when the social world, and the world itself, has been reduced to base quantity, subjectivity and individualism itself collapses. In contemporary culture this is precisely why the *selfie* has become such a phenomenon. In the past people took photos of their significant others in order to remember their presence and preserve them in spectral form, but today we no longer take pictures of others, but rather seek to capture our own likeness in a high-tech manifestation of Lacan's (2007) theory of the mirror stage. Remember, Lacan's point was that long before Oedipalisation, children individualise themselves from Mom through a process of imaginary identification. Against the fractured, fragmented, pre-Oedipal self, the imaginary mirror image confirms the child's unitary identity and sets him up for entry into the symbolic order where he must live within rules and regulations and grow through time. This is only possible, though, on the basis of the original imaginary construction of a self-identical vision of the self—'I am me and not you or this, that, or the other object.'

While this should happen in childhood, the contemporary significance of the selfie is that it indicates a profound crisis in capitalist subjectivity. Since the self is no longer constituted by social regulation and social structures that rely on a web of relations, precisely because every relation has been debased and quantified to the extent that it is too thin to carry real significance, the selfie, the high-tech version of Lacan's (2007) imaginary stage, emerges as a desperate strategy to save the new de-subjectified self from psychotic collapse. This is the selfie's primary function—it presents the high-tech cogito John O'Neill (1991) writes about in his *Plato's Cave*, where I assert my existence through my own image. Given that there is no society to care about or affirm my being in the world, I only know I exist because I can see myself in the high-tech digital image. Of course, Christopher Lasch (1991) wrote about this situation in the late 1970s, which coincidentally also represented the moment when neoliberal ideology came out on top of Keynesianism in the struggle of economic ideas, but the notion of a culture of narcissism is not straightforward. While the straightforward interpretation of this idea relates

to the concept of self-obsession, what psychoanalysis shows is that the condition of narcissism is a deeply defensive approach to self-constitution which hides the destroyed self in its own objectification or spectralisation. In other words, the selfie highlights the process whereby I become my own spectre—a ghostly image of myself necessary to save my identity. Moreover, this spectralisation effect is not simply confined to the selfie, but also relates to the more general use of the mobile media device. Consider the infamous Internet meme, *Einstein's Nightmare*, which shows a range of social situations scarred by mobile media use. The point of the meme is to show that even when we are with other people, we are also somewhere else that we access through the global network, and to illustrate the poverty of the social relation in contemporary capitalist society. Thus *Einstein's Nightmare* is also the sociologist's nightmare because what this simple meme shows is that late capitalism entails the destruction of self-other relations through a process of virtualisation.

When we gaze into the screen—and this is particularly the case with the abyssal surface of the iPhone or iPad—we confirm our own identity in our reflection. We can simulate social connection through Facebook, Twitter, and various other social media platforms, but there is no other in virtual space, because the other is defined by a phenomenological thickness that makes demands upon me. This is exactly what Levinas (1999) understood through his theory of the ethics of faciality—when I look into the face of the other I become responsible and I feel compelled to respond. In the case of social media where friends proliferate it is easy to ignore people or, in the case of FaceTime, simply refuse the connection in the name of the kind of defensive individualism Bruno Bettelheim (1972) understood through the concept of autism. The contemporary social media self is, therefore, the ideal neoliberal individual, who refuses relation to the other because of the potential threat the other poses and prefers instead the isolation of what Bettelheim calls the empty fortress—that is, the militarised self. Moreover, this situation is not simply a cultural phenomenon concerned with social, or mobile, media technology, because I think that it is possible to identify a similar phobia of the irreducibility of social relations in the contemporary Eurozone crisis. While we certainly find a fear of debt in liberal thinkers, such as Locke and Hume, who thought that the state was a potential money pit, I would suggest that it is possible to identify a deeper ideological fear of indebtedness in the crisis that revolves around the refusal to accept that debt is part of the human condition itself.

In Bataille's (1991) vision of general economics, which refers to economics understood outside of the narrow confines of the discipline, it is impossible to repay our debts to others and world that sustain our existence. That is to say that the phenomenological relation is absolute. However, what we see in the contemporary euro crisis represents the height of hubris—the neoliberal economic idea that it is possible to repay debts is evidence of the fantastical belief in the existential isolation of the individual who needs nobody and rejects even the basic reliance on the biosphere itself, which becomes the

ultimate commodity, even though it is absolutely beyond exchange. The Greek has, of course, become the scapegoat for the defence of this vision of restricted economics, where every debt is repayable and it is possible to balance the books, and miserly refusal of the truth of general economics which asserts the ecological connection between self, other, world, and earth. The Greek is thus the sacrificial lamb of neoliberal economics set on the refusal of the irreducibility of social relations, and this is why the sociologist must really oppose austerity in the name of an ethics of generosity, gifting, and the necessity of universal indebtedness. The problem of neoliberal debt is therefore less that we are always in debt, because existence *is* debt, but rather the fantastical belief that it is somehow possible to repay our debts and live in the black. The problem with this view is that it defends restricted economy from the truth of general economics by insisting that we repay what we owe to others with the result that, as Maurizio Lazzarato (2012) has shown, we effectively cancel our futures in subordination to our creditors. In this respect neoliberal capitalism abolishes the possibility of a future worthy of the name, because all the debtor can look forward to is an endless present of repayment. Under these conditions the lonely debtor is subject to the horror of dehumanisation—he cannot change his situation, or live into the future, because his existence is determined by the endless reproduction of his present indebtedness. This programmatic condition confirms the debtor's systematic stupidity in the godless machine of late capitalism, and it is precisely this situation that conjures the spectres of sociology, the spectres of the social relation, that insist upon the truth of general economics where we cannot escape our reliance on each other or our world—the humanised biosphere.

III Spectro–Sociology and the Resistance to Social Analysis

While the refusal of the other is locked into liberal/neoliberal history, I believe that this vision of asociality is entirely unsustainable and that the phobic reaction to and rejection of the basic sociological truth that we find in the work of, for example, Gilbert Simondon, who wrote about trans-individualism, is what produces the procession of spectres that haunt contemporary capitalism with their complaints about injustice, misery, and injury (Combes, 2012). From the neoliberal perspective, there is no social relation, but only economic exchange that limits responsibility to contractual obligation, but the sociological truth the spectres reveal is that the human condition is to be responsible because the individual is founded on otherness in the present, born in the world made by the others of the past, and can only make a future on the basis of cooperation with other people who share the same vision of how the world might change. In this way, debt is irreducible, and this is essentially what Derrida (1994) explains in his *Spectres of Marx*—the spectre demands responsibility, and a recognition of indebtedness, that is horrific from the point of view of the neoliberal subject who learns that debt is somehow evil, but is in truth representative of the possibility

of a space of freedom beyond the capitalist injunction to live out a lonely life in suffocating proximity to others who are similarly phobic about interdependence. Against Nietzsche's theory of debt, which he sets out in his *On the Genealogy of Morals* (2008), explaining that essential indebtedness is the philosophy of the weak, the sociological vision of debt that the spectre communicates carries a message concerned with the necessity of humility born in the very real limitation of the self-identical individual in those others who sustain its existence. It is, of course, precisely this humility which is lost in contemporary global capitalism that individualises everybody, with the effect that it is possible to fortify Europe in the face of migrants on the run from destroyed lands and defend the necessity of severe austerity in the context of an economic system that supports exorbitant luxury.

When neoliberal ideology rejects the connection, or responsibility, between self and other, the spectre returns in order to insist upon the irreducibility of the social relation. This is why the spectre is perhaps the key figure of early 21st-century sociology. In the wake of the end of history, and the globalisation of capitalism, the other is nowhere. In this situation there is no hope for self or other because there is no social situation open to change. As Adorno and Horkheimer (1997) note in their theory of ghosts, it is in these hopeless times when ghosts appear. In their view the spectre represents destroyed hope and in this respect keeps possibility alive post-mortem. According to Freud (2003c), the fear of ghosts, the fear of the dead who have not been able to pass over but remain in our world, is symbolic of the inability to internalise trauma. He thought that ghosts will continue to haunt the living until psychoanalysis works through the hard core of trauma which would allow the spectre to pass over to the other side. While we can read this therapeutic vision conservatively, so that spectres pass over and very little changes, it is also possible to take a more radical interpretation of what Laurence Rickels (2011) calls unmourning, or the inability to enable the ghost to leave the world of the living, and suggest that the spectral symbol of the need to address injustice, misery, and despair will only leave the scene when its conditions have been met. From this point of view, the spectre becomes a figure of utopian possibility and potential transformation, which is exactly what the sociologist of haunting Avery Gordon (2008) explains in her *Ghostly Matters*. For Gordon the spectre represents the possibility of enchantment, the possibility of hope, in a godless, disenchanted world where hopelessness has become the norm.

In his *Specters of Marx* (1994), Derrida argues that the spectre represents a new atheological theology and that spiritless capitalism is fated to produce ghosts by virtue of the phantom objectivity of the commodity that fascinates the consumer. In this way Derrida shows how the pinnacle of late capitalist estrangement is characterised by the reflexive production of spectres. Against this neo-Gothic thesis one might claim that the hyper-visibility of our mediated world screens out the possibility of haunting, but what the works of Jeffrey Sconce (2000), Laurence Rickels (2011), and Stefan Andriopoulos (2013) show is that media is, and has always been, the space of modern and

postmodern haunting. While there is a sense in which the postmodern theory of the ghostly concerns the production of a phantasmatic world where reality itself breaks down before universal simulation where ethics no longer make sense, my view is that the spectre of sociology has a very clear ethical, political function concerned with giving voice to the other who came before, must live in misery today, survive the catastrophe of the cancelled future, and centrally demand that the neoliberal individual recognises his claims on the basis of a social relation which is absolutely irreducible. In this respect it may be possible to supplement Derrida's (1994) reference to Hamlet's spectre with the case of Dickens' (2003) Jacob Marley and the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future, who show the story's famous capitalist miser, Ebenezer Scrooge, the horror of the destroyed lives of Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim and force him to face up to his responsibility for their situation. While Scrooge rejects Christmas in the name of the love of money, Marley's ghost confronts him with his own traumatic past and shows him his own miserable end in order to show him that the social relation is irreducible and that generosity and indebtedness are essential human attributes necessary for survival. Thus Marley shows Scrooge what happens when we lose these human qualities and abandon each other for money—we live and die in misery.

In much the same way that Dickens wrote about the failure of the spirit of generosity in his *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, which was coincidentally the same decade in which Marx and Engels published *The Communist Manifesto*, Derrida's student and collaborator, Bernard Stiegler (2011, 2012, 2014) explores the failure of belief and spirit in contemporary capitalism and suggests that the postmodern, neoliberal, global economy has similarly transformed into a kind of hopeless, nihilistic machine for the production of profit. That is to say that while Dickens' ghost emerges to critique Scrooge's cruel and desperate vision of Victorian capitalism, Stiegler suggests that a similar spectralisation is necessary today in order to save postmodern society from economic destruction. Against Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2007), who suggested that the 1960s led to the emergence of a new individualistic spirit of capitalism which could provide people with hope in personal freedom and self-realisation, Stiegler suggests that this turn to what we might call hyper-individualism has led to the creation of the kind of miserable society Dickens imagines and Scrooge, Bob Cratchit, and Tiny Tim endure—the individual is everything and there is no room for generosity or a recognition of the sociality that makes people human. Indeed, there is no social space beyond the space of the miserable economic transaction. As a result, compassion is impossible, which Scrooge explains in his famous refusal of sympathy—'Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?'—and the other is simply left to perish. This is the misery of capitalism, which Dickens painted in the 1840s, Marx and Engels imagined in the same period, and Bernard Stiegler explains in his works on contemporary disbelief and discredit. After the period of Keynesian state management between the horrors of Victorian laissez-faire and its rebirth in the form of neoliberal economic governmentality, Stiegler (2012) shows how the horror remains the same and that we must return to the

question of fundamental human value once more. In this respect the message of the spectre of sociology, which reminds the individual of his irreducible responsibility for the other who must live and die in misery, is very similar to the message Marley's ghost brought to Scrooge, who was confronted with destroyed lives and compelled to change his ways in order to produce a better world where responsibility, compassion, and sympathy form the basis of a socio-logical ethic of care.

As a result it is possible to see that the utopianism of the spectre of sociol-ogy revolves around a rejection of the restricted economics of neoliberal individualism in the name of a vision of social relations where human value trumps the right to private property. Given this vision, the future the spectre conjures contains the possibility of a form of *globalisation for itself*, rather than *in itself*, where an integrated, sociological world organised around human value, rationality, and a recognition of a communistic ethic where I am necessarily bound to the other supersedes the systemic stupidity of the godless theodicy of neoliberal capitalism. However, the life of the red-green utopian fantasy of the spectre, where there is a recognition of the irreducible interdependence of self, other, world, and earth, is absolutely reliant on sociology and its idea of the social relation that remains beyond the pale in neoliberal society where the individual is the primary unit and his interactions with others are reduc-ible to base, instrumental, economic transactions. Thus the radical nature of sociology resides in its necessary resistance to this weak vision of the social, and its critical, utopian potential is founded upon its core claim that ensures its marginality in the neoliberal universe that cannot recognise social interac-tion beyond economics. As a result sociology becomes a spectral form of knowledge concerned with the spectre of the social relation screened out by the hyper-rationality of neoliberal capitalism, where the individual is everything. While neoliberal ideology must oppose sociological truth because the ideas of irreducible relationality, trans-individualism, and absolute responsibility for others destroy the fantasy of the self-reliant, rugged individual and conjure the horror story of totalitarianism in its opposition to the unplanned society, from the sociological point of view, the militarised individualism of late capi-talism suggests dystopia and catastrophe because there is no human future under conditions of systemic stupidity. These are the coordinates of the political struggle of the spectre of sociology, and the dystopian fantasy of the catastrophic future should not be dismissed in the name of realism, because the assumption of the worst opens up a space of utopian possibility simply because it becomes *necessary* to imagine change (Dupuy, 2014). Of course, neoliberal capitalism is complicit in the production of the vision of the late capitalist dystopia and the spectres that speak about the need for some other way, because its rejec-tion of social responsibility condemns ever more people to live in poverty, misery, and despair.

Under these conditions the spectre of sociology is the hopeless hope of global capitalism to conjure the words of Walter Benjamin (2009), who wrote about the emergence of possibility in the ruins and rubble of the contemporary

through his exploration of German tragedy. Following Benjamin, my view is that the mission of sociology today should be to take care of the spectre, to nurture and love the spectre, to listen to its words, and embrace spookulation in the face of the neoliberal resistance to social analysis that insists upon hard, objective facts reducible to material presence. This is not the knowledge of the spectre, or the social relation of which the spectre speaks, which is why Freud's (2001a) attempt to socialise psychoanalysis led him to write about telepathy. The irony of the truth of the irreducible social relation and the reality of the trans-individual that links self to other to world to earth is that it is entirely inaccessible to economic analyses that insist upon its reduction to the *individual* transaction, and better understood through theory-fiction or what we might call schizo-nomadic thought, able to account for the thickness of the self in history, the depth of its relationality in the present, and the extent of its possibility in the future to come. In this way I want to suggest that sociology must critically oppose the resistance to social analysis that emergences from the neoliberal fear of relationality. This condition, which reflects the sociological equivalent of Freud's (2012) resistance to psychoanalysis, represents the defensive response to the trauma of estrangement that the miserable individual cannot possibly recognise because his identity relies on the phobic exclusion of otherness. What I have sought to show above is that this refusal of otherness has a long history and is rooted in the emergence of modern, and particularly liberal, thought that takes in Hobbes, Locke, and eventually Adam Smith. This is why the refusal of the irreducibility of relationality, where the other is always an enemy or a friend one can simulate in the distance of social media, is so durable and difficult to oppose even in the face of hyper-visible inequality, injustice, and systemic violence.

Given the history of individualism, which has led to the emergence of a militarised, suspicious, antisocial form of identity where sympathy, compassion, and care are signs of weakness, there is a lot at stake in the neoliberal individual's resistance to the spectre of the fundamental social relation. In this situation sociology must develop a psycho-therapeutic sensitivity to the violence of its own message—from the neoliberal point of view, the spectre is a ghoul that haunts late capitalism and threatens the demise of the individual and sociology is a horror story that wants a return to the dystopian conditions of the Stalinist/Nazi past, where the abstract thing called society destroyed freedom. However, sociology is in truth a utopian mode of thought, because it teaches compassion, cooperation, and collective action in the name of a shared future. In defence of this utopianism, I believe that sociology must refuse the phobic identification of collectivity with the horrors of totalitarianism and carefully teach others to accept what they least want to recognise, the other who makes demands upon them which they cannot ignore and the world that limits them which they cannot live without. As sociologists, we should respond to students, whose socialisation means they know the neoliberal world and fear their responsibility for the other, with critical explorations of social structure. Although higher education has become a machine, organised to feed

students into the neoliberal workforce, which is deeply suspicious of sociological truths, spectro-sociology can infiltrate this factory for the transformation of thought into information, and teach its occult knowledge of spectres of the past, present, and future to come (Freire, 1996). This is, in my view, the utopian task of sociology—conjuration of the spectre of the social relation that can emancipate the future from the ruins of the present. It is, finally, particularly appropriate that I set out this theory of spectro-sociology in Prague, neo-Gothic capital of 20th-century Europe, which, as Derek Sayer (2013) notes, is not a city where history always moves forward, but rather a space of hauntings, surreal manifestations, and utopian possibility.

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