

The Labour of the Inhuman¹

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Inhumanism is the extended practical elaboration of humanism; it is born out of a diligent commitment to the project of humanism. A universal wave that erases the self-portrait of man drawn in sand, inhumanism is a vector of revision, it relentlessly revises what it means to be human by removing its supposed evident characteristics and preserving certain invariances. At the same time, inhumanism registers itself as a demand for construction, to define what it means to be human by treating human as a constructible hypothesis, a space of navigation and intervention. Inhumanism is in concrete opposition to any theoretical paradigm that seeks to degrade humanity either in the face of its finitude or against the backdrop of the great outdoors. Its labor partly consists in decanting the significance of human from any pre-determined meaning or particular import set by theology; thereby, extricating human significance from human veneration fabricated as a result of assigning significance to varieties of theological jurisdiction (god, ineffable genercity, foundationalist axiom, ...).² Once the conflated and the honorific meaning of man is replaced by a minimalist yet functionally consequential and real content, the humilific credo of anti-humanism that subsists on the theologically-anchored conflation between significance and veneration also loses its deflationary momentum. Incapable of salvaging its pertinence without resorting to a concept of crisis occasioned by theology and wresting significance from the pathological conflation between an enabling import and glory, anti-humanism is revealed to be on the same theological boat it is so determined to set on fire. Failing to extract significance according to the physics that posits it rather than the metaphysics that inflates it, anti-humanism's only solution to overcome the purported crisis of meaning is by adopting the cultural heterogeneity of false alternatives (the ever increasing options of *post-*, communitarian retreats, ...). Rooted

¹ I owe ideas and arguments developed here to my friends Ray Brassier, Michael Ferrer, Deneb Kozikoski Valereto, Alex Williams and Peter Wolfendale. Whatever merit this essay might have is due to them, its shortcomings on the other hand are entirely mine.

² A particularly elegant and incisive argument in defense of human significance as conditioned by the neurobiological situation of subjectivity instead of god or religion has been presented by Michael Ferrer. To great consequences, Ferrer demonstrates that such an enlightened and non-conflated revisitation of human significance simultaneously undermines the theological veneration and the deflationary attitude championed by many strains of the disenchantment project and its speculative offshoots.

in an originary conflation that was never neutralized, such alternatives perpetually swing between their inflationary and deflationary bi-polar extremes, creating a fog of liberty that suffocates any universalist ambition and hinders methodological collaboration required to define and achieve a common task for breaking out of the current planetary morass. In short, the net surfeit of false alternatives supplied under the rubric of liberal freedom causes a terminal deficit of real alternatives, establishing this axiom for thought and action that there is indeed no alternative. The contention of this essay is that universality and collectivism cannot be thought let alone attained through consensus or dissensus between cultural tropes, but by intercepting and rooting out what gives rise to the economy of false choices and by activating and fully elaborating what human significance consists of.

The force of inhumanism operates as a retroactive deterrence against anti-humanism by understanding humanity historically – in the broadest physico-biological and socio-economical sense of history – as an indispensable runway toward itself. But what is humanism, or precisely speaking, what specific commitment does 'being human' represent and how does the full practical elaboration of this commitment amount to inhumanism? In other words, what is in human that shapes the inhuman once it is developed in terms of its entitlements and consequences? In order to answer these questions, first we need to define what it means to be human and exactly what commitment does 'being human' endorse? Next we should analyze the structure of this commitment in order to grasp how undertaking such commitment – in the sense of practicing it – entails inhumanism. It is noteworthy to remark that a commitment only makes sense by virtue of its pragmatic content (meaning through use) and its demands for undertaking a special form of intervening attitude to elaborate that content and respectively, update the commitment according to its consequences or collateral commitments which are in the course of elaboration made explicit. In short, a commitment can neither be examined nor properly undertaken without the process of updating the commitment and unpacking its consequences in the full range of practices. In this sense, humanism is a commitment to humanity but only by virtue of what a commitment is and what human is combined.

The analysis of the structure and laws of commitment-making and the meaning of being human in a pragmatic sense (i.e. not by resorting to an inherent conception of meaning hidden in nature or a pre-determined idea of man) is a necessary initial step before entering the domain of making prescriptions (whether social, political or ethical). What needs to be explicated first is what it takes to make a prescription, or what one needs to do in order to count as prescribing an obligation or a duty, linking duties and revising them. Correspondingly, this is an attempt to understand the organization of prescription or what making a prescription for and by human entails, because without such knowledge neither prescriptive norms can be adequately discriminated from descriptive norms (i.e. we cannot have prescriptions) nor proper prescriptions can be constructed without degenerating into the vacuity of prescriptions devoid of descriptions. The description of the content of human is

impossible without elaborating it in the context of use and practices, while elaboration itself is impossible without following minimally prescriptive laws of commitment-making and judgment. Describing human without turning to an account of an a-priori access to descriptive resources is already a minimally but functionally hegemonic prescriptive project that adheres to oughts of specification and elaboration of the meaning of being human through features and requirements of its use. “Fraught with oughts” (Sellars), humanism cannot be regarded as a claim about human that can only be professed once and subsequently, turned into a foundation or axiom. Inhumanism is a nomenclature for the unfeasibility of this one time profession and the impossibility of putting the matter to rest.

Part I. Human

To be human is a mark of a distinction between on the one hand the relation between mindedness and behavior through the intervention of discursive intentionality and on the other hand the relation between intelligence and the behavior in the absence of such mediation. It is a matter of distinction between sapience and sentience. More simply this characterizing distinction lies in the difference between being capable of acknowledging a law and solely being bound by a law, between understanding and mere reliable responsiveness to stimuli, between stabilized cognition (as organized by the communal space of language and in a sense made autonomous through certain consumptive and productive attitudes toward norms) and unstable and transient types of response or cognition (such as the ones purely triggered by biological states and organic requirements). Ultimately, the necessary content as well as the real possibility of human rests on the ability of the sapience – as functionally distinct from sentience – in practicing inference and approaching non-canonical truth through entering the deontic game of giving and asking for reasons. It is a game solely in the sense of rule-based practices conducted in the absence of a referee in which taking-true through thinking (mark of a believer) and making-true through acting (mark of an agent) are constantly contrasted, gauged and calibrated. What combines both the ability to infer and the ability to approach truth (truth in terms of what makes sense for taking-true and making-true, in conjunction to one another) is the capacity to engage discursive practices in the way that pragmatism describes it: (1) Ability to deploy a vocabulary, (2) To use a vocabulary to specify a set of abilities or practices, (3) To elaborate one set of abilities-or-practices to another set of abilities-or-practices, and (4) Using one vocabulary to characterize another.

Discursive practices constitute the game of giving and asking for reason and outline the space of reasons as a landscape of navigation rather a-priori access to explicit norms. The capacity to engage discursive practices is what distinguishes sapience from sentience. Without such a capacity, human is only a biological fact that does not yield any propositional contentfulness of the kind that demands a special form of conduct and value attribution and appraisal. Without this key aspect, to speak about the history of human risks reducing the

social construction to a biological supervenience while depriving history of its possibilities for intervention and reorientation or a constructive account of freedom. In other words, deprived of the capacity to enter the space of reason through discursive practices being human does not mean anything in the sense of practice in relation to content, action just means doing something, collectivity is and making commitment through linking action and understanding is untenable. We might just as well replace human qua sapience with whatever we wish with the aim of constructing a stuff-oriented philosophy and a non-human ethics where 'to be a thing' simply warrants being good to each other, ... or to vegetables for that matter. Once discursive practices that map out the space of reason are underplayed or dispensed with, everything lapses either toward the individual or toward a noumenal alterity where a contentless plurality can be maintained. Discursive practices as rooted in language-use and tool-use generate a de-privatized but nonetheless stabilizing and contextualizing space through which true collectivizing processes are shaped. It is the space of reason that harbors a genuine collectivity equipped with functional freedom referred to as 'we'. It should be reminded that 'we' is a mode of being, and a mode of being is not an ontological given, it is a conduct, a special performance that takes shape as it is made visible to others. Precluding this explicit and discursively mobilizable 'we', the content of 'being human' never translates to 'commitment to human, or more precisely, to humanity'. By undergirding 'we', discursive practices organize commitments as ramifying trajectories between communal saying and doing and enact a space where self-construction is a collaborative project.

Making a commitment to something means vacillating between doing something in order to count as saying it and saying something specific in order to express and characterize that doing. It is the movement back and forth, the feedback loops, between these two fields that defines sapience as distinguished from sentience. To make a commitment means 'what else', 'what other commitments' it brings forth and how such consequent commitments demand new modes of saying and doing, new abilities that cannot be simply substituted by old abilities because they are dictated by revised or more complex sayings and doings. Without ramifying the 'what else' of a commitment via saying and doing it, a commitment has neither sufficient content nor a real possibility of assessment or development. It is as good as an empty utterance, that is an utterance that does not recognize itself and hence is devoid of any content. Now we can turn the argument regarding demands of making a commitment into an argument for demands of being a human insofar as humanism is a system of commitment to the concept of humanity. The argument goes as follows: In order to commit to humanity, the content of humanity must be scrutinized. To scrutinize this content, its implicit commitments must be elaborated. But this task is impossible unless we take humanity-as-a-commitment to its ultimate conclusions. By asking what else being a human entails, by unfolding the dynasty of other commitments and consequences it brings about. But since the content of humanity is distinguished by its capacity to engage rational norms rather than natural laws (ought instead of is), the concept of entailment for humanity-as-a-commitment is non-monotonic. That is to say, entailment no longer expresses a cause and its differential

effect as in physical natural laws or a deductive logical consequence, instead it expresses enablement and abductive non-monotonicity. The unpacking of the content of commitment to humanity, the examination of what else humanity entitles us to is impossible without developing a certain intervening attitude that simultaneously involves assessment (or consumption) and construction (or production) of norms. Only this intervening attitude toward the concept of humanity is able to extract and unpack the implicit commitments of being a human. And it is this intervening attitude that counts as an enabling vector, making possible abilities otherwise hidden or deemed impossible.

It is through consumption and production of norms that the content of commitment to humanity can be grasped in the sense of both assessment and making explicit the implicit commitments that it entitles us to. Accordingly, for understanding the commitment to humanity and making such a commitment, it is imperative to assume a constructive and revisionary stance with regard to human. This is what was earlier mentioned as an intervening attitude. Revising and constructing human is the very definition of committing to humanity. Lacking this perpetual revision and construction, the commitment part of committing to humanity does not make sense at all. But also insofar as humanity cannot be defined without locating it in the space of reasons (the sapience argument), committing to humanity is tantamount to complying with the revisionary vector of reason and constructing humanity according to an autonomous account of reason. Humanity is not simply a given fact that is behind us, it is a commitment in which the reassessing and constructive strains inherent to making a commitment and complying with reason intertwine. In a nutshell, to be human is a struggle. The aim of this struggle is to respond to demands of constructing and revising human through the space of reasons. This struggle is characterized as developing a certain conduct or error-tolerant deportment according to the functional autonomy of reason – an intervening attitude whose aim is to unlock new abilities of saying and doing, in other words, opening up new frontiers of action and understanding through various modes of construction and practices (social, technological, etc.).

If committing to being human is a struggle in construction and revision, today's humanism for the most part is but a hollow enterprise, that neither does what it says nor says what it does. Likewise, socio-political philosophies which seek to safeguard the dignity of humanity against the onslaught of politico-economic leviathans end up joining them from the other side. By virtue of its refusal to systematically invest on an intervening – that is, revisionary and constructive – attitude toward human and toward norms implicit in social practices and recognize the autonomy of reason, contemporary Marxism largely fails to produce norms of action and understanding. In effect it subtracts itself from the future of humanity. Only through construction of what it means to be human, norms of committing to humanity can be produced. Only through revising existing norms by norms which have been produced, it is possible to assess norms and above all evaluate what it means to be human. Again, these norms should be distinguished from social conventions where the majority of the emphasis is

misplaced, nor these norms should be confused with natural laws (they are not laws, they are conceptions of laws). In a way, production or construction of norms prompts consumption or assessment of norms which in turn leads to demand for production of newer abilities and more complex normative attitudes. One cannot assess norms without producing them. The same can be said about assessing the situation of humanity – the status of the commitment to be human – at any point: Humanity cannot be assessed in any context or situation unless an intervening constructive attitude toward it is developed. But to develop this constructive attitude toward human emphatically means to revise what it means to be human. Dedication to a project of militant negativity and giving up the ambition for developing an intervening and constructive attitude toward human through various social and technological practices is now the hallmark of kitsch Marxism. While kitsch Marxism should not be inflated to the whole of Marxism, at this point the claim of being a Marxist is just too generic of a claim. It is like saying I am an animal; it does not serve any theoretical or practical purpose. The assessment of any Marxist agenda should be done by way of evaluating its power to elaborate its commitments, its understanding of underlying mechanisms involved in making a commitment and above all by questioning whether it possesses a program for global updating of its commitments or not. Once negativity is valorized and the intervening attitude or the constructive deportment is dismissed, assessment of humanity and its situations become fundamentally problematic on two levels:

1. Without the constructive vector, the project of evaluation – the critique – is transformed into a merely consumptive attitude toward norms. Consumption of norm without producing any is the concrete reality of today's Marxist critical theory. For every claim, there exists a pre-packaged set of critical reflexes. One says the force of better reason? The kitsch Marxist says, who decides? One says construction through structural and functional hierarchies. The kitsch Marxist responds control. One says normative control. The kitsch Marxist reminds us authoritarianism. We say us. The kitsch Marxist recites 'who is us?'. The impulsive responsiveness of kitsch Marxism cannot be identified even as a cynical attitude because it lacks the rigor of cynicism. It is a mechanized knee-jerk reactionism that is the genuine expression of norm consumerism without concrete commitment to produce any. Norm consumerism is another name for cognitive servitude and noetic sloth.

2. The response of contemporary Marxism to humanity is also problematic on the level of revision. Ceasing to produce rational norms by refusing to undertake a constructive attitude toward human in the sense of a deportment governed by the functional autonomy of reason means ceasing to revise what it means to be human. Why? Because as argued norms are assessed by newer norms which are produced through various modes of construction and unlocking of new abilities for going back and forth between saying and doing. Since to be human is distinguished by its capacity to enter the game of giving and asking for reason, construction of human ought to be in the direction of further singling out the space of reason through which human differentiates itself from non-human, sapience from sentience. By

transforming the ethos of construction according to demands of reason into the pathos negativity, not only kitsch Marxism put an end to the project of revision but also banks on a concept of humanity outside of the space of reason whose revisionary force is the only authorized force for renegotiating and defining humanity. Once revision is brought to an end, understanding humanity and acting upon its situations harbor no significance because what is deemed to be human no longer enjoys any pertinence. Similarly, once the image of humanity is sought outside of reason, it is only a matter of time that the distinction between sapience and sentience collapses and telltale signs of irrationalism – frivolity, superstition, speculative enthusiasm and ultimately, tyranny – heave forth. Therefore, the first question one needs to ask a humanist or a Marxist is 'Are your commitments up-to-date?' If yes, then they must be subjected to a deontic trial, either a version of Robert Brandom's deontic scorekeeping or Jean-Yves Girard's deontic ordeal, where commitments can be reviewed on the basis of their connectivity, evasion of vicious circles and recusal instead of refutation.

If commitment to humanity is identified by active revision and construction, stopping to revise and refusing to construct characterize a form of irrationalism determined to cancel out what it means to be human. It is in this sense that kitsch Marxism is not just a theoretical incompetency but also an impulse for self-retardation not only from a historical perspective but also from a cognitive standpoint, from sapience back to sentience. To this extent, without any exaggeration, within every kitsch Marxist agenda lies dormant the germ of hostility to humanity and the humanist project. Negativity refuses to be a resignation but it also refuses to contribute to the system and develop a systematic attitude toward the affirmative stance 'implicit' in the construction of the system. Now insofar as on the one hand resignation implies an abandoning of the project of humanism and falling into regressive passivity and on the other hand the implicitly affirmative attitude of construction is what distinguishes humanism, we can say that kitsch Marxism's refusal to both resign and to construct is tantamount to maintain a position that is neither passive nor humanist. Indeed this 'neither ... nor ...' approach signifies nothing but a project of active anti-humanism that kitsch Marxism despite its pretensions for committing to human is in reality committed to. And it is in the wake of this anti-humanism or hostility toward ramifications of committing to human that the identification of kitsch Marxist agendas with humanism appears at best as a farce and at worst as a critical Ponzi scheme for devoted humanists.

In its mission to bootstrap the commitment to humanism to complex abilities and commitments, inhumanism appears as a force that stands against both the apathy of resignation and the active anti-humanism implicit to practical negativity as the fashionable stance of Marxism today. Inhumanism as it will be argued is both the extended elaboration of the conclusion of making a commitment to humanity and the elaboration of the content of human as provided by reason and the sapient's capacity to engage discursive practices.

Part II. The Inhuman

The practical elaboration of making a commitment to humanity is inhumanism. If making a commitment means to fully elaborate the content of a commitment (the consequent 'what else?' of what it means to be human) and to be human means being able to enter the space of reasons, then commitment to humanity is the full elaboration of the abilities of reason as what converts sentience to sapience. But insofar as reason enjoys a functional autonomy and that's why it is able to prevent the collapse of sapience back to sentience, the full elaboration of abilities of reason means the unpacking of consequences of the autonomy of reason for human. To put it differently, humanism by definition is a project for amplification of the space of reason through elaboration of what the autonomy of reason entails, that is its demands both upon saying and doing. Now since functional autonomy of reason conveys the self-determination of reason with regard to its own conduct – that reason cannot be assessed or revised by anything other than itself otherwise equivocation or superstition ensue – commitment to such autonomy effectively exposes what it means to be human to the revisionary space of reason. In a sense, the autonomy of reason is the autonomy of its power to revise, and commitment to the autonomy of reason (via the project of humanism) is a commitment to the autonomy of reason's revisionary program over which man has no hold. Inhumanism is exactly the activation of the revisionary program of reason against the self-portrait of man through commitment to humanity. Once the structure and the function of commitment are genuinely understood, we see that a commitment works its way back from the future, from the collateral commitments of one's current commitment, like a corrosive revisionary acid that rushes backward in time and an attractor that retroactively constructs the opportunities of present out of trends of past in accordance with orientations of future. Once you commit to human, you effectively start erasing its canonical portrait back from the future. It is as Foucault suggests the unyielding wager that the portrait of man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea. Every portrait that is drawn is washed away by the revisionary power of reason, permitting a more subtle portrait with less canonical traits, to the point at which one must ask 'to what extent what is left behind in sand is human and why and if it is worthwhile or useful to call it human any longer. Inhumanism is the labor of the rational agency on human. But there is one caveat here: the rational agency is neither personal nor singular. The kernel of inhumanism is a commitment to humanity via concurrent construction and revision of human as oriented and regulated by the autonomy of reason, i.e. its self-determination and its responsibility for its own needs. In the space of reason, construction entails revision and revision demands construction. The revision of the alleged portrait of man implies that construction of human in whatever context can be exercised without recourse to a constitutive foundation, a fundamental identity, an immaculate nature or a prior state of affairs. Succinctly speaking, revision is a license for further construction.

To this end, the definition of humanity according to reason is a minimalist definition whose consequences are not immediately given, but it is a definition that bootstraps itself to staggering ramifications. If there was ever a real crisis, it would be our inability to cope with these shocking consequences arising from committing to the real content of humanity. The trajectory of reason is that of a global catastrophe whose pointwise instances and stepwise courses do not harbor an observable effect or a comprehensive discontinuity. Reason, therefore, is simultaneously a medium of stability that reinforces procedurality and a general catastrophe, a medium of radical change that administers the discontinuous identity of reason to the anticipated image of man. Elaborating humanity according to the discursive space of reason establishes a discontinuity between man's anticipation of himself (what he expects himself to become) and the image of man modified according to its active content, i.e. reason. It is exactly this discontinuity that characterizes inhumanism as the general catastrophe ordained by activating the content of humanity whose functional kernel is not just autonomous but also compulsive and transformative. The sufficient discernment of humanity is in reality the activation of the autonomous space of reasons. But since this space – qua the content of humanity – is functionally autonomous even though its genesis is historical, its activation implies the deactivation of historical anticipations of what man can be or become according to a fundamentally descriptive level. Since anti-humanism for the most part attempts to draw its critical power from this descriptive level which is either situated in nature (deemed as immune to revision) or history (pictured on the basis of a particular anticipation), the realization of the autonomy of reason is tantamount to the restoration of the non-theological significance of human and the nullification of the anti-humanist critique. What is important here is to understand that one cannot defend or even speak of inhumanism without first committing to the humanist project through the front door of the enlightenment. Enlightened humanism is but the labour of the inhuman.

Now before moving to the final part, it would be conducive to this argument to expound on the autonomy of reason and address possible misunderstandings. Functional autonomy of reason is the expression of the self-actualizing propensity of reason – a scenario wherein reason liberates its own spaces regardless of what appears to be naturally or culturally necessary or the case. Here 'necessary' refers to an alleged natural necessity and should be distinguished from a normative necessity. Whereas the given status of natural causes is defined by 'is' (something that is purportedly the case because it has been contingently posited such as for example the atmospheric condition of the planet), normative laws or the normative of the rational is defined by 'ought to'. The former communicates an impulsion which is there and supposedly necessary, while the latter is not given, it is generated by explicitly acknowledging a law or a norm implicit in a collective practice and thereby turning it into a binding status, a conceptual compulsion, an ought. It is the acknowledging and error-tolerant, namely, revisionary dimension of ought – as opposed to the impulsive dictat of a natural law – that presents ought as a vector of construction, capable of turning contingently posited natural necessities into manipulable variables required for construction. The

functional autonomy of reason consists in the bootstrapping of simple oughts to complex oughts or normative necessities or abilities by way of inferential links (or processes of inference). Commitment to humanity and consequently, the autonomy of reason requires not only specifying what oughts or commitment-abilities we are entitled to but also the development of theoretical and extra-theoretical inferences to link and elaborate existing oughts to new oughts or obligations. Any philosophy that boasts about commitments – whether of Marxist agenda or the humanist creed – but does not work out inferential problems and techniques and does not construct inferences suffers from an internal contradiction and lack of connectivity between commitments since sufficiency-links between commitments of the kinds which can only be established by modes of inference are missing. Without inferential links, there is no real updating of commitments and without a global program of updating, it is inexorable for humanism to not become an organ of conservatism and Marxism not to slide into the burlesque of the critique, a grab bag of cautionary tales and bravados. Lacking a global updating system and as a result, suffering internal contradictions, such enterprises no matter how socio-politically adept or determined they appear have no business to prescribe any obligation or duty.

The claim about the autonomy of reason is a claim about the functional autonomy of reason, not a claim about the genetic spontaneity of reason. And the claim about functional autonomy is really a claim about the autonomy of discursive practices and the autonomy of inferential links between oughts or constructive and revisionary abilities and obligations. Reason has its roots in social construction, in communal assessment and in the manipulability of conditionals embedded in modes of inference. It is social insofar as it is deeply connected to the origin and function of language as a de-privatizing, communal and stabilizing space of organization. But we should be very careful to extract a 'robust' conception of the social otherwise a generic appeal to social construction risks not only relativism and equivocation but also as Paul Boghossian points out a fear of knowledge. The first movement in the direction of extracting this robust conception of social is making a necessary distinction, the distinction between the 'implicitly' normative aspect of the social (the area of consumption and production of norms through practices) and the non-normative dimension of the social where conventions lie, between intervening attitudes toward norms and identification of norms as dispositions where conformism lies.

Reason begins with an intervening attitude toward norms implicit in social practices, it is neither separated from nature nor is isolated from social construction. However, reason has irreducible needs of its own (Kant), reason has a constitutive self-determination (Hegel) and reason can be assessed only by itself (Sellars). In fact the first task or question of rationalism is to come up with “a conception of nature and the social that allows for the autonomy of reason as well as the reality of moral laws”. In other words, this question revolves around a causal regime of nature that allows for the autonomous performance of reason in 'acknowledging' laws whether natural or social. Without this freedom of acknowledging there is no rationality

since rationality is not a conduct directly according to a law, it is the acknowledging of a law, it is the conception of law. We only become rational agents once we acknowledge or develop a certain intervening attitude toward norms and in doing so, we make them binding. We do not embrace the normative status of things outright, we do not have access to the explicit, namely, logically codified status of norms, we develop attitudes toward norms through social practices. It is through such intervening attitudes – revision and construction – that we are able to make explicit the status of norms. Contra Hegel, rationality is not codified by explicit norms bottomless-up. Confusing implicit norms accessible through intervening practices with explicit norms – which is a common confusion – risks logicism or intellectualism i.e. an account of normativity in which explicit norms constitute the initial condition and there are rules all the way down – a claim already debunked by Wittgenstein’s regress argument.

To this extent, the autonomy of reason is a claim about the autonomy of its function in the face of the chain of causes that condition it. Ultimately, this is a (neo-)functionalist claim in the sense of pragmatic or rationalist functionalism and Kantian abstraction. Here pragmatic functionalism must be set apart from traditional AI-functionalism that revolves around the symbolic nature of thought and also a classical functionalism that relies on decomposability of the behavior of a physical system. While the latter two risk various myths of pancomputationalism (the omnipresence of computation, the idea that universe is a computer) or behaviorialism, it is important to note that a complete rejection of the functionalist thesis in its pragmatic or Kantian rationalist sense will inevitably usher in vitalism and ineffabilism, the mystical dogma according to which there is something essentially special and non-constructible about thought.

Pragmatic functionalism is concerned with the pragmatic nature of human discursive practices, namely, the abilities to reason, to go back and forth between saying and doing stepwise so as to bring out norms implicit in practices. Here the ‘stepwise’ defines the constitution of saying and doing or discursive reasoning as a near-decomposability condition. For this reason, pragmatic functionalism focuses on the algorithmic decomposability of such discursive practices into non-discursive practices. Unlike symbolic or classic AI, it does not decompose implicit practices to explicit, namely, logically codifiable norms. Instead it decomposes explicit norms into implicit practices, knowing-that into knowing-how (which is the domain of abilities endowed with bootstrapping capacities – what must be done in order to count as saying something?) According to pragmatic or rationalist functionalism, the autonomy of reason implies the automation of reason since the autonomy of discursive practices that is the marker of sapience suggests the automation of such discursive practices by virtue of their algorithmic decomposability into non-discursive practices. The automation of discursive practices or movements between saying and doing is the veritable expression of reason’s functional autonomy and the telos of the disenchantment project. If thought is able to carry out the disenchanting of nature, it is only the automation of discursive practices that is able to disenchant thought. The capacity to autonomously deploy a vocabulary (which sets

in motion discursive practices) as that which characterizes sapience entails the autonomy of deployment and autonomy of discursive practices as bootstrapping or practical elaboration of primitive abilities to complex ones. In other words, once the game of reason is set in motion, reason is able to bootstrap complex and autonomous abilities from its primitive abilities. This is but the self-actualization of reason in which reason liberates its own spaces and its own demands, and in the process fundamentally revises what we understand as thinking. Automation of discursive practices – understood as the pragmatic unbinding of artificial general intelligence and in a sense triggering new modes of collectivizing practices via the link to autonomous discursive practices – exemplifies the revisionary and constructive edge of reason as sharpened against the canonical portrait of man.

To be free one must be a slave to reason, but to be a slave of reason (the very condition of freedom) exposes one to both the revisionary power and the constructive compulsion of reason. This susceptibility is terminally amplified once the commitment to the autonomy of reason and autonomous engagement with discursive practices which characterize the sapience are sufficiently elaborated. That is to say, when the autonomy of reason is understood as the automation of reason and discursive practices (the philosophical rather than classically computational thesis regarding artificial general intelligence). The automation of reason, in turn, suggests a new phase in the enablement of the intervening attitude of reason, namely, its revisionary edge and its constructive vector. This new phase in the enablement of reason signals the exacerbation of the difference between rational compulsion and natural impulsion, between 'ought to' as an intervening obligation and 'is' as conformity to what is supposedly the case (contingency of nature, necessity of foundation, dispositions, conventions, and allegedly necessary limits). The dynamic sharpening of the difference between 'is' and 'ought' heralds the advent of what should be called an augmented rationality. It is augmented not in the sense of being more rational (just like augmented reality that is not more real than reality), but in the sense of further radicalization of the distinction between what has been done (or is supposedly the case) and what ought to be done. It is only the sharpening of this normative distinction that is able to augment the demands of reason and correspondingly, accelerating the rational agency to new frontiers of action and understanding. The 'is' in the Marxist call for action, 'what IS to be done' is precisely a marker of its generic impoverishment insofar as 'is' here presents the proper structure of the myth of the given that cannot be jettisoned by itself (it needs the revisionary and constructive compulsion of ought). It is the mixture of overambition, generality of the subject of change and unspecificity of method that guarantees failure. Moreover, 'what is to be done' is a regress toward the correlationist collapse between 'is' and 'ought' where the conflation between being (is) and thinking (ought) is embraced as a condition that not only should not be disturbed but also is the natural state of affairs (Adorno's relapse to nature as a repository of meaning). But this modal genericity that subtly influences the management of commitments reflects the structure of heteronomy as the characteristic of the myth of the

given. It is only the autonomy of reason (a binding and compulsive ought that reflects this autonomy) that is capable of removing the structure of heteronomy.

On the other hand, augmented rationality is the radical exacerbation of ought versus is, and thereby, the annulment of the legend of restoration and termination of any hope for reconciliation between being and thinking. Augmented rationality inhabits what Howard Barker calls the “area of maximum risk” not to humanity but to commitments which have not yet been updated because they conform to a portrait of man that has not been revised. Understood as the labor of the inhuman, augmented rationality stages a generalized catastrophe against unupdated commitments to human through amplification of revisionary and constructive dimensions harbored by ‘ought’. If reason has a functional evolution of its own, cognitive contumacy against adaptation to the space of reason (the evolution of ought rather than the natural evolution of is) ends with cataclysm. Adaptation to evolution of reason – which is actualization of reason according to its own functional needs – is a matter of updating commitments to the autonomy of reason by way of updating commitments to human. The updating of commitments is impossible without translating the revisionary and constructive dimensions of reason into systematic projects for revision and construction of human through communal assessment and methodological collectivism. Indeed the automation of reason and discursive practices unlock new vistas for exercising revision and construction, that is to say, engaging a systematic project of practical freedom.

This is freedom as the systematicity of knowledge and knowledge of the system in order to be able to act on it. In order to act on the system, it is necessary to know the system. But insofar as the system is nothing but a global integration of local tendencies and it has neither an intrinsic architecture, nor an ultimate foundation, nor an extrinsic limit, to know the system, it is imperative to treat the system as a constructible hypothesis. In other words, system ought to be understood by way of construction and methodic or inferential manipulation of its variables, abductive synthesis and deductive analysis. The knowledge of the system is not a general epistemology, but as William Wimsatt emphasizes is an “engineering epistemology”. A field of understanding through designated manipulation of causal fabric and organization of functional hierarchies, engineering epistemology is an upgradable armamentarium of heuristics which is particularly attentive to distinct roles and requirements of different levels and hierarchies. It employs lower level entities and mechanisms to guide and enhance the construction on upper levels and utilizes upper level variables and robust processes to simultaneously correct lower level models and renormalize their space of possibilities so as to actualize their constructive possibilities, yield observables and manipulation conditionals necessary for construction. The revisionary impact of the microscale opened up by science on the descriptive dimension of the macroscale level and the adjusting and mobilizing effects of the constructive initiatives specific to the descriptive richness of the macroscale level form the revisionary-constructive loop of engineering. The engineering loop is a perspectival schema and a map of synthesis. It passes through the manifest and scientific images

(stereoscopic coherence), assumes a view from above and a view from bottom (telescopic deepening) and integrates various mesoscales which have their own specific and unfusable explanatory, descriptive, structural and functional orders (non-trivial synthesis). The revisionary-constructive loop always institutes engineering as re-engineering, a process of re-modification, re-evaluation, re-constitution and re-orientation. It is the cumulative effect of engineering (Wimsatt) that corresponds with the functional and structural accumulation of complex systems and functions as that corrosive substance that eats away myths of foundation and enables a cumulative escape from contingently posited settings.

The error-tolerant and manipulable dimensions of hypothesis and engineering epistemology are precisely the expressions of revision and construction as the two pivotal functions of freedom. Any commitment that prevents revision and does not maintain and also more importantly expand and enhance the scope of construction ought to be updated. If it cannot be updated, then it ought to be discarded. Freedom only grows on functional accumulation and refinement which are characteristics of hierarchical, nested and therefore decentralized and complex systems. A functional organization is constituted of functional hierarchies and correct inferential links between them that permit non-trivial orientation, maintenance, calibration and enhancement, thereby bringing about opportunities for procedurally turning supposed necessities and fundamentals associated with natural causes to manipulable variables of construction. In a sense the functional organization can be interpreted as a complex system of practices for the engineer through which the given order of 'is' can be converted – through a hierarchy of explanations, functions and descriptions – into the intervening and enabling order of 'ought' where contingently posited natural limits are substituted by necessary but revisable normative constraints. It is crucial to note that construction proceeds under normative constraints (not natural constraints) and natural determinations (hence, realism) which while are being important, they cannot be taken as foundational limits. This is why it is the figure of the engineer as the agent of revision and construction who is public enemy number one of the foundation not the advocate of transgression or the militant communitarian who is bent on subtracting itself from the system or flattening the system to a state of horizontality. But more importantly, this is also why freedom is not an overnight delivery whether in the name of the spontaneity or the will of people or exporting democracy. Liberation is a project not an idea or merchandise, its effect is not that of the irruption of novelty but that of the continuity of a labor.

Rather than liberation, the condition of freedom is gradual structural and functional accumulation and refinement. Structural and functional accumulation and refinement constitute the proper environment for updating commitments, both through the correcting influence of causal fabrics over one another and the constructive propensity inherent to functional hierarchies as engines of enablement. Liberation is neither the initial spark of freedom nor its sufficient content. To regard liberation as the trigger of freedom is an eventalist credulity that has been discredited over and over insofar as it does not warrant the

maintaining and expanding of freedom. But to identify liberation as the sufficient content of freedom transpires a far graver outcome and that is irrationalism and as a result precipitation of various forms of tyranny and fascism, because the sufficient content of freedom can be found in nothing but in reason and the difference of rational norm from the natural law, the emancipation intrinsic in the explicit acknowledgement of the binding status of complying with reason from the slavery associated with the deprivation of such capacity to acknowledge which is the condition of natural impulsion. In a strict sense, freedom is not liberation from slavery, it is unlearning slavery. The compulsion to update commitments as well as constructing cognitive and practical technologies for exercising such feats of commitment-updating are two necessary dimensions of this unlearning procedure.

Adaptation to an autonomous conception of reason – that is to say, updating commitments according to the progressive self-actualization of reason – is a struggle that coincides with the revisionary and constructive project of freedom. The first expression of such freedom is the establishment of an orientation – a hegemonic pointer – that highlights the synthetic and constructible passage from human to the universal. But to tread in this path, we ought to cross the cognitive rubicon. Indeed, the intervening attitude that the adaptation to a functionally autonomous reason demands already suggests that the cognitive rubicon has been crossed. Now in order to navigate in this synthetic path, there is no point to keep staring back in the direction of what was once behind but now dissipated as all illusory images by the revisionary wind of reason.
