Fluency Machines:
Semiocapitalism, Disability, and Action

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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University of Alberta

Abstract

Neoliberal capitalism has internalized communication within its basic operations and thus enabled the rise of the so-called "information society" and "semiocapitalism." In this dissertation I argue that the demand for maximal connection and information flow takes an embodied toll on its subjects. Bringing critical disability studies into conversation with contemporary critical theory, I critique technologies of "fluency" that seek to make information flow unchecked across the social and material bodies. Humans are increasingly expected to communicate on the terms of machines and thus become "fluency machines" that signify clearly, efficiently, and without interpretation or dispute. By exposing in the domains of political theory and political economy the underlying conception of a "sovereign speaker" fully in command of their speech, this dissertation both critiques practices of communication invested with capital and seeks to imagine "dysfluency" as a transformative practice of the self that can break with neoliberal modes of subjectivization.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Joshua St. Pierre. Small pieces of Chapter one were published as Joshua St. Pierre, "Becoming Dysfluent: Fluency as Biopolitics and Hegemony," *Journal of Cultural and Literary Disability Studies* 11.3 (2017): 339-556. Some of the research for chapter two is derived from Joshua St. Pierre and Charis St. Pierre "Governing the Voice: A Critical History of Speech-Language Pathology," *Foucault Studies* 24 (2018): 151-184.

Acknowledgements

This project has been a labour of love and support from many people; it is, in many ways, multivoiced—such that a single author should never do. I am indebted to Dr. Cressida Heyes for her mentorship and guidance throughout this project and career. Thank you for always finding the ladders to kick away in my writing and thinking. Thank you for your *parrhesia.* I am grateful to my committee members Dr. Catherine Kellogg and Dr. Marie Eve-Morin, for the insight they have generously provided on various drafts of scattered chapters, and to Dr. Rob Aitken and Dr. Robert McRuer whose enthusiasm for the project sparked a supportive and challenging discussion.

I am grateful beyond words for my found family: the disability studies and activism community. This project is the result of many long and generous conversations with friends and colleagues. I have presented various drafts of this project to the Canadian Disability Studies Association (CDSA), the Society for Disability Studieds (SDS), and Canadian Society for Women in Philosophy (CSWIP), and my work has been deeply shaped within these communities of practice. I would like to thank Dr. Jay Dolmage for his mentorship and for modelling disability scholarship. Thank you Dr. Danielle Peers, Dr. Ada Jaarsma, Dr. Kelly Fritsch, Dr. Anne McGuire, and Jessie Beier for their insightful feedback on many (sometimes proto) sections of this project. I am also grateful for the cherished memories of writing with dear friends in coffee shops and writing groups: Dr. Kristin Rodier, Dr. Jana Smith-Elford, Esther Rosario, and Felicity Bohnet. Thank to so many friends who have listened to me complain and to my half-baked ideas, especially Matt Johnson, Amber and Phil Bergsma, Dr. Cato Taylor, Dr. Daniel Martin, and Brady Van Leenan.

This project would not exist without my stutterers-in-crime. I love you both. Thank you Zahari Richter for your fierce existence that grows wild and gives life to others. You have taught me more than you can know. I am equally grateful to Erin Schick for your wisdom and the power of your voice—your "honest speech." Did I Stutter has been incredibly formative and my voice is forever shot-through with both of yours.

I am grateful for Scholar, my furry writing companion whose cuddles and presence kept me going. Our two kids, Calvin and Thomas—hearing you laugh and watching you grow is a wellspring. My heart breaks for this world you inherit.

Finally, Charis. Somehow we both survived, and my debt to you is unpayable. Thank you for your labour too-often made invisible. This project is also yours—the many conversations, scrawled outlines on napkins, and edits. Thank you for our lives lived together with fear and trembling.

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Introduction

The Soviets used to say that the United States had free speech
but no one could hear you over the noise of machines.
Today no one can hear you over the noise of talk.

-Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons*

Perhaps because of my stuttering speech, I have always been underwhelmed by communication. The dream that more information and less noise will produce a better world (a common dream even in progressive circles) is hard to take seriously for those who struggle to not-be-noise on a daily basis. But the cultural wisdom, the axiom, if you want, goes that more information and better communication will help us avoid errors and cultivate responsible action. Given enough talk, given enough data, we might understand the Other and resolve conflict—from the intrapersonal, to the intersubjective, to the international scale. Why this existential trust in "communication" to solve our social and political woes? Just how cheap is talk?

I take as a working assumption in this dissertation that contemporary capitalism has co-opted and metastasized communication. Put otherwise, it has made the cultivation of both the human capacity and *desire* to communicate internal to its machineries of accumulation. Information is resource, capital, and commodity within what Franco Berardi and Maurizio Lazzarato call "semiocapitalism." We are incited to communicate whenever and wherever possible (be heard! express yourself! be transparent! be authentic!) because the machines of semiocapitalism are structured by the constant circulation of information and require unfettered flow to be efficient and generate profit. Thus, to take a simple example, while content users across the political spectrum may share and debate the same news article on social media with

either outrage or admiration, content *producers* operate within a fundamentally different economy: not of truth but clicks. As comedian Michelle Wolf remarks, "a share is a share is a share is a share" (2018).

I am interested in the embodied and existential toll of this demand for relentless circulation and connection. This dissertation asks how the neoliberal and informational society which is premised on the ideal of maximal information flow reformats a) how we *think* about communication and speech; b) the human *capacities* to communicate, which stretch and morph to fulfill the demands of inhuman machines; and c) subjectivity or the self-relation. More specifically, neoliberalism reduces subjectivity of all kinds to the depolitical model of *homo economicus*—an entity that responds only to the market and is comprised of various forms of capital (speech capital, intelligence capital, human capital, social capital . . .) which together exist to increase the valuation of their holder.

These types of shifts prompt a series of new questions: What assumptions about communication, about both language performance and neurotypical faculties of attention, underwrite semiocapitalism? What are the political and economic functions of speech? What are the conditions (both discursive and material) that enable and constrain it? Who is abled and disabled within this system? Why? What is the use and signification of such categories when most humans now communicate prosthetically through global information machines? How do we understand the politics of communication disability, especially when neoliberalism has declared clear and transparent communication an apolitical ideal? And finally, what is political action—traditionally associated with the act of (fluent) speech—in this context? Is it mere *participation* in flows of information and affect, being recognized and included within the *polis*? Or might it be the more radical act, as Jacques Rancière, Lazzarato, and Michel Foucault suggest

in their own ways, of transforming the very common itself? That capitalism has internalized communication within its operations requires from disability studies an expanded framework that can account for the asymmetrical integration of semiotic bodies and powers into the cycles of production and consumption. Put simply, we need a framework that does not let communication disability fall through the cracks.

This dissertation accordingly makes the contribution of bringing together critical disability studies, contemporary political theory, and feminist theory, each speaking to and critiquing the other. My methodology is generally Foucauldian—though in his spirit, sometimes irreverently so.[1] In one of his final lectures, Foucault outlines the four major types of "technologies" humans employ:

> (1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (1988, 18).

I seek to trace the conditions of speaking across each of these four technologies. While traditional Marxism focuses on the intersection of (1) and (3), it relegates the other technologies to the superstructure. An analysis of contemporary capitalism, however, requires that we attend equally to the technologies of sign systems which have been made internal to capitalist accumulation, as well as the technologies of the self, which neoliberalism has co-opted in the form of therapeutic interventions. Likewise, we cannot understand the constellation of forces that

[1] On Nietzsche, Foucault writes: "I am tired of people studying him only to produce the same kind of commentaries that are written on Hegel or Mallarmé. For myself, I prefer to utilise the writers I like. The only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's is precisely *to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest*. And if commentators then say that I am being faithful or unfaithful to Nietzsche, that is of absolutely no interest" (1972, 53-4; emphasis mine).

enable and constrain speech without an understanding of how fluency is produced and implicated in these four overlapping technologies. My argument is that an assumed "sovereign speaker" who is fully in control of their speech—a model co-implicated with *homo economicus*—underwrites much of our thinking about these issues, even in critical theory. Let me explain the political stakes of this project via the "cheapness" of speech.

Talk is Cheap

Deleuze famously suggested, "Maybe speech and communication have been corrupted. They're thoroughly permeated by money—and not by accident but by their very nature" (1990, 175). While semiocapitalism has *invested* speech with capital, it has at the same time made speech cheap. I don't know who coined the phrase "talk is cheap." Google Ngram traces its usage to the nineteenth century, and while we could spend time first locating and then resuscitating the author of the phrase, this seems to miss its spirit. The phrase commonly means something like, "actions are louder than words" and we use it to call out politicians and advertisers who make vast but empty promises. "Talk is cheap" references the duty to back up one's words with deeds. The phrase hides an imperative; it offers a critique of semiocapitalism that overflows with information. And although the phrase has been rendered cliché, it nevertheless stages an enduring debate within political theory concerning the relation between speech and action. It is this relation I seek to question from the standpoint of communication disability. We might ask: Is talk cheap for marginalized people? What of "disabled" voices? What of those voices that only approximate normalized speech with great physical, psychological, and affective effort? What of those who literally incur debt for speech therapy and assistive devices? What does action look like from such margins?

I want to suggest that these questions of communication ability and disability emerge against the backdrop of the "cheapness" of political discourse: more specifically, the liberal discourse of free speech. The right to "free speech," a "free press," and, taken together, "free expression" are central to classical liberalism. The value of these rights is often conveyed through the metaphor of a "marketplace of ideas." This vision assumes that, like a market unfettered by regulation, freely disseminated ideas that have been evaluated, tested, and selected by rational agents will produce not only an informed citizenry but the best *and most truthful* ideas. Not only must ideas compete like any other commodity, but the right to free expression moreover upholds the classical liberal emphasis on individual autonomy and sovereignty. Free speech protects the contemplative and public life of the individual from state control. Yet the liberal commitment to free expression runs into problems. This model slides into the assumption that all citizens speak in an equal voice and from an equal position. It assumes a neutral stage of political discourse, a shared horizon within which all claims can be given proper judgment. And finally, the rhetoric of free expression which plays out in the marketplace of ideas severs the enunciation from its source. The existential self-positioning of the enunciating subject is wiped away under an axiom of equality that treats each source of speech as equal (and thus inconsequential) and that forces ideas to compete "on their own merit" within a sea teeming with information. As many critical (post-colonial, queer, crip, feminist) theorists have argued, in practice free expression amounts to the privileging of dominant voices (e.g. Cavarero 2015; Lugones 1994; Puar 2013;). In practice, the marketplace of ideas favours the *appearance* of agreement or consensus; in its desire for efficiency it removes dissent and complexity from our voices.[2]

[2] It is for this reason that Jill Gordon (1997) weighs against the common attribution of this metaphor to John Stuart Mill. She writes: "Mill remains emphatically on the side of opinions expressed by any minority. He desires more

To imagine the possibilities of a dysfluent politic, we will have to address the co-optation of speech by capitalism. Jason Moore insists in *Capitalism in the Web of Life* (2015) that we not read capitalism through a narrow economic lens of wage-labour but understand it as a planetary-historical system that must continually appropriate *extra*-economic zones of life.[3] It is this appropriation (what David Harvey calls "accumulation by dispossession" [2007, 159]) that makes the wage-labour relation conceptually and materially possible. "Capital," Moore explains, "must not only ceaselessly accumulate and revolutionize commodity production; it must ceaselessly search for, and find ways to produce, Cheap Natures: a rising stream of low-cost food, labor-power, energy, and raw materials" (53). Put otherwise: nature must be *made* cheap for the law of capitalist value to hold. The production of those Cheap Natures like Food, Oil, and Housework is the engine of industrial capitalism. But following the shift from industrial to post-industrial capitalism, I believe it important to consider also the production of "Cheap Information." Capitalism is in the search for and production of a stream of low-cost information. What are the conditions and historical forces that render speech, and communication more generally, cheap?

We should note that Cheap Info would straddle several of Moore's categories. It is, yes, an extension of labour-power, but also a raw material for semiocapitalism and a peculiar type of fixed capital. Ursula Huws (a theorist of labour) argues that the nineteenth-century desire for a literate and articulate population was in part a bourgeois strategy to deflate the bargaining power of the surging workforce of clerks needed in the global trade industry. Maintaining what Marx calls a "reserve army" of semio-workers dissipates the collective power of labour, and this

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than mere expression and toleration of minority opinions, as he says explicitly. His promotion of free expression does not compel Mill to recommend as a paradigm anything like a marketplace. He says that we must 'encourage' and 'countenance' the minority opinions" (239).

[3] It is worth noting that Guattari frequently refers to contemporary capitalism as IWC: Integrated World Capitalism.

process of flooding the market with a plentiful supply of Cheap Info-workers is even more apparent today where the demand for not only general semiotic but computer literacy has spilled into the Global South—the "periphery" of globalized capitalism. The upshot, from the perspective of labour, is a global race to the bottom. If workers "are aware that it would be perfectly feasible, technologically speaking, to move their jobs offshore, then this creates a potent disincentive to ask for improvements in wages and conditions or to refuse to take on extra tasks" (2014, 44). In one regard, the production of Cheap Info thus involves reducing living labour to a stable (low-cost) set of communicative capacities. Capitalism steals the communicative powers of the body in the production of subjects that signify clearly, efficiently, and without dispute or interpretation.

Yet the concept of "information" and thus of Cheap Info extends beyond the domain of labour. It refers more fully to the *encoded flow of a message* between any sender and receiver—human or not. In its modern use, information is a technical metric of organization within/of an operational system. The advances in Information and Communications Technology (ICTs) that link the globe together in a pulsating network are responsible for labour automation and Business Process Outsourcing (BPOs) such as overseas call centers. In the form of code and protocols, information networks also form the *architecture* of our hyper-connected world. Information is a raw material for semiocapitalist machines, a throughput for financial technologies and Big Data to process and exploit.

"Semiocapitalism" designates the integration of semiotic flows into the mechanisms of capitalist accumulation. Signs here belong not to a superstructure in the form of ideological propositions but are rather *operational*; they bypass representation to plunge into the material field of production. What sets the concept of semiocapitalism apart both from post-Fordism and

its kin "cognitive capitalism" is that it prioritizes neither production (in its traditional sense), language, nor the human subject. Contemporary capitalism is machinic—populated and run not by individuals and propositional statements but by collective assemblages of bodies and (part)signs. To say that sign flows act as component parts of capitalist valorization does not mean, as theorists of cognitive capitalism claim, that the productive forces now revolve around language and dialogical interaction. Language is certainly privileged in certain domains and for certain functions, yet is only one semiotic regime mobilized by capital. Semiocapitalism rather draws together and exploits the heterogeneous sign flows of machines, of gesture and the body, of scientific diagrams and formulae, of language, and of course, of money.[4] These semio-processes rely everywhere on securing the production of Cheap Info at an increasingly intimate level.

The neoliberal apologist will of course insist that we need Cheap Info to guarantee equality in the social, political, and economic market. More specifically, procuring a steady flow of Cheap Info is a prerequisite for attaining a state of "perfect information." Market signals (prices) express such vast flows of information that the State, let alone the individual, cannot hope to process and act accordingly. Neoliberalism renders the market and its signals *the* source and model of truth to which corporations, governments, and citizens alike must bend. Such a macroeconomic upheaval would have been impossible without a corresponding revolution of

[4] It is such that theorists like Lazzarato and Harvey argue that the so-called "knowledge economy" which turns on the production/consumption of high-tech information is really a byproduct of neoliberalism and its hegemony of financial over industrial capital. Industrial capital accumulates via the formula M-C-M, where money is transformed into commodities and in turn changed back into money that will be used for future investment. Financial capital bypasses the M-C-M circuit to draw a return from abstract flows of money in the form of M-M'. Whereas industrial capital relies on labour to produce commodities and is thus embroiled in the antagonism of the capital-labour relation, financial capital is indifferent to the specific form of production and labour: "all that is relevant to them is drawing from these various forms of production and labor a surplus expressed in abstract quantities of money" (Lazzarato 2015, 141). Industrial capital has been (re)governed by financial capital since the early 70s, a hegemonic relation made possible on a global scale by expansive information technologies that process the global flows of capital, commodities, labour, and knowledge into a sufficiently mobile and deterritorialized form that financial technologies can exploit.

subjectivity. The subject produced by and for neoliberalism—*homo economicus*—is a being emptied of political and civic capacities that only recognizes and responds to the logic of the market. Neoliberalism enshrines the market (and its signals) as the singular source of truth and thereby consolidates its power over the subject by transforming every human action within every domain into economic terms. "Power," Foucault writes, "gets a hold on [the neoliberal subject] to the extent, and only to the extent, that he is a *homo œconomicus*" (2008, 252). Every subject and action must be evaluable in the financial terms of investment, risk, and return. Thus is *homo economicus* impelled to relate to itself as "human capital" and responsibly invest in its capacities to thereby increase its value in a global field of fierce competition and precarity.

Neoliberalism was sold as a promise of freedom and equality; the market will be the "rising tide that lifts all boats" from poverty and human misery, but only if we feed it *sufficient information* to manage the future and thus only when information, just like capital, is allowed to flow unfettered by regulation and political boundaries. "Perfect information" describes an assumed economic state where each actor (consumer and producer alike) possess complete knowledge of past and present events. The desire for Cheap Info is intrinsically connected to the lure of "perfect information" through which the market becomes capable of speaking the truth. Neoliberalism establishes a tight relay between information, truth, and power—one that restricts both the *kinds* of truths we can tell and *how* they must be told.

I argue in this dissertation that we cheapen speech by filtering it through the logic of capital. We reduce communicative capacities to a mode of "human capital" that functions merely to increase the valuation of its holder—*homo economicus*. Fluency is thus a type of market veridiction or truth-telling. This movement to make speech a form of capital presupposes a generalized field of information exchange. What Philippe Breton terms the "radical ontology of

the message" is the belief that "nothing exists except in the form of a message, information, a potential transparence" (2011, 42). The radical ontology of the message recasts and problematizes Being—from genetics, to politics, to astrophysics—in distinctly informational terms in response to the demand for technocratic solutions.

In our context, it is important to appreciate that the hollowing out of communication occurs alongside *and as part of* its recoding as a pre-eminent social good. We *must* circulate information to stay informed and connected, we *must* speak with others to be productive, we *must* communicate to be understood, well-adjusted, and happy. "Communication" stands in for liberal-democratic ideals of understanding, tolerance, inclusion, and deliberation. It facilitates "free" expression; it negotiates and resolves alterity; it sustains social cohesion. "Technical networks," writes historian of information Ronald Day, "are not in themselves socially communicative, but as social tropes they have the power to construct—not only technically but also socially—a future based on a vision of social connectivity and communication" (2001, 74). Who would stand *against* this vision on the side of misunderstanding, breakdown, and disconnection?

In this way, the force of communication gathers to an imperative without escape—"communicate!" The flux of low-cost information overwhelms and numbs while it declares us free. Communication is a consensus machine, a form of ceaseless control through connection in the open matrix of late-liberalism. Jodi Dean (2009) describes our contemporary political state as "communicative capitalism" where the participation within information flows overcodes all political activity, and the circulation of information offers the *appearance* of political action. Even though such communicative fields are constituted by the exchange of messages, it is their circulation rather than representational content and subjective uptake that stand centre stage. As

Dean states: “the exchange value of messages overtakes their use value” (26). Communicative capitalism represents a turn from Habermasian action geared to (mutual) understanding of a message towards the contribution to its flow. “A contribution need not be understood; it need only be repeated, reproduced, forwarded. Circulation is the context, the condition for the acceptance or rejection of a contribution” (59). This generalized shift away from content (sign) towards circulation (signal) is today a central condition of both speech and action that we must reckon with.

Critiquing Fluency

This dissertation is accordingly a critique of semiocapitalism and a critique of fluency, of those technologies that seek to make information flow unchecked through and across material bodies. Yet we here encounter a more basic question: what is critique? The practice of critique within the Frankfurt School and the tradition of “critical theory” refers to unmasking dominant ideologies. Theodor Adorno writes that criticism exposes “constellations of power” (1984, 30). It reveals ideology *as* ideology in order to denaturalize social and political hierarchies. Yet the act of denaturalizing a regime of truth does not, in itself, help us decide what our world *ought* to be. It is this lack of normative ground that prompts Jürgen Habermas to move during his career from critical theory to “communicative action”—a project to establish universal norms through a dialogical process of reaching mutual understanding (1984). I am, with Foucault, skeptical of the Habermasian project that aims to overcome difference within the intersubjective field of language and will return to this issue in the first chapter. What is important here is Foucault’s quite different response to the question of critique and normative judgement.

Judith Butler (2002) explains that the primary task of Foucauldian critique is not to evaluate the social and political world against a framework of normative reason, but rather to bring to light and interrogate the framework of evaluation itself. This strikes more deeply at systems of power since "To be governed is not only to have a form imposed upon one's existence, but to be given the terms within which existence will and will not be possible" (220). Critique, put otherwise, unearths the historically specific relations between truth, knowledge, and power that order how we think and what is even *possible* to think. Since, for Foucault, liberal governmentality necessarily routes the operations of power through the subject, critique must involve a type of self-transformation that resists the effects of power in an immanent register. He writes: "Critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth" (2003c, 266). Foucault finds his bearings for this project in Kant's essay: "What is Enlightenment?" Reading Kant, Foucault here seeks to maintain the *critical ethos* of the Enlightenment even while rejecting its conception of a rational and heteronomous self. Foucault asserts that the Enlightenment ethos of continually questioning conditions of possibility should be turned upon objects of analysis like the transcendental self. This practice is what Foucault calls the *critical ontology of ourselves*, which he maintains:

> must be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it must be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them (2003d, 56).

Keeping in the spirit of Kant, the dual task of critique for Foucault will involve the exploration of the historical conditions of possibility of such things like "subjectivity," "sex," or "disability" in addition to the ethical work of transforming the self to enact "the possibility of going beyond"

what is given. This capacity for autonomous self-reflection and self-transformation has been thoroughly co-opted by contemporary capitalism, which markets and produces "authentic selves" on assembly lines. The crisis of free expression (the crisis of fluency) perhaps demands that we relax our grip on identity and perfect meaning; it perhaps requires a radical undoing of the self. If modern power circulates through technologies of identification and recognition, with Foucault, "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are" (2003b, 134). It is for these reasons that in my conclusion I turn with Foucault to the Cynic practice of *parrhesia* or "courageous speech" to reimagine dysfluency as critique: as a risky and desubjectifying practice that helps relocate speaking from the (pure) head to the (shitty) anus.

Butler writes that critique emerges at the limits and from the cracks of knowledge. "The categories by which social life are ordered," she writes, "produce a certain incoherence or entire realms of *unspeakability*. And it is from this condition, the tear in the fabric of our epistemological web, that the practice of critique emerges" (215, emphasis mine). Fluency is the incarnation of perfect meaning, an able-bodied demand for articulate and smooth speech that ironically renders many lives unspeakable. Yet it is from these cracks of fluency that critique emerges.

The medical-industrial complex has thoroughly colonized the discursive terrain of disability such that communication disabilities represent without remainder a negative and diminished form of being. We could here consider a vast range of "voices": from the non-linguistic voices of those severely cognitively disabled or autistic, to the dysfluent speech of stutterers and those with cleft palate, the vocal tics induced by Tourette's, or the opaque speech present in some forms of cerebral palsy. Common to disabled speech, however, is an assumed unintelligibility to varying degrees. Disabled speech with its dyslexic syntax and its temporal

breaks, juts, and repetitions is disorienting and confusing within spheres of communication presumed to be frictionless. (I am less interested in classification and identification than I am in the connections between these embodiments. Thus while I draw regularly upon the example of stuttering throughout this dissertation, I hope to think expansively and open up new alliances.) Under hegemonic capture, complex phenomena like "stuttering" are reduced to biological (neurologic and psychic) breakdowns, an object of medical-scientific rather than political knowledge. I maintain the opposite: that dysfluency is a form of biological diversity which is only rendered a problem by the biopolitical imperative to be fluent.

In this regard, my intention is to flip the discourse and critique the naturalness and self-evident character of *fluency*. Unlike the stutterer whose face convulses in an attempt to wrestle phonemes into the common world, we assume the fluent (that is normal, unmarked) speaker to exercise sovereign control over their body. This assumption, I suggest, reflects what Hasana Sharp (2011) refers to as the "artisanal" or "craftsman" model of speech wherein the body's actions are the mere externalization of either "preformed reason or transparent intention" (44). Speech is the direct manifestation of individual agency. Sharp's project and mine intersect. In *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization*, she argues for a non-humanist politic carefully attuned to the multiple forces that enable and constrain action. It comes as no surprise (at least for someone who speaks dysfluently) that Sharp begins her project of re-naturalization with the tongue—the dragon guarding the humanist door:

> The craftsman model governs our views of speaking as much as our notions of making (transforming matter in accordance with the demands of spirit). We believe that we deliberate internally and proceed to externalize our mental process in the form of speech. Speech is treated as an expression, a publication of our interiority. On this artisanal model, ideas precede and govern actions, thoughts precede utterances, and minds command tongues (43).

The artisanal model hides the *becoming* of speech such that it simply appears in the world; this model thereby occludes those material, contingent, and local powers of any communicative milieu that both enable and constrain action. This is a thoroughly sterile ecology of communication: minds making speech to transfer information to other minds.

We play dress-up and pretend communication is a normal body: an abled body that needs no help, thank you very much; a male and virile body that commands attention; a straight body never veering from its course; a respectable white body that can be trusted to deliver messages. When we're feeling our best, communication sheds the body altogether to become a direct link between minds, a psychic postal man. John Durham Peters (1999) describes the widespread buzz about communication in the nineteenth-century as the desire for unmediated contact between and communion of souls. "Telepathy" is a dream invented circa 1880 by white bourgeois men afraid of the sin of voices playing together in the dirt.

In short, the craftsman model interprets speech not as a relational-collective *action* but a technical—and ultimately technocratic—*making* utterly divorced from its material context. This conception of speech intersects neatly with the operations of semiocapitalism. Moreover this distinction, as I will explain in the first chapter, maps closely with Arendt's distinction between *praxis* and *poiēsis.* Arendt is deeply troubled by the reduction of political life to bureaucracy, to the products of human planning and making. For Arendt, politics by necessity must enter the uncertain and contingent waters of human interaction. Reading Arendt in the spirit of Arendt, I will suggest that the craftsman model similarly renders speech and communication a simple *poiēsis*—an instrumental function to convey preformed meanings efficiently.

Fluency is the product of technocratic making of speech. The smooth or frictionless transmission of signs can, assuredly, be individually enabling and politically mobilizing. Clear

and intelligible communication can, in many situations, help forge community and common meanings. Yet at the same time, I argue that smooth flows of communication can also close the possibility for political action through the production of seemingly uninterrupted spaces, temporalities, and meanings which close over alternative ways of being and relating. As a mode of "compulsory able-bodiedness" (McRuer 2006), I take fluency to be a regulative ideal that governs *how* and *if* speech may enter the common world. The ostensibly seamless flow of signs is a fictive ideal impossible to embody but nevertheless compulsory in its performative demands: offering the appearance of a choice where there is actually none. While semiocapitalism attempts to run semiotic bodies down tractable futures, this effort strains against the dysfluency inherent to the capacity of speech. Since fluency works to close political and social spaces—"covering its tracks," as it were—a *critical* disability studies analysis is needed to expose the discontinuities, frictions, and asymmetries in semiocapitalism; to expose these ruptures and counter its smooth operations.

The vast array of rhythms, semiotic modes, tempos, dictions, and (racialized or disabled) accents that constitute practices of aural "communication" have become the objective domain of the academic field, professional practice, and locus of treatment protocols called Speech-Language Pathology (SLP). This biomedical industry has assumed authority over the truth and technical making of speech. Barry Guitar, in his well-used textbook on speech impediments, offers an exemplary definition of fluency: "simply . . . the effortless flow of speech" (13). This is offered in the midst of caveats and backtracking. Guitar readily admits (12) that fluency is difficult to pin down and that researchers within Speech-Language Pathology often focus on what it is not—namely, dysfluency. Here are a few characteristics: fluent speech is marked by a lack of hesitation, and Speech-Language Pathology is thus forced to make (dubious and highly

arbitrary) distinctions between "normal" and "abnormal" hesitations since breaks and hesitations crop up in *all* speech. Fluent speech is marked by "rhythmical" patterning that follows a normalized cadence. Fluent speech is similarly marked by the lack of "extra sounds" interjected into culturally dominant phonetic patterns. Fluency is defined by the overall rate of speech, which includes not just the rate of vocal flow but of *information* flow (Starkweather 1987). And lastly, fluency is often defined by a lack of "effort" on the part of the speaker. This last characteristic in particular highlights the twinned meaning of fluency: speech that is both perfectly intelligible and mastered.

Transposing this definition into a critical register, the "effortless flow of speech" can be read as a coordinated—yet often strained—performance of bending the energies and capacities of bodies towards stable and univocal futures. Autistics are compelled to restrict stimming, to sit on their hands (to have "quiet hands," [Bascom 2011, 1]), and thereby reroute bodily capacities to the smooth performance of so-called intelligible communication. Dyslexic bodies that process information piecemeal or slowly are forced out of social time (Cosenza 2010, 7). As Zahari Richter has argued, the facial tics and erratic gestures of dysfluent speakers are likewise never communicative *inflections* but are made abject and cast out of the communicative realm altogether by what I am here calling technologies of fluency. Tics of loud cursing and grunting from a public speaker with Tourette's are imagined as an interruption to communication. Dysfluencies are erased from closed captions and courtroom transcripts. What is thus left is a univocal and fluid semiotic operation that instrumentalizes our relations with others. Fluency smooths over the material and discursive gaps of our encounters to close the sites where new modes of subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and kinship might be cultivated.

I maintain once again that dysfluency is not a biological failure but a form of human variation which discloses the contingent and often ableist structure of political action and agency. Attending to the embodied movement of speech reveals how the production of speech is never a given but a politico-historical achievement. Crip communication balks at the notion of communication as the act of a self-contained individual and sovereign agent. It is a collaborative act that grows and snags between bodies (human and not) and cannot be accounted for in the craftsman's terms of "intentionality."

I suggest, then, that dysfluency can cultivate gaps, splintered voices, and misunderstandings that compost into thick collective meanings. Even within radical communities, neither "clear communication" nor "understanding" can mend our problems and help us live justly together. "Dysfluency" offers a way to interrupt linguistic, discursive, institutional, and material processes that are too fluid, too pure, too convenient. Dysfluency is a method. Thinking with Sharp, an attention to the conditions of both fluency and dysfluency can open up new strategies of cultivating freedom that, as Guattari would say, "exit language." Sharp writes:

> When we see words as bodily motions caused by our mutual involvement with one another, we can discover ourselves, not as individuals, but as situated within a complex constellation of causes. We can then, together, *endeavor to transform that environment and build the conditions of genuine freedom*, which will necessarily be a freedom of degree rather than an absolute power to determine ourselves. Deliberation and communication might be interesting . . . not primarily for the content of the words uttered, but for the affects they uncover and the energetic resources they foreclose or offer to a community (53, emphasis mine).

In a similar manner, perhaps dysfluency is interesting not as a case study of breakdown but as a disclosure of the asymmetries of power and the declensions of freedom that structure our collective environments of speech.

Outline

Each chapter in this dissertation traces the conditions of speaking within a different, yet intersecting, domain: the first chapter, political theory, the second, communicative labour within post-Fordist economies, and chapters three and four, what Deleuze calls a society of control. This dissertation is structured, aspirationally, by the movement of critique described by Butler: a "move from understanding the reasons we might have for consenting to a demand, to forming those reasons for ourselves, to transforming ourselves in the course of producing those reasons (and, finally, putting at risk the field of reason itself)" (218). My argument exposes the sovereign speaking subject and those technologies that render speech intelligible and smooth. However, it moves from a negative to positive critique in order to reimagine dysfluency as a transformative practice of the self that puts the field of *logos* at risk.

Chapter 1: Political Theory

Political agency has long been associated with the capacity to speak. The metaphysical intertwining of speech and reason is highlighted in the common term *logos*, and the practice of politics in the Western tradition often revolves around the production of rational speech in the midst of others. The exclusion of those who do not speak, or do not speak "rationally," often results from this pairing. Political theorists of disability like Stacy Clifford Simplican (2015) and Barbara Arneil (2009) have examined the way that democratic norms exclude disabled—particularly intellectually disabled—subjects from participation in political life. My focus in this chapter is at once more specific and more general: how can people who cannot communicate, either at all or within standards of reasonableness, participate meaningfully within

the political sphere? How is the very *capacity* to act (in concert with others) shaped, restrained, and channelled by norms of intelligible and fluent speech? I want to take seriously the notion from Arendt to Foucault to Deleuze that speech is political before it is linguistic. Within its political context, I thus understand fluency as 1) a univocal and transparent articulation of oneself—an expression of what Arendt terms *sovereign agency* or mastery of oneself and others that 2) takes the collective form of consensus. Understanding how disabled speakers are oppressed, and understanding how to resist such oppression, requires an awareness of how ableist norms of sovereign speech are embedded within and constitutive of our political structures and praxis.

In this chapter I suggest, with Jacques Rancière and James Tully, that action is not vying for recognition on a common stage of politics but calling the very existence of the stage into question. Action *transforms* rather than simply participates within the "common sense" that gatekeeps rational from irrational voices. Thus instead of adopting the strategy to expand the register of intelligibility and therefore inclusion within a polity, I suggest it is more generative to consider disabled speech a type of communicative agonism wherein the communicative breaks and aporias generated by disabled speech are themselves contestations of what and who gets to count as political. Here we can imagine alternative political strategies such as cultivating dissensus within the self and society and even rejecting recognition. The larger question, however, looms: if communication has been thoroughly co-opted by capital, how might disabled speakers reclaim agency? This question motivates the following chapters.

Chapter 2: Communication and Labour

With Deleuze and Guattari, I maintain that contemporary capitalism is best understood as a machine comprised of two types of technologies (expressed always in a mixture): "social subjection" and "machinic enslavement." The former governs the individual (the self, the ego) while the latter (a phrase they adopt from cybernetics) refers to the management of component within a system. Machinic enslavement governs "dividuals"—pre-personal components or organs of the body and self. I accordingly track the production of fluency in both registers. In the mode of social subjection, fluent speech expresses and *identifies* the subject. This is the "proper speech" of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries cultivated to reinforce social and economic hierarchies. Under machinic enslavement, however, the goal of fluent speech is to connect rather than identify. This chapter will focus on the subjective production of fluent speech and bracket (as much as possible) machinic enslavement and its operations from analysis.

Capitalism has always been in the business of subjectivity. Human life is a principal site for capitalist exploitation yet also that which poses the greatest obstacle to it since the labouring capacities of *homo sapiens* are embedded within social relations and codes alien to the logic of infinite production. Any mode of production must therefore reproduce certain social relations while expunging others, which in turn demands specific forms of subjectification.[5] The dissolution of feudalism and the migration to urban environments, for example, established "the individual as a *worker*, stripped of all qualities except this one" (Marx 1965, 68), making him or her precariously dependent upon wage labour. Capitalism tears from the individual all social codes, which direct the production and distribution of goods towards the reproduction of particular social relations (such as the tribe or feudal bond). The "worker" is thus submitted to the distinctly capitalist logic of production for its own sake and thus represents a specific mode

[5] Lazzarato writes: "In contemporary capitalism, one governs social machines (axiomatics) and subjectivities for these machines (the realization of axiomatics)" (2015, 178).

of subjection that organizes biological and social potentialities of human life within a rigid system of mass production and wage labour. The industrial worker is a being reduced to labour-power, a homogenized and fungible subject interpellated through the Protestant work ethic. Capitalism recodes this naked subject in its image—producing a subjectivity for consumption, a subjectivity for communication (Lazzarato 2014, 178). Linguistic and political representation mobilize the subject and distribute social roles and identities. This mesh of significations produces "autonomous" and "responsible" individuals who can then be called to account for the shortfalls of neoliberal capitalism. It is subjects who are called before the courts to shoulder the blame for the breakdowns. It is as subjects possessing a conscience and a vast interiority that we make promises to repay loans and are burdened with guilt to ensure compliance. It is as subjects that we labour in alienation and are impelled to appreciate our value as human capital and relate to ourselves as "entrepreneurs of the self" (Foucault 2008).

In this chapter I examine "communicative" labour within post-industrial political economy in order to critique both the ableist underpinnings of post-Fordism and the neo-Marxist literature that criticizes it. Reading the neo-Marxist "Autonomist" tradition represented by Paulo Virno and Berardi, I argue that the "mute" labour of Fordist assembly lines has slowly been displaced by an imperative to speak, to mobilize the potentiality of language for capitalist valorization. The workplace has become increasingly talkative; a type of *virtuosity* or performative excellence of speech is often a prerequisite for getting a job (i.e. possessing "good communication skills"). Theorists like Virno suggest that post-Fordist labour mimes and even supersedes political action.

My critique in this chapter is that neo-Marxist articulations of these developments have overlooked the historically specific configurations of ability and disability that underwrite so-

called “language economies” or “cognitive capitalism,” and thereby reified an apolitical and medicalized conception of communication disability that naturalizes capitalist production. I focus in this chapter on the work of Virno, who has written extensively on the performance of language within contemporary capitalism yet makes recourse to a “simple ability to speak” (2015, 34) that, I argue, erases the production of fluent speaking subjects within late-capitalism. I argue that the neo-Marxist discourse of cognitive capitalism presupposes its own conditions by positing what Virno terms a “generic ability to speak” that is only intelligible through the neutralization and clearing away of embodied, subjective difference. At the same time, disability studies has not properly attended to the material conditions of late capitalism. This lacuna has often rendered communication disability inconspicuous within disability studies.

To back my claim that the “the simple ability to speak” is complicit with the production of human capital, it will be necessary to trace the production of production, the subjection of the speaking subject in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century using a Foucauldian genealogical method. The critical opening for a genealogy of fluent speaking subjects comes through Virno’s insistence that the “communication industry” or “culture industry” is the post-Fordist industry of the means of production. I argue that an articulate and fluent population is a historical biopolitical development and that the *dispositif* of speech correction—now termed Speech-Language Pathology—emerges during the early twentieth century in order to make the capacity of speech manageable, efficient, and thus productive. In other words, SLP is an industry of the means of production: a mixed technology of both social subjection and machinic enslavement. I conclude with the suggestion that the capacity of fluent speech (and being a *subject* of fluent speech) is today a form of human capital.

Chapter 3: Controlling Communication

Whereas the first chapter examines late-liberal technologies of legibility and recognition (attending to the political sphere), and the second interrogates the fluent subject of *post-Fordism* (that is, labour), the final two chapters seek to grasp both of these problems "from the middle"—that is, to map the connections of communication and biopower within the context of what Deleuze terms a control society (1990). Chapter three makes sense of the inner mechanisms of control societies within the context of disability, while chapter four builds on this terrain to analyze the mutations of both speech and fluency within control societies.

In chapter three I examine the control society as a "smooth" space in contrast to the "striated" space of disciplinary societies (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 500). I suggest that control is distinguished from other constellations of power (i.e. sovereign, discipline) by two characteristics. First, control necessarily operates through *networks of continual intercommunication* in an open field. Because the flow of information is so central to its functions, societies of control must exert tremendous biopolitical effort to produce a normalized communicative population—to standardize the poles of the communicative event. The general effect is a smooth field of communication. Second, societies of control are populated by technologies of what Deleuze and Guattari call "machinic enslavement." While control enlists technologies of social subjection in its service, it is often more efficient to bypass the subject altogether so as to connect bodies to things directly. This chapter will accordingly outline both an ontology of the *machine*, defined by its connections rather than essential attributes, in addition to the notion of *information*, which the machine renders a matter of contact rather than meaning.

I argue in this chapter, with both Jasbir Puar and Dan Goodley, that the advent of control within the social and political context of neoliberal financialization alters the meaning, ontology,

and governance of disability. Puar signals this shift as one from ability/disability to what she terms capacity/debility. "All bodies," she writes, "are being evaluated in relation to their success or failure in terms of health, wealth, progressive productivity, upward mobility, enhanced capacity. And there is no such thing as an 'adequately abled' body anymore" (182). Capacity and debility are not discrete *kinds* of being, like normal or abnormal, but represent variegated sites of becoming into which we must invest early and often. Control alters both the conditions of oppression and also the strategies needed in response. Rather than binary exclusion (abled/disabled; in/out) control excludes differentially—by degree—such that inclusion within a system hinges upon continual upkeep and improvement of oneself.

I suggest that we can sharpen this contrast between capacity/ability (and debility/ disability) with Deleuze and Guattari's terminology of the body-as-organism, the Body without Organs (BwO), and what, adopted from Žižek, I call the Organs without Bodies (the OwB). The organism-as-body refers to an entity organized into a functional unity, and the BwO is one emptied of these organizing forms—a pure flux of becoming. The organs without bodies (OwB) can refer, I propose, to a field of autonomous organs *machinically enslaved* to fit within semiocapitalism. Paul Precardio suggests that "We are not bodies without organs, but rather an array of heterogeneous organs unable to be gathered under the same skin" (2013, 116).

This chapter concludes by regrounding the action of the tongue, reconsidering it with new materialists Jane Bennett and Hasana Sharp as a material organ activated by proximate bodies in our environments and, I add, autonomized by the machines of control societies. The tongue is unruly and, as Sharp notes, we are largely unaware of the multiple forces that excite it to action.[6] Nevertheless, control societies take the slouching pace of the communicative body, which

[6] "Given that speech is caused by the forces operating in our environment, even if we do not reveal a discrete interiority upon speaking, we might view the scene of debate as a theater illuminating these very forces, the affects, and images moving us. Speech, beyond our sovereign control, reveals the powers that enable and constrain us" (52).

refuses to conform to machinic norms, as a frontier to overcome. These are distinctly operational challenges overcome by making the human function more like inhuman machines.

Chapter 4: Fluency Machines

In the fourth chapter I examine the transformations of speech and fluency within societies of control. I argue that communicative organs of the body (the OwB) are machined to "fit" smoothly within operational assemblages: not ruled by the sovereign will (of the human) but activated as part of communication assemblages. What I call "machinic speech" is that emptied of its humanist dimensions and indexed to the norms and protocols of the machine: the becoming-machine of the tongue. I examine this becoming from three perspectives: 1) fluency as noiseless channel, 2) fluency as executability, and 3) fluency as interface. Technologies to *machine* speech and make it smooth function to connect and circulate rather than individuate or distinguish a subject of speech. The tongue operates by a distinctly *machinic* rather than representational logic. The machinic struggle for communication is waged against entropy and noise. Tracing the genealogy of the call centre, I examine how disabled people, like trans people, can nevertheless escape some of oppressive structures of the public sphere—where one is pinned down *as* a subject of pathology—by becoming a deterritorialized voice.

Foucault argued that domination (sovereign power), subjection (disciplinary power), and exploitation (the alienation of labour) always exist in mixed consistencies, even though one typically gains an upper hand in any historical period (2003b, 130). To this we must add machinic enslavement which always exists alongside sovereign and disciplinary power yet defines our current moment of governmentality and capitalist accumulation. The task for a theory of communication disability attuned to the conditions of advanced capitalism is to understand

how subjection and enslavement conspire together to exploit semiotic bodies. In reality of course, the distinction between subjection and enslavement is purely analytical. These forms of governmentality, like their corresponding semiotic modes, are always expressed in mixed consistencies. They incite and support one another in complex relationships. The powers (*puissance*) of communication held in the body must be activated, patterned, and formatted according to specific needs of capital. This is to say: semiocapitalism hammers speech and the powers of communication into human capital. The imperative in post-Fordist labour always to speak *more* and to communicate *more* is equivalent to the neoliberal injunction that capital must flow unimpeded. Fluency, I will ultimately argue, is not simply the demand for intelligibility and understanding produced on the stage of social subjection. It is thoroughly machinic: an imperative to maximize our communicative inputs and outputs and to optimize our connectivity/ interfaceability.

This chapter concludes by mobilizing the concepts of machinic speech to critique the discourses of both risk and what Jason Wallin calls "rhizomania" or the uncritical valorization of smooth space. First, I argue that fluency, under neoliberalism, be understood as the stabilization or *containment* of risk. Rendering the communicative body docile is a technology to discipline and make predictable the speculative future. Second, I return to the epigraph, Deleuze and Guattari's warning to "Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us" (1987, 500). While smoothing-machines, like the practice of Universal Design, are often taken to be revolutionary, I articulate the neo-eugenic dangers of smoothness and its accompanying demand for flexibility. Thinking with disability theorist Zahari Richter, I propose that we cultivate dysfluency in its unruliness and wildness instead of a smooth ecology of speech. This is a call for

accessibility on rough and uncertain ground rather than on the clean stage of universal communication.

Conclusion: Stuttering Parrhesia

The conclusion outlines three modes of enunciation within the framework of *parrhesia*. Defined literally, Foucault explains, *parrhesia* is the act of "frankness, open-heartedness, plain speaking, speaking openly [or] speaking freely" (2001, 366). The paradigmatic example of *parrhesia* is to rise before the Greek assembly and speak truth-to-power at the risk of one's life. Foucault's own interests lie specifically in the type of self-relation the *parrhesiast* forms in the act of risking oneself in truth. How might *parrhesia* generate critical breaks within contemporary modes of subjectivization and machinic enslavement? In considering the possibilities of dysfluent enunciations, I examine with Foucault and his interlocutors three modes of truth-telling available in in late-liberalism: therapeutic, Platonic, and Cynic.

Therapeutic truth-telling is an apolitical enunciation that indexes the model of authenticity. This mode of truth-telling is limited to speaking truth about oneself and here in a normalizing register. I argue that the insistence on an "authentic" voice generates an impoverished relation to oneself, to others, and the world; this practice of self-transformation will not help us escape "the veridictional cage of the market" (McFalls and Pandolfi 2014, 174). "Platonic truth-telling," second, is a form of equality-based political discourse that aims at recognition and inclusion. The Platonic tradition seeks to prove that it is the true life through introspection and reason focused around the imperative to know thyself (*gnothi seauton*). Third, I consider Cynic truth-telling as a radical life that embodies critique. In contrast to the Platonic, the Cynic practice of *parrhesia* seeks to overcome *doxa* by pushing the Socratic embodiment of

truth to its absolute limits. This tradition of philosophy proves itself by taking the self, and life more generally, as a continual challenge. It scrutinizes and experiments with forms of life in order to alter the possibilities and conditions of this world.

I suggest that dysfluency be reimagined and relocated away from the purity of the mouth, the head, and the soul. With the Cynics, I believe this requires challenging in radical ways the public/private divisions that keep marginalized peoples removed from the *polis.* I thus conclude by reimaging speech as shit. More specifically, I elaborate the notion of stuttering-from-the-anus in the context of three Cynic themes: animality, the rejection of recognition, and becoming-imperceptible.

Chapter One: Rethinking Sovereign Action

> How do we attend to the strange multiplicity of political voices and activities without distorting or disqualifying them in the very way we approach them?
>
> —James Tully, "Political Philosophy as a Critical Activity"

For James Tully, this is today's preeminent political question. Whose speech can be taken up as political? How can we hold open dialogical space (always constituted by power) within which political claims can be made? In this chapter I intend to take "voices" quite literally. I want to take seriously the notion (from Arendt to Foucault to Deleuze) that speech is political before it is linguistic. How do we answer Tully's question? Understanding how disabled speakers are marginalized, and understanding how to resist, requires an awareness of how ableist norms of speech are embedded within and constitutive of our political structures and praxis.

In this chapter I examine how the very *capacity* to act in concert with others is shaped, restrained, and channeled by norms of intelligible and fluent speech. The analysis follows two co-constitutive lines of inquiry: the politics of recognition and the politics of consensus. Taken together, these form the conditions of participation within late-liberalism. First, I suggest that liberal participation involves the contraction of meaning and identity around a sovereign voice. The liberal demand for legibility is a prerequisite for action, and this occurs within a field of recognition. As a counterpoint to the logic of identity and recognition, I turn to Arendt who offers not only a robust account of intersubjective action but also, arguably, of a "non-sovereign voice." An Arendtian agonistic politic unsettles the logic and politic of identity.

Second, to map the conditions of possibility of speaking and acting, it is necessary to interrogate consensus—or agreement without exclusion. This is a regulatory ideal that gives shape to political discourse in liberal, republican, and much critical theory alike. The demand for

mutual agreement comes at a high cost. Dysfluent and opaque voices amplify the fear of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and misrecognition. As a consequence, these and otherwise non-normative voices are often excluded from the political sphere in order to avoid their represented danger to rational, consensual processes. Instead of adopting the strategy to expand the register of intelligibility and therefore inclusion within a polity, I suggest it is more generative to consider disabled speech a type of communicative *agonism* wherein the communicative breaks and aporias generated by disabled speech are themselves contestations of what and who gets to count as political. Political action cannot help but be exclusionary when it takes a fluent subject and process as its model.

With Tully—who reads Arendt yet sidles closer to Foucault—I argue that action is not the vying for recognition on a common stage of politics but calling the very existence of the stage into question. If, as Tully argues, politics is precisely the agonistic game of calling its own rules into question, action can be reformulated to privilege disabled voices *because of* and not in spite of their unintelligibility and non-transparency. Reframing action also modifies the question of the *subject* of action. Rather than yoking agency to stable and fixed capacities (language, reason) that demarcate the boundaries of "man" or "citizen," the game of politics is indefinitely open to all, but must be manifest locally and historically through struggle.

This chapter consists of five sections. First, I situate my project and discussion of fluency within the political philosophy of disability. Second, I examine the knot of speech, agency, and intelligibility that gets articulated in late-liberalism as an insatiable demand for recognition. Third, I deploy Arendt's theory of action to rethink the possibilities of appearing in and transforming the world with others. Fourth, I consider the political *function* of speech in the Arendtian tension between action as primarily agonistic or deliberative to move, fifth, towards a

critique of consensus and a positive articulation of an agonistic disability politic that starts with a dysfluent rather than fluent subject.

1. On Being Heard: Fluency, Recognition, and the Subject of Action

Barbara Arneil argues that Western political philosophy has consistently foiled the rational citizen with a disabled other. Theorists as diverse as Locke, Hume, Rousseau, Kant, Taylor, and Rawls define this other "as less than 'normal,' 'irrational,' outside the 'usual' way of being, only 'potentially' human, and governed by the principle of charity rather than justice" (2009, 228). Disability, put otherwise, plays the dominant function within political philosophy of delineating political activity and the human as a political entity by negation. Excluded from the practice of politics, disabled people often have little choice but to shoulder these taxonomies and accept the scraps of charity doled out. It is important to emphasize, however, that this exclusion is not incidental to political theory—an unfortunate byproduct of governmentality. Simplican insists that modern political theory is underwritten by the constitutive exclusion of disability and in particular intellectual disability. From Locke to Rawls, liberalism conditions political membership on what Simplican terms the "capacity contract" which

> bases political membership on a threshold level of capacity and excludes anyone who falls below. In doing so, the capacity contract naturalizes a fictional account of compulsory capacity that none of us can achieve. Our inability to conform to the fictional subject leaves us with a deep anxiety, arising between the demands of democratic participation and our inability to meet them (2015, 4).

Compulsory capacity is spurious, an impossible state to achieve.[7] This formulation of necessary yet impossible demands resonates with what Robert McRuer (2006) terms "compulsory able-

[7] There are, note, two sides to the capacity contract. If the first side consists of the necessary yet impossible demand of conforming to a political ideal, "the other side of the capacity contract, however, sees incapacity as essential to human life and thus bases democratic solidarity on shared human vulnerability" (4).

bodiedness." For McRuer, able-bodiedness, like heterosexuality, is a compulsory yet impossible demand on our desires, energies, and materialities that must continually be re-enacted and maintained. The imperative to think, perceive, relate, move, and communicate in ways codified as "normal" can only ever be approximated, and thus the imperative is constantly transgressed. Normalcy is as such fundamentally unstable, and our continual inability to perform the normate results in "ability trouble" as McRuer quips (echoing Butler), and by extension, disability oppression. Likewise for Simplican, a gap opens between the demand to conform to a certain level of capacity yet the impossibility of doing so. This unstable gap often floods with violence. And insofar as political membership is tenuous and is required to be above a "threshold level of capacity," this line is carefully policed by procedural barriers and technologies of recognition.

The performance of speech is a particularly important marker of rationality; a privileged site of liberal-humanist subject formation. Stretching back to Aristotle, *logos* means both speech and reason. Within this paradigm, "mature" speech is taken to disclose "mature" thought. Adriana Cavarero notes that *logos* derives from the Greek verb *legein,* and means both "speaking" as well as "gathering," "binding," "joining" (2015, 33). In its ordinary use, *logos* refers to the activity of speaking, the activity of linking the parts of speech together in the right way. Thought, understood by Plato as "a silent discourse within the soul with itself" (46), retains the structure of "joining" found in *logos.* Spoken discourse is therefore sonorized thought, as the (dia)*logos* within the soul streams through the mouth, taking on a physical form. While much of these early distinctions have been obscured or left behind, the metaphysical pairing of speech and reason continues to exert a discursive power over the contemporary cultural and philosophical imaginary.

Language, when taken to be a stable and fixed capacity, grounds (or enshrines) the political status and authority of the "rational human." To take a single, though stark, example, consider Anne McDonald who in 1964 (at the age of three) was placed in St. Nicholas Hospital, a government institution for those with severe disabilities. Experts assumed from McDonald's severe athetosis—a form of cerebral palsy that results in uncontrollable movement and for McDonald, extreme muscle tension—that she could not think because she could not speak. Being "locked" in her body, McDonald was acutely aware of the necessity of extricating her thoughts, and notes that "for busting out of confinement, speech seemed more desirable [than walking]. We knew there were kids in St. Nicholas who could walk, but none who could talk properly. All our imaginings depended for their fulfillment on speech" (Crossley and McDonald 1985, 24).

I do not want to state, as a general principle, that the fate of disabled people rests on the performance of fluent speech. This concedes too much to *logos*. Yet it is nevertheless true—especially in the context of political theory—that speech bears much of the weight of compulsory capacity. The use of speech as a gauge of rational capacities is embedded in everyday experience, as the quality of speech—speed, perspicuity and effortlessness—provides a rough-and-ready means of judging (even unintentionally) one's intelligence. When these judgments are proven wrong, we are in fact often surprised. Speech demonstrates reason and is the practice of reason.

Scientific-medical experts accordingly pitch techniques of normalization to disabled children and their parents as instruments of *inclusion* into mainstream society. The use of speech therapy to manage speech impediments, and, more severe, the use of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) to normalize autistic individuals helps them pass as abled-bodied and (so the

narrative goes) therefore live a more satisfying life.[8] Becoming a fluent subject of speech is an important investment (in one's human capital) that makes future investments like education possible. Put otherwise, without SLP, many disabled individuals would not have access to education and other distributed opportunities that increase "life chances" (Spade 2011).

With Simplican, I thus seek to trouble the relation between disability and political action. I too am concerned about the gateways of capacity that keep disabled subjects from participation. And again with Simplican, I read Arendt as a generative point of departure. Simplican finds in Arendt an alternative to the formulation of agency and action offered by compulsory capacity. Arendt, as I argue below, is helpful in this regard since she understands action as an intersubjective *collaboration* of speech and deed that together brings something new into the world. Action is equated neither with control (over oneself and others) nor with playing by rigid democratic norms. Yet there are important differences between both the aims and scope of our projects—for one, our methodologies. While Simplican seeks to expand the definition of action in order to broaden the common world and make more space for disabled participation, I am more interested in the agonistic and transformative possibility of rupture. Moreover, my focus on dysfluency rather than intellectual disability *as such* denies any one-to-one correlation of analyses. Dysfluency is a broad term that describes various modes of hesitant and opaque communication. Yet someone who stutters (and can often pass as able-bodied) is situated in a very different constellation of power than, for example, Anne McDonald. The performance—and judgement—of compulsory capacity is graded on a curve.

An agonistic politic can help reframe "fluency" in generative ways. Fluency typically refers to a type of linguistic mastery and the effortless flow of speech. It is a discourse

[8] ABA is a standard yet highly controversial mode of autism therapy based on B.F. Skinner's work. ABA rewards and cultivates "positive" behaviours and diminishes "negative" ones in order to normalize autistic subjects.

neutralized by the scientific authority of rehabilitative medicine—and thus rendered a playground of metaphors for critical theorists. Yet nothing about fluency is apolitical. The ideal of perfect meaning and its incarnation (or rather, approximation in flesh) are distinctly biopolitical achievements. Fluency is a *dispositif*—a congealing of power and knowledge in the flesh of communicative bodies. Yet fluency is moreover a critical lens through which political action can be appraised and reimagined. Again with Tully (as well as Deleuze and Guattari), I am here more interested in what language *does* than in what it means. What is the immanent effect of assuming that bodies are fluent? What is the effect of covering over the contested terrain of intelligibility to construct a frictionless space of politics? This approach pushes to the background more traditional philosophical questions that focus on signification and that might break the disabled speech act into constitutive parts to examine the breakdown of meaning.

Fluency, I suggest, is a material-political ordering that strives to reduce the plurivocality of both the corporeal *and* social body to a unified voice. Within a political context, we can understand fluency as 1) a univocal and transparent articulation of oneself—an expression of what Arendt terms *sovereign agency* or mastery of oneself and others that 2) takes the collective form of *consensus.* The ethical valence of both these concepts can make their critique difficult. Consensus is agreement without exclusion, a democratic ideal *par excellence*, while fluency as a model of political agency trades on social intelligibility and connotes late-liberal values of understanding and recognition. I nevertheless maintain that fluency is an attempt to contain the problem of plurality and difference. The goal of consensus both distorts and disqualifies embodied voices. To defend this claim within the context of late-liberalism, it is necessary to consider the conditions of action within late-liberalism in more detail.

Liberal Recognition

Central to both classical and modern forms of liberalism is the ideal of individual autonomy. As Will Kymlicka writes, "Liberal modernity rests on a picture of individuals choosing autonomously amongst ways of life and exercising responsibility for these choices" (2016, 68). The state is responsible for securing the social and cultural *pre-conditions* which enable individual choice and self-determination but must itself not advocate one vision of the good over another. I am here interested in two particular questions. First, what model of subjectivity does liberalism presume/produce? And second, what model of action follows? My claim is that liberal theory conditions political agency on "having a voice" and more basically on "being heard."

In his influential 1985 essay "Atomism," Charles Taylor argues that in contrast to, for example, Aristotle's political philosophy which affirms the social and interdependent nature of the human animal, the liberal tradition is "atomistic" insofar as it "affirms the self-sufficiency of man alone or, if you prefer, of the individual" (189). While liberals readily agree that we need a social context to survive and develop as human beings, they take these commitments to exist outside political life. Society is here constituted by individuals for individuals. Yet notably, these are individuals *unmarked* by society, culture, and history. As John Christman explains, "The model person, in the liberal tradition, is characterized without essential connections with past or present others or social factors external to 'him'" (2009, 2). The key word is "essential." Connections exist between persons, yes, but these are accidental features that in no way define the subject politically. That is to say, the liberal subject is endowed with rights derived from innate individual capacities like sentience and rationality. Feminists and "communitarians" have pushed back against atomism by asserting that human capacities are necessarily developed in

thick social contexts, and that in overemphasizing individual autonomy liberalism presupposes an "abstract individual," which obscures our material-political connections with others (e.g. Barclay 2000). Moreover, critiques of atomism have emerged from within the liberal tradition. Kymlicka in particular articulates a form of "liberal egalitarianism" attentive to minority politics and maintains that "any recognizably liberal theory has to be concerned with the way that the cultural context either facilitates or impedes individual autonomy" (2016, 72).

Consider with Eva Kittay, who is here writing in the context of intellectual disability, that "liberalism invokes a notion of political participation in which one *makes* one's voice heard. It depends on a conception of the person as independent, rational, and capable of self-sufficiency. And it holds to a conception of society as an association of such independent equals" (258, emphasis mine). The disability community has rallied around the axioms of self-sufficiency and independence in the struggle for justice, even though these axioms are often cudgels turned against it. *Pace* liberalism, capacities like reason and sentience—on which individual rights are based—are not fixed and unassailable. Simplican's account of compulsory capacity reveals the "ability trouble" haunting liberalism. Disabled people know that capacities are not self-evident but must be proven again and again. "Having a voice" is never assured: it must be recognizable to be rational; otherwise it is simply noise. For a subject or voice to be considered agential, it must pass thresholds of recognition that gatekeep the common world of political life. The production of the common world, of its very commonality, must be interrogated.

While I agree with Kittay's assessment, the term "making" one's voice heard is perhaps too voluntarist, since liberal participation depends more fundamentally on *being* heard, or rather, on having one's voice *recognized* as intelligible, rational, and therefore agential. My reasoning turns on a distinction between what Rancière terms the "popular" (here, liberal) and "conceptual"

(what I would call "critical") meanings of recognition. In the popular sense, recognition refers to the *confirmation* of either previous knowledge or the moral dignity of other individuals. A unified identity always precedes recognition. I recognize you as a discrete subject, a being of moral worth—which you have always been. Critical recognition, on the other hand, describes the act of reconfiguring the conditions of possibility of appearance. Rancière argues the space of politics is "a field of identification and a *field of conflict about identification*, since it is always controversial whether the animal mouthing a voice in front of me is saying something common about the common" (2016, 85; emphasis added). The stakes of this precise conflict have always been violent for the disabled community—institutionalization, sterilization, euthanization, as well as mundane scenes of exclusion. Rancière frequently turns to the example of speech and insists that logos is never simply speech but the account made of it: is it *speech* that signifies the common world or *noise* that expresses brute pain and pleasure (2004a, 22-3)? The very existence of the common is never settled within the critical mode of recognition. For Rancière, action is the very re-composition of what is common. To recognize what already exists (shifting pre-formed parts around a board) does not rise to the level of political action.

As a point of contrast to liberalism, allow me a brief sketch of Rancière's political philosophy. Rancière defines politics against what he terms "police." Politics here is not a matter of ruling, governmentality, nor living together in community aimed at the highest good, but rather a primal fission or disruption of an order. In his reading of classical political philosophy, he argues that before politics proper existed both "arithmetic" and "geometric" orders. The former establishes an identity between advantage and command which could take the form, for example, of Thrasymachus' identification of strength with rule, or the oligarchy's simple identity of wealth with domination (1999, 8). This vulgar arithmetic was interrupted in Rancière's

reading by the introduction of political philosophy's ideal geometry. Splitting the natural association between might-right or owning-having, Platonic philosophy, for example, divided the city into ideal parts of classes, occupations, and virtues.

This division of the community into parts is the beginning of politics, yet this is so not because it establishes justice (a geometric form), but rather since it is "always a false count, a double count, a miscount" (6). Rancière argues that politics is founded upon a *wrong*—a measuring of the immeasurable. Politics is a rupture of the geometric order, the radical egalitarian impulse of those who have no "part" making themselves of some account. With words easily applicable to late-liberalism, Rancière turns political theory on its head, arguing:

> Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution. I propose to give this system of distribution and legitimization another name. I propose to call it *the police* (2004a, 28; emphasis in original).

The geometric order that takes account of the community must accordingly not be understood in general terms such as class divisions, but a totalizing schema or logic. The police is in the first place an order of bodies that "defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task." (29). The police renders the community a totality with no remainder—everything and everyone has its proper place. Moreover, the police counts the community according to various functions, relying upon what Rancière terms "the distribution of the sensible," a way of ordering the laws of perception such that some bodies "appear" and others do not. The distribution of the sensible is "an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as *discourse and another as noise*" (22, emphasis added).[9]

[9] He continues: "Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was

Politics is contrarily the interruption of the police order, a redistribution of the sensible. In response to the totalizing logic of police, Rancière argues that politics only occurs when those who have no part, when those who are miscounted, place the world where they "are" and the world they are "not" in conflict (27). In terms of the politics of recognition, Rancièrian politics is a fundamental contestation over the grounds of intelligibility. The distribution of the sensible is not only that which excludes; it is also that which establishes a common stage upon which subjects become visible (2010, 36). For Arendt, the act of building common sense is a necessary condition of political life. Common sense "discloses to us the nature of the world insofar as it is a common world; we owe to it the fact that our strictly private and 'subjective' five senses and their sensory data can adjust themselves to a nonsubjective and 'objective' world which we have in common and share with others" (2006, 221). This is a neo-Kantian category, a broadened (and thus impersonal) perspective that takes a plurality of viewpoints into consideration.

Yet Rancière argues quite the opposite that the activity of politics only occurs when the presupposed distribution of intelligibility is *ruptured*. Politics is thus not simply a matter of vying for recognition upon a common stage artificially built, but a "conflict over the *existence* of a common stage and over the existence and status of those present on it" (1999, 27; my emphasis). This, again, is the critical mode of recognition which for Rancière means making oneself of some account through the contradiction of the fundamental "wrong" or the miscount. It is a radical egalitarian thesis affirming the quality of everyone and anyone and the sheer contingency of any order (17). Such an egalitarian principle paradoxically implements the heterogeneous assumption that the subject's role and place can never be given in advance.

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only place for noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise" (2004a, 30).

If, then, as Kittay writes, liberalism premises political action on "making one's voice heard," this can only be true when recognition is "an original configuration of the common world" (Rancière 2016, 90). Rancièrian politics is an agonistic struggle to make one's speech of account—to dissent and recompose the common conditions of appearance. When, for liberalism, recognition is "a response to something already existing" (ibid), the conceit of "making one's voice heard" becomes apparent. To be heard is to be confirmed by a dominant hegemony. To be heard requires that a voice assume a recognizable form. To be heard one must vie for recognition among "independent equals" on the terms of compulsory capacity.

When Tully asks how we can "attend to the strange multiplicity of political voices and activities without distorting or disqualifying them in the very way we approach them" (2008, 537), he speaks in part to the inadequacy of liberal theory to address this fundamental problem. The liberal presumption that speakers can be made equal if the right enabling conditions for fluent speech are provided (and obvious barriers to participation in politics are removed) distorts the multiplicity of voices by filtering them through a grid of intelligibility. The responsibility always lies with individual subjects to conform to hegemonic norms of, here, speech and communication in order to pass through gateways of recognition that seal "non-rational voices" from the political realm. Yet the performative threshold for recognition of this sort is both high and evaluated on ableist terms. Kittay reminds us that "The capacity to speak is not always enough. Those who speak do so in a language not recognized—and even demeaned—by those who speak in the language of the public sphere" (2002, 258). We can trace this exclusion across three moments in liberalism: 1) resolving plurality through a universal position; 2) neutralizing contestation within the political field; and 3) totalizing intelligibility.

First, the liberal subject is unmarked, as we witnessed above, by socio-historical identity. Iris Young argues that political paradigms that ask participants in rational dialogue to adopt a view of impartiality and impersonality "[express] a logic of identity that seeks to reduce differences to unity" (1990, 97). Plurality of voices, in Young's assessment, is a problem in political theory (of both liberal and republican variants) overcome by reducing the multiplicity of subjects down to a universal point of view. Liberalism enables this move through its strong division between the public and private, rational and embodied. As Young writes:

> The impartial reasoner is detached: reason abstracts from the particular experiences and histories that constitute a situation. The impartial reasoner must also be dispassionate, abstracting from feelings, desires, interests, and commitments that he or she may have regarding the situation, or that others may have. The impartial reasoner is, finally, a universal reasoner (100).

The binary of reason and embodiment/ desire/ affectivity, argues Young, expels bodily facticity from moral and political consideration. For a universalizable point to be established, political engagement must be taken up in a register that denies the seemingly mundane diversity of bodily shapes and sizes, abilities, functions, feelings, and affective states. "By assuming that reason stands opposed to desire, affectivity, and the body," she comments, "this conception of the civic public excludes bodily and affective aspects of human existence" (109). The particularity of bodies is both politically non-relevant as well as a threat to the impartiality of reason. Accordingly, the logic of universalization (ostensibly) brackets out embodied differences, imagining the political self to be a disembodied and therefore rational entity.[10]

In practice, bracketing out bodily difference amounts to the exclusion of non-normative embodiments from political participation. This exclusion is justified by the ostensible neutrality

[10] Brown traces this impulse within political theory to Cartesian dualism where the mind can be envisaged as distinct from the body and cultural-historical location. As she writes, "across Lockean, Kantian, Millian, Rawlsian, and Habermasian perspectives, rationality transcends—or better, exceeds—embodiment and cultural location to permit a separation between rational thought on one side and the constitutive embodiment of certain beliefs and practices on the other" (2006, 152).

of liberalism. Brown articulates the liberal dichotomy between reason and embodiment as a conceit: "for deliberative rationality to be meaningful apart from 'culture' or 'subjectivity,' the conceit must be in play that the individual *chooses* what he or she thinks" (2006, 153). The rational self that enters political life as a free-standing, disembodied entity, in other words, is imagined to be uninfluenced here by her body/culture/history. The liberal actor steps outside such influences in the rational process of deliberation. The disabled person, on the other hand, falters before this liberal conceit. She either refuses to leave her body behind, or her body refuses to go away. While both positions ultimately lead to her exclusion, the former upholds the liberal deceit while the latter admits it. That is, if she is understood as unwilling to adopt a universal point of view, the deceit is maintained and she is simply not capable of rational discourse. Yet if she is unable to abstract from her embodied position (for example, to speak fluently and independently), her exclusion is a liberal confession requiring her banishment.

The dichotomy between particular interest vs. public will presents itself as a solution to the impossibility of abstracting from embodiment. If embodied particularity cannot be separated from the rational self, Young makes the case that this second dichotomy quarantines particularity in the private and non-political realm. "The plurality of subjects is not in fact eliminated," she writes, "but only expelled from the moral realm; the concrete interests, needs, and desires of persons and the feelings that differentiate them from one another become merely private, subjective" (103). Private desires, interests, and constitutive embodied facts about oneself are therefore tolerated, but are simply not political. They become, in effect, incommensurable, incommunicable, and a-rational since they are closed off from the process of rational deliberation. These voices do not participate in the construction of a common world and accordingly do not belong.

Second, many contemporary liberal theorists adhere to the "anti-perfectionist" view that the state should be neutral with regard to competing visions of the good life (Dworkin 1977; Rawls 1993; Kymlicka 1991). State neutrality is a precondition for individual autonomy. This drive towards a neutral public can be partly read as an extension of liberal political rationality and its deference to political economy. Since the eighteenth century, liberalism has established the market as the truth and limit of the state. Foucault argues that the central issue for the liberal art of governing is "how not to govern too much" (2008, 13). The government of life which shapes the aptitudes of the population is always in agreement with and restrained by economic axioms. To govern frugally means, in part, to treat the public sphere like the market—as a clear and neutral "medium" of production and exchange. That we take the marketplace of ideas to be ostensibly neutral is a function of overlapping consensuses that establish the validity of truth claims. Jodi Dean explains that "Quickly formatting 'the conversation' via the exclusion of myriad views and positions as crazy or not serious, such discussion is premised on the fantasy that there is no fundamental disagreement over the basic character of the world (or that such disagreement has no bearing on politics)" (2009, 147). The universal position is an abstraction and insulation from the condition of plurality. The public/private, rational/embodied division quarantines difference within apolitical spaces and temporalities. Thus do neutrality and the quarantine of the private sphere conspire together to clear contestation from the space of politics.

Yet while liberalism covers over and/or denies the necessarily conflictual nature of political life, it nevertheless must, as a self-proclaimed bastion of pluralism, simultaneously entertain and mediate differing perspectives and social worlds. Enter recognition. The anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli argues that recognition is a primary form of "apprehending alternative social projects and worlds in late liberalism" (2011, 76). It resolves minority and

multicultural differences within the social body by translating difference into a form the state can recognize and capture. The state either recognizes or refuses social difference: it either makes live or lets (slowly) die (Berlant 2007). Trans* theorists and activists, for example, have noted that they must identify themselves in recognizable terms before scientific-medico experts in order to receive juridical recognition and thus protection. "Trans people," explains J.R. Latham, "have an imperative to present 'evidence of transexuality' in a way that is recognisable to clinicians so that they may obtain the bodily modifications they seek. This means that how clinical guides describe transexuality will continue to influence how trans people present themselves to clinicians as long as clinicians control access to trans services" (2018, 4). The performative reproduction of dominant (medical) schemas of knowledge flattens trans experiences into a static and predetermined identity. Yet the distribution of life chances hinges upon successful recognizability, which opens a gamut of performative survival tactics like cloaking and feigning authorized identities.

The liberal appeal to neutrality makes liberalism widely defenseless against antagonisms that surface in the political field. When conflict does arise, liberalism either denies, seeks to quarantine, or tame through recognition forms of social difference. These are brittle practices and, as Povinelli explains, recognition "trembles" faced with an "unrepentant alterity"—difference that resists recognition on the terms of the state *and yet persists*. In *Economies of Abandonment*, Povinelli takes as example contemporary Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory who endure despite late-liberal attempts at erasure and assimilation. "They are," she writes in context of Rancière, "the part that has no part—the noise of the unsayable—found neither on one side nor on the other of the temporal division of social space" (73). Recognition trembles (like a rock thrown in a glass lake) because the field of politics is neutral, with no

imagined place for contesting the conditions of possibility of appearance. Yet it can, and does, violently resolve unrepentant alterity.[11]

Third, docile bodies are legible bodies. For Foucault, "subjection" (*assujettissement*) is an individualizing form of power that makes "individuals" into distinct subjects. It "applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him" (130). The more precisely subjects can be individuated, the more these subjects can be located and grouped within institutional-discursive matrices and thus governed. Disability offers a clear example. Drawing on qualitative research from Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price that examines a self-administered questionnaire for prospective recipients of UK welfare, Shelley Tremain explains how

> the given potential recipient must document the most minute experiences of pain, disruptions of a menstrual cycle, lapses of fatigue, and difficulty in operating household appliances and associate these phenomena in some way with this abstraction. Thus, through a performance of textual confession ('the more you can tell us, the easier it is for us to get a clear picture of what you need'), the potential recipient is made a subject of impairment (in addition to being made a subject of the state), and is rendered 'docile,' that is, one to be used, enabled, subjugated, and improved (2001, 633).

Tremain is focused primarily on the way such confessional practices produce a homogeneous social category of "disability" from heterogeneous embodied experience. That is, they enable the discursive naturalization of disability and impairment. But this example also highlights intelligibility as a link between disciplinary and recognitive practices. Confessions like this questionnaire are a means of fashioning a recognizable identity for the state, of articulating

[11] It is important to note, *pace* Mouffe, that the liberal stance of neutrality does not always means impotence. Povinelli writes: "when recognition encounters, or manufactures, an unrepentant alterity, it does not simply tremble. Nor does the liberal state merely transfer these public tremors to the realm of private beliefs . . . Where the security of the state is challenged, the *state* of recognition publicly denounces the redlined public, enacts repressive laws to eliminate it, and hunts down its recalcitrant members" (2015, 92).

oneself in terms that confirm disabled identities as a *fait accompli*—an already agreed-upon set of facts.

Intelligibility, put otherwise, is a price of self-sovereign rule within liberal societies. Tremain writes: "the more individualising is the nature of the state's identification of us, the farther is the reach of its normalising and totalising disciplinary apparatus in the administration of our lives" (2015, 18). While liberalism governs *through* freedom and encourages subjects to circulate within the social field, it binds subjects to the logic of the state through practices of recognition and identification. "Modern government of behavior," asserts Lazzarato, "entails that the significations defining the functions and limits of our actions (man, woman, worker, boss, etc.), determining our roles within the social division of labor, are solidly established and leave as little room as possible for interpretation and dispute" (2014, 74). We can trace this closure of meaning—this displacement of contestation and desire for recognition—into the fleshy domain of fluency. For Lazzarato, the production of "distinct and individuated speakers" and linguistic interaction are both modeled on economic exchange and the juridical contract: rational agents entering into a contractual agreement (68). Technologies of fluency facilitate the fluid transaction between necessarily pre-defined and stable subjects who each speak and act with a univocal, rational voice. The question –"Who are you?"– must be answerable in definite terms that leave little room for interpretation and dispute. To put this otherwise, fluency saps the possibility of contestation from our *material* practices of relation to pre-empt rupture in the social order.

Foucault insists that to resist subjection is not simply to liberate ourselves from the state or various institutions, but to liberate ourselves "both from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state" (2003b, 134). We must, in other words, refuse the forms of

subjectivity associated with (post) disciplinary societies that chain us to a recognizable identity. The struggle against subjection cannot in this regard be achieved by taking up forms of identity politics that turn on recognition which are by their very nature individuating and subjectifying. Rather, to cite Foucault again, "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are" (134). This political goal requires that we discover new forms of subjectivity and enact a self-transformation by, as Amy Allen comments, "taking up in a subversive way the relations of subjection that have made us who we are" (2007, 173). Any transformation of society must continually start with the care of the self. Or in Povinelli's terms, to refuse what we are is to refuse recognition and to divert energy from identification into creative elaboration of the self. "In these social fields," she writes, "the point may well be to reshape habitudes ahead of recognition, to test something out rather than translate it, not to produce meanings that can be translated, or embodiments that can be recognized" (2011, 100). Such re-elaboration most often takes place within subaltern communities (like crip and queer) that embody different ways of knowing, perceiving, and being. Re-elaborating the self is to test out possible worlds and reshape habits of perception and judgment that form a common-sense.

Critical Politics of Recognition

It would be ungenerous to consider recognition yet ignore its critical modes. Critical theory has articulated multiple "politics of recognition" in response to thin notions of agency and intersubjectivity that pervade liberal democracy. Some of the main actors include Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth, and Nancy Fraser. While both Arendt and Rancière have contributed to this stream of thought in their own ways, neither fit squarely within its borders. For the first cluster of thinkers, recognition gets tied to identity politics. Charles Taylor, for instance, argues that

"misrecognition shows not just a lack of due respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with crippling self- hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need" (1994, 26). Honneth similarly insists that the desire for recognition is psychological: a need for autonomy, self-expression, and self-worth. These thinkers follow Hegel to argue that the primordial drive for mutual recognition between subjects offers a normative structure for social and political life. Unlike in the liberal (or popular) mode, recognition here establishes or *recomposes* a common world where subjects can appear with dignity and worth. "Being heard" is a dialogical struggle that creates new identities and capacities in the move towards mutual understanding and/or self-expression. And especially for people like Rancière, the struggle for re-composition is necessarily communal.

A substantive account of identity stands at the forefront of this model; its robust account of subject formation stands in stark contrast to liberal theory. One's identity is not fixed in advance (a *fait accompli*) but develops and shifts in dialogue with others over time. However, the emphasis on identity still remains a problem for a disability politic. The mediating knowledge of *who* one is as a political actor, even when not construed as a *fait accompli*, precedes action itself. The capacity to act follows from the *knowledge* of your authentic identity (and its belonging to larger groups) that get successfully recognized by others. Markell accordingly argues that "mutual recognition of this sort [aspires to] eliminate the obstacles of misunderstanding, ignorance, and prejudice that alienate us from each other and ourselves, making it possible for us to act in accordance with *who we really are*, and to do so with the support rather than the resistance of our fellows" (12, emphasis added). That action is both impelled and constrained by identity establishes mutual understanding as a constantly receding horizon.[12]

[12] Nancy Fraser has offered an important and sustained corrective to this identity-focused discourse that focuses on recognition *and* redistribution (1998; 2001).

It is nevertheless tempting to do the work of extracting a disability politic from the "expressive" model of Honneth. For example, dysfluent people live in a haze of partial- and mis-understandings which leaves them at continual risk of denied or deferred recognition. Regular misrecognition causes psychic pain, social isolation, and lack of participation. Disability might thus impede someone from expressing their authentic self such that they get recognized, if at all, as an object of pity and shame rather than their chosen identifications. Society does not recognize their emotional needs, values, and moral autonomy and thus their *capacity* to act meaningfully in the world. Such marginalized peoples are in this reading driven to act and speak by a singular desire for mutual recognition. The indelible link between suffering and misrecognition constructs fluency as the antidote for social and political injustice. If only we could be heard. If only we could be understood. *Then* could we belong. While useful in many regards, I suggest that this reading is too safe. It does not adequately interrogate its own conditions of possibility.

The "expressive" reading gains plausibility insofar as we typically locate fluency in the neuro-vocal utterance itself: the final step of language into the world. We imagine fluency as the capacity to express oneself fully—the negative existence of impediment or blockage—and take mutual recognition to be the ultimate goal of communication. But what if we locate fluency much farther upstream in the aspiration towards the *univocal articulation* of an authentic and stable identity? Fluency is transparency is identifiability. Dysfluency would here not be a blockage of expression that creates failures of understanding on the surface of human interaction, but a fundamental misalignment of the self and its performance. Existing as opaque in a stratifying grid of intelligibility leaves the dysfluent person in constant danger of misunderstanding and misrecognition. The biopolitical demand for static identities can only be satisfied by univocal articulations. This is of course true for all subjects, not just dysfluent

people. The phantasmal ideal of fluency that gets imposed on bodies covers over the multiple and contingent aspects of both subject-formation and agency; it collapses the voice into self-presence in order to articulate before certain others (as well as the State) an identity without remainder that is at once recognizable and governable. The effects of this pull are, however, felt more strongly on bodies marked as abnormal.

Thus while critics like McNay argue that recognition naturalizes agency insofar as the singular desire for recognition "simplifies the diverse logic of action, by imputing to it a single cause and a relatively unmediated relation to embodied existence" (162), I suggest that a naturalization of fluency is also at work. The false unity imposed on the self and its relations by the logic of identity fractures under worldly stress unless the self is univocally articulable. Rendering oneself fluent is always a biopolitical achievement that in itself simplifies the diverse logic of action. When action is governed by the logic of identity, "the fragilities and indeterminacies of the relation between self and others are obscured" (165). Yet when the tremor of ambiguity that constitutes the very relation between self and others gets obscured, dysfluency can only appear *aberrantly* within social relations as an impediment to the capacity of mutual understanding and thereby agency. At this point, agency is reduced to a mastery or domination over ourselves and others: what Arendt terms "sovereignty."

Allow me to take stock of the argument: liberal theory, I have argued, conditions political agency on "having a voice" and more primordially on "being heard." For a subject or voice to be agential, it must pass thresholds of recognition that gatekeep the common world of political life. This, in turn, demands that subjects conform to a strict logic of identity to be rendered intelligible and capable of action. Insofar as liberalism fronts legibility (and thus a unified and univocal identity) as a condition of social, not to mention *political* life, subjects must cross a barrier of

articulability: Can these voices assume a recognizable form? To "be heard" is to compete for recognition using a voice authorized by a dominant hegemony. Even in its critical modalities, recognition "presumes a univocal model of subject formation which underplays the problems of multiple and contingent identifications. It presumes that agency derives its shape from identity rather than action itself being constitutive of identity" (McNay 164). Arendt, however, flips this equation to move beyond gatekeepers of identity. Action does not follow from but constitutes identity. Action is *sui generis.*

2. Arendtian Speech and Action

Arendt offers a generative ground from which to reconsider action for several reasons. First, her theory of action and agency is robust: grounded in the human condition of plurality rather than the unitary subject that pervades both liberal and republican theory. And while she does not carry the argument through, the "non-sovereign" character of speech renders the dysfluent rather than fluent speaker the model for action. Second, Arendt is considered a theorist of recognition and offers a compelling critique of liberal identity politics which hinge on a thin conception of recognition. Although I argue that even Arendt's articulation of recognition does not overcome the limits of this politic, the agonistic elements in her theory gesture towards a more radical position (as taken up by Tully). Third, I should note that Arendt would most certainly object to my reading that muddies politics with the body. Arendt criticizes identity politics and the intrusion of the social into the political sphere because they are not sufficiently impartial; they trade in "necessity." In this way, the discussion of "disability politics" would not register for Arendt as intelligible. Nevertheless, with Bonnie Honig, I suggest reading Arendt in the spirit of Arendt.

Arendtian Action: Agonistic and Theatrical

To articulate the centrality of action to political life, Arendt revitalizes the Greek distinction between *praxis*—"doing"—and *poiēsis*—"making." The latter term referred to such activities as house (or for Arendt, nation) building, where the product of one's activities are separate from the activity itself. *Poiēsis* distinguishes the conceptual activity of thinking or making—drawing out a plan—from carrying out that plan. The activity of house building is thus instrumentalized insofar as its meaning is predetermined. *Poiēsis* hierarchizes the activity of thinking and carrying-out such that thinking equates with rulership and becomes the ultimate occupation of political life while action, or carrying-out these plans, equates with obedience. This is the logic of instrumental rationality that renders the modern world a simple means to an end.

Set in contrast to *poiēsis*, Arendt turns to action, or *praxis*, in which the meaning of an activity is inherent to its performance. Action (*agere*) holds two meanings: both to set in motion and to carry through to completion (1998, 189). It is accordingly a *doing* that cannot be instrumentalized nor predetermined. And since its meaning is contained within the performance, action is a necessarily public activity. For Arendt, action, unlike labour and work, is the only activity that exists directly between humans and is the *raison d'être* of political life (7). It is through action that humans "show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities, and thus make their appearance in the human world" (179). Action in this way discloses the actor as well as the world—the context of action. But it also *transforms* the web of relationships that constitute the world, for when we act, inserting ourselves into the human world through speech and deed, we bring into it something new (166). Natality, or this possibility of interrupting a

natural series of events or an automatic and bureaucratic process is for Arendt intrinsic to political life. Indeed, it is for this reason that we must leave the private world of "necessity" marked by order and the mere reproduction of life and enter into the public world where the consequences of action are "boundless, unpredictable, unintended, and often unknown to the actors themselves" (Honig 1993, 93). Yet while Arendtian action is always an exercise of freedom, its specific character garners considerable debate among scholars: Is it a theatrical disclosure of oneself—primarily a matter of recognition? Dialogue and debate geared towards consensus? A vitalistic, agonal force that opens new possibilities in the world? Arendt entertains all these interpretations (and more); her text embodies plurality. But I am here most interested in the "agonistic" Arendt that cuts across these readings. More specifically, I suggest that dysfluency be read as a type of agonistic action.

'Agonism' derives from the Greek *agōn* and denotes contest or struggle. It is a type of game played in the political as well as athletic sphere. As Arendt writes: "The public realm itself, the *polis*, was permeated by a *fiercely agonal spirit*, where everybody had constantly to distinguish himself from all others, to show through unique deeds or achievements that he was the best of all" (1998, 41, emphasis added). Agonistic action can refer to the performance of great deeds through which a political actor discloses oneself. It can refer to fierce debate. And as I argue later in this chapter, it can be read as the very activity of calling the rules of political life into question. Yet at a more fundamental level, both Connolly and Honig emphasize Arendt's Nietzschean influences to interpret this "fiercely agonal spirit" as a spontaneous and creative force that can interrupt automatic processes (the herd mentality) to bring something new into the world.

What defines the process of action is precisely its unpredictability and its capacity to interrupt hegemonic social processes with a chain of unforeseeable consequences. Arendt, in this way, reads modern politics as an impulse towards closure and stability: "The attempt to eliminate action because of its uncertainty and to save human affairs from their frailty by dealing with them as though they were or could become the planned products of human making has first of all resulted in channeling the human capacity for action" (230-31). Arendt has in mind the reduction of political action to bureaucratic management and the "fabrication" of the nation-state. But action also gets channeled in our bodies and social relations—communication becomes instrumentalized and run down fluent lines. It is in this context that I read dysfluency as a material force that resists closure. Dysfluency is transgressive; it continually threatens to rupture meanings and the social fabric of events which fluency has dulled to automatic processes. A stutter is a surprise; a thick disability accent an invitation.[13]

However, the fiercely agonal spirit cannot be considered solely through this Nietzschean lens, insofar as a robust public sphere is for Arendt a necessary condition of action. Put otherwise, action can only take place within certain institutional and juridico-political contexts that give weight to our words of promise or forgiveness. Against those who over-read the groundlessness of Arendt's agonism, Honig accordingly argues, "What about acting in concert, promising, forgiveness, law, the public-private distinction, foundings, constitution-making, and amendment?" (1993, 529). Agonistic theorists recognize that the *agōn* cannot continue without

[13] While the notion of agonism does connote heroic deeds and fluent words, Honig helpfully insists that the fiercely agonal spirit need not be understood in such hypermasculine terms: "What if the subject of *virtù* is not the manly male warrior of ancient Greece or Rome but the virago, a figure defined variously as a "turbulent woman," a "whirlwind," a "woman of masculine strength or spirit," a figure who, in herself, poses a limit to the continuing possibility of calling those strengths and spirits masculine? What if *virtù*, with its sensitivity to excess and remainders, turns out to be a force that disrupts and unsettles such binary categories as masculine and feminine, pointing out their inadequacies, their limits, their aporias? Perhaps the virago, this masculine woman who is both human and a force of nature, is a more appropriate figure for *virtù* than is the thoroughly identifiable, categorically settled and category settling masculine man of war" (16). *Virtù* in this way is a force or power; a specific way of relating to oneself and others that is at once fierce yet (I would argue) kind.

some sort of institutional framing that mediates the contest. The *agōn* must, in some regard, be stabilized, tamed. In "Homer's Contest" Nietzsche himself argued that anyone who becomes too strong should be ostracized. Nobody should be the best because "with that, the contest would dry up and the permanent basis of life in the Hellenic state would be endangered" (98). Points of stabilization provide a common stage on which politics can be carried out. Thus while action is both boundless and unpredictable, forcing open limitations and cutting across sedimented boundaries (Arendt 1998, 191), it occurs for Arendt only under certain artificial conditions of publicity and plurality organized around a shared object of care—the world.

In contrast to the agonistic reading, the "theatrical" model of Arendtian action emphasizes both recognition and dialogue. Arendt understands the political sphere to be a "space of appearance" that can emerge whenever people organize to act and speak together but will dissolve when they disband. "The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be" (1998, 198). In this fragile space where "I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly" (198-9), action reveals the unique identity of a human being: their whoness. The political is accordingly a space of recognition.

Arendt venerates speech as a necessary condition of action, yet this is not—strictly speaking—for its capacity to *communicate* meaning. "It is true that speech is extremely useful as a means of communication and information," she writes, "but as such it could be replaced by a sign language, which then might prove to be even more useful and expedient to convey certain meanings, as in mathematics and other scientific disciplines or in certain forms of teamwork"

(1998, 179). Arendt resists what Sharp terms the craftsman model of speech. When understood as the exchange of information, communication is simply a *poiēsis*; an instrumental function to convey meanings efficiently (especially within highly technical disciplines). Such activity is governed by necessity and means-ends rationality. We will consider in chapter four what I call "machinic speech" emptied of its humanist dimensions.

Instead of an instrument of communication, Arendt rather takes speech to be a form of "virtuosity" akin to excellence in performing arts. A speaker is a virtuoso insofar as speech produces no external object and requires the presence of others in a publicly organized space. Speech summoned on the political stage is necessarily performative, and this performance (along with its reception and contestation) ecstatically constitutes the speaker. That is to say, speech discloses both the meaning of a deed and the "whoness" of the speaker in distinction to their "whatness." It reveals not a list of stable identities and talents—gender, disability, sexuality, personality—but the speaker as a political actor. The performance of speech is a necessary condition of acting in the world. Arendt makes this clear:

> Without the accompaniment of speech, at any rate, action would not only lose its revelatory character, but, and by the same token, it would lose its subject, as it were; not acting men but performing robots would achieve what, humanly speaking, would remain incomprehensible. Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words (1998, 178-9).

Whoness as revealed through speech is an index of human singularity that cannot be known ahead of time and can never be fully exhausted.[14] It can only be revealed dialogically and resists

[14] In resonant Bakhtinian terms, whoness is equivalent to the "unfinalizability" of a person. This means, as Dmitri Nikulin explains, that one "can never exhaust the various relations she has with either herself (expressively) or with others (communicatively)" (2006, 56). Note the contrast with what Markell calls a "an excessively firm grip on identity" that trades on univocality. "An excessive investment in having your acts reflect and express who you already take yourself to be . . . can be paralyzing too. Or worse: it can feed modes of action that seek to suppress or manage worldly unpredictability, often by constraining others or compelling them to bear a disproportionate share of the risks of human interaction; it can lead you to simplify your own sense of who you are for the sake of *having* a

the totalization of identity by which liberalism administers subjects as a *fait accompli* (akin to what Arendt terms the "rise of the social").

The courage to engage publicly in dialogue and distinguish oneself from others through contestation is for Arendt the essence of political life. I say the *courage* to dialogue because the effects of action always ripple beyond one's control. Who the actor is, what their words mean, and what their words can *do* are formed in this intersubjective space (what Arendt terms the "in-between"). As Trevor Tchir explains: "While the actor initiates a performance that attempts to present one's virtuosity to the public, one which self-stylizes or self-creates, the actor is ultimately powerless at controlling who they disclose to the public in a given performance, and certainly who they disclose over the course of their entire life" (2017, 23). Mustering the courage to speak publicly (*parrhesia*) is an existential risk, but this risk is the very condition of possibility of appearance.

In the liberal account, again, social identity is a *fait accompli* that always precedes and gives form to action. Identity (both individual and social) must be recognized to act freely and meaningfully in the world. But as Yasemin Sari argues (2017), the recognition of social identity is a necessary *yet not sufficient* condition for Arendtian action. Sari reads in Arendt a "two-tiered theory of recognition, which takes into account the recognition of social identities as the condition of possibility for the recognition of the unique political identities of individuals in their *visibility* to one another" (7). Human singularity can only appear in an artificial space of equality that is stabilized, though never determined, by laws and by norms of social recognition.

The Non-Sovereignty of Speech

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maximally coherent and stable evaluative orientation; it can lead you to neglect those human goods that cannot be pursued as part of a plan" (60-61).

When Arendt claims that we insert ourselves into the world through speech and deed, the adverb 'heroically' always seems implied. The Word appears to enter like a conqueror—the resolute decision of an existential hero. Yet what if the Word enters not majestically but in a *slovenly* way? Not with authority but wandering hesitantly through the side door, crippled and carried by others? Natality is the very possibility of interrupting a fluent process to make space for new beginnings, and the dysfluent voice is perhaps far more amenable to this political *praxis* than the fluent. What, in other words, if we stutter ourselves into the world?

To pursue this thesis, I seek to exploit an implicit tension in Arendt between the "glory" and "suffering" of speech. In one regard, she stands in a long line of Western political theorists who place speech and dialogue at the fount of political life. One can easily, at first read, construe the agonistic elements in Arendt as a form of heroic individualism. Since she models action on the Greek *polis* where citizens would struggle in debate to distinguish themselves through word and deed, action requires "for its full appearance the shining brightness we once called glory" (1998, 180).[15] To achieve great acts demands an excellence (virtuosity) of speech that we quickly associate with the silver tongues of Pericles or Demosthenes and collapse into self-mastery and fluency.[16] Yet although the heroic orator assuredly lurks in the writing of Arendt, the fixation with this ideal washes out ineliminable Arendtian themes like non-sovereignty and plurality. I thus suggest reading Arendt against herself—or better, reading Arendt in the spirit of Arendt—to reorient our understanding of speech around a model of weakness and "suffering."

What Arendt terms "sovereignty" is ultimately the desire for unmediated understanding and recognition. Sovereignty is "the ideal of a free will, independent from others and eventually

[15] It is worth noting, with Villa (1999), that Arendt's primary exemplars of action are statesmen, not orators.
[16] As Tchir explains: "Great deeds and speech have an exemplary quality that calls for remembrance. Arendt uses the imagery of light, brightness, and 'shining forth' to describe acts, events, and speech whose extraordinary nature calls for their public remembrance, their glorification. She argues that history should be understood in terms of its unique, transformative, and exemplary or illuminating events" (Tchir 25-6).

prevailing against them" (2006, 163). The concept aligns at many points with the liberal ideal of "negative freedom" whereby one is liberated *from* external constraints (Berlin 1990) and politics itself. Independence from others is for Arendt a form of self-sufficiency that undermines the conditions of a common world, a "mastery which relies on domination of one's self and rule over others" (1998, 244). The sovereign agent, in other words, is incompatible with the human condition of plurality. That "men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world" (7) means that we are thrown into a situation never entirely of our making nor control. Individual desires will conflict and collective action must be forged within these cross-purposes. The meaning of our deeds and words (which together and over time reveal *who* we are) thus never fully lie within our grasp. Meanings are, always, shared and collectively negotiated. To speak is always to relinquish command. This is what Arendt terms the "weakness" of plurality (234) and it cannot be overcome except through the domination of oneself and others.

In contrast to the mastered subject and adjacent to the weakness of plurality, action is always defined in part by *suffering*. "Because the actor always moves among and in relation to other acting beings," writes Arendt, "he is never merely a 'doer' but always and at the same time a sufferer. To do and to suffer are like opposite sides of the same coin, and the story that an act starts is composed of its consequent deeds and sufferings" (190). Agency is the capacity to affect *and* be affected. There can be no escape from the suffering of action, which by definition exposes oneself to others and ignites unpredictable chains of re-action. It is in this way that Markell reads sovereignty as a distinctly *temporal* reflex against the contingency of the future. It expresses "the aspiration to a sort of sovereign invulnerability to the open-endedness and contingency of the future we share with others" (15). Sovereignty seeks to master natality: to

escape the suffering of action and the weakness of plurality in an attempt to render the future administrable.

From this vantage, we can imagine fluency more robustly as a form of "sovereign speech" that seeks to eradicate plurivocality within both oneself and the world in order to secure the absolute intentionality of the speaking subject. In Sharp's terms of renaturalization, sovereign speech is a type of artisanal making. Stated in temporal terms, fluency is an insulation from the contingency of the shared future with others. Agency here equates with a mastery over both *langue* and *parole*—both the structure and event of language. These two are intimately related insofar as the aspiration to fix each meaning that trails into the world demands control over the event of language as it unfolds from the body into the world. Insofar as we thoroughly naturalize the *becoming* of speech and imagine it a certainty—a fluid and unambiguous march across a threshold—we reintrench action within a logic of identity and means-ends rationality at odds with Arendtian *praxis.* Thus with sound theorist Brandon LaBelle (2014), in the context of the lisp, mumble, mute, pause, and stutter:

> It is my interest to hang onto this hesitation, this gap, to occupy the prolonged moment, this *being on the verge of speech*. In such a gap we might detect the life of the voice, its arrival, as a slow irruption between the lips, and which irritates the air in front with sudden force. With this pause, this gap we might capture the body as it tries to move forward, as it seeks to propel itself into a second body (129, emphasis in original).

Labelle understands the oral cavity to be alive with material forces (an agency of their own) such that hesitation reveals not an ontological weakness—a pathological lack—but a tensed subject "under duress by the force of a linguistic order" (131). The tongue stresses under the force of the linguistic order because the tongue is itself irrepressible (Sharp 2011). The structure of this linguistic order, what Deleuze and Guattari would call a "major grammar" (1987), moves always towards the closure or fixation of meaning and identity. In its drive towards unity it leaves no

place for hesitation. There is no common space for the voice to resonate, to become, to stutter. Rather, sovereign speech is a fixed and reliable stream of words that unproblematically appear in the word as authoritative commands (even the constative is here an order, a fixing of identity). The sovereign speaker is assuredly an efficient semiotic instrument: an optimized medium to transfer meanings and garner consensus.

We could here consider what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten call the "authoritative voice" that often takes charge within progressive movements—in their experience, Occupy—to overcode their possibilities with a singular voice. "The properly authorised and authoritative speech of a demand takes the form of a univocal, single speech. Essentially, a kind of sovereign speaker is now drowning out, or trying to collect within his own anthemic speech, all these other kinds of speech" (2013, 135). This ideal and artisanal model of speech that implicitly guides our practices of communication is nevertheless anti-political and thoroughly compromised by instrumental rationality.

Non-sovereign speech, on the other hand, is reconciled with the weakness of plurality and the contingency of the future. It takes as its model the crip voice that needs assistance from others to enter the world (and here always with some indeterminacy). Hesitation of voice and meaning is its *modus operandi.* As Arendt states, speech and suffering constitute two sides of the same coin—the former can only be meaningful insofar as it suffers before others in the common world. Non-sovereign speakers simply dramatize this exposed and vulnerable character of speech; they make no claim to ownership over language and thus do not aspire to master its embodied event nor the in-between of human sociality.[17] Crip speech—such as stuttering or

[17] It is, arguably, in this vein that Markell insists the attempt to master one's own words is not only violent but utterly futile. The inescapable bond between action and suffering highlights a tragic undertone to Arendtian action. Markell uses the term "impropriety" to denote this exposure: "a constitutive feature of human action: the very conditions that make us potent agents—our materiality, which ties us to the causal order of the world, and our

Tourette's, but also facilitated communication such as ASL interpretation or digital voice mediation—simply balks at the notion of communication as the act of a self-contained individual agent. What it reveals is voice and listening as *relational actions* rather than *poesic* instruments. The fully-intentional speaker cannot hold together "the simultaneous presence of freedom and non-sovereignty, of being able to begin something new and of not being able to control or even foretell its consequences" (Arendt 1998, 235). Non-sovereign speakers learn to *expect* partial understanding and recognition, and in this way offer a corrective to politics of recognition that coalesce around identity. "Language," writes Braidotti, "is not only and not even the instrument of communication but a site of symbolic exchange that links us together in a tenuous yet workable web of mediated misunderstandings" (1994, 14). We are connected not despite but because of the impossibility of pure understanding and recognition. Coming to terms with the partial character of meaning can dislodge "understanding" from its central position in the ecology of action. It is to ask *how* we mediate misunderstanding and how to do this more justly.

My point is nothing crass like: "since suffering permeates speech then 'all speech is disabled' or (even worse) 'everyone is disabled.'" The nonsovereign character of speech does not wash out stratifications of power. Rather, the crip instead of heroic speaker signals a different political heading, it opens a new horizon of action based on interdependency. Consider, for example, that the disability theorist Lennard Davis displaces the humanist subject (of compulsory capacity) to make space for a wounded "dismodernist" subject always already in need of care. Here, "the ideal is not a hypostatization of the normal (that is, dominant) subject, but aims to create a new category based on the partial, incomplete subject whose realization is

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plurality, which makes it possible for our acts to be meaningful—also make us potent beyond our own control" (63). "The attempt to become master of our own deeds and identity is not only doomed to fail," writes Markell, "but risks intensifying that suffering unnecessarily, even demanding that we give our lives for what will turn out to have been an illusion of control" (65).

not autonomy and independence but dependency and interdependence" (Davis 2002, 30). Immediate Arendtian objections surface: not only does the focus on identarian politics trade on whatness rather than whoness, but Arendt is careful to note that plurality itself and not "strength or weakness in the sense of *self-sufficiency*" (1998, 234; emphasis added) underlies her conception of non-sovereignty. Nevertheless, if dysfluency is a constitutive feature of being-together in plurality, then the question of *how* speech can enter the world (and thus *who* is permitted to act) does not reduce to identarian politics but continually reopens the question of who can count as political.[18]

[18] Important caveat: As both Nietzsche and Arendt repeat, while action is boundless it is always articulated within *some* sort of normative institutional, social, and cultural structure. Lois McNay writes: "In criticizing the false unity that the idea of identity imposes on that of action, it is important, however, to avoid falling into an equally as problematic assertion of the indeterminate or open-ended nature of action. The logic of action is one of neither pure determinacy nor indeterminacy. The uncertainties of social existence are always mediated through determinate social relations which themselves are at least partially expressed in the entrenched dispositions and tendencies of embodied subjects" (165-6). Just as the act of speech is never fully unified and mastered by an intentional subject, so is it never fully indeterminate.

—A Dysfluent Interruption

Dysfluency is a material excess, a persistent and sturdy resource to be "conserved" (Garland-Thomson 2012) in the face of ongoing attempts to secure in/through our bodies fluent meanings and the frictionless passage of time. One mode of resistance is thus to cultivate more dysfluency within the world, and make worlds themselves—their systems and horizons of meaning—stutter and gap. Derrida proclaims (in an echo of Hamlet) that "time is out of joint" (2006, 1), that the present is neither self-identical nor stable but split by the past and the possibilities of the future. William Connolly, in his Nietzschean reading of Arendt, similarly states that "in every moment, the pressures of the past enter into a dissonant conjunction with uncertain possibilities of the future. The fugitive present is both constituted by this dissonant conjunction between past and present and rendered uncertain in its direction by it" (144, 5). Fluency, when inscribed in a horizon of consensus, smooths over this "fugitive present" precisely because the rupture—"that uncertain process by which the new flows or surges into being" (144, 5)—is what makes politics possible. Fluent action has been tamed of contingency. But a crip politic takes the further step to recognize that this rupture is somatic, both experienced through and surging *from* the body. To assert that time is out of joint is, as both Freeman and Kafer explain, to say not merely that time is fundamentally fractured but that time's "heterogeneity can be felt in the bones," that time "has, indeed *is,* a body" (Freeman 2; Kafer 34). This places the crip (/queer) rather than abled body at the centre of chronopolitics.

To look for, expect, and create habitable worlds for disability requires a heuristic of indeterminacy that generates multiple meanings and relations, an embodied rupture "by which the new flows or surges into being" (Connolly 144, 5). Dysfluency offers a way to interrupt linguistic, discursive, institutional, and material processes that are too fluid, too pure, and too

convenient. And in this way, these stakes are always in part counter-eugenic. Garland-Thomson argues that "disability's contribution, its work, is to sever the present from the future. . . Disability contributes a narrative of a genuinely open future, one not controlled by the objectives, expectations, and understandings of the present" (352). Similar to fluency, eugenics is the attempt to rigidify the passage from the present to the future, trading in the present—legitimizing mass violence and injustice—for an imagined future and population that will never arrive. Garland-Thomson imagines disability as a *narrative* resource operating within the sphere of representation, but we might also locate this specific contribution of disability within the somatic. That is, to sever the present from the future requires that we enter rather than disavow dysfluency and its uncertainty. What, then, might it mean to desire dysfluency and its destabilizing effects within our world? What might it mean to cultivate friction, disjoints, and even rupture? How might dysfluency make space for new beginnings?

Kelly Fritsch (2015a), taking her cue from Foucault, has formulated this set of questions in terms of "heterotopia"—a radical form of social imaginary that always starts with the incompatible and discontinuous and moves towards multiplicity rather than unity. "If," she writes, "the neoliberal hegemonic social imagination limits what it is to have a body and what that body can do, then, the heterotopic imagination must work to open space for desiring disability differently, so as to be able to collectively practice and experience disability differently" (55). Fluency is one mechanism by which the "neoliberal hegemonic social imaginary" is enfleshed and by which the radical possibilities of disability are thus contained.

3. Cripped Action: Deliberation or Agonism?

Writing in a similar vein as Markell, Dana Villa suggests that the Western political tradition has repeatedly sought to purge action of uncertainty, to "reinterpret it in a manner that would allow the beginner to retain control over what he had started, to posit the end of action and realize its achievement" (1992, 278). It is this same impulse that expels disabled and other non-transparent voices from the public sphere. It is this same impulse that demands univocality and a sovereign mastery from the voice. The strange multiplicity of voices is an unruly force that exposes the public sphere to contingency and uncertainty. While I have, up until this point, primarily considered the political *character* of speech, we must now consider its *function* within paradigms of action. How is sovereign speech mobilized within/as a form of public rationality? How do the procedural constraints of action exclude disabled subjects?

In general, Arendtian scholars disagree about action's character and often divide into two camps: those for whom action is primarily agonistic or "expressive" and those for whom it is deliberative or "communicative." Each models a very different form of political life. As Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves explains:

> When the emphasis falls on the expressive model of action, politics is viewed as the performance of noble deeds by outstanding individuals; conversely, when [Arendt's] stress is on the communicative model of action, politics is seen as the collective process of deliberation and decision-making that rests on equality and solidarity (quoted in Villa 1993, 85).

Agonistic readers like Bonnie Honig and Villa stress the space of appearances where political actors theatrically disclose themselves through great deeds. This reading highlights Nietzsche's influence on Arendt. Readers such as Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Benhabib, on the other hand, dismiss the agonistic Arendt to derive a deliberative model of public space defined by equality and aimed at mutual understanding. The communicative (what Benhabib alternatively terms the

"associational") model of public space can emerge "whenever and wherever, in Arendt's words, 'men act together in concert'" (Benhabib 1993, 102). What matters from this individual standpoint is not excellence of speech nor rhetorical skill but ordinary skills of judgment and communication. For Benhabib, agonistic action that reveals the actor's singular identity fits discordantly with Arendt's commitment to human plurality as manifest in dialogic action.

In fact, the deliberative model not only avoids agonism but seeks *procedurally* to block its rhetorical functions from the communicative sphere. Habermas and Benhabib understand communicative action to bracket out the influence of economic and political power. Through dialogue, one takes up the objective stand of the "generalized other" (Benhabib 1986) such that validity claims can accordingly be raised and challenged by any participant regardless of gender, age, ability, race, or class. Within the sphere of rational discourse, all that matters is the content of one's rational claim that can be responded to with a "yes" or "no." To aim for consensus is a response to the vexing plurality of political voices. The competing plurality of political voices constitutive of modern democracy can only be addressed for Habermas through the establishment of valid moral norms to which every participant can consent. These generalizable norms are not transcendental—neither grounded in human essence nor ontological order—but *quasi*-transcendental, procedurally generated from the practice of discourse itself. Habermas terms this activity "communicative action," wherein participants state and defend their goals to each other in dialogue with the express purpose of reaching mutual understanding or consensus (1985). Thus can dialogue reach agreement without exclusion, the rational overcoming of difference. This is clearly a daunting project since, at least from a Foucauldian perspective, the very notion of consensus is inseparable from power relations producing the conditions of

validity. Any outcome of communicative action, no matter how diverse the participants, is a function of a certain perspectival vantage.

Yet considered within this formulation, the deliberative rather than agonistic model certainly appears more compatible with the project of disability justice. The crip must become a supercrip to achieve world-transformative deeds on a stage defined by fluency, competition, and hyper-masculine ideals of aggressiveness. In Simplican's terms, agonistic action seems deeply committed to compulsory capacity. Deliberative action, on the other hand, exhibits crip values of interdependence and solidarity. The deliberative model stresses what Simplican finds useful in Arendt's theory of action—that speech and action "are often collaborative, undertaken between people with a range of capacities" (2015, 102). Even though deliberative practices orbit around communication, dysfluent and other non-normative voices at least stand a fighting chance within contexts that aim at mutual understanding and recognition. Given an "ideal speech situation" (Habermas 1985), even the most marginalized of voices (for example, an intellectually disabled person who communicates through facilitation) might have their claims for justice weighed with equal consideration.

I wish however to suggest an alternate reading that retraces the horizons of both deliberation and agonism. While the sphere of rational deliberation can certainly be expanded to include disabled voices, I argue that insofar as this model is structured by the regulative ideal of consensus, it instrumentalizes the event of communication and thus smooths over the possibility of contestation from our material relations. On the other hand, the agonistic model need not be parsed through the heroic speaker. Agonism can rather be understood as the activity of calling the rules of political life and participation into question such that the communicative breaks and aporias generated by disabled speech *are themselves* contestations of what and who gets to count

as political. To privilege friction rather than agreement, misunderstanding rather than recognition, and the breaking rather than forging of a common-sense opens new ways of relating to and communicating with each other that are otherwise impossible. In order to reframe action, it is first necessary to locate the existing point of tension between the deliberative and agonistic models.

Broadening Deliberation

Benhabib resists the agonistic model, in part, because of its steep conditions for participation. Theatrical action implies norms and "choreographies" (Crossley 1996; Patterson 2012; St. Pierre 2015) of communicative excellence that privilege fluent (and "culturally neutral") speech. Yet it is worth noting that this same criticism has been leveled against deliberative democracy. Young, for instance, argues that the space of rational deliberation is hardly neutral but constituted by norms that privilege aggressive and combative voices. This leads to the devaluation of non-normative speaking styles. As she writes:

> Deliberative theorists tend to assume that bracketing political and economic power is sufficient to make speakers equal. This assumption fails to notice that the social power that can prevent people from being equal speakers derives not only from economic dependence or political domination but also from an internalized sense of the right one has to speak or not to speak, and from the devaluation of some people's style of speech and the elevation of others (1997, 63).

In practice, the act of speech is always negotiated within diffuse and ephemeral forms of power such as a sense of internalized authority. To this day, for example, I regularly feel that the fluent words which sometimes slip from my mouth deserve more attention, let alone consideration, from others than the dysfluent. I too have accepted at some level that agency resides in a masculinized and unified voice. It is in such ways that Young insists, *pace* deliberative theorists, that bracketing out social and economic power cannot produce a level playing-field where all

voices are heard equally. Both embodied and cultural styles of speech are in practice impediments to rational deliberation. Articulateness must be learned. These norms "are culturally specific, and in actual speaking situations in our society exhibiting such speaking styles is a sign of social privilege. Deliberation thus does not open itself equally to all ways of making claims and giving reasons" (63). Yet these diffuse forms of power are difficult to bracket or even articulate on the model of consensus insofar as the shared stratum of communicative intelligibility is the given backdrop against which validity claims can be made.

Moreover, if what matters in communicative action is the content of one's rational claim that can be responded to with a "yes" or "no," then clearly not *everyone* is able to participate. In the Habermasian view, children and those severely intellectually disabled are particularly disqualified since they are not capable of this stringent linguistic and rational activity. The stratum of intelligibility that makes discourse ethics and the goal of consensus possible structurally excludes certain types of communicative bodies. Habermas indeed is explicitly concerned with "distorted communication" (produced by forces like disability) where either the listening or the speaking capability of the participants cannot conform to the quasi-transcendental rules of communicative action (1985).[19] "In these cases of incomprehensibility," remarks Simplican, "Habermas turns to ideal speech situations wherein bodies, speech acts and perceptions perfectly align, but this turn . . . exacts the heavy price of exclusion. His solution to the stigmatization of unruly speech is to discipline unruly bodies" (2012, 215). Consensus as a rational process implies a type of *frictionless communication* where bodies are docile or invisible

[19] Whether or not this reflects his personal experience, Habermas was aware of the danger disabled speech represented to the project of mutual understanding. As he writes in a rare reflective moment, "my speech impediment [a cleft palate] may incidentally also explain why I have always been convinced of the superiority of the written word over the spoken word. The written form disguises the taint of the spoken" (2008, 16).

and speech acts are perspicuous. Distortion and noise do not exist in the ideal speech situation and bodies that incur such misunderstandings are accordingly excluded.

This gap between the ideal and concrete speech situation drives both Young and Simplican not away from but *towards* a more critical model of deliberation. Young seeks to make space for "non-rational" modes of communication such as greeting, rhetoric, and narrative, and to reform the rules of deliberation to account for cultural and embodied differences. Simplican has likewise argued that the tension between intelligibility and inclusion leads to the exclusion of disabled subjects when the latter is sacrificed to the former. Simplican thus desires a "reflexive deliberation" that challenges the norms of deliberation to make space for disabled voices within democratic practices. In the first place, she maintains that physical presence, in the absence of or in supplement to linguistic vocality, communicates the needs of participants. Secondly, she argues for an understanding of speech as collaborative in which deliberative participants can make claims together and thus shore up individual "deficits." If "deliberative democratic theorists fail to attend to the ways bodies communicate and, consequently, are unable to grapple with inequalities caused by bodily difference" (2012, 217), then for Simplican, unmooring the practice of deliberation from the hegemony of language can greatly expand the range of political participation and the place of disabled peoples within democratic societies. Thus "deliberative theory, once revised, can encourage informal and formal public confrontations of difference to overturn negative assumptions surrounding disability" (ibid). The power of bodies to communicate exceeds signification. The question that lingers in Simplican's account, however, is the *telos* of such revisions. Is she seeking inclusion by way of consensus and recognition in an attempt to fix the deliberative model, or something more radical? I argue in the final section that while Simplican perhaps lands somewhere in the middle, her account can be

buttressed by an agonistic reading of action. Before this final turn can be made, we must return once more to the deliberative / agonistic debate in order to challenge the deliberative axiom that more communication (and less misunderstanding) will produce a rational consensus.

Beyond Deliberation

Benhabib's sharp critique of "theatrical" action sets up a foil between the agonistic and the deliberative or "associational" Arendt. Yet Villa takes issue with this hermeneutical strategy itself and argues that in her curt dismissal of the agonistic Arendt, Benhabib misses something important. For Villa, Arendt highlights the space of appearances not in retreat from the facticity of modern democracy towards a Greco-Roman world, but rather to safeguard the condition of "worldliness" or the specific "feeling for reality" (1999, 134) that has been lost in modern societies. The commonness of the world that exists as a *shared object of care* is lost within mass society that collapses the public sphere into private interests.

Arendt understands reality to be perspectival in the Nietzschean sense yet necessarily plural—disclosed in our shared world that, like a kitchen table, "relates and separates men at the same time" (1998, 52).[20] It is only within the context of the shared objectivity of the world that we are seeable and hearable to one another. "Common sense," explains Arendt, "discloses to us the nature of the world insofar as it is a common world; we owe to it the fact that our strictly private and 'subjective' five senses and their sensory data can adjust themselves to a nonsubjective and 'objective' world which we have in common and share with others" (2006, 221). Without this feeling of worldliness and with the corresponding retreat to the private sphere,

[20] "Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear" (Arendt 1998, 57). Though note, as both Sara Ahmed (2006) and Zahari Richter argue (2017), that the kitchen table is not a neutral metaphor but laden with heteronormative and ableist / neurotypical assumptions and expectations.

mass society simply multiplies individual perspectives without their separation—erasing the epistemic conditions of *plurality* that underwrite the common world.[21] Without a shared object of concern and without the sustaining conditions of plurality, the common world (or the public sphere) cannot survive.[22]

Put otherwise, more communication (no matter how "rational") cannot rescue the public sphere. While Benhabib and Habermas share Arendt's concern with the decline of the common world, Villa argues that "they view this sphere in terms so narrowly formal that the 'recovery of the public realm' is identified with the achievement of a more 'deliberative' democracy" (151). Deliberative theorists seek to plug the loss of worldliness with rational deliberation geared towards consensus and place faith in rational dialogue to commensurate difference and disagreement. One consequence of this model is that it channels action by making language and the public use of reason the *sine qua non* of political life. As Adrianna Cavarero explains, this model "risks focusing too much on a language—guaranteed by understanding and rational norms—of which the speakers are nothing but a function" (193). Language, not the world nor judgment, is what forges the common bond between otherwise atomized individuals. "It becomes a universal bond that makes the linguistic community the most suited for constituting a democracy of individuals" (188). This warning chimes with Arendt's insistence both that debate

[21] The destruction of the common world not only occurs under the conditions of totalitarianism but also those of "mass society or mass hysteria" where "we see all people suddenly behave as though they were members of one family, each multiplying and prolonging the perspective of his neighbor. In both instances, men have become entirely private, that is, they have been deprived of seeing and hearing others, of being seen and being heard by them. They are all imprisoned in the subjectivity of their own singular experience, which does not cease to be singular if the same experience is multiplied innumerable times. The end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective" (Arendt 1998, 58).

[22] This, Villa argues, is why Arendt turns to the theatrical metaphor. Agonistic action—which constitutively includes the staging, the artificial space of equality, the feeling of worldliness—highlights the common world insofar as it calls forth judgment from the body politic. Villa argues that political judgment "helps to tame the agon by reintroducing the connection between plurality and deliberation, by showing how the activity of judgment can, potentially, reveal to an audience what they have in common in the process of articulating their differences. And what they have in common, contra Aristotle and contemporary communitarians, are not purposes *per se* but the world" (1992, 289).

rather than agreement is the goal of political life and that agreement, when it *does* occur, is produced through persuasion and rhetoric rather than the force of *logos* itself. That the deliberative model risks turning actors into functions of language is precisely what Simplican seeks to avoid by asking *how* bodies communicate in order to broaden political action beyond narrowly defined speech acts.

But perhaps most importantly, the deliberative model overstates the ability of language to forge understanding and resolve difference. "Benhabib and Habermas," writes Villa, "fall prey to a familiar delusion, namely, the idea that the more opportunities people have for debate and deliberation, the more their moral horizons expand, the more likely (in the end) they will come to a reasonable consensus" (1999, 151-2). The belief that more communication will lead to greater understanding (along with recognition) and thus agreement without exclusion is a modern fantasy that continues to persist, despite the fact that communication is as likely to produce discord as agreement. Paulo Virno, an Italian neo-Marxist (whom I examine in greater detail in the next chapter), similarly questions the capacity of language to produce equality and views misrecognition as the inevitable horizon of such attempts: "Located at the limit of social interaction, the eventuality of nonrecognition reverberates, even at its center, and permeates the entire web. Language, far from mitigating intra-species aggression (as Habermas and a certain number of happy-go-lucky philosophers assure us), radicalizes this aggression beyond measure" (2015, 19). Language—even when tamed and made rational by universalized procedural norms—is not the antidote to difference and social ills.

One answer, I suggest, is to own up to the impartiality of meaning. Consider again Braidotti's quote from above: "Language is not only, and not even, the instrument of communication, but a site of symbolic exchange that links us together in a tenuous yet workable

web of mediated misunderstandings" (1994, 14). Much like Arendt's critique of *poiēsic* communication, the event of language is for Braidotti constitutively broader than the transfer of univocal-meanings. And much like Cavarero's critique of deliberative democracy, the common bond is not the structure of language (which yokes individuals to procedural norms) but the shared and material act of exchange. Partial understanding and recognition are not the exception but the rule to meaning-making. Bodies and meaning are never transparent (fluent, or univocally articulate) in communication *such that* communication becomes the very shared negotiation of an ambiguous terrain striated by relations of power. "An act of communication," insists Rancière, "is already an act of translation, located on a terrain that we don't master" (2016, 84).

When stated in these terms, crip voices that are unclear and produce uncomfortable aporia and silence, that stretch and break temporal norms and perceptible worlds point towards not simply an ethic but a politic. The shared responsiveness needed to negotiate a web of misunderstandings denotes, in the first place, an ethical or "critical" practice of communication. As James Berger states in the context of disability: "insofar as language cannot be totalized (and so generates excesses, contradictions, incoherences, and other forms of resistance to composition and communication), interlocutors must work in order to understand each other—and, indeed, to understand themselves. Linguistic indeterminacy entails a practice that is both interpretive and ethical" (59). But this indeterminacy can also be imagined as a *political* practice insofar as the rough ground of crip communication offers a stark contrast to the smooth space of consensus production. If consensus and fluency are both the striving for univocality that represents *in toto* a unified body (whether social or corporeal), then dysfluency refracts the voice to reveal its internal plurality, the impurity of understanding, and the radically different communicative stance needed in such a terrain. In other words, I seek to understand dysfluency as an agonistic

action. To address the exclusion of non-normative speakers in all their embodied partiality, I thus turn from reasoning as consensus to reasoning as an ongoing agonistic relatedness. This second mode of reasoning does not shy from misrecognition, but structurally calls into question the rules that guide norms of intelligibility and recognizability through disruptions of intelligibility.

4. The Limit of Consensus

In a recent *New York Times* op-ed, Jay Ruckelshaus makes the case for an agonistic disability politic. The radical demands of disability politics cannot, he argues, be articulated against the backdrop of consensus. The moral consensus that structures and mediates our relation with disability in particular makes any substantive public discussion on the issue nearly impossible:

> Rarely, if ever, do people contest my claims that we must do more for those with disabilities: Greater access? Better employment training? More flexible school curriculums?"Of course!" they invariably respond. "Who could argue with that?" (2017, para. 3)

The consensus that disabled people deserve equal standing and opportunities may be ubiquitous but is nevertheless paper thin, and the moment the discussion treads beyond the shallow waters of individual acts of compassion towards systemic oppression—that is, as soon as the disablist hegemony upon which this discussion is staged gets called into question—a more basic and resilient consensus surfaces: namely, the eugenic axiom that the world would be altogether better off without disability (cf. Garland-Thomson 2012). "Like compulsory heterosexuality," McRuer explains, "compulsory able-bodiedness functions by covering over, with the appearance of a choice, a system in which there actually is no choice" (2006, 8). Compulsory able-bodiedness obscures its operations of assembling consent such that, while the desirability of able-bodiedness

is presupposed, it is offered as a simple choice within, for example, ablenationalist discourses of "inclusion" (Mitchell and Snyder 2015) or liberal eugenics (Agar 2004). This false choice is expressed for McRuer in the seemingly unanimous answer to questions like: "Wouldn't you rather be hearing?" or "Wouldn't you rather see?" As McRuer argues, "The culture asking such questions *assumes in advance that we all agree*: able-bodied identities, able-bodied perspectives are preferable and what we all, collectively, are aiming for" (9; emphasis added). In other words, the hegemonic force and momentum of systems that simultaneously produce and exclude subjects of disability issues from an apparent consensus on the undesirability of disability. "Of course!" they invariably respond. "Who could argue with that?"

Consensus in this way both masks the political character of disability and insulates the conditions of social transformation.[23] "Instead of facilitating change," writes Ruckelshaus, "false unity actually restrains change. It stifles the more substantive conversations true progress requires. And our inability to speak honestly—and contentiously—about disability shows how the politics of disability is in this sense *non*-political" (para. 9, emphasis in original). The ability to speak honestly—*parrhesiatically*—accordingly requires a different posture. Thinking and acting agonistically is to recognize that crip politics makes contested demands and necessarily stands at odds against the dominant culture. With Mouffe, Ruckelshaus holds that a robust agonistic theory can "tame" the antagonism of contemporary politics and transform adversaries into competitors, violence into struggle, and antagonism into agonism.

Yet if disability oppression issues from an apparent consensus on the undesirability of disability, then what exactly is this agreement? Post-Marxists (such as Mouffe and Laclau) and

[23] A Habermasian would say that this paper-thin consensus is not consensus at all because it is not founded on any genuine processes of deliberation. However, as I argued above, the procedure of communicative rationality itself sits uneasily with disability. Moreover, despite their differences, I suggest that both popular and procedural forms of consensus seek to erase "the contestatory, conflictual nature of the very givens of common life" (Rancière 2004b, 7).

cultural studies more generally locate the manufacture of consent in *ideological* vehicles necessarily articulated through language, media, and other cultural artifacts. Agreement is forged in the sphere of representation. Within this lineage, ideological meanings must be stabilized in the space between sign and referent: hegemonic conceptions of the world are produced and maintained through cultural systems that direct/flatten the *connotative* meanings of a concept to achieve a "near-universal" and "naturally given" ideological meaning (Hall 2006, 167). For example, that the association between "disability" and "suffering" seems to be near-universal within our cultural lexicon (cf. Garland Thomson 2012) would point not to a deep truth of the human species, but rather to the massive politico-cultural apparatus that has mapped an ableist set of meanings to the referent of "disability" so successfully as to naturalize the concept and produce a consensus. This effort to stabilize meanings according to a normative grammar is precisely the reason that disability activists are compelled to switch the term for "intellectual disability" every few decades when the previous terms acquires a pejorative meaning. No matter the signifier, the connotative meaning of intellectual disability will necessarily be ableist when coded by compulsory able-bodiedness.

Ableist and eugenic ideology assuredly contribute to the apparent consensus on the desirability of able-bodiedness but, as Jon Beasley-Murray suggests in *Posthegemony*: *Political Theory and Latin America,* ideology is always a secondary inscription: an echo of the material in the sphere of representation. This is particularly manifest within the embodied domain of fluency. It is thus perhaps more fruitful to parse this consensus through the *mode* by which compulsory able-bodiedness circulates and is translated across different ideas, practices, and institutions rather than isolating the specific sites where this consensus, this hegemony, is produced. Stated otherwise, what are the biopolitical conditions and effects of consensus?

Fluency can here be understood as the material production of a common ground or a *common sense*. McRuer argues that "the experience of the able-bodied need for an agreed-on common ground" is a common experience that "links all people with disabilities under a system of compulsory able-bodiedness" (8), and I suggest that this "common ground" of disability oppression is a *how* as much as a where or a what. That is, a common ground is never just found, but must be cleared away and maintained with effort through time. Fluency attempts to cover over political spaces—to mitigate (when it cannot eliminate) interruption and disruption—thus facilitating in one move the rationalization and naturalization of embodied difference that *seems* to emanate from everywhere and nowhere. In Rancierian terms, fluency is a "policean" operator that divides the sensible world so that some bodies are heard as speech and others noise.

Dissensus

Rancière is decisive in his critique of consensus and, particularly relevant here, locates politics in the ordering of the perceptible world that divides visible from invisible, speech from noise. Recall that, for Rancière, politics is the very contestation over the existence of a common stage and common sense. He defines the dispute about what is given, "about the frame within which we see something as given" (2004a, 304), as "dissensus"—the process of rupturing the givenness of who is counted as part of the demos.[24] Given that what is typically understood as politics is actually for Rancière the *displacement* of politics, consensus means "not simply the erasure of conflicts for the benefit of common interests. Consensus means erasing the contestatory, conflictual nature of the very givens of common life" (Rancière 2004b, 7).

[24] The political subject *herself* is as such the site of politics, defined as "a capacity for staging such scenes of dissensus" (304). The human as a political entity is constituted and reconstituted in the opening between a radical equality and what is given, and this ongoing process of (self-) creation is the vehicle through which revolutionary politics is carried forward.

Consensus reduces conflict to technocratic problems. The distribution of the sensible allocates a meaning and place to everything without remainder such that—in Honig's terms—having found the right "fit" between subjectivity and a political order, (neo)liberalism can get down to its primary task of administration.[25] The assumption of fittedness "occludes the processes that daily produce selves into subjectivity. Once those processes are occluded, the remainders they engender can be accounted for only as independent, prepolitical, or apolitical artifacts" (Honig 5-6). Precisely those aspects of the community capable of calling the division of the sensible into question are depoliticized and thus rendered politically inert. "At the core of consensus," reminds Rancière, "is the dream of an administration of affairs in which all forms of symbolizing the common, and thus all conflicts over that symbolisation, have been liquidated as ideological specters" (2004b, 8). A dissensus thus seeks not to patch up misunderstandings by appealing to a common ground, a process which only reinscribes the givenness of certain political voices, but rather calls for gaps in meaning within which the radical project of calling into question "who gets to count" can occur.

There is a crip politic lurking here. Rancière articulates a form of radical equality where anyone can make their voice of account and thereby short-circuit orders of domination founded on recognition. ("Radical" in relation to liberal projects of recognition where the identity of both

[25] Honig's distinction between "virtue" and "*virtù*" theories is here helpful. For Honig, virtue theories of politics are those which "displace conflict, identify politics with administration and treat juridical settlement as the task of politics and political theory" (1993, 2). Virtue theorists—like Kant and Rawls—understand the self to be congruent with and enabled by their particular conception of political order and subjectivity. Finding the right "fit" between political (geometrical) ordering and subjectivity leaves no remainder such that politics can get down to its primary task of administrating justice. Fissures in political order are as such to avoided; each virtue theorists "yearns for closure and each looks to politics, rightly understood, to provide and maintain it" (3). *Virtù* theorists on the other hand "see politics as a disruptive practice that resists the consolidations and closures of administrative and juridical settlement for the sake of the perpetuity of political contest" (2). *Virtù* theorists argue that the political sedimentation of rights and laws is never sufficient for producing a just society. There will always be an excess that haunts and resists our political order—the attempt to settle conflict and remove the scourge of political remainders can only be an act of bad faith. This is true not only in the fit between political organization and subjectivity, but in our political practices themselves. No resolution is ever final, to rest upon juridical settlement is only to defer responsibility and to be greatly surprised with that particular *agōn* manifests itself again.

stage and actors are fixed.) If, as Jean-Philippe Deranty explains in his reading of Rancière, "the end of exploitation demands that speech be given back to the exploited," then this is a project of making communication more accessible. "The role of the intellectual," he continues, "is to help them express their own experience, their thoughts, and their desires for recognition, by helping to *pull down the barriers* that exclude their speech from the authorized forms of speech" (140, emphasis added). The struggle of dominated voices to be heard as worthy speakers re-configures the common world and transforms social reality. We can easily imagine this as the work of disability activists and allies. Yet radical equality is for Rancière produced and guaranteed by *logos* and is thus self-limited. That is to say, *logos* is the common denominator that stages dissensus: if exploitation, Rancière argues, divides along the line of a rational community of speech versus those who utter noise, the dominant class can nevertheless only rule—the dominated class can only serve—if the dominant admit the common speech of the Other. *Logos* is the shared stratum, both the condition of possibility of action and its limiting horizon. Politics requires that noise become speech; that it signify. This schema thus restricts the transformative possibilities for disability justice.

Agonistic Relatedness

In the final turn, I wish to articulate an agonistic disability politic in the space between Arendt and Rancière. Arendt helpfully positions action as an unpredictable beginning forged in plurality, yet arguably clings too tightly to recognition staged on a common world. Rancière, on the other hand, helpfully reads action as the conflict over the perceptible world, the conflict for the very conditions of commonness. The emphasis on rupture over understanding is a generative theoretical shift for disabled voices that inevitably fail at compulsory capacity. However

Rancière problematically requires *logos* to guarantee his egalitarian thesis. Following Tully (2008), I suggest a type of middle path that steers Arendt in a slightly different—and Wittgensteinian—direction. Action is here to refuse the common world as a *fait accompli* and rather to seek its recomposition.

The trailhead is once again Arendt's distinction between *praxis*—a beginning and carrying through—and *poesis*. For Tully, Arendt moves away from the examination of politics as an accumulation of policies, explanations, and conditions towards understanding politics as a type of game: that is, "what citizens do and the way in which they do it" (136). Politics reduces neither to systems of management nor meta-management, but life lived together (even if today in more abstract ways). Tully reads in Arendt the Wittgensteinian insight that language is best understood not as looking for metaphysical explanations, but rather examining the way in which the "language-game" is played. As Mouffe writes (also in the context of Arendt): "Rules for Wittgenstein are always abridgments of practices, they are inseparable from specific forms of life" (1999, 749). Rather than focusing on the motivations for political action, the expression of a substantive identity, the deep meanings behind political activity, or the ideal "rules" by which politics is/should be played, we should ask *how* the game of politics is played.

This immediately practical approach trades on the notion that political norms and principles are not inscribed in nature but are emergent properties of political action—of *using* and debating concepts. Tully argues that politics is accordingly not rule-bound in the sense of having circumscribed boundaries. Rather, politics is a game where we are free (in theory) to modify the rules, to call into question the meaning of fundamental concepts like "freedom," "ability," or "the human." Or put more strongly, politics is precisely the game of calling its own rules into question. Articulating agonistic political theory in these terms allows Tully to glean the

revolutionary impulse from Rancière's notion of dissensus without the guarantor of *logos*. Tully, like Foucault, would find 'the police' a far too stagnant concept that doesn't properly attend to the way in which politics is lived and daily contested *within* and not simply against relations of power. And as I will argue in the conclusion to this dissertation, the axiom of equality that underlies Rancière's theory is a necessary yet ultimately not sufficient condition of action.

Agreement will always be necessary to some degree—in Arendtian terms, action must be stabilized if it is to have effect. Or as Mouffe writes, "Consensus is needed on the institutions that are constitutive of democracy and on the ethico-political values that should inform political association, but there will always be disagreement concerning the meaning and methods of implementing those values" (2002, 89). That is to say, there will always be moments of overlapping agreement, but agreement will always be partial and conditional—always open for contestation. We find moments of agreement not despite agonistic activity, but through such contestation.

Moreover, it is important in this regard to emphasize that agonistic relatedness does not simply redraft the conditions of recognition that make consensus possible; consensus is no longer the arche-goal of political participation. It is this agonistic activity of calling the rules of political life and participation into question, not mutually agreed norms of validity, that binds individuals together. Put otherwise, "what citizens share is nothing more or less than being in on the dialogues over how and by whom power is exercised, which takes place both within and over the rules of the dialogues" (Tully 2008, 147). Of course, late-liberalism excludes marginalized voices from these dialogues all the time. But redefining action around disagreement rather than understanding holds open the space of politics such that marginalized voices are never structurally precluded from this activity.

In his focus on modifying the rules of politics, Tully distances his position from Arendt's and is aligned more closely with Foucault's. While Arendt understands political activity as vying for recognition—ultimately to be seen in one's "whoness" not "whatness"—that agonistic activity has little to do with calling the rules themselves into question. Foucault on the other hand argues, "In a given game of truth, it is always possible to discover something different and to more or less modify this or that rule, and sometimes even the game of truth" (Tully 2008, 297). Modifying the rules of the game is itself the agonistic game of freedom. "Precisely," writes Tully, "the freedom of speaking and acting differently" (143). Yet notable in our context, speaking and acting differently modifies not only the game, but also the players within the game. Contesting the rules of a game breaks up sedimented forms of subjectification and thus might produce new modes of subjectivity *and* intersubjectivity: new ways of relating to and communicating with each other that are otherwise impossible. This subversive thesis holds promise for rethinking the place of non-normative voices within political space.

Let us then return to disabled speech, reformulated as a type of communicative agonism. Common to disabled speech is an assumed unintelligibility in varying degrees. Reasoning as agonism sublates the anxiety around the unintelligibility of non-normative speech patterns. The communicative breaks and aporias generated by disabled speech *are themselves* contestations of what and who gets to count as political.[26]

[26] Any attempt to hear without distorting the multiplicity of voices requires that one also problematize the production of consensus *within* the self. Communication can assumed to be frictionless only insofar as friction has already been settled within the subject. The perfect alignment of intention, body, expression, and perception secures the transparency of language and in turn the possibility of mutual understanding. This means, in one regard, domination over the existential refrains of subjectivization. Any strategy, Guattari writes, against a deterritorialized and delocalized capitalism must "confront [its] effects in the domain of mental ecology in everyday life: individual, domestic, material, neighborly, creative or one's personal ethics. Rather than looking for a stupefying and infantilizing consensus, it will be a question in the future of cultivating a *dissensus* and the production of existence" (2000, 50; emphasis in original). Such work, I will suggest, is capture well by the Cynic practice of *parrhesia.*

Simplican explains that during the drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Sue Swenson, a disability rights advocate, and her physically and cognitively disabled son Charlie, who is "non-verbal," were present before the attendees to advocate for Charlie. When the delegation of advocates broke for lunch, Sue asked for volunteers to take Charlie, who was sitting in the front row (in his wheelchair) grunting with pleasure, with them. As Simplican tells the story, "Reasoning that the delegation of disabled advocates could intuit her son's political rights and needs without assistance, Sue suggested that they could easily take him to lunch. As the crowd watched Swenson's son in apprehension, no hands were raised to volunteer" (2012, 221). Simplican reads this moment of anxiety as an embodied form of political participation. Charlie communicated his needs in a radically different mode than linguistic competence.

The ambiguity in Simplican's argument turns on this point. Reflecting upon the experience of Sue and Charlie later in the piece, Simplican writes, "For Charlie Swenson, his participation at the UN was valuable for the way in which it prompted new reactions and reframed the political problem" (225). Simplican here represents Charlie as engaged in an agonistic relation with the UN participants. His embodied presence creates dissensus, a break in the givenness of who gets to count in deliberation. Yet she continues:

> This was only possible, however, because of the ways in which Sue's lifelong attentiveness to Charlie made possible her ability to communicate with him, as well as the delegate's openness to listen and their commitment to disability rights. Like any other deliberant, Charlie's presence *risks misinterpretation*, but locating him within a network of support is one such *defense* (225, emphasis added).

We might ask if Charlie was engaged in reasoning as consensus or agonism. The fear of misinterpretation and the requisite need of defense could indicate that communicative distortion

remains a horizon to be overcome. In this regard embodied presence and communicative interdependency widens the range of intelligibility but does not question its basic structure.

To read Charlie's activity as an agonistic modality of reasoning sidesteps tired questions about the thresholds of linguistic competence needed to participate in rational deliberation and be considered political. Returning again to Foucault's insistence that the agonistic game of freedom also modifies the players within the game, we might additionally consider the way in which intersubjectivity itself is malleable. That is, Charlie contests not only the rules of participation, but also the given possibilities of being and communicating with others. Linguistic speech acts may be the dominant form of communicating politically, but bodily presence, groaning, growling, and smiling may all be salient means of reasoning that cannot be cashed out linguistically or even meaningfully.

There is nothing to mourn in giving up the ideal of purity (Shotwell 2016). Susan Bickford notes that "if we automatically coincided, formed a not-very-differentiated whole, we would not need to speak or listen or argue" (1996, 4-5). The model of consensus and unity would ultimately forgo the democratic activity of dialogue if possible. Dialogue is here merely, and unfortunately, the necessary route to common understanding. Like Tully's critical historical methodology, a politics of noise alternatively understands the embodied struggle of communication to be the activity of politics itself. Misunderstanding and heterogeneity are therefore not to be avoided inasmuch as they are the forward impulse of a politic that is never stable and never simply given. In this space, disabled voices are not just welcome but needed.

5. Conclusion: Refusing Recognition

Creating dissensus in political space (the public sphere, the self) could be the work of disabled communication. The salience of disabled speech is, I suggest, derived not from salvaging scraps of meaning from dysfluency that then ground agonistic contestation, but from the ruptures themselves dividing common sense and rendering meaning unmeaningful. Against the logic of universal reasoning decried by Young, speaking incoherently is neither private nor incommunicable. Rather, speaking in ways that fracture communication is by very definition political.

In conclusion, I seek to add my voice to the choir—the cacophony—of those who reject recognition. Recognition is a late-liberal strategy that apprehends social difference within a logic of state-identity. Many who survive on the margins of this project understand that the doors of "the commons" will forever be closed, and thus band together in what Harney and Moten (writing in the radical black tradition) call the "undercommons." Refusal is here an alternative political strategy. Jack Halberstam explains:

> If you want to know what the undercommons wants, . . . what black people, indigenous peoples, queers, [crips,] and poor people want, what we (the "we" who cohabit in the space of the undercommons) want, it is this—we cannot be satisfied with the recognition and acknowledgement generated by the very system that denies a) *that anything was ever broken* and b) *that we deserved to be the broken part*; so we refuse to ask for recognition and instead we want to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls (2013, 6; emphasis added).

Crips too dwell in the undercommons. The grammar of the undercommons is minor—anything but fluent—such that any refusal of recognition must refuse the demand for fluent and univocal articulations that precondition belonging and participation. In refusing what has been refused us, subaltern communities, as Povinelli might say, can focus their energies into creative practices of self-elaboration that reshape somatic fields of perception (2011, 100).

Elizabeth Grosz explains this politic (2002) as a choice between a "theory of the subject" and a "politics of imperceptibility." While theories of recognition have been useful in gender and critical race theory (e.g. Cornell and Murphy 2002), Grosz maintains that the ecology of recognition leaves critical projects starved of both concepts and practices. Recognition cannot think beyond the sovereign self: an individual creature defined by reason and right. The subject, she explains, is left constrained from without—by the very structure of recognition that requires acknowledgment from the other—and from within—by the subject's own structures of identification (465). A politics of imperceptibility focuses instead on those *inhuman* forces "that are both living and non-living, macroscopic and microscopic, above and below the human" which we acknowledge and allow "to displace the centrality of will and consciousness" (470). The projects of mutual-understanding, visibility, and self-expression all index the human subject—the subject of *logos.* But dysfluency breaks the word apart to reveal the multiplicity of inhuman forces at work in speech and communication.

This signals a different political heading since a politic of imperceptibility does not aim to be heard and understood but to transform the immanent power of the "we." Grosz writes:

> This struggle is not a struggle by subjects to be recognized and valued, to be and to be seen to be what they are, but a struggle to mobilize and transform the position of women, the alignment of forces that constitute that 'identity' and 'position,' that stratification that stabilizes itself as a place and an identity (471).

The struggle from the perspective of dysfluency is similarly to transform the constellation of (human and inhuman) forces that produce and fix the identity of "disabled speaker." The struggle is to re-elaborate ourselves beyond the pathologizing gaze—to reject the demand for intelligibility. I return to this prospect in the conclusion.

The attempt to rearticulate action (and reclaim speech from liberal paradigms) hits a major snag, however, when we consider the bleeding of political action into political economy.

Post-Fordist economies of knowledge, semiotics, and subjectivity (or so-called semiocapitalism) put to work and thus proliferate fluent and intelligible speech. Moreover, Virno insists that, *contra* Arendt, the domain of labour has reterritorialized the public sphere which was once the sole domain of politics. "It is not," he argues, "that politics has conformed to labor; it is rather that labor has acquired the traditional features of political action" (2004, 51). Post-Fordist labour is a virtuosic performance that occurs in the midst of others, reveals one's singularity, and is marked by contingency and natality. The claim that labour mimes (and even further, supersedes) Arendtian action is surely contentious and must be examined in greater detail. Yet even if Virno overstates this point, the larger claim is still in play: communication has been thoroughly co-opted by capital. How might disabled speakers reclaim agency under these conditions? This is the motivating question of the following chapters.

Chapter Two: Communicative Labour

> In the post-Fordist context, in which language has become in every respect an instrument of the production of commodities and, therefore, the material condition of our very lives, the loss of the ability to speak, of the "language capacity," means the loss of belonging in the world as such.
>
> —Christian Marazzi, *Capital and Language*

I examine in this chapter the fluent underpinnings of both post-Fordism and the literature that criticizes it. Transformations over the past fifty years have internalized communication within the operations of capital to render it productive, which has changed both labour and the conditions of communicative disability. It is possible and indeed tempting to read the transformations of capitalism through the labour-capital relationship. Marxist analyses of political economy famously start bottom-up: from the working class and their blood, sweat, and desire. The exploitation of human labour-power provides *the* crucial insight to understand the creation of value and accumulation of capital. It thus makes sense that Marxists would seek to understand the mid-twentieth century transformation of industrial "Fordist" to post-industrial "post-Fordist" capitalism from the stage of labour.

The Italian Autonomous tradition in particular read technologies of automation, communication, and cooperation that had permeated the means of production to be a reaction to the subjective power of labour. In this view, "it is not capital itself that is revolutionary, . . . rather, [capital] is forced to change and transform itself by its antagonistic confrontation with subjective labour power" (Read 2003, 13). Autonomists such as Mario Tronti, Antonio Negri, and Paolo Virno accordingly locate the beginnings of post-Fordism in the joint student-worker strikes and sabotages within France and Italy in the 60s and 70s. The *refusal* to work as a strategy of resistance is where the term "*post-operaist*" or "*post-workerist*" comes from. It is this

refusal, they argue, particularly under conditions of alienation, that has forced capital's hand to develop and integrate automated machines and ICT into the mode of production. Technology like automated assembly lines replace human labour as the main force of production, which in step requires human attendants with "intellectual" capacities to oversee and regulate the process. This movement frees living labour to engage in more loquacious, social, and ostensibly "human" work in the tertiary and quaternary sectors, productive activities that emerge when semiotic machines become immanent to the production cycle.

It is such that post-workerists such as Paolo Virno and Lazzarato argue that post-Fordism be defined as the movement from "mute" to "gregarious" labour. I suggest in this chapter that we focus, more specifically, on the *mode* of gregarity. Fluency is a form of "virtuosity" or performative excellence of both language and social space; a social performance needed to enter the workforce. Virtuosity returns us to Arendt and her discussion of political action. A virtuosic activity is a *doing* not a *making*, which requires the presence of others for its fulfillment. Virtuosity is thus by definition political for Arendt: it cannot occur within work or labour but only in the disclosive midst of others. Yet Virno alternatively insists that within post-Fordism, politics does not imitate labour, but labour has rather acquired traditional features of political action (2004, 51). Virtuosic performance has become the model for labour. In fact, Virno takes Arendt's lead in highlighting the speaker in particular as the virtuoso par excellence.

I here focus on fluent speech in the mode of *social subjection* and will accordingly bracket (as much as possible) machinic enslavement and its operations from the chapter's analysis. I take Virno as representative of the neo-Marxist discourse of cognitive capitalism and argue that this discourse presupposes its own conditions by positing what Virno terms a "generic ability to speak" that is only intelligible through the neutralization and clearing away of

embodied, subjective difference. The organization and insertion of tongues, brains, and voices into capitalist machinery is something we must explain. Cognitive capitalism assumes but in fact must (attempt to) create frictionless spaces and temporalities of communication—reconstituting our opening to the world to meet the demands of capitalist accumulation. The faculties and subject of communication did not simply show up for work one day fully formed; "communicative competency" as a generic ability has a history that must be grasped before resistance to the lure of semiocapitalism can be thought.

I back this claim with a Foucauldian genealogy: tracing the historic production of production, the subjection of the speaking subject in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. The critical opening for a genealogy of fluent speaking subjects comes through Virno's insistence that the "communication industry" or "culture industry" is the post-Fordist *industry of the means of production*. I argue that an articulate and fluent population is a historical biopolitical development and that the *dispositif* of speech correction—now termed SLP—emerges during the early twentieth century in order to make the capacity of speech manageable, efficient, and thus productive. In other words, SLP is an industry of the means of production: a mixed technology of both social subjection and machinic enslavement. I conclude with the suggestion that the capacity of fluent speech (and being a *subject* of fluent speech) is today a form of human capital.

1. Fluency and Work

The capacity to regulate informational and affective flow has become a baseline for postindustrial labour. In "Wanted—Straight Talkers: Stammering and Aesthetic Labour," Clare

Butler makes an ethnographic study of aesthetic labour with reference to people who stutter (PWS). She interviews 36 male participants from the UK for her study.[27] The language of "straight talk" comes from one participant, Brian: "I mean there's loads of things I can do, why don't they think about that. There's more to work than talking straight isn't there? Some straight talkers talk rubbish but that's alright is it?" (2014, 724). Butler describes how speaking dysfluently is a *disqualifying* mark within work contexts that increasingly require the act of speech. Her participants describe their dysfluency as disqualifying their masculinity.[28] Not "speaking straight" means not matching dominant choreographies of communication or patterns of fluency that, as I have argued elsewhere, are intertwined with performances of masculinity and straightness (St. Pierre 2015a). That is, by disrupting an instrumentally ordered world constituted by a disembodied and hegemonic conception of time, the male disabled speaker fumbles the social performance of masculinity and threatens their recognition as a speaking subject. As Butler explains, "their level of fluency directly impacted on whether their message was heard and acted upon" (725) by co-workers and customers alike. Dysfluency, by transgressing social norms, disqualifies a message *qua* message.

Butler discusses the now-common inclusion of "essential: excellent communication skills" on job application packages. A particular form of speech and face-to-face communication skills are deemed necessary to gain entrance into the labour market. Some of her participants use language of gatekeeping explicitly. Simon, for example, remarks:

> What's an interview for other than to find out if you'll fit in? Yes it's about being able to do the job but it's more than that, it's will you fit with us, do I like you, will the team like you, and the clients, customers will they actually listen to you, respect you, and being like

[27] Much of the research on stuttering involves male participants since stuttering occurs male to female at a ratio of 4:1.

[28] "The men discussed the omnipresent quest for sounding right in the workplace and described their inability to achieve the required level of speech fluency in terms of a verbally activated emasculation" (730).

> this [a PWS] doesn't fit that. You are not respected. I've never been respected for what I have to say. This voice is not what they [organizations] want (723).

What disqualifies Simon's speech from work in this description is not (direct) failure at job performance, but the failure at a certain style of embodied, affective labour. The dysfluent voice exposes the boundaries of social tribes.

Butler emphasizes that PWS experience and internalize the changing work environment in complex ways. Recognizing that hirability and promotion depends more and more not just on getting words into the world but doing so in a *certain way* that sets people at ease and navigates complex social codes deftly, many of her participants felt burdened by the emotional labour of performing fluency in the workplace. "However," Butler continues, "they typically considered that this effort toward speech fluency is necessary and that this quest for sounding right is right, despite its frustrations" (728). The embodied work—the strenuous effort—of transforming one's speech (one's self) to meet able-bodied norms of verbal communication is taken to be an unfortunately necessary project. Stutterers internalize the desire for straight talk which marks subjects in hierarchies of belonging. Straight talk denotes social confidence and authority (in hegemonically masculine fashion); it opens social doors and produces opportunities to ascend within hierarchies. It opens hegemonically normal and straight futures (St. Pierre 2015; Kafer 2013). Butler moreover insists that unlike many other disabilities like dyslexia, stuttering is not accommodated at work. People expect, she writes, accommodations for various forms of communication difference (Braille, screen readers, etc) but not for disqualifying performances of speech. Perhaps fluent speech is today simply too essential for work. Maybe post-Fordism cannot do without straight talkers.

Disability Studies at Work

The field of disability studies emerges from the premise that disability is not a biological characteristic of individual bodies and minds, but a complex interaction between corporeality and social, discursive, and material processes—a "social and political category of difference" (Erevelles 2011, 2). The binaries of normal/abnormal, abled/disabled are historically specific means of managing corporeal variation, not an inscription in nature. This point is made well by Tremain, who argues that biological differences are "materialized as universal attributes (properties) of subjects through the iteration and reiteration of rather culturally specific regulatory norms and ideals about (for example) human function and structure, competency, intelligence, and ability" (2001, 632). Tremain, and by proxy, Foucault, have in mind a vast array of biopolitical technologies that individualize, categorize, sort, and manage human bodies and populations according to norms of efficiency. Just *one* set of such technologies that produces regulatory norms and ideals of human functioning is the exploitation of living labour coeval with capitalism—wage labour, mass production, rent, assembly lines, Taylorization, etc. While Foucault generally concurs with Marx's analysis of political economy, Marx, in his estimation, errs in totalizing the space of critique, by universalizing socio-economic exploitation at the expense of contemporaneous modes of governance (such as domination and subjection) within modern society (Foucault 2003b, 130; 1980a, 101-102). This is the methodological position I will likewise assume here. Marx provides a useful analytic for parsing the constitution of communication disability in semiocapitalism that must, nevertheless, be shored up by an account of the multiple and even conflicting biopolitical strategies operative in the social field that produce fluent speaking subjects.

In any case, Marxist disability scholars follow the historical contours of political economy to demonstrate how the categorization of "disability" is a correlate of rationalized and standardized relations of production (e.g. Gleeson 1999; Oliver 1994; Russell and Malhotra 2002; Slorach 2015). The capitalist law of value is predicated on the "socially necessary labour time" needed to produce a given commodity; an average that is both a general equivalency against which surplus value can be measured, and a mobile norm used to extract ever more surplus value from labouring subjects. The bourgeoisie seeks to drive down the socially necessary labour time through an iterative remaking of production processes and disciplinary technologies upon the body. Brandon Gleeson quotes Andrew Ure, a Scottish scholar who in 1835 noted that "the object of the new factory discipline was to train formerly independent workers to 'renounce their desultory habits of work' in order that they might 'identify themselves with the unvarying regularity of the complex automaton' (Ure, 1967: 13; cited in Gleeson 1999, 107). Yet while the standardization of work is necessarily applied across the entire labour force, it impinges on the embodiments of some more than others.

Put otherwise, disciplining the body to move in precise, repeated, and quick measures was a feat not all could accomplish. The rhythms of industrialized capitalism effectively destroyed the socio-economic contexts that valorized the labour of disabled people in pre-capitalist eras (Gleeson 101), such that "disability became an important 'boundary' category whereby people were allocated to either a work-based or a needs-based system of distribution" (Russell and Malhotra 2002, 214). Maintaining a highly exploitable workforce demands a categorization of difference—seemingly grounded by medicine in biology—that can be used administratively to segregate charity (or welfare) from productive subjects. "By focusing on curing so-called abnormalities, and segregating those who could not be cured into the

administrative category of 'disabled'," Russell and Malhotra explain, "medicine cooperated in shoving less exploitable workers out of the mainstream workforce. So, just as capitalism forces workers into the wage relationship, it equally forcefully coerces disabled workers out of it" (214). "Disability" is in this way a social and political category used to sort human difference according to the needs of capitalist production, a category that emerges as a social *problem* (to be managed by a sprawling state apparatus) set against the ceaseless demands of industrial capitalism.

While this reading of political economy and disability is surely generative, Nirmala Erevelles warns against drawing a univocal relation between political economy and bodily difference. Erevelles rather situates disability as the "ideological linchpin utilized to (re)constitute social difference along the axes of race, gender, and sexuality in dialectical relationship to the economic/social relations produced within the historical context of transnational capitalism" (2011, 6). Any proper attention to the material conditions of disability will necessarily find race, gender, and sexuality knotted together. At the same time, Erevelles insists that analyses of social difference within transnational capitalism do not hang together without a politic of the disabled body. Disability theorists regularly point out the lack of attention to disability within social and critical theory (e.g. Davis 1996; Garland-Thomson 2002; Tremain 2013), and Erevelles argues more specifically that the social relations of production and consumption within transnational capitalism are increasingly refracted through ability and disability. Semiocapitalism must accordingly be approached intersectionally. It is not enough to claim with Virno that "nobody is as poor as those who see their own relation to the presence of others, that is to say, their own communicative faculty, their own possession of a language, reduced to wage labor" (2004, 63). Our productive relations to others do not reduce to operations

of wage labour because they are also racialized, gendered, and shaped by ableism in ways that reproduce hegemonic and productive social structures. Adjacent to how women's work in the home was considered "non-productive" before Marxist feminists demonstrated that it reproduces the social relations of capitalism (Federici 1975; 2012) so, I will suggest, has the production of fluent semiotic capacities and social relations gone unnoticed by their beneficiaries while structuring and enabling capitalist production.

Mute to Communicative Labour

Post-workerists like Virno, Berardi, and Lazzarato suggest that we can mark industrialism from post-industrialism by a degree of sonority: the movement from mute to loquacious labour. Workers were silent in the factory, in part because factories were noisy. Franco Berardi notes that they "were forced to stand by the assembly line surrounded by a hellish metallic clanking noise; it was impossible for individuals to exchange a word, since the only comprehensible language was that of the machine" (2009, 106). Factories were so large and noisy that in the 1960s, critical thinkers often made incommunicability a criterion of alienation. Mute labour was however not simply accidental but intrinsic to the rationalization of work. As Virno explains of labour within Fordism, "Production is a silent chain, where only a mechanical and exterior relation between what precedes it and what follows it is allowed, whilst any interactive correlation between what is simultaneous to it is expunged" (Virno 2001, par. 1). I suggest that the division and standardization of labour did not expunge communication per se, but rather displaced communication, particularly intersubjective communication, within the complex mechanisms of the factory system—its surfaces, bodies, gazes, and actions. This rationalization dissolves the need for human *subjects* to communicate through language such

that, as Virno states, labourers are related to one another and the means of production externally and thus silently. Work was only ever silent from the logocentric position that assumes communication is primarily intersubjective and dialogic.[29]

The displacement of communication within the factory system is made clearer through an analysis of abstract labour and "living labour." Marx famously draws a distinction between concrete and abstract labour: the former is labour considered in its material, particular, and qualitative modality while the latter regards labour in its general, homogeneous, and quantitative modality (1992, 29). Labour expended in the abstract mode is called "labour-power" and is measured in standardized temporal units. It is this homogenizing feature of labour-power congealed in commodities that makes commodities commensurable: "the labour, however, that forms the substance of value, is homogeneous human labour, expenditure of one uniform labour power" (27).

The expenditure of labour-power is only salient when indexed according to the ableist-laden "socially necessary" time needed to produce a given commodity. That is, each "unit" of labour power is equivalent "so far as it requires for producing a commodity, no more time than is needed on average, no more than is socially necessary" (27). Labour-power generalizes the time it takes an average human worker to produce a commodity under normal conditions of production and with the average degree of skill. We should thus read the word "average" critically since this is never a simple quantitative mean, but a cultivated norm produced by the

[29] We can also consider that from a critical race perspective, Moten and Harney object to the above post-workerist characterization of this history: "Whiteness is why Lazzarato does not hear industrial labor. Whiteness is nothing but a relationship to blackness . . . but in particular a relationship to blackness in its relationship to capital, which is to say the movement from muteness to dumb insolence which may be by way of bringing the noise. But the noise of talk, white noise, the information-rich environment of the gregarious, comes from subjectivities formed of objectified labor" (56).

exclusion of disabled and otherwise inadequately productive bodies from the equation.[30] Nevertheless, for Marx, the capitalist creates value by purchasing labour-power and selling the resulting commodity for more than the amount of socially necessary labour-power invested in that commodity. To put it otherwise, the appropriation of surplus value is exploitation: not simply the flow of net income but the difference between paid and unpaid labour-time of the producers. It is for this reason that, as productivity is pressured upward to ensure economic growth, more and more workers become functionally "disabled" if they cannot meet new norms of productivity.

Communication is seemingly absent from the calculus of labour-power and surplus value. Yet it is important to recognize with Jason Read (2003) that abstract labour is not a passive and homogenized capacity, but a docile mode of the active and unruly force possessed by human subjects to create something new, an excessive power that the bourgeoisie must continually reduce and discipline into a calculable energy (83). Marx refers to this generative capacity, albeit inconsistently, as "living labour" (1993, 295-6). As Read argues, capitalism must produce *while constraining* the indifferent capacity to work, developing the "potentiality of the subjectivity of labour while at the same time reducing the possibility for conflict and antagonism" (2003, 11). A primary aspect of living labour to be considered is sociality, cooperation, and communicability. As workers were gathered in factories they formed increasingly complex networks of cooperation, constitutive of yet exceeding the mode of production that capitalism must continually displace and suppress.

[30] Davis, for example, argues that "we tend not to think of progressives like Marx as tied up with a movement led by businessmen, but it is equally true that Marx is unimaginable without a tendency to contemplate average humans and think about their abstract relation to work, wages, and so on. In this sense, Marx is very much in step with the movement of normalizing the body and the individual" (1996, 29).

Within early twentieth century factory systems, the requisite level of cooperation was simple enough that the panoptical gaze of the foreman in the centre of the factory floor could bind silent workers to their quotas. Communication was displaced in and thus contained by this gaze and the route systems of tasks assigned to individual workers by the foreman. However, greater coordination and systematization was needed when manufacturing employment doubled from 1880 to 1900, and then nearly again from 1900 to 1920 (Jacoby 2004, 30). The technology of "scientific management," also called Taylorization, was accordingly used to mechanize and deskill the labouring process and thereby minimize the collective capacity for resistance while optimizing the interface between workers, tools, and machines. This involved, Jacoby explains, "breaking a task down into its component parts, timing these parts, eliminating 'unnecessary motions,' and then arriving at minimum time for task completion" (33). The attempt to standardize living labour nevertheless catalyzed the passage from mute to communicative production by building up an excess of communication. That is, the effort to silence labouring subjects generated an excess of communicability that capitalism struggled to control within Fordist frameworks. Consider Antonio Gramsci's critique of scientific management:

> Taylor is in fact expressing with brutal cynicism the purpose of American society—developing in the worker to the highest degree automatic and mechanical attitudes, breaking up the old psycho-physical nexus of qualified professional work, which demands a certain active participation of intelligence, fantasy and initiative on the part of the worker, and reducing productive operations exclusively to the mechanical, physical aspect (1971, 302).

While Taylorism breaks apart the psycho-physical nexus of human cooperation and communicability, this dissolution is simply one stage in capital's unfinalizable development of subjectivity. Taylorism does not and *cannot* silence labour but rather redirects linguistic communication to a complex bureaucratic network and anatomo-political apparatus in the attempt to control the sociality of living labour within rigid channels. In addition to externalizing

intersubjective communication within a "silent chain of production" (Virno 2001, para. 1), the increased complexity of manufacturing under Taylorism generates a new plane of bureaucracy: an information-rich army of low- and mid-level managers to gather and process data so the upper management could coordinate production and allocate resources (Jacoby 2004, 31).

Despite the efforts to silence labourers such that they relate to one another mechanically and externally, living labour continued to haunt the industrialized capitalist mode of production. "As the number of co-operating workers increases," explains Marx, "so too does their resistance to the domination of capital, and, necessarily, the pressure put on by capital to overcome this resistance" (1992, 449). Increasingly complex production generates collective power that resists capital: this is a basic contradiction of capitalism.[31] Taylorization buckles under the force of living labour insofar as the mechanization of labour simply leaves the worker with more time to think. "Not only does the worker think," Gramsci writes, "but the fact that he gets no immediate satisfaction from his work and realises that they are trying to reduce him to a trained gorilla, can lead him into a train of thought that is far from conformist" (1971, 310). Industrialization falters in its attempt to totalize control over the intellectual, creative, social, and communicative power of the human subject. The capitalist mode of production characterized as Taylorism and Fordism mobilizes communication while remaining external to it—what is termed a *formal* subsumption of communication. A real subsumption, or an internal restructuring of social relations to bring communication within the capitalist mode of production, was needed to grasp living labour more fully. In other words, capitalism needed to produce subjectivities of communication.

[31] Note Berardi's recognition that "industrial labor was characterized mainly by boredom and pain. . . . Therefore industrial workers found a place for socialization in subversive working communities, political organizations or unions where members organized against capital" (2009, 84).

2. Cognitive Capitalism and the Speaking Subject

As indicated above, "cognitive capitalism" is a post-Fordist articulation of the conditions of immaterial labour that attends predominantly to *signifying* semiologies operative at the *subjective* level. Another way of saying this is that cognitive capitalism routes the heterogeneous set of productive activities that make up "immaterial labour" through the human subject and through language. This tenet is simultaneously the greatest strength and weakness of cognitive capitalism. In their favor, those like Virno and Marazzi diversify the *post-workerist* discussion of general intellect beyond *technical* machinery to show that socialized knowledge has also taken root in the bodies and social interactions of workers themselves. Virno, for example, argues that labour is increasingly defined by the "spectacle" of communication (2004, 60). Cognitive capitalism doubly puts language to work insofar as linguistic action is both the product *and* the means of labouring activity. "The chain of production has, in fact, become a *linguistic chain*, a *semantic connection,* in which communication, the transmission of information, has become both a raw material and an instrument of work, just like electricity" (Marazzi, 50; emphasis in original). The media, health, education, service, and various other sectors of the economy attest to the duality of communication at work; the "raw materials" of language are deployed in social interactions and immanently transformed—*through their use*—into a spectacle as semiotic-product. Marazzi suggests that communicative interaction is central even to financial markets, which function in his reading according to "mimetic rationality" or a herd mentality that relies on speech acts to solidify collective opinion as referential norms. "The individual investor," explains Marazzi, "does not react to information but to what he believes will be the reaction of the other investors in the face of that information" (26). The self-referential nature of financial

markets, disconnected from underlying economic value, makes communicative interaction a central ingredient within these complex assemblages.

However, as noted above, not everyone agrees that labour has become interaction. The Midnight Notes Collective, an Autonomist faction composed of George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici (among others), argues that cognitive capitalism has wildly overstated its claims. For example, Caffentzis points out that in its exuberant exposition of globalized information processes, cognitive capitalism quite conveniently eclipses the grim network of sweat-shops, chemical factories, and mining operations in the Global South (2013). He and Federici also note that the term "immaterial labour," which applies to affective or care labour as much as financial investing, erases the tremendous efforts of feminist Marxists to have the material consequences of gendered labour recognized (2007). Such critics accordingly contend that the notion of cognitive capitalism ultimately distracts from the material conditions of globalized capitalism and lacks true revolutionary potential.

My concerns with cognitive capitalism in this chapter are related yet distinct. I seek to rethink some fundamental premises of post-Fordism by problematizing the communicative body and subject. I take Virno as representative of the post-workerist stream of thought and thus focus specifically on his argument. In particular, I submit that cognitive capitalism not only naturalizes what Virno refers to as the pure "ability to speak" that grounds communicative labour but does so necessarily. Routing the heterogeneity of immaterial labour through the subject and through language necessitates a linguistic faculty that is altogether indeterminate and thus *capable* of carrying out an indefinite set of productive activities. Speech must pick up a tremendous amount of slack when the significations of human subjects are thrust to the fore of contemporary capitalism. In this manner, perhaps cognitive capitalists presuppose their own conditions by

positing a "generic ability to speak" that is only intelligible through the neutralization and clearing away of embodied, subjective difference.

Virtuosic Labour

An accessible entry into this thesis is the concept of "virtuosity" employed by both Arendt and Virno, although in disparate contexts. "Virtuosity" denotes an excellence within the performing arts where, as Arendt explains, "the accomplishment lies in the performance itself and not in an end product which outlasts the activity that brought it into existence" (2006, 154). The meaning or purpose of a virtuosic activity is immanent to its performance; thus by extension virtuosity requires the presence of others for its fulfillment. As Virno writes: "lacking a specific extrinsic product, the virtuoso has to rely on witness" (2004, 52). For Arendt, recall, "virtuosity" characterizes political action which cannot occur within work or labour but only outside the realm of necessity—that is, politics. Yet through the figure of the virtuoso, Virno challenges Arendt's distinction between politics and labour and suggests that labour within cognitive capitalism has increasingly taken on virtuosic characteristics traditionally belonging to the political: occurring in the midst of others, revealing one's singularity, and marked by contingency and natality. In other words, virtuosic labour is not simply interaction but the very type of interaction Arendt claims is possible only in the political sphere.

As I stated in the first chapter, a sharp contrast between *praxis* and *poiēsis* lies at the heart of Arendt's political philosophy. It is not surprising, given this contrast, that Arendt worried about contemporary politics imitating both work and labour. Arendt interprets the project of nation-state building as a form of *poiēsis* or work that attempts to produce a lasting and stable artifact exterior to political activity (1976). Moreover, the massification of labourers within the

factory, toiling away at meaningless work, and working simply to reproduce their labour-power, stands in stark contrast to political action. Virno nevertheless maintains that post-Fordist labour has rather acquired traditional features of political action (2004, 51).

Like singing or acting, the performance of human language has its fulfillment in itself: it does not produce an external object and requires the presence of others in a publicly organized space. What sets the speaker apart from other virtuosos for Virno is that she, making use of the *potentiality* of language, requires no script: "With the infinite potential of one's own linguistic faculty as the only 'score,' a locutor (any locutor) articulates determined acts of speech: so then, the faculty of language is the opposite of a determined script, of an end product with these or those unmistakable characteristics" (2004, 56). A singular utterance is determinate—manifesting a historical vernacular and grammar—but for Virno the *act* of speaking never follows a pre-determined script. The so-called ability to speak and communicate exists as a pure *dynamis* or potentiality, guided only by the general intellect.

Marx defines "general intellect" as socialized knowledge that is objectified in fixed capital (1993, 706). However, commentators like Virno recognize that general intellect is not merely congealed as technology but is also manifest in living labour. "We should consider the dimension," Virno writes, "where the general intellect, instead of being incarnated (or rather, cast in iron) into the systems of machines, exists as attributes of living labour. The general intellect manifests itself today, above all, as the communication, abstraction, self-reflection of living subjects" (2004, 65). General intellect is externalized knowledge, thought made public as it is rendered productive. When channeled into industrialized machinery, general intellect calls upon and exploits indifferent and deskilled labour-power that renders cooperative activity insignificant. However, here is the twist. The continued erosion of skilled labour is predicated

upon the development of general intellect: of sociality, cooperation, and communication. Capitalism is a moving contradiction that both presupposes and undermines its own conditions, cultivating the general intellect through the attempt to displace it.

This antagonistic movement can be articulated more concretely through Marx's distinction of formal and real subsumption. Formal subsumption is "the imposition of the basic forms of the capitalist mode of production—commodity production and wage labour—on preexistent technical and social organizations of production" (Read 2003, 105). Cottage industries, for example, are characterized by pre-existing technologies and social structures turned towards capitalist ends. Artisans worked from their homes with tools and raw materials supplied by the bourgeoisie. Capital here confronts non-capitalist spaces, relations, and processes without transforming them. Real subsumption, on the other hand, is "the restructuring of social relations according to the demands of capitalist valorization" (104). The factory system systematically destroys pre-capitalist social relations and production processes in order to install a "specifically capitalist" mode of production more capable of extracting surplus value with less social, institutional, and logistical friction. Much like the spread of cancerous cells, capital does here not confront an exteriority *as* exteriority, but transforms it from within.

In the context of communication, gathering workers in the factory and "silencing" their labour begins a transformation in the social and technological conditions of production (Read 109). Among the conditions transformed by real subsumption is the subjective power of living labour, which, one the one hand, must continually be reduced to labour-power: a socio-biological *technology* that will interlock with wage labour, scalable commodity production, and the creation of surplus value. However, particularly as general intellect expands into increasingly complex technologies that engender more intricate social relations, real subsumption necessarily

intensifies and makes aspects of living labour—cooperation and communication—that are not reducible to labour-power productive. Or, to state the correlative, "What is put to work in real subsumption are not only the powers of nature contained in the machine but also the power of sociality, of social relations, that make possible the machine but are also ultimately not reducible to the machine" (121). This transformation is both antagonistic and impure. Capital's inability to totalize the subjective power of labour generates remainder that expands worker's desires; yet inversely, the excess of communicability and cooperation is almost immediately internalized by capital at a different level.

Really subsuming communication can thus be understood as an effective means to control living labour. As semiotic operations circulate within the normalized and thoroughly regulated patterns of capitalist valorization, the semiotic faculties are transformed, their indeterminacy pared down and/or erased, which subsequently rigidifies these patterns into channels that communication *must* flow through. Putting communication to work has in this manner produced a dense and expansive network of lithe social relations that maximize communicative inputs and outputs.

As a result of restructuring sociality around operational norms of communication, the subject herself becomes invested in capital, with alloyed consequences. On the one hand, Berardi acknowledges that putting communication to work enriches experience, especially when compared to the "silent" alienation of the assembly line. Semiocapitalism calls upon creative and affective faculties such that workers invest the "best" of themselves into production rather than the most general and demeaning capacities of labor-power. Yet at the same time, communication put to work "loses its character of gratuitous, pleasurable and erotic contact, becoming an economic necessity, a joyless fiction" (Berardi 2009, 87). Those who come home after a long

day at the office know well semiocapitalism's affective drain and the accordant desire to sit silently without a smile all evening.

The effects of becoming subjects *of* labour extend beyond the instrumentalization of sociality and creativity. Internalizing cooperation and communication releases capital into all corners of social life since the virtuosic worker quite literally embodies the means of production, putting it to work through a plethora of everyday tasks. "Every act of production," explains Read, "incorporates knowledge, instruments, discoveries, and social relations that are not present in the limited space or time of the factory. The factory becomes a social factory" (122). Yet if capital has saturated the social sphere, this results as much from the informatization of the social as from the dissolution of the factory walls. Capital has transformed the field of life into an informational network of, for example, genetic markers, biometrical data, affect, and language games pervious to post-Fordist exploitation. The post-Fordist dissolution of the factory walls and the informatization of the social sphere together result in a semiotic overload. Faculties of attention are mobilized to consume and thus complete the productive circuit of communication. By putting the general intellect to work, capital renders subjects *qua subjects* increasingly isolated and depressed while nevertheless connecting them more densely within the productive semiotic-social field.

It would seem, *prima facie*, that the real subsumption of subjectivity is what Virno means when he claims the general intellect as the score for the virtuosic speaker. Rather than merely channeling into fixed capital, the general intellect "unfold[s] in communicative interaction, under the guise of epistemic paradigms, dialogical performances, linguistic games. Public intellect is one and the same as cooperation, the communicative competence of individuals" (2004, 65). If general intellect is the score for the virtuosic labour of speech it should follow that the

particularity of these epistemic paradigms and linguistic games would matter. After all, epistemic paradigms, linguistic games, and relationality itself are *always* variegated, constitutively inscribed with power (Heyes 2003). More to the point, the social norms governing "communicative competence" and the ability to navigate social relations in productive ways must be taken into account if one is to argue that the contemporary and specifically capitalist mode of production exploits communicative labour.

This is not the case for Virno since he ultimately takes the faculty of language to be formally and not really subsumed by capital. Virno is of course cognizant of the socio-political management of language, recognizing that "the relation between 'score' and virtuosic performance is regulated by the norms of capitalist enterprise" (2004, 66). Yet while he recognizes that putting language to work requires a historically determinate form, even here, regulatory norms simply *mediate* the score and virtuosic performance. Virno resolutely defines the score, or general intellect, not in relation to socio-political norms, but as the biological and psychological "linguistic faculty" itself. Since this faculty—what he terms the "pure ability to speak"—grounds virtuosic labour and thus, in turn, cognitive capitalism, bringing into relief the ableist underpinnings of this conception offers a potentially radical critique of both contemporary capitalism and Marxist theory.

The Generic Faculty of Language

What Virno terms the "linguistic faculty" or the "generic faculty of language" is not a linguistic structure or a determinate act of linguistic meaning. Rather, in a nod to Arendt, Virno identifies this faculty by zeroing in on the utterance itself: the fact of speaking, the performance of language, the insertion of speech into the world. The generic faculty is an indeterminate capacity that can be applied within innumerable contexts in innumerable ways. It "shows by

means of a single enunciation that we have the *ability* to speak, the *power* to say something" (2015, 44, emphasis in original), a power he elsewhere describes as the "pure and simple 'ability to say'" (2004, 91). Such claims should arouse suspicion. Virtuosity is a type of excellence or mastery—what does the generic power to speak or the pure "ability to say" amount to? What assumptions of sovereignty are in play? What naturalizing conceptions of ability are being employed by universalizing competence? What and/or who must be excluded for this faculty to be rendered intelligible?

Virno attempts to mitigate implicit concerns about the generic faculty by distinguishing between the generic faculty and "historico-natural languages." This second term denotes the infinite storehouse of possible yet determinate speech acts etched with social and cultural relations (2015, 34). The generic faculty represents the *ability* to say, while historical-natural languages represent *what* we say. Both of these are modes of the general intellect and both are accordingly a type of script. The generic faculty as script manifests in an openness, a sociability, the power (*puissance*) to cooperate with others. The performance of the script as a historical language, on the other hand, produces the semantic content of our utterances. Yet while these two scripts are correlates—always bound in the enunciation—and together enable the action of the linguistic human animal, one of the scripts exists in the contingent realm of the political while the other is thoroughly naturalized. Note the contrast: "The historical language nearly anticipates, in both form and content, the concrete actions that the speaker can perform, while the faculty itself is *formless*, and empty of content: it is an indeterminate power, always heterogeneous to any specifiable action" (2015, 44, emphasis added).[32] I will suggest that

[32] The notion of a pure generic faculty *is* more resistant to critique than it first appears. For example, Virno claims that this "simple ability to speak" is a "biological endowment common to the entire species" (2015, 34) that has "remained unchanged since the age of Cro-Magnon" (2015, 99). Yet, the potential nature of the linguistic faculty shields Virno from much of the criticism often leveled at Evolutionary Psychologists (e.g. Hall 2012; O'Donovan

securing the linguistic faculty as formless and indeterminate power depends on casting aphasia and dysfluency from the political sphere. The pure ability to say is premised on the neutralization of disability.

It warrants asking why Virno clings so tightly to the notion of a biological invariant. What is at stake? Weighing in on the 1971 Chomsky-Foucault debate, Virno contends that the poststructuralist rejection of "human nature" has rendered critical theory unable to theorize innate characteristics such as language: "The paradoxical result," he writes, "has been the inability to see how . . . the biological invariant has been *managed* by contemporary forms of production and power in historically determined ways" (2015, 176, emphasis added). Isolating the invariant from socio-political mutability is necessary for Virno to track the overlay of power, the specific management of language by discursive regimes and capitalist modes of production. I believe, however, that Virno problematically couples two related yet distinct phenomenon: the dissolution of the unified subject and an inattention to the politics of speech. Drawing a causal link from the former to the latter ironically leads Virno to posit a faculty of language that can recognize neither its own ableist, fluent constitution nor, subsequently, the production and exploitation of fluent subjects within cognitive capitalism.

Rather than a "formless" linguistic faculty, as Virno submits, it is perhaps more generative to imagine the faculty as "unfixed." The faculty in this second reading is a constitutive aspect of one's openness to the world such that the "ability to speak"—taking my cue from Foucault—is a capacity that emerges always *through* one's socio-political and cultural relations. (Put otherwise, one always speaks in/as an assemblage with multiple human and

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2013; Stotz and Griffiths 2001). Virno is not claiming that *homo sapiens'* ability to speak is a psychological mechanism stable across time and resistant to change. Nor is he claiming that a person born mute lacks the generic faculty. Indeed, as he writes, "If we identify the faculty with a given set of specific structures, we are not really dealing with the faculty, but with the minimum common denominator of historical languages" (Virno 2015, 193).

inhuman forces.) Both configurations of the linguistic faculty retain their indefinite and indeterminate character, which is the condition of possibility of natality, yet the construing the faculty as unfixed makes thinkable the variegation of one's openness to the world, the constitutive relations forming the "power to say something" (2015, 44). Positing a linguistic faculty that is unfixed does not imply a relativistic floundering as Virno seems to think, but simply means that the political management of language must be understood in/as a relation rather than a superimposition over a pre-determined capacity. Naturalizing the so-called ability to speak—securing it as a pre-existing and stable faculty to which power applies *a posteriori*—limits the range of Virno's analysis and the available possibilities for thinking beyond cognitive capitalism.

For Virno, the linguistic faculty conceived as a pure *dynamis* hinges on an unfinalizable "openness to the world," where the "world" signifies a context that "always remains partially undetermined and unpredictable" (2008, 17). The human animal experiences a persistent maladaptation with her environment in this formulation that she must continually attempt to alleviate through social-semiotic relations. Being open to the world is accordingly characterized by both an absence and excess that together produce an unstable state of uncertainty, aggression, and panic (2008, 19). Just as the linguistic faculty cannot be reduced to a determinate set of actions, so is the species-specific aggression of the human animal "variable to the point of being immeasurable" (2008, 17-18). Virno stresses the point that openness is never a pure condition and can lead to genocide as easily as to collaboration and solidarity.

The linguistic upshot of this indeterminacy is what Virno terms a state of "aphasia," a scientific-medical term that refers to a communication disability (usually the inability to comprehend and form words) caused by damage to the brain. Virno indulges in metaphorization.

Given, he writes, "the overabundance of stimuli that are not connected to one operating task or another provokes a constant uncertainty and a disorientation" (2008, 17), openness appears as an aphasia or wordlessness that the human animal never leaves behind but always reperforms in each enunciation (2015, 96). What does this mean? For Virno, each act of speech traverses the negative horizon of communication—*absentia linguae*, silence—in its actualization. Language is accessed through an originary lack that must continually be overcome. Using the language of "aphasia" in this context is politically questionable; the disability rights motto "nothing about us without us" comes strongly to mind. While reading "aphasia" as a hesitant, crip movement through language is not in itself incongruous with a radical disability politic, even here it remains exceedingly easy to metaphorize, to overstate the importance of the Word and eclipse the generative movements of silence manifest in aphasia. Put otherwise, I do not wish to exploit aphasia in the service of dysfluency. I recognize, however, that aphasia and dysfluency are governed by a shared logocentricism, a system of oppression that must together be resisted from many quarters of the disability community.

Given the necessarily political nature of disability, possibly the most intriguing aspect of invoking aphasia in this context is one that only gets mentioned in passing. Namely, if language must be acquired through the aphasic each time anew, it can also be lost. This precarity is significant for tracing the politics of speech, since the fear of losing language, of losing one's footing in the world, takes on a heightened and specifically political valence within post-Fordist societies:

> In the post-Fordist context, in which language has become in every respect an instrument of the production of commodities and, therefore, the *material* condition of our very lives, the loss of the ability to speak, of the "language capacity," means the loss of belonging in the world as such . . . Since panic manifests itself in the loss of the capacity to speak, as the disarticulation of language, the physical incapacity to name or recall objects (aphasia

> or dysphasia), it is the faculty of language, language as a possibility of existence which we are afraid to lose (Marazzi 2008, 131; emphasis in original).

Social norms, institutions, grammars, and language games *may* partially stabilize one's existential condition, yet the threat of being thrown back on the openness of the world always lurks on the tip of one's tongue. This risk of losing citizenship within language or being detached from the material condition of our lives cultivates and sustains an imperative to erect language into walls, absurdly porous though they might be, that demarcate social and political hierchies. The aphasic, in other words, circumscribes and haunts post-Fordist labour. This is true not just symbolically but politically insofar as the management of communicative competence, as I will argue in the next section, is rooted in a biopolitical and eugenic production of articulate and fluent subjects.

I suggest that Virno and Marazzi invoke aphasia and dysfluency (not to mention paralysis) as unproblematic foils for the insertion of language into the world. This embodied traversal of the linguistic horizon can be approached from the perspective of non-sovereignty. If language materializes through silence, we must resist imagining its entrance as magisterial. Consider the way Virno relates linguistic action to ambiguation: "When we perform a particular action or we say something specific, we are setting aside, for a while, our inarticulate *dynamis*, eschewing its inherent uncertainty" (2015, 2000). The trouble with this phenomenology is that the voice is far too stable *and* stabilizing: Virno understands the voice to dispel uncertainty at the first possible moment due to its presumed authority. Virno's uptake of linguist Emile Benveniste, who suggests that each speaker must *appropriate* his or her language in the aphasic enunciation, is here revealing. "It would be nonsensical," Virno writes, "to appropriate something that is already ours" (2015, 194). Even stripped of its colonial inflections, the "appropriation" of

language is a political declaration of hierarchies and relations of power embedded within the act of speaking.

The fluent and determinate voice might accordingly be understood as a product of the logocentric and anthropocentric matrix of cognitive capitalism. The "pure ability to speak" is at worst complicit with, and at best a function of the capitalist desire to individuate and make speech compatible with labour-power and surplus wage extraction as human capital. This voice is an uncoincidentally optimal linguistic medium for semiocapital.

I previously suggested that Virno's identification of the general intellect with the virtuosic score can be indexed to the real subsumption of subjectivity: of sociality and communication. Yet taking stock of the argument so far, it is perhaps more accurate to say that Virno's generic faculty is only *formally* subsumed by cognitive capitalism. Recall how Read defines formal subsumption: "the imposition of the basic forms of the capitalist mode of production—commodity production and wage labor—on preexistent technical and social organizations of production" (105). In Virno's schema, the capitalist mode of production accesses and exploits the generic faculty as an externality; social and productive systems manage the *ability* to communicate without restructuring it according to the demands of capitalist valorization. How could it be otherwise? The purity of the linguistic faculty places it ostensibly beyond the reach of even capital. As a result, while Virno rightly laments that "nobody is as poor as those who see their own relation to the presence of others, that is to say, their own communicative faculty, their own possession of a language, reduced to wage labor" (2004, 63), he is unable to account for the ways that hegemonic and productive social structures are reproduced. Perhaps the politicization of speech is regularly neglected because the linguistic ability has been thoroughly naturalized by the very systems Virno seeks to understand.

It is thus difficult to take seriously Virno's claim that "public intellect is one and the same as cooperation, the communicative competence of individuals" (Virno 2004, 65) when *competence* is apolitical, incapable of being problematized. It is equally difficult to square away his wider conclusion that "in the execution of innumerable tasks and functions what matters is not the familiarity with a certain kind of enunciation, but the ability to produce any sort of enunciations; it doesn't matter what we say, but the simple ability to say it" (Virno 2015, 90). The virtuosic labourer displays an adroit command over language and sociality that smacks of neoliberal flexibility and responsibilization. Virtuosity in this way reads much like communication rendered internal to semiocapitalist valorization, like living labour that has been tamed to flow infinitely within regulated and productive channels, making it complicit with the discourse and production of human capital.

The critical opening for a genealogy of fluent and productive speaking subjects comes through Virno's insistence that the "communication industry" or "culture industry" is the post-Fordist industry of the means of production:

> Traditionally the industry of the means of production is the industry that produces machinery and other instruments to be used in the most varied sectors of production. However, in a situation in which the means of production are not reducible to machines but consist of linguistic-cognitive competencies inseparable from living labour, it is legitimate to assume that a conspicuous part of the so-called "means of production" consists of techniques and communicative procedures (2003, 61).

Virno identifies the industry of the means of production with the "culture industry" since the generic faculty has already been naturalized and thus removed from the equation. Thus, Virno's claim that "the culture industry produces (regenerates, experiments with) communicative procedures" (61) must be read *through* the production of fluent subjects of signifying semiologies, which is an industry that draws upon and exploits ableist, classist, and neo-colonialist norms and relations within the subject itself.

3. **The Industry of the Means of Production: A Genealogy of Fluency**[33]

My guiding question in this section is quite simple: how was speech made into an object pliable to the operations of biopower and the interests of capital? How, more specifically, were fluent and determinate speaking subjects produced? A couple of theoretical points must be attended to before shifting into this more historical mode. Given that Virno routes semiotic labour through "the subject," Foucault offers a helpful starting point to fray the edges of fluent speech. For Foucault, "subjectivity" represents not a primordial footing in the world but the historically specific (that is, modern) mode by which human beings come to relate to themselves and are identified within society. Subjectivity is a correlate of modern biopolitical imperatives to regulate the productive capacities of a population and is in this way both an entity and process. That is, while the subject must be unambiguously representable (i.e. fluent) within bureaucratic and discursive structures as, for example, a "woman" or "Canadian," subjectivity is inherently unstable and is continually reproduced and maintained through technologies of social subjection. This form of power "applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him" (2003b, 130). The subject is a verb that becomes a noun. Biomedical regimes, for example, (re)produce the subject of medicine through a diffuse set of actions, relations, and technologies that govern how one relates to oneself and others under the doctor's expert gaze (e.g. desiring to be "healthy," managing "risk," submitting to biomedical "authority"). Put inversely, the medical-industrial complex has come to speak the truth about medicalized subjects such that we now willingly submit—or more accurately, subject—ourselves to their disciplinary practices.

[33] Parts of the research for this section are derived from Joshua St. Pierre and Charis St. Pierre, "Governing the Voice: A Critical History of Speech-Language Pathology," *Foucault Studies* 24 (2018): 151-184.

The subject of fluent speech is the product of a vast array of discursive and material operations upon the self, of which medicine is but one, that individuate language, the enunciation, rationality, and agency. Individuating speech renders the dysfluent and polyvocal insertion of speech into the world a tractable operation of biopolitical subjects (congruous with human capital and wage labour). Fluency makes subjects intelligible qua subject. When, as I will argue, dysfluency emerges as a social problem in the early twentieth century, subjection yokes it to individual psyches, bodies, and behaviors—to faculties and discourses that can be overcoded by biopolitical regimes of truth. Contemporary capitalism produces, as a product, subjects of fluent speech.

Particularly in the context of disability, it should moreover be stressed that social subjection gains biopolitical efficacy through its enmeshment with social hierarchies. "By assigning us an individual subjectivity, an identity, sex, profession, nationality, and so forth," writes Lazzarato, "social subjection produces and distributes places and roles within and for the social division of labour" (2014, 24). Subjection conforms individuals to social roles and places (such as man/women, boss/worker) that others must recognize and that one must recognize in oneself (Foucault 2003b, 130). It both articulates and replicates productive—i.e. oppressive—social hierarchies. In general, then, the desired end of this biopolitical technology is fluent subjects whose roles are "solidly established [with] . . . as little room as possible for interpretation and dispute" (Lazzarato 2015, 74). Governing subjects is premised on perspicuous distinctions and minimal friction; becoming a subject of determinate and fluent speech is a distinctly social movement. "Good" speech has always been defined in contrast to the speech of, for example, racialized peoples, foreigners, women, homosexuals, and the working class. Fluent speech and social mobility are conjoined, particularly through the concept of human capital. A

"history of the present" (Tremain 2015) is accordingly needed to show how fluent speaking bodies are the products of history, a history that could have been otherwise.

The second theoretical point is that tracing the patterns of subjection is not simply a Foucauldian but also a Marxist concern. Problematizing the speaking subject extends Read's argument that abstract labour is for Marx simultaneously natural and historical. On the one hand, the fungibility of abstract labour is necessarily grounded in the social relations of commodity production. "Let us remember that commodities possess an objective character as values only in so far as they are all expressions of an identical social substance, human labour, and that their objective character as values is therefore purely social" (1992, 138-9; cited in Read 72). The indifferent labouring capacity may be socially and historically produced, yet Marx nevertheless holds that "Tailoring and weaving, although they are qualitatively different productive activities, are both a productive expenditure of human brains, muscles, nerves, hands, etc. and in this sense both human labour" (1992, 134; cited in Read 74). Read holds these seemingly inconsistent axioms together, suggesting that Marx is in fact pointing to a particular problem: "That is, the necessity of thinking abstract labour at one and the same time as historical and natural—as being produced from a certain ensemble of relations and also involving and implicating subjectivity to the point at which it *appears* to be coexistent with the biological basis of subjectivity (brains, muscles, and nerves, etc.)" (Read 75; emphasis added). The word "appears" must be accentuated since unlike Virno, Marx is not appealing to a biological invariant then overlaid with a historical social form. Rather, as Moishe Postone argues alongside Read, "the categories of Marx's analysis of the essential forms underlying the various categorical forms of appearance are intended not as ontological, transhistorically valid categories, but purportedly grasp social forms that themselves are historically specific" (1996, 146). "Abstract labour" is a transitive

categorization intended to propel theorists to the social relations that stand *behind* a fungible and generic physiological capacity. Read and Postone thus offer a Marxist analysis of subjectivity irreducible to totalizing economic and social processes or class struggles. Marx, in this reading, is concerned "with the production of subjectivity down to its apparently natural and biological ground" (Read 74), an attention to historical *a priori* that dovetails neatly with Foucault's genealogy of the modern subject.

Elocution and Speech Education

The production of biopolitical subjects never follows a straight and even path but emerges through the contestation of multiple and discordant forces (Foucault 1980a). The stuttered movement towards postindustrial labour might accordingly be initially located in the tension between nineteenth-century education and elocutionary practices: between the desire for an articulate population and the desire to shore up class and race distinctions through "pure" speech. Following the war of 1812, Americans increasingly turned towards "common" education as a manifestation of their civic virtues. Urbanization and industrialization, along with an ostensible desire for class equality, contributed to the felt need for improved educational opportunities. "With the extension of suffrage to all men, rich and poor," write Gladys L. Borches and Lillian R. Wagner, "came the realization that education was necessary to train men as citizens**,** and not merely as members of the Church or for the ministry or because they belonged to a particular class" (1954, 285). In Foucauldian terms, "common" education coincides with the biopolitical need for well-rounded and governable subjects—and by extension, a population—rather than simply specialized occupations like doctors, lawyers, or ministers.

Speech was concurrently emerging as a generic, as opposed to specialist, capacity central to American democratic and industrial society. Historians such as Angela G. Ray and Donald M. Scott link the rise of an oral culture organized around lyceums and Chautauqua assemblies with nation-building and the establishment of bourgeois values.[34] These public lecture and debate practices, emerging in the late 1820s and declining in the 1910s, served the civic republican function of binding large and disparate audiences into an American public. As Thomas Wentworth Higginson explained, the public lecturer "moving to and fro [provided] a living shuttle, to weave together this new web of national civilization" (Higginson 1868, 49; quoted in Scott 808).[35] In step with the increasing centrality of the oral within this social milieu, American "educators began to popularize the needs of man as an articulate person in his practical world; they saw man as a citizen speaking as well as reading" (Borches and Wagner 285). An apparatus or *dispositif* was accordingly needed to render the hitherto unruly capacity of speech manageable, efficient, and productive.

Constructing an articulate citizenry was, however, a difficult feat, not simply due to the requisite social, discursive, and technical infrastructure. An articulate citizenry required norms against which speaking bodies could be measured and disciplined, and calculating these norms would be near impossible until compulsory education and child labour laws were passed in the early twentieth century (Simon 1954, 400) that, along with the standardized test and the survey,

[34] Both Lyceums and Chautauquas were a type of adult education movement in the nineteenth-century United States that gave people the opportunity to hear debates and lectures. Highly popular, these assemblies provided entertainment to communities with performers and lecturers.

[35] Both Ray and Scott often focus on the consolidation of American values and beliefs under the banner of nineteenth-century oral practices, but if, as Ray argues (2005), the lyceum was "a site where group identifications could become meaningful through the repetition of behavioral patterns, through recurring rhetorical acts" (7) one might also attend to the ways these practices consolidated correct "American" language and speech production. Lyceums and Chautauquas affirmed clear, useful, and aesthetically pleasing speech as correct, as public, and in turn, as American. Anticipating the nationalistic anxieties around Better Speech Weeks in the early twentieth-century (e.g. *The Racquet* 1919), dominant linguistic norms in the nineteenth-century consolidated American identity—"I am American; this is how we speak."

would enable vast amounts of data to be gathered on "normal" and "deviant" speech. Yet the antecedent issue is that defining and embodying norms of "proper" speech is a moving contradiction that at once seeks to reinforce *while* standardizing and circulating classed and racialized dictions, cadences, and grammars.

A central site in the nineteenth century for cultivating legible speech in American educational institutions (and private practices) was elocution, a discipline that migrated from England where it had taken hold in the mid-eighteenth century. One of its chief proponents in England, Thomas Sheridan, describes the current state of verbal utterance with disdain:

> Amongst those who speak in the senate house, pulpit, or at the bar, as well as amongst men in private life, we find stammerers, lispers, a mumbling, indistinct utterance; ill management of the voice, by pitching it in too high or too low a key; speaking too loud, or too softly as not to be heard; and using discordant tones, and false cadences. These being, I say, common to all ranks and classes of men, have not any marks of disgrace put upon them, but, on the contrary, meet with general indulgence from a general corruption (1762, 32-33).

Elocutionists on both sides of the Atlantic took it upon themselves to improve the quality of spoken language. In the US, textbooks such as Ebenezer Porter's 1827 *Analysis of the Principles of Rhetorical Delivery as Applied in Reading and Speaking* and James Rush's *Philosophy of the Human Voice*, published in the same year, were widely used during this century in public schools and private practices. Rush, the son of Dr. Benjamin Rush, arguably pioneered the science of the voice by applying his expertise in medicine to the speaking subject.[36] Others had described the anatomical structure of the speech mechanism, but Rush was the first to identify, through a systematic nomenclature, the physiology of speech *production* in relation to elements—force, pitch, quality, rhythm—of the voice (Hale 1954, 226). By rendering vocal expression an entirely

[36] Dr. Benjamin Rush was the Surgeon General of Washington's army and considered by Ladelle McWhorter to be the father of modern biopolitics (2009, 102-110).

describable and objective phenomenon, Rush enables a science of vocal duration and succession to be mapped onto and habituated within the speaking body.

Rush's methodological attention to the anatomy and physiology of the utterance was foundational for the future science of speech but was often misread and dismissed in his time. Jonathan Barber, a Harvard elocution teacher, was a notable exception who adopted Rush's methodology wholesale in his own practice. Barber emphasized the practice of individual sounds, disciplining the vocal mechanism to move in measured, rational, and efficient ways: a manifestation of anatomo-politics (Foucault 1995). He moreover defended Rush against his many contemporary critics who believed his system too mechanical. Rather, Barber argues, Rush has "listened to Nature as few ears have listened," and accordingly discovered the "right use of the functions of the voice" (1829, 9; quoted in Robb 1954, 186-7). Barber here naturalizes the anatomo-politics of speech through several deft moves. By first making the speech gesture and the voice scientific objects of study whose truths are not contingent upon the subject but are gleaned from Nature herself (provided one has ears properly attuned to her truths), Barber can effortlessly shift to inscribe in Nature the right use and functions of the voice. The imperative to discipline the speaking body is thus naturalized and set loose.

Yet while elocution sought to establish itself as a science of the voice, it fell out of favor during the second half of the nineteenth-century. This was not due to a waning interest in speech education but a general belief that the elocutionary method was far too mechanized to govern the expressive and spontaneous faculty of speech (Grover 1965, 65). Speech education was thus taken up by departments of English and rhetoric, supplemented by a new interest in intercollegiate speaking contests, while elocution both dropped to an elective status and migrated from public to private institutions (Hocmuth and Murphy 1954, 173). Elocutionists, however,

offered some of the first curative programs for the speech defect which, though they will be labelled the invention of "quacks" and "charlatans" (Van Riper 1939) by the forthcoming "scientific" speech correctionists, extend into the early twentieth century and moreover provide the basic anatomo-political structure for speech correction as it moves from a private practice to a social imperative.

It is crucial not to overlook the racial and class politics of these elocutionary practices. Elocutionists like Sheridan expressed a general concern about poor speech within the population as a whole, yet the predominant worry was illegible and uncultivated speech leeching into the habits and practices of the bourgeoisie. Dwight Conquergood in this way reads elocution from the perspective of racial tension and class struggle. "Elocution," he writes, "expressed in another key the body-discipline so characteristic of industrial capitalism, but this was a discipline imposed on the bourgeoisie, a way for them to mark 'distinction' from the masses" (326). The problem with the common word was precisely its commonality; elocution was designed to recover the power of the spoken word from the uncouth masses (327)—that is, to shore up the privilege of white property owners.[37] Subjection is always in step with hierarchy, and becoming a "refined" subject of language and speech reifies oneself not only as human (not animal), but as white (not black), rich and educated (not poor and ignorant). As Conquergood suggests above, elocution deploys a distinctly industrial capitalist set of biopolitical operations upon the bourgeois body in this attempt to standardize and replicate vocal norms of class and civility. Elocution was a technology that regulated and then recirculated the excess of orality, analogous

[37] "Elocution sought to tap the power of popular speech but curb its unruly embodiments and refine its coarse and uncouth features. It was the verbal counterpart, on the domain of speech, of the enclosure acts that confiscated the open commons, so crucial to the hardscrabble livelihood and recreation of the poor, and privatized them for the privileged class. Elocution seized the spoken word, the common currency to which the illiterate poor had open access, and made it uncommon, fencing it off with studied rules, regulations, and refinements" (Conquergood 2000, 327).

to the work of the printer's type within scribal culture (326). Indeed, Conquergood cites Anna Russell's (1851) *The Young Ladies' Elocutionary Reader* where the uncultivated voice is described as an error, a smudge: "It resembles, in its effect to the ear, that presented to the eye, when the sheet has been accidentally disturbed in the press, and there comes forth, instead of the clear, dark, well-defined letter, executed distinctly on the fair white page, a blur of half-shade" (15; cited in Conquergood 326).

One premise of this curious statement is that aberrations or "vocal smudges" exist only in relation to a system of standardization and mechanization. The attempt to standardize the speech patterns by which nineteenth-century subjects could access class privilege created and perpetuated the dilemma it sought to address. A slightly different way of stating this problem is that bourgeois speech, and the bourgeois speaking subject, is necessarily defined against the racial, classed, and disabled other. The excess of orality can never be eliminated since it is an articulation of the necessarily public and political character of speech (Arendt 1998). An utterance will always be common or polyvocal; the bourgeois voice is thus not simply bordered by but shot through with the voices of the immigrant, the working class, and the dysfluent. As a result, creating a social factory (albeit here in a nascent stage) that both cultivates and standardizes the capacity of speech can only serve to circulate and proliferate the problem of excess and its correlate: the vocal deviant.

The vocal deviant is perhaps the key to understanding the post-Fordist industry of the means of production. Not only is "deviance" a constitutive aspect of the very capacity to speak, an excessive mode of the phonetic that cannot but trace the political edges of intelligibility and belonging, but for Foucault, the pathological has *methodological* primacy over the normal within any account of subjection. As Nikolas Rose writes, "Our vocabularies and techniques of the

person, by and large, have not emerged in a field of reflection on the normal individual, the normal character, the normal personality, the normal intelligence, but rather; the very notion of normality has emerged out of a concern with types of conduct, thought, expression deemed troublesome or dangerous" (1998, 26). Despite its ostensible fall from grace, I suggest that elocution represents a font of modern strategies to render speech intelligible and manageable. That is, consonant with the Foucauldian emphasis on the pathological over the normal, elocution was one of the first modern disciplines to problematize the speech deviant as a social, rather than simply individual, problem and by extension to objectify the voice and the speaking subject as a target of a scientific and medicalized *dispositif*.

Practices to correct speech were of course not invented in the nineteenth century; stuttering, for instance, is a phenomenon that has long puzzled physicians and orators. To take but a few examples, Demosthenes manifested what describes as "a certain weakness of voice and indistinctness of speech and shortness of breath which disturbed the sense of what he said by disjoining his sentences" (1919, 6.3) and famously stuffed his mouth with pebbles while he recited speeches to strengthen his voice. The first century BC Roman physician Cornelius Celsus advised a series of concoctions to be eaten, gargled, and rubbed on the tongue. Similar practices were still in place in the sixteenth century under the guidance of the Italian physician Hieronymus Mercurialis—borrowed almost verbatim, as Bobrick notes, from tenth-century Persian physician, 'Ali ibn al-'Abbas al-Majusi (Bobrick 52-6). By the nineteenth century, the humoral understanding of the body and its "dysfunctions" had been displaced by a mechanical one. Physicians in Europe linked stuttering to a disruption of the nerves between the brain and the speech muscles. Johann Friedrich Dieffenbach addressed this mechanical breakdown quite dramatically by cutting a triangular wedge out of the base of the tongue, allowing the tongue to

move freely. Hundreds of (often fatal) operations were performed across the continent and in England before the surgical practice was put to rest (Wingate 38). At the same time that stuttering was being cured with scalpels, elocution was taking root in the US. Vocal drills and exercises, tongue and laryngeal gymnastics, slowing down speech or timing it to a steady rhythm were all methods used to avail speech defects of their ailments (Wingate 44-56; Bobrick 91).

This brief account of disciplinary practices is offered to highlight the possibility that elocution is just one in a long line of efforts to discipline the tongue.[38] *Prima facie,* the insertion of pebbles into one's mouth differs very little from the tongue gymnastics of elocution. Accordingly, what matters as much as the concrete practices is how they are circulated within the social field and utilized in specific ways for specific, political ends. The science of speech inaugurated by elocutionists like Rush and developed via the abnormal in the early twentieth century is articulated *through* emerging sciences of linguistics, phonetics, medicine, and psychology. As Rose argues, such disciplines (with particular attention to psychology) should be understood in terms of political authority. Psychology opened up the person to intervention by transforming the interiority of the soul into a set of "calculable traces" (74). As Rose writes, "We have entered, it appears, the age of the calculable person, the person whose individuality is no longer ineffable, unique, and beyond knowledge, but can be known, mapped, calibrated, evaluated, quantified, predicted, and managed" (88). Such positive knowledge is instrumental for governing liberal subjects where political authority cannot be mobilized as an externality but must arise from the internal truth of each subject. Likewise, speech correction, which cuts across disciplines such as psychology and linguistics, translates the vital act of speaking into a scientific object of calculation and management that can be governed by a truth both institutionally ratified

[38] A history of the practices of correcting dysfluent speech has been given (though in a largely uncritical way) by Wingate 1997, Bloodstein 1993, and Bobrick 1995.

and couched in individualizing principles of normality and well-being. The science of speech constitutes a new object of knowledge—the speaking subject—through which political authority could be mobilized in an even more reticular manner. The anatomo-politics of elocution are therefore particularly significant insofar as they were not localized but circulated and caught up within an overlapping series of discourses and institutions of subjection.

Speech Correction and Biopolitics

While elocution provides the initial momentum for the biopolitics of speech in America, the discursive and disciplinary "grasp" on the speaking subject was stymied in the nineteenth century by two co-constitutive factors: an embryonic science and a lack of socio-political urgency. James Murdoch, an elocutionist, was convinced in 1883 that "the multiplication of mere rules and precepts can be of no avail until an active and a general interest amongst the thinking public, as well as amongst educators, is aroused in the true philosophy and full scope of the theory of the principles of expressive speech" (10). Holding aside for the moment the question of *how* and *why* it would obtain, this general interest in the principles of speech would find expression in the early twentieth century, yet *outside* elocution. In a contestation for the truth of the speaking body, disciplines as heterogeneous as phonetics, medicine, education, psychology, psychoanalysis, and mental hygiene would absorb and transform the biopolitical impulse and anatomo-political technologies of elocution, setting them on an empirical and verifiable scientific footing. The result of this "game of truth" (Foucault 2003b) is the industry of SLP, which straddles operations of both social subjection and machinic enslavement: it produces intelligible speech that *marks and locates* speaking subjects yet also disciplines speech to be efficient and reproducible—to "fit," connect, and disappear. SLP works to both striate *and* smooth speech.

Edward W. Scripture—a turn-of-the-century physician, phonetician, and experimental psychologist—embodies the fledgling science of speech that, significantly, cleaves along the lines of normalcy and abnormalcy:

> In most medical faculties no place is accorded to speech defects; the same is true in schools of pedagogy. This was formerly justified on the ground that a scientific study of speech and its defects did not exist. In the last decade, however, the science of phonetics has extended itself to laboratory work and university teaching; moreover, speech clinics have been established in several of the foremost medical schools. The treatment of these defects thus stands upon an entirely new basis; namely, that of a *carefully developed science of normal and pathological speech* (Scripture 1912, v; emphasis added).

Problematizing speech in terms of normal/pathological enables the oral anxieties of class and race in the nineteenth century to be translated into a standard deviation (i.e., a "calculable trace") and, though a series of knowledges and techniques, distributes speaking subjects hierarchically according to classifications. The "speech defective" thus becomes a reified subject, a target for biopolitical strategies of normalization. Speech correction also constitutes the "normal speaker," who is necessarily caught in speech correction's hierarchical surveillance and normalizing judgment. The faculty of speech is not only common but central to social and economic exchange. The question for governing speech is not so much "how can we isolate the speech defect?" as "how can we regulate the circulation of speech and cancel out its dangers?" (cf. Foucault 2004). Benjamin Bogue, advertising his institute for stammerers, proclaims that "Our age demands perfect speech" (1912). This imperative necessarily implicates the entire population in a matrix of compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer 2006). The abnormal, in other words, renders the biopolitics of speech intelligible yet was never its sole target. The management of speech and the production of fluid semiotic subjects must be located *through* the dysfluent, but within the entire social field.

Thus, it is important to note that while Scripture's concern for the "speech defective" is largely one of charity—"The life of a stutterer," he writes, "is usually so full of sorrow that it can hardly be said to be worth living" (3)—he also begins to problematize the speech defect in the biopolitical terms of economic cost and the good of society. Stutterers and lispers are imagined as an "irritating distraction to their teachers" and a "needless retardation to their classes" (v). One year earlier, in 1911, John Madison Fletcher states the threat of the speech defect for the edu-factory even more starkly:[39]

> If I understand the great movement for efficiency in commercial lines as Dr. Taylor and others have conceived it, the first point of attack is the sources of lost energies, misplaced efforts and neglected forces. In other words, the whole efficiency movement begins with the *stoppage of leaks, lost motions and costly frictions*. . . . If you should stand before a class in which there was a stuttering boy trying to recite, and watch this stumbling, halting, blushing and writhing embodiment of mental torture, and see the sympathy, worry, distraction of attention and anxiety of the teacher no less than the rest of the class, you could understand what I mean by this great leakage of energy (148-49; emphasis added).

Invoking Taylorization in the context of the speech defect is telling, to say the least, as it situates the speech defective within an industrialized system that regulates living labour. The "stoppage of leaks, lost motions, and costly frictions" refers in one regard to the smooth operation of the edu-factory, yet it also refers to the production of semiotic subjects that are fluid, docile, and interoperable (Berardi 2009), or capable of interfacing with standardized semiotic systems.

[39] Caffentzis and Federici (2007) describe education institutions in terms of "the edu-factory," highlighting these locals as sites of struggle over the ownership of knowledge, the reproduction of the labour force, and the creation of social and cultural stratifications (par. 1). Yet as they argue, if the edu-factory is indeed important within so-called cognitive capitalism, this is due to its role in capitalist development *and* under-development. "Capitalism," they write, "has systematically and strategically produced disparities through the international and sexual/racial division of labor and through the 'underdevelopment' of particular sectors of its production, and these disparities have not been erased, but in fact have been deepened by the increasing integration of science and technology in the production process" (par. 12). The edu-factory and the production of information-rich subjects is not implemented symmetrically across the Global North and South. Caffentzis makes this point clear, writing: "Why did the World Bank launch structural adjustment programs during the 1990s in African countries that defunded their educational systems when, it had presumably recognized that knowledge and a knowledgeable workforce was the most decisive 'input' for any contemporary economy that hopes to survive in the global market?" (2013, 100). These geopolitical vicissitudes must be taken into account when parsing the systemic exclusion of dysfluent subjects in of contemporary capitalism.

According to this logic, the speech defect represents a costly friction not just within the edu-factory but across the social field.

Consider Ira Wile, a physician, mental hygienist, and the commissioner of education in New York City, who in 1916 presented a paper entitled "The Economic Value of Speech Correction" to the National Education Association. Wile expands upon Fletcher's worry of "leaked energy," and argues that speech defects threaten both individual and societal welfare (584). Not only is the speech defect burdensome and costly within the classroom, but "the economic cost of speech defects is registered in the limitations of occupations that are available for individuals who have speech deficiencies" (584). Wile, like many others in his time, points out employers' reticence to hire individuals with speech defects, including for jobs that required minimal speaking.[40] Moving further from loquacious labour, Wile underscores a cost to be paid even on the assembly line: "The relation of speech defects to the cost of industrial accidents has been hinted at in those reports which attribute a part of the accident to the inability of employees to speak the prevailing language of the factory, mine or shop" (584). The "silent" factory, *pace* Virno, has a language that one must be properly subjected to in order to avoid costly frictions. Granted, this is a minimally intersubjective language often mobilized in response to breakdowns, and yet, even on the factory floor, becoming an adequate subject of language has distinctly positive value. As J.S. Gaylord writes, "It is the workman who talks most intelligently about his work who is made foreman, and that it is the foreman who talks best who is made manager, and so on up to the head of the business, one is ready to believe in the value of speech" (1919, 359). In response to these concerns, speech must be rendered an object of biopolitical discourse that

[40] For example, the elocutionist Benjamin Bogue recalls being denied employment and repeatedly terminated in his adulthood even as a newsboy or hotel elevator boy (forms of immaterial and affective labour, respectively) due to his speech impediment (1912, 7-8). See also Scripture 1912.

can in turn be governed according to the needs of a society ever more reliant upon linguistic operations.

The concern over "leaked energy" and the regulation of speech as a biopolitical capacity foreshadows the incorporation of communication within capitalism and the emergence of speech as a form of human capital. Yet before this movement toward post-Fordism can be examined, it is necessary to take a step sideways to recognize the way in which reducing frictions within bio-industrial machinery—reducing living labour to abstract labour—is but one mode of governmentality. The *problem* of the speech defect was not simply economic but one of life itself. Clarence Simon suggests that speech correction lagged up until the twentieth century in part because educators had understood speech as a mere expression of the mind that did not aid its development (Simon 1954, 406). Psychology, however, established a relation between speech and ideation that flows both ways such that uncorrected speech could in fact *cause* deficient minds and personalities. The effect of this reversal, no matter its verity, was to place speech in the midst of the biopolitical struggle for life. Wile argues that speech defects "decrease the social worth of the individual and rob the community of the full fruits of human mentality" (585). And speaking to the National Education Association (NEA) in 1916, James Green, the director of the New York Institute for Speech Defects, boldly claims: "It is universally conceded that until the faculty of speech is established no man can ever become a useful citizen" and again, "Efficiency and ease seem to go together as a characteristic of mental strength and economy. 'Living at the tips of one's nerves' though an impediment of speech tends to develop vicious circles of nervous instability resulting in an increase of criminals, prostitutes, and general failures" (866). The speech defective is thus not simply an economic cost, but a *danger* to society itself. Foucault's

claim that "nineteenth-century psychiatry was a medical science as much for the societal body as for the individual soul" (1978, 7) obtains for the speech defect as well as the sexually abnormal.

One can better appreciate the threat represented by the speech defect through some of the general social anxieties surrounding speech at that time. Speech, as noted above, was necessary for normal psychological development (Greene 1916) and was understood as the "greatest weapon of [man's] brain in the fight for advancement" (Martin 1919, 287). "Advancement" has a nationalistic and nativist tone due to the influx of immigration, which exacerbated the nineteenth-century worries about class and race; the chorus of racialized and classed others (further) destabilized the "American" rhetorical identity forged in lyceums and Chautauquas. Foreigners with speech defects were likely to be denied immigration due to the worry of their becoming a public charge (Scripture 1912, 2; Bennett 1965, 339), and those immigrants who did pass through Ellis Island were surveilled. "The very Americanization of the foreign citizen is involved in this matter of clear English speech. A good speech, unhampered by accent, is a requisite for the highest mental and moral development of the immigrant" (McDonald 1916, 864). Foreign accents and speech defects alike threatened the civic values and moral standing of American society and demanded a social response. This anonymous editorial sums up this affect well: "Even the man in the street is conscious now that thousands in our midst are untouched by our American spirit because they cannot communicate with us; and that thousands, yes, tens of thousands, more are unable to play their full part as citizens and workers in the industrial democracy because they cannot talk" (E.M.H. 1919, 436).

In one regard, the problem of the speech defect is seemingly contained by the burgeoning scientific discipline of speech correction. In a state of biopolitical and eugenic fervor, Dennis J. McDonald, speaking to the NEA, proclaims that "Plans are under consideration whereby the

board of education will provide in the very near future for its thousands of children suffering from defective speech, thus wiping out all handicaps and setting a standard for normal American children" (863). Within these early years of speech correction, it was often assumed that speech defects could be outright eliminated, a eugenic hope carried by a scientific discourse that had ostensibly rendered speech a docile object. These "plans under consideration" include speech correction programs and speech clinics that were cropping up across the country. Unsurprisingly, speech—a mode of living labour—was far more recalcitrant to disciplinary technologies than anticipated. By the 1930s, the discipline of speech correction increasingly shifted into a rehabilitative rather than curative mode that sought to make the speech defective socially useful since it could not be cured. In addition, the number of US school children with "serious defects of speech" ballooned from 500,000 to 2,000,000 in the span of twenty years (Wile 1916; Blanton 1936). This explosion was a result of more "accurate" technologies of calculation that continually narrowed the parameters of normal speech.

A primary reason speech correction is incapable of containing the speech defect, let alone eliminating it, is because—like elocution—it circulates deviancy and produces the problem it seeks to solve. Yet this will ultimately be beneficial for the *dispositif* of speech correction since it consolidates the discursive authority of speech correction across the social field. However striking MacDonald's eliminativist desires may be, the second part of his claim, setting a standard for normal American children, is perhaps even more salient for the current discussion of the industry of means of production. The "correct" use of language establishes an identarian hierarchy, yet since "normal" speech is nothing but a biopolitical-statistical calculation that exists only within systems of equivalency, normalization, and production, the normate (Garland-Thomson 1997) must be reproduced through biopolitical technologies. Creating a standard for

normal children in practice means generalizing the biopolitical and, in turn, anatomo-political strategies used on those with speech defects across the entire population.[41]

Targeting the "normal" population with speech correction technologies follows Foucault's insistence that "the bourgeoisie could not care less about delinquents, about their punishment and rehabilitation, which economically have little importance, but it is concerned with the complex mechanisms with which delinquency is controlled, pursued, punished and reformed" (1980a, 102). In the context of a society where communication is being pushed to the fore, the vocal delinquent will have more economic importance than would the criminal delinquent, yet Foucault's point stands. The technologies invented to curb the defective and reinforce class and race distinctions start to become economically and politically useful (Foucault 1980a, 101), which results in speech correction circulating more densely within the social field. However important immediate economic productivity may be, speech correction filled the much larger role of consolidating and maintaining a system of normalizing control over subjects of speech.

I have argued that an articulate and fluent population is a historical biopolitical development, that the *dispositif* of speech correction—now termed SLP—emerges during the early twentieth century in order to make the capacity of speech manageable, efficient, and thus productive. This medical-scientific apparatus has come to colonize the subject of speech despite being ostensibly mobilized to mitigate the social and economic threat of the speech defective. For, unlike nineteenth century attempts to correct speech, the twentieth century *dispositif* was increasingly recognized as scientific (St. Pierre and St. Pierre 2018) and began to circulate within society via public and private school systems, child guidance clinics, and hospital clinics during

[41] Educators during this period called into question the pedagogical focus on debate and public speaking, since "The aim is on the whole the polishing of the *star pupil,* not the development of the whole group of pupils" (O'Neil 1918, 347, emphasis in original).

the 1920s and 30s—interpellating the normal subject of speech in its discipline of the abnormal. Since speech could not flow within productive channels until it had been made a docile object and capacity, speech correction should accordingly be understood as an *industry* that first renders speech intelligible as a biopolitical capacity whose insertion into the world (and capitalist machinery) *can* be regulated and controlled, and second, produces fluent semiotic subjects though a dense matrix of normalization spread throughout institutions and social structures.

If SLP is an industry of the means of production that produces biopolitical subjects of speech, it does so in a largely implicit manner. Only a small percentage of the population have speech disabilities and will find themselves face-to-face with an SLP, although many more will interact with this *dispositif* in more diffuse ways. Yet this is not so different from many other modern apparatuses of power. The prison-industrial complex, for example, interpellates juridical subjects not through the constant threat of the sword, but through a panoptical gaze internalized by the population and a multitude of para-penal institutions. We participate in this form of subjection directly and indirectly, willing and not. Likewise, speech correction initiates a matrix of surveillance and self-surveillance that saturates the very capacity to speak, a condition of possibility of one's speech entering the world *as* speech, and thus, of entering the world as a human and political agent. The internalization of the speech correctionist's gaze shapes our comportment to interlocutors, to the utterance, to language, and to authority in such a manifold (and normalizing) way that Virno's "formless" linguistic faculty fails to keep pace. Our very communicative opening to the world is constituted by technologies of subjection that continually attempt to render communication a *techne* rather than an *ethos*. This matrix of speech correction enmeshes with and quickens other technologies of subjection such as psychology, medicine, and of course, capitalism. Yet while suggestive, the argument that speech correction is a

semiocapitalist industry of the means of production is still missing an important and final step: namely, the leap from biopolitics to cognitive capitalism. I suggest that the discourse of "human capital" is the bridge between these two apparatuses. That is, human capital renders speech an individual capacity that one *must* work on as a good neoliberal subject.

Speech as Human Capital

Recall that for Virno, the "culture industry" or the "spectacle"—here reading Guy Debord (1967)—is the industry of the means of production within cognitive capitalism (2004, 60-61). The spectacle, "not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images" (Debord 1967, thesis 4), is for Virno both a commodity and a productive force. Like Debord, Virno links the spectacle with the emergence of mass media in the 20s and accordingly turns to the Frankfurt school when tracing the culture industry's import within post-Fordism. Adorno and Horkheimer, Virno notes, decried the "factories of the soul" such as publishing, cinema, radio, and television for reducing the spirituality of traditions and practices to a Fordist logic of mechanization and serialization (58-9). Through the proxy of mass media, capitalism dissected communication and sociality into a set of standardized and scalable tasks. Yet, in a now-familiar move, capitalism was unable to totalize this control since a certain amount of informality was needed for communicative and creative improvisation and thus adequate corporate productivity (59). Horkheimer and Adorno read this gap as a vestigial remnant within Fordist machinery; Virno alternatively suggests that this remainder has been internalized by capital and is now the condition of post-Fordism. Put otherwise, Adorno and Horkheimer attend to the standardization of the soul, and to what they believe a trivial remnant of Fordism, while Virno focuses on how natality as a mode of social production will come to be thoroughly

exploited within post-Fordism. For Virno, the communicative procedures and techniques produced by the culture industry thus constitute the industry of the means of production, when enfleshed in human subjects.

I do not dispute the role of the culture industry in generating productive techniques and communicative procedures through which capital flows. However, this argument rings hollow without an account of the biopolitical making and remaking of communicative subjects compatible with capital, an industry of the means of production that operates alongside the culture industry. In this regard, it is perhaps useful to reiterate Debord's point that the spectacle is a social *relation* and not a collection of images or, in Virno's reading, the "human ability to communicate" *simpliciter* (2004, 60). Virno threatens to fetishize the spectacle as productive force by resting on a generic faculty of language. As a counterpoint to Virno's appropriation of "the spectacle" as the industry of means of production, consider Foucault's suggestion that "in a society in which the principal elements are no longer the community and public life, but, on the one hand private individuals and, on the other, the state, relations can be regulated only in a form that is the exact reverse of the spectacle" (1995, 216). Foucault here refers not to the Debordian spectacle of postindustrialism but that of the Coliseum, and yet his words are nevertheless instructive. Biopower functions alongside the hollowing of public life, displacing the public (whatever it was) with a field of normalizing gazes. The spectacular re-emerges *through* this normalizing field woven by speech education and correction—the Debordian social relations of the spectacle are necessarily biopolitical. To put this another way, the "simple ability to speak" is a red herring that at best does little to parse the postindustrial mode of production. In the place of biopolitical subjects whose speech is continually flattened out, made calculable and rational, the generic faculty constructs a subject curiously ready-made for capitalist exploitation. In addition

to naturalizing and stabilizing capitalist demands for communicative labour, in addition to naturalizing the ableist exclusion of dysfluent communicators within cognitive capitalism, the danger of positing a generic faculty thus lies in individualizing production and supplementing neoliberal discourses of responsibilization and human capital.

"Human capital" is a peculiar notion that annuls the political impulse of Marxism. Foucault, like David Harvey (2014), traces this concept to the mid-century American neoliberals such as Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz. Whereas Marx identifies capital with wealth reinvested in production and consumption, thus necessarily bound up with class relations, Becker and Schultz individualize and thereby depoliticize the concept. Foucault argues more specifically that the neoliberals reorient "capital" from the perspective of the worker rather than the system. As he writes:

> [W]e will call "capital" everything that in one way or another can be a source of future income. Consequently, if we accept on this basis that the wage is an income, then the wage is therefore the income of a capital. Now what is the capital of which the wage is the income? Well, it is the set of all those physical and psychological factors which make someone able to earn this or that wage, so that, seen from the side of the worker, labour is not a commodity reduced by abstraction to labour power and the time [during] which it is used (2008, 224).

From the worker's perspective, "capital" is that which will produce a return, a future income—a wage—such that labour is not a commodity sold to the bourgeoisie but is a skill, an ability, or a form of capital. In this way, the labouring subject becomes a site of investment, often through education, for future income—an enterprise (225). The discourse of human capital thus jettisons the responsibility for procuring an income onto each individual subject, since the inability to earn an adequate wage can be read as a simple failure to invest properly in oneself as an enterprise. (We can here recall participants of Butler's study who have internalized the desire for "straight talk.") Harvey makes the depoliticizing function of human capital clear: "the main point of the

revival of human capital theory . . . was to bury the significance of the class relation between capital and labour and make it seem as if we are all just capitalists earning different rates of return on our capital" (260). This ideology is wholeheartedly supported for obvious reasons by the "major institutions of capital" such as economics departments, the World Bank, and the IMF (260). In the context of cognitive capitalism and the ableist production of fluent subjects, there are two particular issues that come to bear: the real subsumption of intellectual and communicative capacities and the agential centring of the subject.

First, organizing labour in terms of human capital enables neoliberalism to consolidate capital's grasp on the worker in an post-industrial age. "The failure to treat human resources explicitly as a form of capital, as a produced means of production, as the product of investment," writes Schultz, "has fostered the retention of the classical notion of labour as a capacity to do manual work requiring little knowledge and skill, a capacity with which, according to this notion, labourers are endowed about equally" (1961, 3). Schultz argues that labour is precisely not a homogeneous capacity but, sketching the outline of living labour, is differentially constituted. Imagining the worker as a composite of various "capital-abilities" (Foucault 2008, 225) that must be invested into to see return folds the *production* of "communicative competence" (Virno 2004) into the operations of capital while simultaneously making the subject solely responsible for its inevitable failure at compulsory able-bodiedness. This is the real subsumption of subjectivity, a site where Foucault and Marx once again meet. To become human capital, one must relate to oneself as a project through technologies of subjection. This is not an ethical project of relating to oneself as Foucault imagines in his later work (2005; 2003c), but a project or enterprise that serves the demands of capital and biopolitical governmentality. Becoming a fluent subject of speech is a crucial investment in one's human capital (an

investment that makes future and ancillary investments possible) and is necessary in a world saturated by semiotics to be rendered governable and unambiguously representable within the apparatus of biopower. With this being said, and as we will witness in the next two chapters, to become human capital is also to leave the human behind; to *bypass* the subject in a becoming-machine.

Second, human capital responsibilizes our capital-abilities by centring the locus of agency squarely on the subject. This point is perhaps made best by Lazzarato, where, after he highlights the individuating function of linguistics, psychoanalysis, and economics, says: "It is perhaps property rights that form the most successful individualizing apparatuses of subjectivation. By dividing the assemblage into subjects and objects, they empty the latter (nature, animal, machines, objects, signs, etc.) of all creativity, of the capacity to act and produce, which they assign only to individual subjects whose principal characteristic is being an 'owner' (an owner or non-owner)" (2014, 35). Within the nexus of capital and signifying semiotics that is constitutive of cognitive capitalism, the discourse of human capital leeches agency from all but the subject of speech. As the ostensible owner and master of one's speech, the subject is called upon as the sole origin of enunciation and the sole bearer of responsibility for investing properly in this mode of human capital. The ploy, of course, is that speech is itself a heteronomous set of capacities that can never reduce to the willed action of an individual agent. (Speech is as machinic as it is human—agency and speech are dispersed functions that are only called upon when needed.) The speaking subject is a biopolitical category used to recoup the unruliness of communication back within technologies of subjection and the flows of capital. In short, through the discourse of human capital, speech becomes a private faculty that one owns, that one *must* work on to subsist within semiocapitalism, and a capacity that one can only work

on as an individual. To put this last point another way, rendering speech into human capital requires that one continue to subject oneself to technologies of biopower. Not only is the investment in one's speech as human capital interoperable with the *dispositif* of speech correction and normalization, but human capital is, in this way, a central mechanism by which the *dispositif* is internalized and generalized across the population.

4. Conclusion: Communication Breakdown

By way of conclusion, I wish to reflect on some of the implications of cognitive capitalism and the production of fluent biopolitical speaking subjects for disability studies. A few months ago, my colleague Zahari Richter wrote a post on the *Did I Stutter* blog entitled "Rewilding the Stutter," arguing that stuttering in all its unruliness should be conserved rather than neatly trimmed and domesticated. A member of our community, someone who is not exactly on board with our radical crip politic, wrote in the comments that, "Speech is like a city; . . . you plan and construct words when speaking. When stuttering you're trying to speak. The metaphor maybe more like the Long Island Expressway at rush hour." This was a fascinating comment. Not only because there is something so phenomenologically apt about it (stuttering *can* often feel like being caught at rush hour), but also because I believe it can tell us much about the relationship between capitalism and communication.

My response to this individual was this: "There are times when speech is certainly just a commute, a way to get from point A to B. However, it would be sad if speech, like our lives, is never anything but a commute." I am interested in the ways in which our formulations of communication are not simply complicit with modes of capitalist labour, but prefigure and constrict possible actions and ways of existing together with others. Speech as a city, as building,

implies language as a utilitarian order that maximizes the flow of linguistic, sonorous vehicles transporting ideas between the minds of neoliberal capitalists.[42] Speech as a city reinscribes the biopolitical ordering of subjects of speech as, incidentally, vehicles of individualizing power.

Late-liberalism demands much of communication. Not only does neoliberalism require the constant flow of information to assure the truth of the market, but multiculturalism negotiates alterity in a globalized world through "communication" and "understanding." Given the weight of the utterance and communication within our world, it is worth reflecting on what the "breakdown" attributed to disabled communicators means in this context. Amit Pinchevski aptly remarks that

> In a time when elaborate communication networks proliferate, questions concerning the ethical implication of communication are ever more critical. Does facility of interaction imply a greater propensity for responsive and responsible relationships? . . . Could it be that the success of communication in the creation of a greater union of minds might actually preclude different ethical possibilities? (2005, 6).

Rendering speech a form of human capital has certainly impelled us to speak *more*, to become loquacious whether or not we wish. Maximizing communicative inputs and outputs is one of the functions of cognitive capitalism. Thinking with Pinchevski, however, it is not clear this engenders ethical relations, nor that throwing more collective words at a problem will help.

The production of fluent subjects is premised on the reduction of friction and the avoidance of misunderstanding, and while dysfluency assuredly threatens the operation of semiocapitalism, it can only impede "communication" when this notion is framed as the collapse of alterity. The *dispositif* of speech correction notably justifies itself in these biopolitical terms. An advertisement for an SLP program at Grant McEwan University several years ago

[42] This critique might pertain more to highly-planned cities. As Wittgenstein says of language: "Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses" (2009, 18).

announced: “Think clear communication is the key to understanding? We have a program for that,” while the tagline for the American Speech-Language Association reads: “Making effective communication, a basic human right, accessible and achievable for all” (ASHA, 2015). The imperative of “clear communication” manifests the desire to expunge dysfluency and indeterminacy from our social and productive relations. This attempt to control living labour is a central function of semiocapitalism, but not communication. “The ethical stakes in communication are the most critical when there is a risk of misunderstanding, lack, and refusal of communication,” writes Pinchevski, “and it is perhaps only at this point that there is an event of communication truly worth the name” (2005, 7). While not penned with either semiocapitalism or disability in mind, Pinchevski nevertheless underscores the stakes for a disability politic in an age of fluent imperatives and imperatives of fluency. I will consider the ethics of communication in the concluding chapter.

Speech as human capital subsumes the singularity of the voice and the speaker, making them a simple function of language and technologies of subjection (Cavarero 2015, 193). Attending to singularity of the voice and those aspects of communication that refuse to be transformed by capital sketches out a site of politics and resistance. This reading of dysfluency, considered as a material agentic capacity, has already left the arena of cognitive capitalism, of the subject and language. This is perhaps for the best if the subject is understood as the correlate of modern biopolitical technologies. Resisting the spell of the linguistic and semiocapital requires that we find ways to exit the game of language and the strategies that impel us to play within the rules of intelligibility and the technocratic view of communication that serve capital. The next chapters will turn from the subject to rethink speech and fluency from the perspective of the machine.

Chapter Three: Controlling Communication

> But as efficient as communications' mechanisms become, they are still, as they have always been, subject to the overwhelming tendency for entropy to increase, for information to leak in transit, unless certain external agents are introduced to control it.
>
> —Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings*

1. Communication Corrupted

Expressing his antipathy for communication in a 1990 interview with Antonio Negri, Deleuze remarks: "We don't suffer these days from any lack of communication, but rather from all the forces making us say things when we've nothing much to say" (137). The forces that "make" us speak are a central concern of these next two chapters. The ableist myth of fluency is premised on the conception of an individual free utterance that the dysfluent tongue or the neurodivergent brain impedes. But what if the tongue is thoroughly unmasterable? What if enunciation is always collective? I suggest the communicative flood in which we participate daily is hardly a liberal utopia of free-expression but a machinic enslavement to the informatic and affective demands of late-liberalism and semiocapitalism.

This chapter sets the stage for chapter four by defining control societies and making sense of their inner mechanisms with reference to the disabled body. In my reading, what first distinguishes control from earlier configurations of power (i.e. sovereign, disciplinary) is the continual intercommunication of components within an open field. Societies of control connect bodies (of various sorts) into global circuits of information—this is their basic operation of power. The machines of control incite communication: they decodify it to make us speak

whenever and wherever possible—even when we have nothing to say; they beat back entropy to restrict noise. Such operations imply a firm biopolitical grasp over the communicative body. The concepts of "information" and the "machine" are both central to this technique of power.

The second distinguishing mark of control societies is that they carry out their functions without interpellating the subject. Control aspires to arrange bodies and minds into a smooth and connected "fit." This form of governance can bypass the ungainly subject altogether to connect bodies with things directly. Moten and Harney refer to this technology as "logistics;" Deleuze and Guattari as "machinic enslavement." In the next chapter I consider fluency deterritorialized: the machining of the communicative body into a frictionless field of organs. Yet as a bridge to this argument we must first understand the milieu of control that buzzes with information to desediment the social field. Control breaks down constitutive boundaries of the subject, human, the organism. It decentralizes and automizes arch "human" functions like cognition, perception, and speech. And as Jasbir Puar explains, control recasts both the character and "subject" of oppression and accordingly requires that we adapt our political strategies.

Before moving to control, it is worth briefly returning to Deleuze's oft-quoted remark, because its context—though often omitted—speaks to my project. His suggestion that "speech and communication have been corrupted" follows immediately this more general reflection on resistance: "You ask whether control or communication societies will lead to forms of resistance that might reopen the way for a communism understood as the 'transversal organization of free individuals.' Maybe, I don't know. *But it would be nothing to do with minorities speaking out.*" (1990, 175; emphasis mine). Deleuze's worry that speech is nothing more than a conduit for capital echoes Arendt's concern with the possibility to act in and transform the world in modern society. It also directly highlights the problem of dysfluent action. Minorities "speaking out," in

Deleuze's line of reasoning, merely adds to the circulation of opinions and perspectives without constituting action. Participation works within the rules and the norms that govern intelligibility. It is guided, in our contemporary context, by undifferentiated equality and structured by neoliberal axioms like "diversity" and "inclusion" such that, for example, Black Lives Matter and Toronto pride organizers are shamed for being intolerant of, and shutting down dialogue with the police industry (e.g. Levy 2017; Gee 2018) when the police are uninvited from the parade, a parade that began, in part, *opposed* to such forces that continue to oppress their community. Capitalism co-opts the capacity to "speak out" by encouraging these impulses at higher and higher levels of deterritorialization with ever more context-free voices included in the overstimulating discussion: one more viewpoint to be managed as a component part in a semiotic machine. The task for a critical politic, as people like Puar or Bryant suggest, is thus first to understand *how* such machines work and find where they might be weak.

1. Societies of Control: Machines and Information

In "Postscript on the Societies of Control" (a short five-page essay), Deleuze extends Foucault's argument that "disciplinary societies" have reigned since the eighteenth century. Having reached their zenith in the early twentieth-century, disciplinary societies, he suggests, have now been superseded by control societies. Deleuze reads discipline as a technology of *confinement*. The school, the prison, the factory, and the nuclear family govern through the enclosure of space that produces an interior like a mold. Disciplinary molds produce individualized yet uniform subjects like the convict, the sexual deviant, the worker, the dropout, the child. Moreover, the avatar of discipline is the "body-as-organism"—an antipoetic system with clearly demarcated boundaries that is closed to information but open to energy (Deleuze

1992; Parisi and Terranova 2000). Constituted as such, the body's forces could be arranged and trained to work within mechanical, thermodynamic systems that harness *usable* energy in the production of biopower. But just as biopolitics outstripped thanatopolitics in the eighteenth century (discipline "replacing" sovereignty), so have a series of material, social, and conceptual transformations—including the resurgence of finance capital, the flourish of information technologies, and the rise of neoliberalism—led to societies of control.

In my reading and for my purpose, two features distinguish control from discipline: 1) the routing of power through networks of continual intercommunication in an open field and 2) operations that emphasize constant modulation rather than containment of being. For example, perpetual training is displacing the school and dissolving the once-strict boundaries of the "student" through technologies like online learning, continuing education, and professional development. The surfacing and circulation of information is the lifeblood of control—hence the demand for flexible and fluent bodies. Discipline operates by solidification, limiting the body within a confined space and a closed system. Control rather manages where and how fast flows can pass, positively channeling potentialities within open systems. If confinements are molds, then, Deleuze writes, "controls are a modulation, like a self-transmuting molding continually changing from one moment to the next, or like a sieve whose mesh varies from one point to another" (4). The mid-twentieth century "crisis of enclosure" dissolved many traditional modern institutions and released disciplinary functions into open systems of networks such that "they disseminate and vary, coming to be even more finely distributed throughout the social field" (Massumi 57). Governing within an open system—a smooth space—is possible only with the help of global information machines that enable the continual *intercommunication* between component parts of the social machine. We are "free" to express ourselves on social media and

"free" to work abroad or from home, but always on infinitely expanding highways of information where each move that constitutes our digital profile is carefully tracked by big data. Deleuze writes: "You do not confine people with a highway. But by making highways, you multiply the means of control. I am not saying this is the only aim of highways, but people can travel infinitely and 'freely' without being confined while being perfectly controlled. That is our future" (2006, 322).[43] "Information highways" likewise expand our possible communicative routes and horizons within the parameters of control. (And the potential for semiotic traffic jams!)

Mark Kelly (2015) takes issue with Deleuze's conception of control societies and argues that while he enlists Foucault's philosophical project and methodology, Deleuze misinterprets "discipline" and therein extends an often redundant thesis. Discipline, for Foucault, is not coterminous with confinement (sovereign powers *also* locked away the poor and disabled—cf. Chapman, Carey, and Ben-Moshe 2014) but rather the distinctly positive cultivation of bodies and their powers. As Kelly reminds us, these operations of discipline or "anatomo-politics" need not be non-consensual. Subjects may internalize discipline such that they willingly accept its operations and forms of identification. Thus while Foucault *does* mark a change wherein "starting in the 1960s, it began to be realized that cumbersome form of power was no longer as indispensable as had been thought and that industrial societies could content themselves with a *much looser form of power* over the body (1980, 58; emphasis added), Kelly maintains that this neoliberal shift occurs within the same essential regime of power (153). For example, the use of mobile phones invites surveillance into the most intimate parts of our lives, but how, asks Kelly,

[43] Thus Deleuze maps simple machines to sovereign societies, thermodynamic machines to disciplinary societies, and information machines (or computers) to control societies. His point is not that machines determine a social form but rather that they "express those social forms capable of generating them and using them" (1992, 6).

is this surveillance different (besides in degree) from the nineteenth-century panopticon that we internalize through, for example, normalizing gazes?

Kelly resists any periodization of Foucault that breaks societies into discrete types rather than examining the overlapping *technologies* of power. He takes issue with the idea that control societies are a radical break with discipline rather than an extension and intensification of its logics. Take as examples the prison and psychiatric institution. While ankle bracelets have enabled the carceral system to expand beyond confined walls and reterritorialize the prison through parole, rehabilitation, and the surveillance of subjects within an open field, after massive growth in the 1980s, incarceration rates remain steady.[44] Prisons have not gone anywhere. Likewise, while it is true that many large psychiatric institutions were closed during the 1960s, these subjects—left to die slowly by the state—flowed back into the carceral system such that, as Michael Rembis explains, prisons today are vastly overpopulated by people with mental illness and disability (2014, 144-47).[45] Sovereign, disciplinary, and control power can occupy the same territory quite comfortably—the question concerns their relation in a given historical moment. In control societies, for example, the smooth power of finance governs and re-aligns both industrial capitalist and state functions. Control enlists discipline and sovereign power into its service.

This critique does not require (nor ask) that we abandon control. While the signifier of "control society" can be misleading insofar as the technologies of discipline and control overlap

[44] There is, in fact, a small decline in both Canada and the US incarceration. The US recently recorded a 2-decade "low" of incarceration: 860 inmates for every 100 000 adults with 2.2 million people behind bars (Bureau of Justice 2018). In 2015/16, the Canadian incarceration rate was 139 per 100 000 adults (40 147 people incarcerated), down 6% five years earlier (Statistics Canada 2017).

[45] Why would we think eugenics has diminished when the same technologies of power that constituted early twentieth century eugenics movements (statistics, classification, genetic intervention, normalization, sterilization, psychiatric testing and classification, therapy, institutionalization, and apparatuses of sexism, colonialism, and white supremacy) did not disappear with the repeal of eugenic legislation but simply migrated ever-so-slightly into different socio-political constellations and strengthened their hold. The medical-industrial-complex became unmoored from state policies and guidance and shifted to third-party insurance providers, big pharma, etc. The discourse moved from a state and nationalist mode to a liberal one of human rights and choice.

in complex ways, the operation of power *has* changed since the mid-twentieth century. Intensities cross thresholds and become something new. Any mutation of power requires (as Deleuze and Guattari would say) that we become tinkerers of the abstract machines (here, the fluency machines) that give form to our lives. What do they produce? What do they require? How do they function?[46]

Kelly perhaps overstates the tension between Foucault and Deleuze. For instance, one important difference between control and discipline concerns the target of operations. Discipline crafts the in-divisible subject as the object and locus of power/knowledge, while control works chiefly upon dividuals—pre-individual components of subjectivity that can be endlessly divided and re-composed. For Kelly, "the dividual" refers to a generic truth of human existence: the inherently fragmented self that lies beneath the spurious fiction of the individual. The more we assert individuality the more frail it becomes. "Individuals have never been solid kernels," he writes, "but rather individuality is a constitutive fiction masking considerable internal dehiscence. Discipline establishes this fiction of individuality in a particularly monolithic way" (159). While true that the molds of discipline hold the individual in its shape, this seems to miss the other point. Control machines *actively* tear the individual apart to trigger and transform pre-subjective components of subjectivity in the operation of machinic enslavement.

It is important, in other words, to attend to the mixed regimes of power within contemporary capitalism: both social subjection and machinic enslavement. For while the operations of neoliberalism require the subject (with its consciousness of blame, guilt,

[46] It is true, as I explained last chapter, that communication also functioned within the disciplinary machines of industrial societies. Yet these operations were most often not smooth and were largely contained within discontinuous networks of production and the striated space of the school, factory, or home. Machinic norms of economic efficiency sought to smooth production, and Habermas famously argued that the nineteenth-century café was a smoothing-machine that brought together, under the banner of rational discourse, a heterogeneous assemblage of bodies to produce a public sphere. The public space, though highly striated, was one of smoothing—anyone within the civic body could meet and be heard.

responsibility, etc.) they regularly decompose the subject into constitutive parts that exist as platforms for the exchange and transformation of information. Lazzarato explains:

> Subjection operates at the molar level of the individual (its social dimension, the roles, functions, representations and affections). Enslavement on the other hand operates at the molecular (or pre-individual or infrasocial) level (affects, sensations, desires, those relationships not yet individuated or assigned to a subject) (2006, para 3).

Machinic enslavement operates at the pre- and supra- personal register. Rather than interpellation, it assigns human beings "certain modes of perception and sensibility" (2014, 38)—formatting our ability to feel, see, hear, and speak such that we can interface with the control society. The machine has no use for the representational function of language which produces social narratives and meanings except as a component to be managed. In the machine-centric world of semiocapitalism, asignifying semiotics act on and between material flows. That is to say, information functions *diagrammatically* or operationally: a program activates a technical machine; a word spoken to an electronic operator signals a response procedure; an algorithm purchases sugar from China. As Lazzarato notes, the subject, consciousness, and representation are present in such operations but remain the background (2014, 4). Technologies of subjection like pastoral power solicit the individual as a whole—an indivisible synthesis—which corresponds to the organism-form. Language, for example, calls into being "autonomous" and "responsible" individuals who stand on reserve to account *qua* subject for the shortfalls of neoliberal capitalism. But power is never exhausted on the expression-plane.

Recognizing more than one regime of power (and signs) recasts the relation between the individual and dividual. In their articulation of the machine, Deleuze and Guattari draw from Lucas Mumford who argues that the *original* machine—what he terms the "megamachine"—was found in Ancient Egypt. The pyramids and other public works were built with a massive social, technical, scientific, and bureaucratic machine that conceived and managed slaves not as subjects

but component parts. The modern individual is the result of Enlightenment striation. Unlike the cog, the individual possess agency and a vast interiority (the ego, will). Social subjection assigns the individual an identity and declares them free—to sell their labour—within the open matrix of neoliberalism. But pushed to its limit the individual breaks open and is re-enslaved to the megamachine. From pyramids to offices to click-farms. As Deleuze and Guattari note, "a small amount of subjectification took us away from machinic enslavement, but a large amount brings us back to it" (1987, 458). The individual and dividual are de- and re-territorialized constellations of bodies (both potential and actualized) in constant assembly.

From a critical race perspective, Moten and Harney remind us that capitalism has always possessed various ways to make bodies work, and that "the subject" is a recent invention restricted to a small subset of *homo sapiens*. The Atlantic slave trade, the plantation—*these* are the models of capitalist appropriation without the subject. Moten and Harney argue that "logistics"—the movement of things; the "ambition to connect bodies, objects, affects, information, without subjects, without the formality of subjects" (92)—was founded in the hold, the first great transportation of commodities. One goal of logistics is to remove the human agent from the equation of governance and exploitation. "For capital, the subject has become too cumbersome, too slow, too prone to error, too controlling, to say nothing of too rarified, too specialized a form of life" (87). As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, capitalism has returned in full force to machinic enslavement. It is thus, Moten and Harney write, that "Logistical populations will be created to do without thinking, to feel without emotion, to move without friction, to adapt without question, to translate without pause, to connect without interruption, or they will be dismantled and disabled as bodies in the same way they are assembled" (91). This is the hollow subject of neoliberalism designed to connect, translate, and circulate; a subject reconfigured as

homo economicus—one that does not make strategies but seeks to increase its appreciative value in relation to the market.

Control, when read in relation to discipline, introduces one final conceptual pair: smooth and striated space, which are best understood not as states but becomings. "What interests us in operations of striation and smoothing are precisely the passages or combinations: how the forces at work within space continually striate it, and how in the course of its striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces (1987, 500). The *smoothing* of striated space; the *striation* of smooth space. But note also that striation at its limits can "reimpart" a smooth space. Navigation and cartography striated the once-smooth and chaotic ocean to produce grids that could locate and identify. "This," explains William Bogard, "is the social in its rigid, stratified form, the space of surveilled bodies, bodies that know their bearings" (285). Assigning identities is the most important work of subjection since like the ocean, the individual is an organizing grid. Yet pushed to its limits, striated space gives way to the smooth. The sea becomes smooth again "but, in the strangest of reversals, it is for the purpose of controlling striated space more completely" (480). Bogard offers the examples of the submarine that escapes detection of rigid command and control systems and the cyborg that through biotech and genetic engineering escapes the organism into immortality. We can also include the internet and fluency (or what I also call "machinic speech") in this list. Both are grounded, ostensibly, in the democratization of information. The internet is heralded by many—such as theorists like Pierre Levy—as an escape from the political (striated) control of information.[47] Machinic speech is the escape from biological limits. But both are highly striated spaces and practices. A smooth field of instant

[47] Indeed, Day argues that mid-century information pioneers like Weiner were confronting the perceived threat of Soviet communism in their struggle for open and "free" communication networks (47).

communication is only possible because of intense disciplinary practices. We must always critique the smooth.

A Machinic Ontology

There are two concepts essential to understand the circuits of fluency within societies of control: the *machine* and *information*. Both are common yet enigmatic terms. Allow me thus a brief detour first into the machine (which, incidentally, is always in-between, always the middle of things). I here follow Guattari, who inverts the common-sense relation between the machine and technology. He argues that we should "consider the problematic of technology as dependent on machines, and not the inverse. The machine would become the prerequisite for technology rather than its expression" (1995a, 33). The technical machine, which runs on information and energy, is a *type* of machine, but itself only functions through its connections with other machines in which it is a component part.[48] Guattari here threads the Scylla of vitalism and the Charybdis of mechanism. The machine is neither a vital force nor does it describe an assemblage of purely exterior relations, but is rather a system of interfaces.

> The liminal element of the entry into the machinic zone undergoes a kind of *smoothing process*, of the uniformisation of a material, like steel which is treated, deterritorialised and made uniform in order to be moulded into machinic shapes. The essence of the machine is linked to procedures which *deterritorialise its elements, functions, and relations of alterity*" (1995b, 9; emphases mine).

The machine continually opens itself to the exterior; it governs a field of always-changing *possible* relations and *virtual* connections.

[48] Guattari argues that reducing the machine to its materiality obscures its *ontogenetic* elements: those "elements of the plan, of construction, social relationships which support these technologies, a stock of knowledge, economic relations and a whole series of interfaces onto which the technical object attaches itself" (1995b, 8). The technical device is inseparable from its ontogenetic process. Yet the technological machine also sits within a machinic phylum—that is, within a lineage of machines that we can trace from Charles Babbage, the Jacquard loom, onwards.

Levi Bryant explains that "the being of a machine is defined not by its qualities or properties, but rather by the operations of which it is capable" (2014, 40). The question is not: What *is* that, but What is a machine connected to? What operations does it perform? What does it make possible? The notion that a machine is defined by its operations on flows rather than its intrinsic qualities means a machinic ontology is *processual,* an ongoing assembly of (both virtual and actualized) operations, materials, and forms. A tree, Bryant explains, is a system of operations that perform transformations on its inputs from the soil and air. A machinic ontology focuses on what the tree does and what it can become in relation to approximate machines and thus demands that we attend to its immanent relations and *possible* connections. The machinic assemblage "is an assemblage of possible fields, of virtual as much as constituted elements, without any notion of generic or species' relation. In this context, utensils, instruments, the most basic tools and the least structured pieces of a machine acquire the status of a *proto-machine*" (Guattari 1995a, 35; emphasis mine). When plumbed into a restroom, to take a frequent example, a urinal is a waste-removing machine. But when connected to an art installation, the urinal becomes a war machine that hacks at the sedimented territories of art and common sense.

There are a few things to note. First, the machine breaks down the "ontological Iron Curtain" (a phrase Guattari adopts from Pierre Lévy) that separates subject from object, human from the machine. Technologies of subjection proceed along hierarchical binaries of subject/object and nature/technology such that humans *use* machines as a tool or prosthesis. The machine operates quite differently by a fundamental logic of connection: it forms linkages or "concatenations" between once-heterogeneous components. It is by definition an assemblage that includes technical aspects—what we typically mean by a machine—but also corporeal, social, intellectual, and semiotic organs. Machinic enslavement thus shreds the ontological curtain to

render the human (or rather, its elements) cogs in a piece with the machine that must be managed like any other mechanical and semiotic component. The human-machine relation is no longer defined by externality and use but "mutual internal communication" (Lazzarato 2015, 184). These types of lithe operational relations form the basis of societies of control.

Second, insofar as "the essence of the machine is linked to procedures which deterritorialize its elements, functions and relations of alterity" (Guattari 1995b, 9), the machine is open to the exterior, to transformation, and thus also to the possibility of operational breakdown. A machine can "cross a threshold of formal consistency where it will lose its form" (1995a, 35) when, to use Guattari's examples, a hammer loses its head or a worn key-lock assemblage no longer "fits" in an operational relation. If the profile of either key or lock deteriorates beyond "the framework of a separation-type limit" (ibid, 43) the machine will no longer open the door. A speaking body can likewise cross a limit-threshold where it is too dysfluent or too slow to operate as a component part in an assemblage like a working group. The need for a "fit" between elements of a machinic assemblage is why the machine smoothes its parts. This is the operation of what William Bogard calls "smoothing machines" which I discuss next chapter. But note that the fit occurs at both the material level—the physical abrasion of the keys; the physical arrangement and reactions between bodies and tongues—and what Guattari terms the formal or "diagrammatic" register. Here, "we must also consider smoothing machines that ensure ideal functions or fits between lock and key, e.g. plans, designs, schemata, measurements, and so on" (Bogard 2000, 277). Likewise, one would have to consider the formal and informal dynamics that structure a working group; its corporate protocols, targets, etc. Smoothing machines operate transversally *across* registers to ensure a tight fit. Sometimes,

inversely to the hammer, smoothing means *cutting off* a component (like a dysfluent subject) who functionally alters the assemblage.

Third, the machine does not represent but assembles. As Bryant notes, the machine, like the Deleuzo-Guattarian unconscious, it is not a theatre but a factory: "Machines are not expressive[,] they are not representational, but rather are productive. Worlds are everywhere composed of factories where production in an infinite variety of forms ceaselessly takes place" (2014, 39). To make sense of this contrast between factory and theatre, we must further consider the Deleuze-Guattarian distinction (adapted from Hjelmslev's semiotics) between the plane of *content* and the plane of *expression*. Consider for example Paralympic Basketball. The content-plane describes the world of corporeal bodies. Content, what Deleuze and Guattari also term the "machinic assemblage of bodies" (1987, 88), refers to the relations between muscles, wheelchairs, friction, gravity, and rubber; to the potential of material bodies to intermingle/react to produce distinctly *corporeal* transformations (hardened muscles, degraded muscles, broken chairs, etc.). Expression, or the "collective assemblage of enunciation" (ibid) refers, on the other hand, to both signifier and signified—to the entire regime of the symbolic. The call-outs that make a play, the rules that structure basketball, the regulations against doping, and the classification system that ranks disabled athletes all lie on the expression-plane.[49] Expression enacts *incorporeal* transformations. When a Paralympian qualifies for the national team or is reclassified, these are incorporeal transformations that alter one's place in the symbolic realm (e.g. status and advertising). The planes of content and expression interact in complex ways yet are nevertheless autonomous, operating with their own set of rules. As Eugene Holland explains, these planes co-exist in a relation of "reciprocal presupposition" or mutual continuativeness (37).

[49] The scale ranks 1.0 to 4.5 and indexes "functional ability" (there cannot exceed 14 total "points" on the court at a time). See Peers 2012 for a Foucauldian reading of the highly confessional and surveilled character of Paralympic basketball.

The International Wheelchair Basketball Federation *claims* to be tracing the functional ability of the body, yet the map is not the territory (Korzybski 1993). Content and expression each play by their own rules. The relation between content (base, if we want) and expression (superstructure) can thus never collapse into gross materialism nor linguistic idealism.

The concept of the machine offers tools to frame problematics of speech and fluency in new and productive ways. This is important because machines, Lazzarato remarks, are found everywhere except critical theory (2014, 13). Particularly since the so-called "linguistic turn" in the 70s, the strategies of critique and resistance (for theorists such as Habermas, Butler, or Rancière) remain squarely on the plane of expression and pass *necessarily* through the operations of language. Recall Rancière's obsession with *logos*. Even Arendt contends that action is "the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter" (1998, 7), while this condition has not been true, Lazzarato notes, since at least the first industrial revolution (2014, 61). Fluency machines do not operate exclusively on the plane of expression—the management of language and identities. We must further consider the material register of bodies (and their logics and entanglements) through which information is made to flow. This implies then that fluency machines (like all abstract machines) operate as relays between forms of content and expression.

Information as Contact

And what of information? Using the distinction of content- and expression-plane, we can understand information to operate at two registers and under two different logics: the representational and the machinic. In its most common sense, information is representational. This refers to the semantic content of a message and its meaning—to *signs*. But at a more basic

level, information refers to *signals*: the electronic (or radio) impulses defined against noise that carry a message through a channel. Tiziana Terranova (2004) argues that the fundamental informatic problematic is how to establish *contact* between sender and receiver. Contact implies a type of alliance created between a sender and receiver against the third party of noise. As Weiner writes: "Speech is a joint game by the talker and the listener against the forces of confusion" (92). In other words, successful communication is first and foremost not an interpretive but operational game. Information theory ascribes "*secondary* importance to the question of the *meaning* of messages when compared to the basic problem of *how to increase the effectiveness of the channel"* (Terranova 14; emphasis in original). The distinctly inhuman force of noise becomes the universal enemy—shifting the register of communication politics from subjective to machinic.

Information is both sign and signal, both representational content and machinic contact. The dual character of information winds back to its founders Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver who offered a general theory of communication. In the opening pages of *The Mathematical Theory of Communication,* they designate communication as the "procedures by which one mind may affect another" or, even more abstract, as "the procedures by means of which one mechanism (say automatic equipment to track an airplane and to compute its probable future positions) affects another mechanism (say a guided missile chasing this airplane)" (3). This definition flattens complex assemblages into purely operational relations that focus on definitive and behavioristic outcomes. More specifically, Shannon and Weaver problematize communication at three registers:

1) The *technical* problem—"how accurately can the symbols of communication be transmitted?"
2) The *semantic* or *philosophical* problem—"How precisely do the transmitted symbols convey the desired meaning?"

3) The *effectiveness problem*—"How effectively does the received meaning affect conduct in the desired way?" (4)

This set of conceptual and technical problems revolve around the accurate, precise, and effective transmission of a message between a sender and receiver. It is such that communication is often represented in communication studies in terms of the "conduit metaphor" (Reddy 1979). Information in this metaphor is the encoded flow of message from one "mind" (treated as a black box) to another, a process which entails: 1) the subjective intention of a message which gets 2) transmitted across a clear medium such that the original intention is 3) re-presented in the mind of the other, 4) the accuracy of which is measured by behavioral effects (Day 2001, 41). For cybernetics we could add a final step: 5) feeding information back into a system to control its states. Cybernetics is the science of control; its chief prophet Norbert Weiner defined it as the scientific study of "control and communication in the animal and the machine" (1950). Put simply, cybernetics rewrote the (biological, social, and mechanical) world in terms of information and systems sought to exercise control over the human and its environment through these means. Both information theory and cybernetics model information as a conduit, which always implies both the "subjective" message and its mathematical encoding in electrical signals that enables the accurate reproduction of meaning at the other end. Hence the necessity to decrease noise in the channel.[50]

[50] Although it lies outside the scope of this project, it is worth considering the connections between information and liberal theory. Katherine Hayles and Day emphasize that while information theory and cybernetics recast the human as an information-processing entity, these disciplines nevertheless extend rather than subvert liberal political theory. "Weiner," writes Hayles, "was less interested in seeing humans as machines than he was in fashioning human and machine alike in the image of an autonomous, self-directed individual" (1999, 7). Weiner accordingly adopts and extends the liberal conception (and anxieties) about communication. The link between economic and communicative exchange is easy to spot once the latter has been reduced to transmitting messages: "Analogous to theories of production and exchange in liberal capitalism, information is understood as created by the "free" will of one person and is then transferred through the "medium" or market of public language into the ear and mind of another person, at which point the second person acknowledges the correct value of the original intention by his or her performative actions" (Day 38). Information theory translates the liberal formula and anxieties about communication into a far more deterritorialized form representable in the neutral terms of systems theory. It transforms, for instance, the public/private divide, which excludes disabled subjects from the political and the sphere of rational discourse, into

It is important to emphasize that representation is always only secondary for Shannon and Weaver, who *explicitly* push subjectivity and semantic meaning aside to distill a technical definition of information: the statistical measure of uncertainty within a tightly defined system. Information is surprise. Constructed within a schema of pattern/randomness, greater uncertainty equals more information. A greater improbability of an event (that, for example, 'q' is not followed by 'u') corresponds with more information sent. Technically speaking, a static image on a monitor and a stable tone are both redundant and convey no information. In this regard, information is a pattern beset by noise at all sides. The goal of information theory is the *invariant* transmission of information (Lazzarato 2014, 72) across heterogeneous milieus. Communication is accordingly a problem of entropy: the tendency of a system to become disorganized; of a signal to dissipate in transmission, of contact to collapse back into noise.

Technical connectivity is however an empty trope without a *social* machine to construct smooth bodies and relations. Fluency machines must reproduce—through violence if necessary—the minimum conditions for communication within the body. This is their first act. Consider the figure of Alexander Graham Bell, who embodies two great projects of the late-nineteenth century: eugenics and telecommunications. A staunch supporter of the "oralist" position that (in counter-distinction to the "manualist" position) held deaf people must be taught to speak rather than sign, Bell believed that speech was invaluable. If one *were* to appraise speech, "we must not measure the value of speech by its *perfection*, but by its *intelligibility*. What is the object of the education of the deaf and dumb, if it is not to set them in communication with the world?" (Education Department 1877, 178; emphasis added). I would

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the operational (and far more clean) distinction between system and noise. Dysfluency cannot be excluded from the political when the latter does not exist. Information theory moreover resolves through feedback the liberal aporia of communication. Understanding is confirmed by the observation of behavioral effects: the exchange of information triggers cycles of action and reaction representable within informational systems.

argue that evaluating speech not by its perfection but intelligibility references the machinic problem of contact. The value of speech here lies not as a (striating) marker of individuality but a (smoothing) connector that effaces one into the world. Its function seems resonant with the logistical imperative to move without friction, translate without pause, connect without interruption. The technical-philosophical dream of connecting the world through telephone wires as well as the contiguous hurdles of entropy and interference are mirrored in the deaf and dysfluent body.[51] For Bell, the principal object of deaf education is to produce smooth surfaces of contact. Setting the deaf (and dysfluent) in "communication with the world" is thus thinly veiled language for assimilation and the erasure of semiotic difference. Bell was heavily invested in the eugenics movement and while he did not advocate sterilization he did encourage the "evolution of a higher and nobler type of man in America" through legislative and educative means (1908, 214). Equally eugenic is his belief that deaf people should be assimilated into mainstream society to erase all cultural trace of deafness.

Consider Deleuze and Guattari's own critique of information theory. Against the Shannon-Weaver model, which defines information as uncertainty held in entropic check by redundancy, Deleuze and Guattari contend that "the redundancy of the order-word is instead primary and that information is only the minimal condition for the transmission of order-words" (1987, 79). That is to say, language marks first and foremost a series of commands rather than communicated signs: it tells us what we *must* think through repetition or redundancy. "Language is made not to be believed but to be obeyed, and to compel obedience" (76). For Deleuze and Guattari, information is the minimal condition to understand and follow orders. "One must be just informed enough not to confuse 'Fire!' with 'Fore!'" (76). The bare scene of contact is not

[51] Josephine Hoegaerts (2013) argues that at close of the nineteenth century, the human body was imagined as a nerve-system akin to a telephone exchange. The brain sent information through the nerves to the muscles. What the stutterer accordingly lacked was not willpower, but a line without interference (19).

one of signification but compliance. Cultivating *intelligible* rather than *perfect* speech in deaf students describes the minimum conditions necessary to field commands and thus be "set in communication with the world." (In our terms, Bell references *machinic* rather than *proper* speech.) The ableist designation of "communicative" vs "non-communicative" people thus indexes not simply a clear communication channel but the capacity for contact or connection: embodying the minimum conditions of communication. Gary Genosko alludes to this zero degree of communication, I would argue, when he writes that under semiocapitalism we are "primed for fielding commands to produce" (2016, 108) as well as consume. The capacity to field and relay order-words *in the service of capital* is perhaps the minimum threshold of "inclusion" within neoliberal and communicative capitalism. To ask if a body is valuable (not "useful" in the industrial-Fordist sense) here is to ask: can it connect? can it conduct? can it flow? Some forms of life cannot easily be included within flows of information, capital (especially speculative), medicine, and labour. Some crip lives are simply not worth the investment of capital (Fritsch 2015b).

2. Deterritorialized, Debilitated Bodies

Jasbir Puar's theory of capacity and debility can help articulate the character of oppression within societies of control. Puar reminds us that disability studies and activism emerged within a distinctly liberal-humanist context. The agendas of these movements have been organized largely around rights-based politics and the effort to resist pathological norms/significations—both of which operate at the "molar" register of the organism, language, and society. (Within both disability activism and theory, there has additionally always existed a strong materialist stream.) With Deleuze and Guattari, Puar seeks to rethink structures of oppression from within control

rather than industrial-disciplinary forms of power. It is thus that Puar offers an affective politic of "capacity" and "debility." She argues that neoliberalism assembles open fields of power where "all bodies are being evaluated in relation to their success or failure in terms of health, wealth, progressive productivity, upward mobility, enhanced capacity. And there is no such thing as an 'adequately abled' body anymore" (2013, 182). No longer discrete *kinds* of being—normal vs abnormal—capacity and debility are fluid indexes of the power of an assemblage. Never fixed, capacity and debility are sites into which we can and must invest.

Capitalism can exploit far more value from gradated and modulated capacities than from the hegemonically normal subject. When *no one* is adequately abled, then life-long learning, professional development, rehabilitation, therapy (of all stripes), cosmetic surgery, diet, exercise, prosthetics, medical and student debt, and even doping all become ways to manage risk in one's body. Puar describes the shift from ability/disability to capacity/debility in terms of *regulating normativity* vs. *regularizing bodies*:

> normal/abnormal to variegation, modulation, and tweaking; from discrete sites of punishment (the prison, the mental hospital, the school) to pre-emptive regimes of securitization; from inclusion/exclusion to the question of differential inclusion; from self/other, subject/object construction to micro-states of subindividual differentiation; from difference between to difference within; from the policing of profile to patrolling of affect; from will to capacity; from agency to affect; from subject to body. And finally, and I believe most importantly, there is a shift underway, from Althussarian interpellation to an array of diverse switch points of the activation of the body (181).

Puar offers the example of mental health. From the late 80s to 2005-2008, the rate of antidepressant use in the US skyrocketed 400% (National Center for Health Statistics, 2010); in 2014, 12.7% of the US population took antidepressants (Pratt, Brody, and Gu 2017). Puar argues that the surge of depression is the result of differential inclusion: not interpellating an increasing number of depressed subjects but asking "to what *degree* is one depressed?" (182; emphasis mine). The medical-industrial complex thus captures and activates modular components of the

body (and population) that, Puar highlights, are surveilled "not on identity positions alone but through affective tendencies, informational body-as-data, and statistical probabilities—through populations, risk, and prognosis" (ibid). The diffuse quality of depression (and Madness in general) that exists as a series of "various states, intensities, and tendencies" (ibid) is not captured well under the molar category of disability.

As in the discussion of control vs discipline, we shouldn't read this shift as one of simple replacement. The prison, mental hospital, and school continue to do quite well in their disciplinary and confining roles (cf. Ben-Moshe, Chapman, and Carey 2014). Disabled people likewise face regular exclusion along the normalcy-abnormalcy fault lines. The relation between disability and debility, much like that of industrial and financial capital, is rather one of capture and overcoding. Lazzarato writes that "It is no longer accurate to speak of finance capital and industrial capital as separate realities, for the hegemony of a higher vector of abstraction like that of finance reconfigures all the flows of lesser speeds" (2015, 155). The deterritorializing logic of neoliberalism and societies of control likewise governs the body at a higher level of abstraction while reconfiguring the "flows of lesser speeds" (e.g. the flows of so-called "special education") to become valuable and/ or profitable.

Oppression takes on a different shape within neoliberal societies of control. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that now, "The issue is no longer to adapt, even under violence, but to localize: Where is your place? Even handicaps can be made useful, instead of being corrected or compensated for. A deaf-mute can be an essential part of a 'humans-machines' communicational system" (1987, 570). Discipline makes disabled bodies usable (or docile) through molds that conform or adapt unruliness to a dependable output.[52] Disabled subjects (measured against rigid

[52] Discipline always creates excess. As Mitchell and Snyder write: "Non-productive bodies are those inhabitants of the planet who, largely by virtue of biological (in)capacity, aesthetic non-conformity, and/ or non-normative labor

norms) can possibly be corrected with sufficient biopolitical effort. However the issue is quite different within control societies. At the molecular level, human-machine assemblages start to dissolve such binaries. Deterritorialized bodies are cogs made useful through their localization within communicative assemblages. Semiocapitalism's need for Cheap Information opens up newfound possibilities for livelihood if one is disabled (in a limited variety of ways). As Mitchell and Snyder explain:

> Global capital increasingly relies on the development of workforces that can manipulate immaterial data across an ever-expanding array of communication networks. . . . We are increasingly approaching a time when all that formerly passed as the undesirability of life in a disabled body proves increasingly "advantageous" from the standpoint of an immaterial labor market (2010, 189).

The precondition for this development is a type of fluency and communicative flexibility. Call centers, for example, are the mainstay of semiocapitalist labour, but effectively exclude from employment any person who is communicatively disabled (cf. Butler 2014).

Thus while it makes sense to say that the goal is no longer to adapt but localize (and while this can be revolutionary), it is important to map the conditions of possibility of this differential inclusion. Kelly Fritsch argues that "Disabled persons can be included if they can be captured by market rationality, or market values" (2015b, 29). In other words, one must be the right *kind* of disabled subject to find inclusion within neoliberal societies—productive or profitable in some other way. She highlights a news segment on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation where a business owner touts the "huge return on disability" because his employees who are intellectually disabled "deliver like no one else" and hardly call in sick etc. (ibid). Fritsch labels this the neoliberal success story but notes also the flipside—those incapacitated bodies that cannot be integrated into the productive networks of neoliberal capital. What also of

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patterns, have gone invisible due to the inflexibility of traditional classifications of labor (both economic and political)" (184).

those bodies that *cannot* flexibly connect within the parameters of neoliberal productivity? What of those voices or brains that cannot make information flow within operational parameters? What of those limbs that cannot physically manipulate data within the same constraints? Technical (assistive) devices help offset functional limits of the OwB—substituting when possible, for example, fluent fingers for dysfluent tongues or vice versa. Access is a type of translation, of smoothing. (And, as Kafer argues [2013, 121], a cyborg crip politic means appreciating the irony that life-giving assistive devices are borrowed technology from the military-industrial complex).

The machinic enslavement of disability alters our political strategy. Bryant insists that paying attention to machinic ontologies demands a different kind of politic: not a "semiotic politic" that remains at the expression-plane (to argue through persuasion; to interpellate identity positions) but a "thermodynamic politic," which he defines as a "form of political engagement that targets a machine's sources of energy and capacity for work" (72). This is precisely, I would argue, Puar's goal when she signals that "a political agenda that disavows pathology is less relevant than a critique of the re-embedded forms of liberal eugenics propagated by what they call the medical-industrial complex and its attendant forms of administrative surveillance" (180). She targets the source of energy (desire, financial capital, and bodies yet-to-be-prognosed) of neo-eugenic machines that surveil and capacitate the body at a pre-personal level (their capacity for work). The scope is global. Transnational capitalism disproportionally affects the undercommons; the working-poor, non-white, queer, and debilitated are, in fact, the norm (cf. Erevelles 2011).

Puar thus argues that a liberal-humanist politic cannot capture the complex dynamics of contemporary forms of oppression. A liberal-humanist agenda works within (and thus reproduces) the binary logic of abled/disabled and normal/abnormal. One problem with such

"representational" or "visibility politics" (182), Puar argues, is that the "attachments to the difference of disabled bodies may reify an exceptionalism that only certain privileged disabled bodies can occupy" (180). The landscape of disability rights and activism has historically been eclipsed by those (white and often straight) physically disabled subjects who are capable of claiming moral-cognitive parity and thus social worth (i.e. a subject of rights). Put bluntly, in claiming that they deserved civil and human rights because, despite their disability, they were essentially normal, early activism too often threw intellectually disabled people under the bus—along with any other disabled people who strayed too far off the recognizable humanist path and moved towards animality. It is for such reasons Puar argues that disability studies must challenge the "status of rational, agential, survivor-oriented politics based on the privileging of the linguistic capacity to make rights claims" (182). Although my project, in returning *yet again* to speech, does in some ways reify this problem, my desire is to destabilize and dethrone the tongue. Both the dysfluent and machinic tongue fundamentally undermine the liberal-humanist project. These are tongues activated by complex affect-information machines, not the expression of an equal and autonomous will. Bryant (2014) reminds us that "if minds are not simply what are in the head, but are a relation between brain, body, and entities in the world, the unicity of the term 'human' and therefore claims that all humans are equal are significantly called into question" (92). Liberalism is premised on the *a priori* equality of the human individual. Yet when the basic social unit is no longer the individual but the machinic assemblage, the theoretical footing for liberal egalitarianism crumbles. (Human rights will help less than meeting access needs at an immanent level—increasing the power of the assemblage.) Rather than a defeat, this can be an invitation to account for the non- and in-human forces that enable and constrain action. I concur with Puar who invokes the new materialists when she writes that if

"language has been granted too much power, a nonanthropomorphic conception of the human is necessary to resituate language as one of many captures of the intensities of bodily capacities, an event of bodily assemblages rather than a performative act of signification" (183).

3. The BwO/Organism/OwB

I suggest that we can sharpen this contrast between capacity/ability (and debility/ disability) with Deleuzo-Guattarian terminology. Specifically, we can import their notions of the Body without Organs (BwO), the Body-as-organism, and what, adopted from Žižek, I call the Organs without Bodies (the OwB).

First, the **Body without Organs** (BwO) is a concept designed to destroy the form of the human or organism—this destructive-transformative function of the BwO is why Deleuze and Guattari call it a "war machine" (1987). It describes a body without *organization*; a pure flux of becoming. The BwO is not, strictly speaking, a metaphor but a riff on Spinoza's famous phrase that "no one has determined what the body can do" (1994, 155). It is virtual potential weaponized against the neoliberal machines that continue to grind the vast possibilities of life into the logic of capital and the mold of *homo economicus*. The BwO is thus above all an invitation to experiment with possible connections and flows. It is an experiment to dismantle the organism, which, they argue, "has never meant killing yourself, but rather opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territories and deterritorializations measured with the craft of a surveyor" (1987, 160). In the context of disability studies, Dan Goodley has taken up this invitation and argues that a "key site for the politicization of disabled people can be found in their own work with their bodies (and minds) where they destabilize, perhaps at times explode,

such individualized understandings of body/self/ psychology/identity—in order to make connections with other bodies and entities" (2007, 153). Through self-activism (of both molar and molecular forms), disabled people contest the striating conditions of the body-as-organism. Becoming a BwO is, in Bogard's terms, becoming-smooth.

Second, the **body-as-organism** references the individualized body organized into a functional unity; a "phenomenon of accumulation, coagulation, and sedimentation that, in order to extract useful labour from the BwO, imposes upon it forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organizations" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 159). Medical and scientific regimes stabilize the flows of the body (defining what it *is* and what it can *do*); they organize the powers and boundaries of the BwO until it assumes a recognizable, functional, or "usable" form locatable within highly stratified (hierarchical and identarian) typologies. In the terms of chapter one, conforming to the organism-form is a necessary condition of being recognized by the State and others within liberal-democracies. The stratum of the organism, along with signifiance and subjectification, is a "pincer" (ibid) that continually restricts what we are/are not (can and cannot be) via endless binaries: male/female; child/adult; white/black; straight/gay; abled/disabled; communicative/non-communicative. Whereas the BwO *is* its connections (both virtual and actualized), the body-as-organism is severed from its milieu to be pinned against the wall of subjectification as an identifiable something.[53]

Note, moreover, that the organism-form and pathological subject are kin. As I noted above, the body-as-organism is the avatar of industrial capitalism. The unyielding rhythm of industrial machines enslaved to the logic of capitalist valorization disciplined and standardized the body and therein spawned a multitude of deviant subjects. Industrial workers were exploited

[53] Goodley reminds us that "educational institutions and discourses require (children's) bodies to be measurable, accessible, easily treatable and understood. Bodies that morph in ways that are unintelligible—that are not dis/abled enough or fit the typology of dis/abled used by educational institutions—are not easily included" (2009, 264).

for their thermodynamic energy indexed against rigid bio-industrial norms that excluded from participation many people who were blind, deaf, chronically ill, and otherwise physically or intellectually disabled.[54] The energy of bodies that could not stand, for example, could not easily be consolidated and put to use within most factory systems. Stated otherwise: since the energy of disabled bodies was not easily exploitable, an ontology of abnormalcy cast their bodies outside the factory walls as objects of pity and need.[55] Goodley puts this in terms of the possibility for connection: "Disabled bodies are metaphorically and materially constituted as atomistic, enclosed, unitary, and embodied bodies-as-organisms which fail, lack, handicap, and disable. These pathological understandings of the disabled body fold disabling discourse on top of disabling discourse to constitute a knotted, tight, failing body-as-organism (2009, 260). The issue is not an inherent or pathological disconnection, but the specific assembling of these bodies within the expression and content planes (what Goodley here terms the metaphorical and material). As he writes, "Impaired bodies are understood as contained bodies" (264). Disabled bodies are failed organisms closed in upon themselves—even though the organism itself is perhaps designed to fail—a bounded and entropic body running up heat death.

[54] Recall that Marx's "average worker," who underpins the capitalist law of surplus value, is premised on a system of normalization (Davis 1996, 28-9).

[55] Luciana Parisi and Tiziana Terranova (2000) suggest a thermodynamic reading of the body-as-organism. Since the disciplinarity of the nineteenth-century, industrial society required a means of consolidating and arranging material forces, "the fluids which were circulating outside and between bodies, [were] folded onto themselves in order to be channeled within the solid walls of the organism/self/subject" (para 10). The body-as-organism is an autopoietic system with clearly demarcated boundaries—closed to information but open to energy circulating between bodies and industrial processes. Yet there was always bio-energy which could not be reabsorbed into the system since capitalism was unable to use all available flows enclosed within a body-as-organism. The entropic accrual of heat threatened the disciplinary order of industrial capitalism and drove the system to inevitable outbursts and revolutions. Parisi and Terranova likely have in mind the abled body-as-organism, although its disabled counterpart is far more entropic. As part of the bio-machinery of industrial capitalism, disabled bodies-as-organisms were assuredly disciplined, but their energy was recalcitrant. The energy of bodies that could not stand, for example, could not easily be consolidated and put to use within most factory systems. The body-as-organism acts according to principles of solidity, since "discipline centralises the blockages and segments of the body, intensifies its reactive forces and delimits its function to a molar order" (para 12).

If the organism-as-body refers to an entity organized into a functional unity, and if the BwO is one emptied of these organizing forms—a pure flux of becoming—than the **organs without bodies** (OwB) can refer to autonomous organs *machinically enslaved* within semiocapitalism. The term comes from Slavoj Žižek, who adopts this inversion of BwO in his Lacanian reading of Deleuze. For Žižek, OwB is the autonomization of organs within the body field, the "virtuality of the pure affect extracted from its embeddedness in a body" (2016, 26). He writes of a "body in pieces" or a composite of replaceable organs (like pacemakers and limbs) made possible by contemporary science (108) and is cautiously optimistic regarding possibilities of this flight from the organism. For my own part, I intend to reserve the 'OwB' as a distinctly critical term. Paul Preciado writes that the multiple power regimes of what he terms the "pharmacopornographic society" (a global economy of techno-carnal pleasure) rip the body apart to operate on modular and autonomous organs. "We are not bodies without organs," he writes, "but rather an array of heterogeneous organs unable to be gathered under the same skin" (116). The OwB is the machined result of the insatiable desire for connection and while it can bring escape, particularly for marginalized peoples, we should at the very least recognize its dangers.

We can recognize also that the communicative body is a deterritorialized assemblage of organs. This becomes apparent at two registers: phenomenological and as machinic enslavement. First, Drew Leder terms the phenomenological self-presencing of a specific organ (or the body as a whole) that has malfunctioned in some way the "dys-appearing body." Phenomenologically speaking, "the minimal materiality of linguistic signs demands only a minimal though intricate use of the body. . . . The result is that language use is compatible with relegating most of the body to a merely supportive role" (1990, 122). However, when something goes "wrong"—like when one blocks hard on a word mid-conversation—the body *dys*-appears or rushes to the

forefront to become hyper-present. The face scrunches, the lungs tighten, and the body can convulse as it takes on a more active role in language. This phenomenon of the body obtruding is especially prominent in decontextualized scenes like using the telephone without context or embodied cues—where one is reduced to pure voice. The stutterer knows full well the horror of the telephone. In many cases "who you are" is literally on the line (which only increases the pressure to be fluent). The majority of stutterers who went to SLP (old and young alike) spent many hours forced to make essentially fake calls to local businesses just to practice this alchemy of transforming oneself into pure voice—an act so essential to the operation of our world. I remember the small room where the discipline took place: a single SLP and I would return here month after month trembling through the yellow pages to fill my quota of awkward and embarrassing 30 second conversations—each of which were being carefully measured for dysfluencies—so I could return to the room with the others. The voice, meant to be a neutral medium of information, buckles and thus obtrudes in conscious awareness. The stutterer experiences communication as an assemblage of organs only partially under our control.

Leder writes that "the body itself is not a point but an organized field in which certain organs and abilities come to prominence while others recede" (24). In addition to a phenomenological field (which begins always with the lived "I") we can also imagine a global field of communicative organs where there is no whole or center but simply connections. Dysfluent tongues fit awkwardly within this milieu of instant information but can also circumvent the need to speak through text-based communications. As I argue in the next chapter, the blurring of boundaries between human and machine brings both new possibilities and dangers.

4. Controlling the (Uncontrollable) Tongue

If communication has been corrupted, the body is surely unscathed. The head, the face, the tongue crown the organism: these are the epitome of humanness. Yet while the tongue exists as the chief index of *logos* and human sovereignty, Deleuze and Guattari insist that the mouth, tongue, and teeth do not originally belong to signification but to eating and sonority. These organs "find their primitive territoriality in food. In giving themselves over to the articulation of sounds, the mouth, tongue, and teeth deterritorialize. . . " (20). Emissions of the body—grunts, belches, hisses—are deterritorialized noises that we have coded as articulated sound: noise captured within schemas of meaning. As Jane Bennett explains, "Language steals the mouth from eating/sonority and tries to make it pronounce/mean; language bends the sense of taste into the sense of meaning" (2001, 154). This theft is never complete since sonority haunts signification—the phonic is never fully consumed by the phonological but remains as excess. Nevertheless, the tongue takes flight with speech. It becomes unhinged, unmoored from the material sites of enunciation, drunk on the overcoding power of signification.

Thinking with new materialists like Bennett and Hasana Sharp is helpful in the effort to reground the action of the tongue and reconsider it as material organ autonomized by the machines of control societies. Sharp advocates a Spinozian de-anthropomorphic politic appreciative of the countless "bodies"—forces or affects—in the world that enable and constrain action. Her target, much like Arendt's, is the sovereign agent. One significant difference is Sharp's posthumanist turn, which is attentive to nonhuman actors like chemicals, objects, and non-human animals. I will suggest that we must also attend to the *inhuman* actors of technological machines that enable and constrain action. Sharp admits that "speech is one of those activities that are very difficult to renaturalize" (42). Fluent people, at least, often imagine

speech to be free from external constraint. Yet Sharp, with Spinoza, suggests that there is perhaps nothing *less* in our control. Instead of a docile instrument of the reason and will, the tongue is thrashed around by proximate forces in the environment, most outside the conscious register. Spinoza writes that:

> human affairs, of course, would be conducted far more happily if it were equally in man's power to be silent and to speak. But experience teaches all too plainly that men have *nothing less* in their power than their tongues, and can do nothing less than moderate their appetites. (E III P2S; emphasis added; cited in Sharp 47).

For Spinoza, we are most often like the "drunk, madman, and gossip" who erroneously believe themselves to be speaking their minds without external influence. Although these examples indulge in oppressive stereotypes, Sharp takes his point to be more basic: "What Spinoza underscores is that the affects exciting tongues are as powerful as an alcoholic's urge for whiskey or an infant's yearning for milk. They can hardly be resisted" (48). We shame dysfluent tongues for their indocility yet conveniently forget that fluent tongues are not *ruled* by self-transparent intentions but *excited* by affective assemblages. The tongue is habituated within a common sense to reproduce dominant opinions and ways of speaking. In short, "we imagine ourselves to cause our words, when we have little if any understanding—let alone mastery—of the vast multiplicity of causes that incite our speech" (Sharp 47). This warning should provoke pause, especially within a so-called communication society that takes fluent connections for granted.

How then can the unmasterable tongue be governed? Spinoza famously defends free speech, but as Sharp notes, this is because human speech is *not* free—because the tongue is irrepressible. "Since what we say does not flow from mental decrees over which we have independent control," she explains, "it is futile and self-undermining for a government to legislate the appropriateness of speech acts, or spoken passions" (52). However, while it might

be futile for a sovereign power (which relates to its subjects as an exteriority) to legislate verbal passions in attempts to plug the mouth, the abstract machines of the control society bypass this problem. Control societies *manufacture* proximate bodies to incite information from the *OwB* and send it running within networks of global telecommunications captured by capital in a move that diffuses political agency. Deleuze warns, recall, of those "forces making us say things when we've nothing much to say" (1990, 137), while Sharp reminds us, from the other side, of the very irrepressibility of the tongue. The inhuman forces of control societies expertly exploit the powers of the tongue. For Sharp, the unruliness of the tongue offers an invitation to become aware of *and account for* the multiple forces that enable and constrain action within the concreteness of the event. This is a generative way to listen, and I suggest we expand this awareness to include the inhuman machines at work.

Control societies work directly on material flows to amplify and speed the circulation of information. Why legislate the tongue when its powers can be captured and redirected into networks of profit and control? Within communicative capitalism, again, it is the circulation and style rather than specific content and subjective uptake of messages that stands centre stage. Although fluency machines are never perfect in operation—although the smooth spaces they produce are always temporary and partial—they desire to circulate. This is why Breton likens the information age to a deluge that brings to the surface hidden sediment and sweeps away all impediment to circulation. He writes: "The actual annihilation of the 'non-visible,' deemed opaque, cannot help but be an attack on barriers, frontiers, on all separations which impede the flow of information, the 'generalized interconnection' and the final transparency of the world" (63). The axiom to "be a circulator-of-information at all costs" leaves its marks on the body. People who do not communicate verbally or are literally too ashamed of their voice to leave the

house or make a call, for example, represent challenges to the project of transparency; they are neo-eugenic frontiers to annihilate.

We can frame the challenge more tightly: the demand to communicate without cessation must ultimately, I argue, be read alongside the neoliberal reduction of all things to the logic and form of capital. I have depicted speech as "human capital," but this is somewhat misleading, since reducing speech to an *individual* capacity which yields a return-on-investment remains too specialized, too territorial a goal. Neoliberalism seeks to detach speech from the subject and source of enunciation to make it acquire the features of and operate like capital itself. We can here consider with Wendy Brown the 2012 US Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United vs FEC*. This landmark case ruled that since spending money was a form of disseminating speech, the government could not restrict corporations from contributing money to political campaigns. The majority opinion, penned by Justice Kennedy, argues that "The right of citizens to inquire, to hear, to speak, and to use information to reach consensus is a precondition to enlightened self-government and a necessary means to protect it" (2015, 23). In several deft moves, Justice Kennedy reduces political action into consensus-making and rules that the constant accumulation and circulation of information is necessary to reach informed agreement. It follows that the government must not interfere with the First Amendment rights of both corporations and individuals to disseminate unlimited speech and capital alike.

Brown suggests that Kennedy equates speech with capital in two ways: "Speech is *like* capital in its natural, irrepressible, dynamic, and creative nature; its market field of operations and circulation; its undifferentiated standing across diverse social agents." Speech, like money, is fungible or interchangeable: neoliberalism dismisses the source of both as irrelevant to their meaning and value. At the same time, "speech operates *as* capital to enhance the positioning of

its bearer in what Kennedy calls the 'political marketplace'" (162). *Citizens United* translates speech from the political to economic sphere not, Brown argues, by applying economic concepts to nonmarket fields but by the wholesale conversion of political discourses and practices into economic ones. The function of speech becomes, like capital, to appreciate value and advance its bearer's interest. "If everything in the world is a market," she writes, "and neoliberal markets consist only of competing capitals large and small, and speech is the capital of the electoral market, then speech will necessarily share capital's attributes" (158). The circulation of speech is taken to be an axiomatic good such that *any* restriction of information—from the State or disabled body—is a harm, while any attempt to redistribute power and produce substantive rather than formal equality in the "political marketplace" is "simply to make a Keynesian moral and technical error" (162). Speech must be able to flow unimpeded.

In sum, we can consider that while Deleuze and Guattari consider speech a forced *fast*, and while Spinoza and Sharp depict the need to speak as an unquenchable *appetite*—whetted, I would add by the neoliberal reduction of speech to capital—Zali Gurevitch describes the tongue's desire somewhat differently: the tentative breaking of silence. "The tongue's break dance returns us to the crisis of conversation as a crisis of speech, the difficulty to enter speech: What to say? Why to say?" (1999, 538). Gurevitch, like Spinoza, indulges in his own stereotypes: the stutterer for him represents both the embodied effort of speech and its prophetic expectation.[56] Even though metaphorization drains stuttering of its political valence, we dysfluent will find resonant images here. Our problem most often is not talking too much but breaking into speech. From the perspective of information dynamics, initiating *and maintaining*

[56] Such claims would be powerful if they were manifesto not metaphor: "Speaking the word is its reception. It also returns us to the child who is in wait for the word. Both in the ordinary stutterer and in the prophet-stutterer [i.e. Moses], the basic situation is of expecting, or turning toward the word together, to the word that has not yet come, that is only about to be uttered, about to be heard" (532).

contact is the very challenge of communication. Irrepressibility swings both ways. The tongue can neither be clamped shut *nor* made to speak. Thus, if the surfacing and flow of information is never perfect, the body shoulders some of this blame:

> The body moves not only along with speech and conversation but also against them. Its gravity forms a resistance to the flow. Speech cannot always recruit the body into its communicative projects. It must acknowledge, sometimes in spite of itself, the body's gravity and weight, the crudeness of the sound, the slouching pace (536).

Speech cannot always recruit the body into its biopolitical projects, this is true. But fluency machines, as I will argue in the following chapter, take the slouching pace of the body as a frontier to overcome. These are distinctly operational challenges overcome by making the human function more like inhuman machines. Or as Genosko asserts, "the direct exploitation of general intellect by semiocapitalism compels subjectivity *to enunciate more and more like the nonhuman machines into which it is increasingly plugged and assembled* but not, ultimately, into which cognitive activity is totally and infinitely subsumed" (116; emphasis added). It is important to keep in mind that while networks *aspire* towards purity, transparency, or the perfect circulation of information, the surfaces are always rough. The capture of the body-mind in the networks of capital is never complete because, as Bryant explains, "machines, in performing operations on flows or inputs, will have to contend with the powers characterizing the being of these flows. It is for this reason that machines are not sovereigns of the flows that pass through them" (50). Machines must reckon with the crookedness of human bodies and minds.

Chapter Four: Fluency Machines

> A society that smoothes, that is a smoothing machine, is fast and clean and perfect. I enter your number, and here you are! I order a thing, and it arrives. I imagine a scene, and it appears, as if by magic. Perhaps one day in the not too distant future, people and things will arrive even before they are summoned, and appearances will precede, even replace, my imagination of them. A society of perfect information, perfect communication, perfect control.
>
> —William Bogard, "Smoothing Machines and the Constitution of Society"

> Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us.
>
> —Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

1. Smoothing Machines

The subject is too clumsy for control. It moves with too much pomp—demanding formal recognition and rights. It interprets, reasons, is indecisive. Moten and Harney use the term "logistics" to describe the mechanisms of control. Logistics: the movement of things. The subject, they argue, can only impede when "to work today is to be asked, more and more, to do without thinking, to feel without emotion, to move without friction, to adapt without question, to translate without pause, to desire without purpose, to connect without interruption" (2013, 87). Societies of control constitutively *smooth* the relations between things—connecting flows of bodies to information to affect to objects. This automization of life implies, I suggest, technologies of "machinic speech" that overcode the humanist functions and characteristics of speech. Machinic speech is reproduced through such technologies as Speech-Language Pathology.

To eavesdrop on SLP, one is immediately plunged into a humanist world of individual subjects and signification, of stunted development and blocked truths waiting to escape. As I have already argued, the discipline was, after all, birthed in psychology. But in this chapter I

propose something quite different: fluency and its production are a matter of *surfaces* and their *contact.* As a way into this thesis, we might consider what William Bogard, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, terms "smoothing machines." Smoothing occurs at the interface of heterogeneous spaces, temporalities, bodies, materials, and forms. Society is the production of such machines that assure a tight "fit" between its parts: "No rough spots, no bottlenecks or pinch points, just everything free, clean and fast" (2000, 269-70). Dysfluency is one such rough spot, a frictive point that (ostensibly) impedes the potential for connection. In this way, smoothness is a function of control over flows both human and inhuman.

SLP both smooths and striates—these operations are not opposed but always in passage, expressed in mixture. In its striating mode, SLP organizes and identifies subjects within hierarchies of knowledge and power. As I argued in chapter two, nineteenth-century elocution viewed "proper speech" as a distinguishing *marker* (of humanity, social class, whiteness). The diagnosis of speech defects produces endless binaries for the body-as-organism (e.g. abled/disabled; fluent/dysfluent; communicative/non-communicative) that lodge subjects within ontological hierarchies (i.e. different *kinds* of people: "moron," "idiot," "feeble-minded"). These hierarchical categories feed directly into eugenic machines. SLP in this way reflects its humanist lineage where speech is connected to and expresses interiority. It remains highly "arborescent" or tree-like (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) in its drive to classify, structure, and enunciate the human around a centrally organizing principle—or three, in fact. Deleuze and Guattari argue that human existence is arranged and bound by three "great strata"—the *organism*, *signifying totality,* and *subjectification*:

> You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body—otherwise you're just depraved. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted—otherwise you're just a deviant. You will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement—otherwise you're just

a tramp (ibid., 159).

These strata mark the human as such. Social machines, first, reduce the multiplicity of human action and desire to a singular body organized into a functional unity—the "body-as-organism." They, second, require that we interpellate ourselves through a major language to, third, assume an identifiable subject position. We can already recognize the production of these strata by SLP like other therapeutic industries. Fluency machines reify the "speaking animal"—you will be organized by *logos*; demand that we signify ourselves—you will be representable; and recoil the enunciation into a singular and bounded being—you will speak by yourself as an individual.

But while it striates, it also smooths: SLP *machines* the semiotic body so it functions optimally in society—smoothing not just the body directly, but its potential for contact with other bodies (Bogard 282). It manages not just how one speaks, but the virtual potential to connect. If one imagines SLP in its striating mode as a well that draws meaning-laden speech up from the self (speech that expresses and identifies the truth of the interior subject), SLP is also a surfacing machine that unfolds interiority to produce a level plane, a maximal yet smooth surface of semiotic contact. The concern here is not representation of content but the optimization of the interface or external point(s) of contact between heterogeneous surfaces. Moreover, insofar as machines are not coextensive with technical devices but operate on a plurality of flows, we must recognize the machining of perception and affect. That is to say, fluency is the smooth interface *between* these various surfaces and thus implicates the practice not just of speaking but of hearing, looking, and feeling in its production.

Although somewhat paradoxical, surfaces are machined to fit through a process of what Bogard calls marking. Similar to how a jointer peels away wood to create a level plane or shoe polish floods a fissured surface through abrasion, smoothing occurs through both extraction and deposition (270). These traces always inscribe the body. As Bogard explains:

> For better or worse, my body will bear the marks of all these smoothing machines — perfect vision (contact lenses, lens implants), perfect skin (cosmetic operations), perfect organs (transplants, artificial pumps and filters), perfect birth (episiotomy), perfect genes (spliced and diced). But marked as it is, that's what makes it a smooth body, a smoothing-body. Fast and clean. Connected to all the other smooth bodies in its territory, in a smooth-running collective machine (270).

Technologies of fluency shave away undesirable speaking behaviors: tearing the event of speech from its context and web of relations. They deposit new surfaces of (potential) contact like smooth vowels, technological devices (the SpeechEasy), and pathologized identities. Fluency machines, in other words, leave their marks when erasing marks, when they transform dysfluent into smooth speech. But it is important to recognize the machinic *function* of smoothness—of fast and clean connections. Much like "the shine on a shoe 'fits' a walking-machine to a status-machine, to a commodity-machine, to a pleasure-machine, etc.," (Bogard 272) so does fluent speech "fit" a sound-machine to a speaking-machine, to a status-machine, to a spending-machine, to a desire-machine, to a labour-machine, to a rhetoric-machine, etc. Fluency is a connective tissue that enables smooth contact and thus movement and relation in the social field.

SLP is of course just one smoothing-machine at work on the semiotic body. Machines are ubiquitous in our lives and are defined by their connections (or concatenations) with other machines. They are, put otherwise, defined by what they *do* and *might possibly do* rather than intrinsic qualities. This is why we must read fluency machines in the context of last chapter and the control society which stretches from the aftermath of WW2 to the cyberspace present. The historian of information Philippe Breton (2011) maps the utopic vision that has carried these machines into being: namely, the promissory belief in an open and transparent universe. This vision, as I explained last chapter, traces back to Norbert Weiner whose mid-century work in cybernetics sparked what Breton terms the "radical ontology of the message." This concept frames my thinking of fluency in this chapter. Breton writes:

> All being is, essentially, in its deepest existence, message. This thought inaugurated what one may call a "radical ontology of the message": *nothing exists except in the form of a message, information, a potential transparence*. . . . The finality of the message is circular; everything that goes along with the movement is positive; everything that conspires in restraining the movement of information is its opposite: entropy, disorder, Evil (42; emphasis added).

The *flow* of information for Weiner and those who follow constitute not only the human being, conceived as a vast network of genetic and molecular code, but society itself such that protecting the flow from dissipation or entropy takes on a seemingly ethical valence. As Weiner asserts (in 1950 while the cold war raged): "The integrity of the channels of internal communication is essential to the welfare of society" (131). By overcoding the world in informational terms, Breton explains, "Weiner opens the way to the cult of everything-that-favors-the-circulation-of-information" (Breton 43). The fluid circulation of information has become axiomatic under semiocapitalism. Entropic forces like dysfluency, which impede the free flow of communication, are thus existential risks that the clerics of the information age (SLPs, medical professionals, and technocrats alike) must ward off.

From his humanist vantage, Breton is deeply concerned with the way surfacing machines annihilate what is non-visible, opaque, or private (63). The drive towards transparency (i.e. the perfect surfacing and circulation of information) tears apart the individual subject. Perhaps most disconcerting for Breton is the status of speech, which he argues is "purged only of certain of its essential dimensions, notably those that connect it to interiority." Embodied speech is replaced with the notion of "interactivity" which designates a "practical ideal" (86) of communication. By "practical ideal" he means a functional, operational, or what I call *machinic* view of speech gauged solely by its connectibility, while "interactivity" refers to feedback mechanisms or "the capacity to actively intervene in the received message" (87). What amounts to an ableist demand

for flexible, spontaneous, and creative intervention in flows of information takes its toll on the body. Breton's critique is helpful, though its humanist trappings, I will argue, are unnecessary.

In this chapter, I thus attend to the mutations of fluency within a society of control. Emptied of its humanist dimensions (for example, Alaxander Graham Bell's "proper speech"), what I call "machinic speech" is that indexed to the norms and protocols of the machine. Machinic speech is that fit for the airwaves. Machinic speech is what we call "professional" speech fit for networking and a myriad other daily connections. Machinic speech is the rapid and nimble tongue of the air traffic controller—a smooth interface of flows. Machinic speech is that conformed to the patterns of voice recognition technology. Systematically, I approach the becoming-machine of the tongue from three perspectives: 1) fluency as noiseless channel, 2) fluency as executability, and 3) fluency as interface. With a goal neither to individuate nor distinguish (the truth of a subject, the boundaries of a social group), machinic fluency aims always to connect and circulate. The communicative organs of the body are machined to "fit" smoothly within operational assemblages: not ruled by the sovereign will but activated, Sharp might say, by immanent powers. Following the Deleuzo-Guattarian distinction between content (the machinic assemblage of bodies) and expression (the collective assemblage of enunciation), I suggest that the machinic tongue operates by a distinctly *machinic* rather than representational logic. The machinic struggle for communication is waged against entropy and noise. In this way, I will argue that the discourse of risk avoidance captures the dangers of dysfluency within semiocapitalism. In conclusion I will return to the epigraph, Deleuze and Guattari's warning to "Never believe that a *smooth space will* suffice to *save us" (TP 500).* This omen bookends their discussion of the smooth and striated in *A Thousand Plateaus*, and for good reason. *S*moothing-machines are often taken to be revolutionary rather than dangerous. Yet this chapter cuts against

the grain to articulate the dangers of smoothness and its accompanying demand for flexibility that fits so well with neoliberal practices.

2. The Communicative OwB

In one mode, the informational turn represents a process of deterritorialization where hearing and speaking become disconnected from a particular (embodied) source to be treated as isolated functions. Hearing and speech reduce to technical problems of signals and stimuli which in turn become pulsating inputs and outputs in global systems of communication. Lazzarato illustrates:

> Still half-asleep, I turn on the radio, which subjects speech and voice to profound "machinic" transformations. The usual spatial and temporal dimensions of the sound world are suspended. The human sensory-motor schemas on which sound perception is based are neutralized. The voice, speech, and sound are deterritorialized because they lose every kind of relationship with a body, a place, a situation, or a territory (2014, 91).

Decoded or "freed up" in the form of information, the tongue (along with other organs) can enter into new assemblages that remap the body—its powers and possibilities machinically primed and enslaved to circulate of information and affect. What do these transformations do to the concept of communicative disability? When the process of communication is being "outsourced" piecemeal to various inhuman organs, what hold does the concept of "ability" maintain? What conceptual work does the inverse—communicative *disability*—thus do?

The fluency machines of late capitalism work in a field of decoded attention and social norms to incite communication at nearly all moments. These machines free the tongue from the bounds of the organism- and individual-form. To think with Sharp, the tongue is not, and has never been, ruled by the individual will, but is *activated* by signals and protocols—the very

powers that hold the OwB in consistency. “Human” capacities of communication and affectation are thus stretched to inhuman limits of the information machine. The tongue is governed by pragmatic or *operating* norms that make machines run smoothly: speed, clarity, articulateness, repeatability, executability, and connectibility. (The machinic tongue is the production of and is itself a smoothing machine.) But as tinkerers of the fluency machines, we must trace their ontogenetic processes. How did these machines come to autonomize the communicative organs? I suggest that we can map three organs of the communication-machine: the ear, the tongue, and fields of attention.

In an essay entitled “Machinic Vision,” John Johnston offers this term to describe the generalized condition of visuality in the information age. I seek to expand this description into the domain of hearing and speech. For Johnston, machinic vision “presupposes not only an environment of interacting machines and human-machine systems but a field of decoded perceptions that, whether or not produced by or issuing from these machines, assume their full intelligibility [and thus recognition] only in relation to them” (27). In the first sense, machinic vision describes the intervention and extension of machines into the “human” act of seeing. First photography, cinema, and now mobile-phones plugged into global telecommunications networks function to de-link vision from an individual embodied source. Vision machines collapse both space and time such that we can see from multiple perspectives, with instantaneity, and at inhuman scales (both cosmic and microscopic). In Johnston’s words, such machinic operations, second, open a field of decoded perceptions—deterritorializing the human sensorium. The eye is released from its hierarchical organization in a functional unity (the organism) such that the organ can enter into and form new assemblages based on the exchange of information. Virtual reality represents for Johnston a stark example wherein the machine displaces external stimuli,

"the world collapses into the machine, and the eye becomes a vision machine operating in a closed loop" (40).

Yet rather than a fall from a natural or phenomenological state of human perception, Johnston suggests machinic vision as a type of "distributed perception" and cites Andy Clark as exemplary of recent work in cognitive science that argues human cognition is itself distributed. A notepad outsources memory; a working group externalizes internal deliberation; a stock trading interface guides decision-making: Clark insists that the mind, body, and world act in concert (1997). Johnston draws out the further point that machinic vision cannot be a fall since the human being has *always* existed in/as assemblage. Put otherwise, there has never been a truly natural state of perception. Yet now, "functions that were formerly attributed to the brain have been autonomized in machines operating as parts of highly distributed systems. In short, the brain itself has become a deterritorialized organ" (45). Machinic enslavement rips the individual apart (deterritorialization) yet also continually re-assembles (or re-territorializes) its component parts: this continual movement is possible because the OwB is held in a workable assemblage not by a transcendent form (the organism) but, Lazzarato writes, "in the assemblage or process (corporations, media, public services, education, etc.)" (27).

The Ear

The media historian and disability theorist Jonathan Sterne (2003) draws together the history of deafness and sound-reproduction technologies in part to demystify the latter. He suggests that these technologies, like the phonograph and telephone, which emerged in the nineteenth century and became more advanced leading up to WW2, like the vocoder and stereophonic sound, carry with them cultural assumptions—including a transcendental subject of

hearing (and, I still would add, speech) that lies outside of history. "They assume," explains Sterne, "that sound-reproduction technologies can function as neutral conduits, as instrumental rather than substantive parts of social relationships, and . . . are ontologically separate from a 'source' that exists prior to and outside its affiliation with the technology." (21). Sterne rather argues that the history of sound-reproduction tells quite a different story—one of bending the capacities of the individual and social body to the specific informatic needs of the machine.

He moreover insists that to tell the history of sound-reproduction is to tell the history of Deafness. While it is common sense to imagine sound-reproduction technologies as *talking* machines that extend the powers of the voice across space and time, Sterne writes instead that sound-reproduction is fundamentally a *hearing* machine. "The ear displaced the mouth in attempts to reproduce sound technologically because it was now possible to treat sound as any phenomenon that excites the sensation of hearing. Under this new regime, the ear's powers to transduce vibrations held the key to sound reproduction" (33). Within this decontextualized milieu of sonority, the human voice, *logos*, is displaced by machines that decode listening into a field of acoustic frequencies. The voice becomes but one instance of sound—one excitation of the ear—not a privileged source to which listeners must orient. This deterritorializing milieu of sound, moreover, reduces both hearing and speech to functional operations. Sterne explains:

> Where speech or music had been the general categories through which sound was understood, they were now special cases of the general phenomenon of sound. The emergence of the tympanic function thus co-incided with an inversion of the general and the specific in philosophies of sound. Sound itself became the general category, the object of knowledge, research, and practice (23).

Releasing speech into a generalized sonic field de-links hearing (and communication more generally) from the body-as-organism. Hearing becomes a mechanical operation: equated with what Sterne terms the "tympanic" function of the ear which translates the vibrations of sound

into essential information.[57] Sound is vibration. This in turn means that the deterritorialized *function* of hearing can be isolated from other senses and incorporated into information machines. The autonomization of hearing displaces the function of the ear with technical machines and distributed systems. The goal for inventors of sound reproduction technologies like Bell and Edison in the late nineteenth century was "to have our ears *resonating in sympathy with machines to hear for us*. Sound was first and foremost a form of vibration—its particular causes mattered less than the determinate effect that it had on the sense of hearing" (Sterne 81; emphasis mine). Sterne emphasizes that tympanic functions radically transform sound—opening the possibility for a field of global vibration.

The task to make machines hear for us draws attention to deafness and leads to a curious reversal. As Sterne writes, "Sound-reproduction technologies were connected with an ongoing project to make the deaf like the hearing. They wound up making the hearing more like the deaf" (347). Sound-reproduction technologies destroyed the idea of "natural" hearing. Thus, he continues, by 1878 with Bell's invention of the telephone, "it was possible to think that ears were (at least potentially) imperfect versions of a tympanic mechanism that could be mimed and amplified. Hearing demanded supplementation, so we are now surrounded by media that hear for us (347). It is because of such ironies that Puar and others suggest we abandon binaries like hearing/non-hearing, abled-disabled and think rather of the immanent needs and powers of assemblages.

[57] As Kittler remarks: "The phonograph does not hear as do ears that have been trained immediately to filter voices, words, and sounds out of noise; it registers acoustic events as such" (23).

The Voice

And what of the voice? We could trace its deterritorialization through the vocoder, a device built in the 30s to break speech down into its essential elements of information transfer. The vocoder translates the voice from an analogue to digital source by filtering it into bands which are then "sampled" to encode and compress the acoustic event. Moving backwards in this history would lead to the transducer—the technology, employed in the gramophone, that translates air pressure and sonic vibrations into electrical signals. But one could step even further back into the history of sound-reproduction technologies (and what I would call machinic speech) to consider "Bell's Visible Speech." Alexander Melville Bell developed this system of phonetic symbols in 1867 to help deaf students learn to speak. John Durham Peters depicts the process:

> Young Alexander, acting as his father's assistant, would leave the lecture hall, and "volunteers were called to the platform, where they uttered the most weird and uncanny noises, while my father studied their mouths and attempted to express in symbols the actions of the vocal organs he had observed." On returning, Alexander would read his father's graphemes and produce the sound to the surprise and applause of the audience. A special triumph occurred when young Bell was able to produce a sound "correctly at the very first trial, without ever having heard the sound at all" [Bell 1922, 228-29]. This is the primal scene of the supersession of presence by programming (2004, 190).

Visible speech, in other words, bypasses representation to produce speech machinically. Visible speech is detached from an individual body and subject—from interior states and causes—and is rather produced by a code. The visible speech machine can thus reproduce speech across temporal and geographical limits without the subjective need of understanding, of meaning.

The younger Bell would later insist that "If you are to get good speakers, especially among the congenitally deaf, they must *see* the pronunciation" (Gallaudet and Bell 1892, 55; emphasis mine). However simply seeing pronunciation was not enough to produce good speakers. "Bell had met with some limited success with this method," explains Sterne, "but

visible speech did nothing to teach the deaf to modulate their voices like hearing people. Visible speech depended on the faculties of speech and hearing for it to work as an elocutionist's script" (37). Alexander Melville Bell yearned to emulate the success of the protagonist in George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, which was recreated on Broadway in 1956 as *My Fair Lady*. In this famous story, the elocutionist Professor Higgens corrects the dialect and thus enables the social mobility of the flower-girl Eliza Dolittle. (Elocution has always been a machine that both striates and smooths. Recall from chapter two the elocution machines, which function to cement racial and social strata, and the "vocal smudge"). Hearing machines like the phonograph and laryngoscope transformed Dolittle's voice into feedback. "A machine hears for the speaker," writes Sterne, "who can then modulate his or her speech until it is perfect" (37). Bell accordingly turned to other methods such as the phonautograph that represent the waveforms of speech. Sterne argues that unlike visible speech, the phonautograph imitates not (the positions of) the mouth but (the tympanic functions of) the ear (38). The Bells were hopeful such feedback-machines would produce good speech—the minimum conditions of contact. The application of feedback is a central theme within the history of communications and specifically, as I will argue below, of establishing noiseless channels of communication.

Economies of Attention

The deterritorialized ear and tongue (in concert with other bodily flows) constitute a field of organs primed to communicate. Yet we must here also appreciate the psychosocial *economies of attention* within which these organs compete to connect and make contact. The concept of the "attention economy" has a simple premise: in a world of information glut, the commodity that is scarce and thus valuable is human attention. As managerialists Thomas Davenport and John

Beck write: “Telecommunications bandwidth is not a problem, but human bandwidth is” (2). First used by psychologists and economists in the late 60s, the attention economy gained wide uptake during the dot-com era within managerial and marketing circles in particular. Attention is always in short supply and is thus a resource for capitalist machines to maximize, incite, and discipline such that we attend to the right things at the right time. Some suggest it is *the* essential resource of modernity, a claim which resonates in context of the informational milieu of decoded perceptions. To cite Sterne again:

> The mouth, the voice, music, and musical instruments would become specific contenders for audition in a whole world of sonic phenomena. In this new regime, hearing was understood and modeled as operating uniformly on sounds, regardless of their source. Sound itself, irrespective of its source, became the general category or object for acoustics and the study of hearing (33).

Within such a decoded sonic field, the capacity of *attention* is both transformed and becomes more important. Let me as such trace the attention economy through three movements: i) attention as a limited resource, ii) the production of attentional regimes, and iii) attention as individual vs. pre- and supra-individual capacity.

We can track the idea that **attention is a limited resource** within the domains of both psychology and economics. From the side of psychology, human attentional resources are understood to be very limited and thus selective. Since the 50s, psychologists (particularly cognitive neuropsychologists) have puzzled over the “cocktail party effect” that allows us to filter one conversation out of a noisy room. How and why do we “tune in” to a single stream of information by “tuning out” competing streams? Are these semi-conscious choices inflected by values and beliefs or does attentional selection occur earlier in the processing event? One of the most prominent hypotheses is the “perceptual load theory of selective attention” (Lavie and Tsal,

1994) which holds that attention is always fully deployed to process stimuli.[58] According to the general consensus, our perceptual grasp on the world is patchy at best. "Our awareness of the various stimuli in more complex auditory environments is far sparser than our everyday intuitions would lead us to believe. . . [I]n the absence of attention, people simply have no conscious awareness of the majority of the auditory stimuli around them" (Spence and Santangelo 266). We constantly shift and reallocate all-too-human resources of attention to make sense of our immediate world.

The distribution of attention is a decidedly political matter. Steven Pinker argues that in the human communication system, "speech has to overcome the problem that the ear is a narrow informational bottleneck" (156). Speech is a generally efficient transmitter of information despite being analogue not digital—that is, the boundaries of words are not discrete *beep beeps* but an overlapping wash of sound that our ears must pull apart and distinguish. Neither speech nor listening is perfect. "All speech is an illusion. . . . We simply hallucinate word boundaries when we reach the edge of a stretch of sound that matches some entry in our mental dictionary" (ibid. 159-60). The ear gets help in this task. Phonological rules that add redundancy to language, social cues, prior conversations, or stereotypes all lend predictability and thus reduce the attentional load of the listener. For Pinker, this schema produces a tension between "lazy speakers" and "lazy listeners." As he writes: "Every act of sloppiness on the part of a speaker demands a compensating measure of mental effort on the part of the conversational partner. A society of lazy talkers would be a society of hard-working listeners" (167), while on the other hand, a society of "lazy listeners" would force speakers to exaggerate pronunciation in

[58] As Charles Spence and Valerio Santangelo explain, "under conditions where a participant's primary task is not overly demanding, there may well be spare attentional resources available for the processing of other stimuli" (251) whereas a demanding task might suck up all available resources. Lavie and Tsal argue that under high loads, attentional selection often occurs "early" in the process but occurs "later" when there are additional attentional resources to go around.

compensation. The tone of this analysis shifts dramatically when we expand beyond "lazy" communicators to appreciate the embodied diversity of speech and listening capacities and thus the political distribution of attention. Dysfluent speech requires compensating effort by listeners—it is not merely *time* but *attention* they must capture to forge communicative contact. On the other hand, someone partially deaf may require a sentence to be repeated. Limited attention can create competing access needs between, for example, Deaf and dysfluent people. Yet the negotiation and harmonization of attention is the fabric of everyday life. Slotting attention into an economic model of means-ends rationality and the machinic logic of efficiency is what problematizes attention—it produces attention as a problem for psychology to understand and govern.

From the economic side, capitalism confronts the psychological limit of attention always as a frontier to overcome. The streams of information that thread the planet are simply too vast to comprehend. The vast majority of this flow is asignifying—sent machine to machine—such that humans can only interpret and intercede in it with machinic help (interfaces and filters that "represent" data). The endless parade of digital advertisements and on-screen notifications demand our attention and tempt the click. Attention is big business: big data measures the surfaced effects of attention (like internet, credit, and buying histories) to re-sell our attention to the highest bidder. This is to say nothing of the non-digital world itself saturated with headlines, images, overheard conversations, etc. The limited resource is the human capacity to perceive, apprehend, and intervene within these flows. While capacities of perception and attention have of course always been limited, this bottleneck only becomes a *generalized problem* with the industrial capitalist demand to capture *in toto* the energies and desires of the population. The

control society dominated by the constant inter-communication of information enslaves human attention and demands we attend to and manage its flows.

Jonathan Crary traces the problem of attention back to the proto-information age. For Crary, "it is in the late nineteenth century, within the human sciences and particularly the nascent field of scientific psychology, that the problem of *attention* becomes a fundamental issue. It was a problem whose centrality was directly related to the emergence of a social, urban, psychic, and industrial field increasingly saturated with sensory input" (13, emphasis in original).[59] If it is true, as Spense and Santangelo argue, that without attention we have little awareness of the stimuli around us, then attentional resources needed to *connect* us to flows of information will necessarily be found in short supply within information societies *and must thus be cultivated* within the perceptual field.

We typically imagine attention as an individual capacity. After all, the lived experience of attending to *this* rather than *that* is undeniable. But Yves Citton insists we must understand attention as first **a collective rather than individual phenomenon**. He writes: "'I' am only attentive to what *we* pay attention to collectively. To understand the ways in which a subject becomes aware of an object, it is important to identify the collective 'attentional regimes' through which we are led to perceive our world" (14, emphasis in original). The example of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) illuminates the idea that we are "led to perceive" our world. I follow both Citton and Crary who describe ADHD as a *problem* of attention that also expresses the individual-structural tension. What we now call ADHD did not exist before

[59] Other theorists like Richard Lanham argue that attentional economies are as old as rhetoric itself (2006). What is rhetoric, we might ask, if not a stylistic device to attract attention and to forge (and maintain) contact between orator and audience? While human attention has *always* been limited and thus valued, the difference between ancient, nineteenth, and twenty-first century economies of attention lies not in intensity, but the specific machines that attention make run. What, in other words, does attention *do*? What is it plugged into? While rhetoric is a *techne* that captures attention, its operating power in ancient economies of attention is limited to specific sites (like the agora) and did not function within a deterritorialized field of attention. The conditions were simply different.

the general problematization of attention. The desire to capture attention within a political economy enslaved to the logic of surplus value creates the problem of *in*attention. Under the stern eye of the teacher and within the striated space of the classroom, the daydreaming or energetic child becomes a distraction and problem of recalcitrant attention. Inattention is a diagnosis always applied to individuals (ADHD is a subjectifying practice) but one that more accurately describes *structural* interactions: rigid timetables; regimes of bodily control; monotonous tasks; sensory overload. Nevertheless, the pathologization of ADHD works to collapse structural into individual agency. To reference the *DSM 5*, symptoms of *inattention* include:

> Often fails to give close attention to detail or makes mistakes; Often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or activities; Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork or workplace duties; Often avoids, dislikes or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort; is easily distracted by extraneous stimuli.

Symptoms of *hyperactivity and impulsivity* follow the same disciplinary suite:

> Often fidgets with or taps hands and feet, or squirms in seat; Often leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected; Is often 'on the go', acting as if 'driven by a motor'; Often talks excessively (APA, 2013).

These symptoms are *meant* to describe inherent psychological characteristics, but more clearly outline the responses to (now post-) industrial institutions and managerial practices. They could pass for Frederick Taylor's notes on the challenges of optimizing labour (!) and are symptoms of semiocapitalism: a topography of attentional regimes.[60]

[60] James Christian highlights the close relation between ADHD and disciplinary spaces, giving particular attention to the school. For him, "ADHD is a category that distinguishes those individuals whose bodies are out of control in the classroom, and are incapable of following the structured expectations and routines of that environment" (32). A student with ADHD distracts from the smooth teacher-student flows of information. The classroom and factory (workplace) remain two stalwart centres of attentional, disciplinary regimes. While post-Fordist managerial theory is slightly more flexible, the office cubicle is hardly an accessible environment.

The diagnosis of ADHD individualizes the phenomenon of inattention and thus assures that the level of analysis is fixed at the level of individual failure, not the structural demands on our attention nor the ubiquitous machines that guide our collective attention. To understand the ways in which a subject becomes aware of an object, it is important to identify the collective "attentional regimes" through which we are led to perceive our world. As Crary rightly notes:

> In a culture that is so relentlessly founded on a short attention span, on the logic of the nonsequitur, on perceptual overload, on the generalized ethic of "getting ahead," and on the celebration of aggressiveness, it is nonsensical to pathologize these forms of behavior or look for the causes of this imaginary disorder in neurochemistry, brain anatomy, and genetic predisposition (36).

Nonsensical but not a-rational. By transferring the responsibility for inattention downwards to individuals, all these structural inequalities evaporate as a "psychological problem." This is the neoliberal move to "responsibilize" structural inequality (Brown 2015) such that individuals, not multi-national corporations, shoulder the blame and guilt for austerity politics and the feverish demand for surplus value. The widespread use of pharmaceuticals is necessary to invest subjects with symbolic capital and to bend attentional resources to the rigid demands of productivity, while making subjects maximally receptive to *the right kinds* of sensory input (advertisements and other productive semio-commodities).[61] Neoliberal capitalism draws upon technologies of both discipline and control to shape the perceptive reality.

Attention economies express a **complex interplay between subjection and machinic enslavement.** Berardi writes that:

[61] Yet in a peculiar twist of capitalist ingenuity, the diagnosis of ADHD often bypasses the subject altogether. James Christian (1997) explains that those who are diagnosed with ADHD are often told its not *them* but their biology. This works to maintain disciplinary (anatomo-political) regimes of attention while finding a more efficient (and thus profitable) path for capital to circulate: pharmaceuticals. As Christian writes: "The biological dominance works to individualize the abnormality within the biology of the individual thus shifting the responsibility from the institution, and the individual to the medication" (40). Rather than individualization, this recourse to biology perhaps expresses a shift from the logic of abnormalcy to *debility*; from the molar to molecular. (Note that the molecularization of ADHD further diffuses responsibility. The chemistry responsible for inattention is two conceptual steps removed from the structural conditions that reproduce attentional economies: neither the structural demands, nor the failed individual will to attend, but the sub-individual forces of neuro-chemistry.)

> Productive life is overloaded with symbols that not only have an operational value, but also an affective, emotional, imperative or dissuasive one. These signs cannot work without unleashing chains of interpretation, decoding, and conscious responses. The constant mobilization of attention is essential to the productive function (2009, 107).

Attention moves and enacts transformations between conscious (subjective) and surface (machinic) registers. Yes, information consumes attention in the subjective form: a signifying message like a narrative or an ideological message consumed by an individual subject. But attention *primarily* concerns surface effects of bodies, not the interior reception / interpretation / belief about the content of a message that a user produces in the Web 2.0. Feedback can provide some clues about the subjective states of bodies—questioning or examination for the teacher; polling for the cable network. Yet for the most part, a teacher cannot tell *what* a student is thinking, only that they *appear* to be attending and comprehending a message. This is similar to how, as Lazzarato explains, "Pollsters can measure the 'available brain time' spent in front of the television but not what occurs during this time" (2014, 47). Attention registers surface effects within networks of machinic enslavement; attention is captured as metadata and analyzed by algorithms.[62]

While the office and factory require sustained attention, the New Media and Web 2.0 on the other hand fragment attention into ever smaller pieces in order to maximize both semiotic exposure and the speed that information circulates. This condition is what Jeffrey Scheuer terms the "Sound Bite Society," one that is "flooded with images and slogans, bits of information and abbreviated or symbolic messages—a culture of instant but shallow communication" (8). I take "shallow" in the distinctly amoral sense of the circulation of information across the smooth *surfaces* of bodies. Scheuer is describing the semiocapitalist field of deterritorialized language

[62] For example, Netflix has tagged its films with so many subcategories that *The Atlantic* calculated it possesses 76,897 unique ways to describe types of movies (Madrigal 2014). From here, Netflix algorithms analyze its users viewing habits to "reverse-engineer Hollywood"—producing the *type* of content that will hold maximal collective attention.

and bodies, of part-signs and split attention. It is the short yet memorable slogans that cut through the noise to establish contact—hence the power of memes.[63]

We have become talking heads. Or perhaps more accurately, talking faces. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the face overcodes and delimits the human. Facialization, the process through which the face is assembled *qua* face, rips the (rational and signifying) head from the body. "The face is produced only when the head ceases to be a part of the body, when it ceases to be coded by the body" (170). The face is then reterritorialized on the strata of signification and subjectification. The face does not express but "sets the stage" for communication: a virtual surface that reshapes the world and guides our possible relations (Rushton 234). What after all are these "talking heads" on network news but deterritorialized face-voice assemblages? Speed is essential for machinic speech. Disembodied and decontextualized faces spout diverse *perspectives* to keep the flow of information and affect in circulation. Talking heads are given scant time to defend complex points within highly polarized fields and with zero context. But complexity is hardly the point. Talking heads yell to be overheard so as to contribute to the flow of memic talking points. To cite Dean again, "the use value of a message [in communicative capitalism] is less important than its exchange value, its contribution to a larger pool, flow or circulation of content" (27). The style of a message or *how* it circulates is here more important than *what* it signifies. This is why talking heads spew sound bites: they are signals meant to cut through the noise; rapid-fire bids for attention working according to a machinic logic.

[63] The power of a meme derives not from its truth-content but its affective resonance—its virtual power to assemble. For example, in the 2016 US election the alt-right demonstrated the weaponized and flooded social networks with power of deterritorialized signs. For memes, "its particular content is irrelevant. Who sent it is irrelevant. Who receives it is irrelevant" (Dean 26). Vitriolic anti-Hillary memes gained power through circulation, not understanding. One can debunk meme after meme yet (or, because) their continued circulation draws from a pool of "grievance politics"—specifically, in this context, cultural and racial animus.

Establishing the minimum conditions for communication requires what Lanham calls a "stylistic device"—"attracting [and, I would argue, regulating] attention is what style is all about" (xi). Whatever else it may be, the talking head's style is decidedly fluent: both in the subjective sense (the performance of normalcy, class, gender, and race) along with the machinic (the uninterrupted and affectively modulated flow of information—a smooth surface of contact). A certain type of aggression and articulateness is needed to compete successfully for attention—norms, we might recall, that Iris Young finds lurking in deliberative democracy (1997, 63). The difference here is that the exchange-value of communication rather than its use-value is primary such that stylistic devices, functioning according to a machinic logic and within a generalized field of attention and perception, play a far more powerful role. Collective attention is not geared (*pace* Habermas) around mutual *understanding* but the axiom of semio- or communicative capitalism to circulate information. Information is a pulsating movement of affective resonance, not mutual understanding. Thus the goal for the talking head (gasping for a scarce amount of time and attention) is not to convey truth, per se, but to cut through the noise. To cease *being* noise. The deterritorialized organs of communication do not strive to "be understood" because they operate under a machinic rather than representational logic.

Deleuze and Guattari suggest the image of the "probe-head" as a way to dismantle the organism which is by necessity framed by the face, but I sometimes worry that we are instead becoming talking heads: deterritorialized face-voices moving through transient spaces and contexts giving memic responses in bids for attention—and thereby appreciating our human capital. The suggestion that we are talking heads is not unfamiliar notion for people who are dysfluent. We regularly exist as deterritorialized organs of communication (tongues, hands, faces, lungs) that must somehow compose ourselves as a talking head to compete for attention—

to not be noise—in an informational field devoid of context. Our communicative bodies have never truly been whole, but experienced as an odd assemblage of organs that know from experience the strict limits of (in)human attention.

Machinic Speech

To offer a definition: if "proper" speech (as cultivated by nineteenth-century elocution) references *humanist* norms which striate class, race, gender, and ability, then machinic speech in its most basic sense is that referenced to the norms and protocols of the machine. Machinic speech smooths rather than distinguishes. I suggest we can distinguish at least three machinic or operative norms: 1) Fluency as noiseless channel: speech submitted to operational norms of clarity and efficiency, cleared of noise to constitute a stable communication channel. 2) Fluency as executable utterance: speech that is increasingly pragmatic and technical and desires to be computer *code* that executes semantic meaning without interpretation or question. 3) Fluency as interfaceability: speech that easily connects with other semiotic segments and systems.

Taken together, these three characteristics describe a reimparted smooth space of communication beyond both mechanized and humanist speech: machinic speech produces a "rhizome" or smooth space of potential for things to form new connections. Machinic speech does not individuate but joins. Pushed to its limits, the striated sea again becomes smooth—the submarine escapes surveillance. While Bogard offered as example the cyborg that escapes the organism into immortality, we can slow down this line of flight to consider also the operations of *fluency machines* to reimpart smooth surface. Machinic speech is a connection machine; a line of flight from the atomic and isolated body-as-organism. With this being said, a reimparted smooth space is still striated. The neoliberal attempt to make information circulate freely and equally

through the social body—read: to produce a perfectly smooth plane (a transparent flow) for financial capital to exploit—assumes a highly striated space, a tightened grasp over the individuated body and its social arrangement.

Machinic speech is, first, a noiseless channel. This concept returns us to information as contact and the problem of entropy. It is helpful, I suggest, to consider noiseless channels from the perspective of disability history. Deaf scholars are uniquely comported to the materiality of information technologies, the embodied mediums through which information travels. Mara Mills, a historian of disability and media, argues (*pace* Hayles 1999) that cybernetics did not seek to abstract information from materiality but was deeply invested in the body—specifically in the policing of human difference—to produce smooth forms of (bio)media that carry signals efficiently (83). While Mills is most concerned with the intertwined development of deaf education and communication engineering, speech is never far off within her analysis. This makes sense insofar as deafness is constructed within an environment of strident oralism. Mills writes: "Information theory and cybernetics emerged in a milieu committed to the materialization and control of communication. . . . [such that] these fields prioritized certain kinds and arrangements of bodies above and beyond the sheer isolation or transfer of information" (82). Specifically, she argues that information engineers and theorists took as their model face-to-face oral conversation, assuming that speech (rather than writing or sign) was most informationally efficient and best conveyed the intentions of the sender.[64]

The goal of invariant information transmission upon a channel clear of noise requires by necessity a hyper-normalized and docile social body. Mills argues that Deaf activists were well

[64] The presumption that interpersonal verbal communication is primary, Sterne argues, predetermines the history of sound from the start. "Treating face-to face communication as primary also predetermines the history of sound reproduction before we even tell the story. If interpersonal interaction is the presumptively primary or 'authentic' mode of communication, then sound reproduction is doomed to denigration as inauthentic, disorienting, and possibly even dangerous by virtue of its 'decontextualizing' sound from its 'proper' interpersonal context" (21).

aware that clear channels (voices) were required to be included in the communication society. She cites the mid-century activist Florence Hazzard:

> We underhearing people are apt to forget what a strong influence sound has on the emotions. . . . And the effects our voices have on our normal hearing friends are too frequently boredom (from lack of color and inflection), fatigue (from straining to hear a low mumble-mumble), annoyance (from the nervous shock of being shouted at) (1942).

Uncommon pronunciation (the so-called Deaf accent) impedes the transfer of information at the affective and signifying register. It affects and demands something from the listener—and thus widens the aperture of the encounter beyond functional limits. Much like the dysfluent voice, the discomfort of the Deaf voice slows down the sensible process of interpretation and makes such mediums inefficient carriers of information. Wiener agrees. "The vast majority of deaf mutes," he writes in 1949, "though they can learn how to use their lips and mouths to produce sound, do so with a grotesque and harsh intonation, which represents a highly inefficient form of sending a message" (260). The affectivity of the Deaf voice must be normalized in order to constitute a stable communication channel. "Inclusion" into mainstream communication flows and into the public itself hinges on disabled and other minor voices conforming to operational norms.

This is a good place to address a potential stumbling block: the difference between machinic and what we might call mechanized or *mechanical* speech. Mechanized speech is measured, robotic speech devoid of inflection, and is the easiest for fluency machines to produce. By dramatically slowing down the rate of speech (starting at a very slow 60 syllable/minute) and by stretching out vowels and attacking consonants softly, one can produce a sing-song form of speech mostly devoid of dysfluencies. SLPs can reproduce in the mouths of stutterers this smooth yet mechanical voice quite easily within clinical conditions; even out "in the world" mechanized speech can successfully reproduce the minimal conditions of communication if one can somehow ignore the social stigma of talking like a machine. Mechanized speech is a striating

moment in the becoming-smooth of the tongue. Mechanized gives way to smooth machinic speech, but the striation always remains. For example, in many SLP recommended morning warm-ups (ten minute vocal exercises of "speech skills"), a stutterer is taught to begin with mechanized speech to build up to fluent speech.[65]

The historian of information Ronald Day portrays the decades leading up to WW2 as a period of "cultural shock" when society faced the new assembly lines of images and knowledge in film, newspapers, advertisements, telephone, and radio that cybernetics would later thematize as "information" (93). Walter Benjamin held that "technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training" (328) and admonished the "bourgeoisie conception of language" which reduces its function to transmitting messages (2003, 144). Benjamin, this is to say, was highly critical of the radical ontology of the message. The technology of the telephone embodies these historical worries and also facilitated what Mills terms the *industrial* conception of language wherein speech becomes a saleable commodity. The telephone quantifies speech: "a particular message from a unique voice, sent as a signal through the telephone system, could at once be treated in abstract mathematical and economic terms: quantified in terms of relative volume and information or priced in terms of time" (77). In the shift from sign to signal, operational norms of vocal clarity and temporal efficiency become economically and technically salient. SLPs and cyberneticists alike had a stake in calculating, standardizing, and streamlining speech—the rate of information flow.[66]

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[65] The interplay between social subjection and machinic enslavement is important to note. Growing up, I was deeply ashamed of how I looked (and sounded) when I stuttered. Shame is a social mechanism of silencing—of disconnection. But I eventually decided that I would rather *appear abnormal* and satisfy the minimum conditions of communication. That is, I now push words out of mouth no matter how it looks because I like contact and don't care much for normalization. This practice is of course a form of resistance, reclamation, and experimentation—even if it also desires the possibility of machinic enslavement.

[66] During the 1950 Macy Conference, for instance, J.C.R. Licklider calculated the rate of normal human speech: 10 phonemes per second using a 64 word vocabulary = 60 bits of information per second (Pias 2016, 227). In addition, Mara Mills explains: "Like the motor functions and the other senses, speech had been analyzed, subdivided,

The demand for clear and neutral mediums of communication runs into the theoretical and biopolitical problem of entropy. We should keep clear two types of entropy: thermodynamic (industrial) and probabilistic (informational). We might say that dysfluency is a form of *heat* in the first schema and *noise* in the latter. In the terms of industrial capitalism that sought to extract useable energy from the body-as-organism, the speech defect constitutes a point of friction and leak of energy. To re-cite Fletcher, a psychologist and early proponent of speech correction:

> If you should stand before a class in which there was a stuttering boy trying to recite, and watch this stumbling, halting, blushing and writhing embodiment of mental torture, and see the sympathy, worry, distraction of attention and anxiety of the teacher no less than the rest of the class, you could understand what I mean by this great leakage of energy (1911, 148-49).

The speech defect here represents a costly friction not just within the education machine but across the entire social field. Fletcher refers in one regard to the smooth operation of the education machine, yet also to the production of fluid, docile, and interoperable semiotic subjects (Berardi 2009) capable of interfacing with standardized semiotic systems. Fletcher's worries evoke the informational turn yet still express the logic of disciplinary machines, which, as Deleuze points out are plagued by the "passive danger of entropy and the active danger of sabotage" (6). The entropic danger of dysfluency approaches that of the wooden shoe thrown into gears: friction that reduces efficiency, wastes usable energy, and in the extreme leads to breakdown. But we must also keep in mind that "industrial dysfluency" attributed to the organism is chiefly a problem of *production* that operates within discontinuous spaces.

The informational turn that was set in motion by Claude Shannon and Norbert Weiner recast the concept of entropy. Whereas heat death operates within a closed system that slowly loses the capacity for *work*, entropy for Shannon and Weiner refers to the degree of *organization*

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reproduced, rationalized, and streamlined through the joint forces of psychophysics and industrialization, which fused in the medium of the telephone" (77). This follows in the tradition of elocution and speech correction.

of a system.[67] As Bryant explains: "A low entropy system is a system where information about one element enables inferences about others. Such a system is organized or structured" (94). He takes as one example the incorporeal machine of a conversation. A low entropic conversation is utterly formalistic—a series of pre-formed responses without natality. It contains little information. By comparison, "a conversation that descends into complete randomness in the utterances of the participants proves unable to form a unity *between* the participants, thereby preventing a conversational machine over and above the participants to emerge" (106; emphasis in original). A highly entropic conversation results in a high attentional load for the listener and threatens to push the assemblage beyond its functional limits.

In short, information is a metric of organization that must be maintained across system states and contexts. We can here imagine dysfluency as the threat of *noise* and the interruption of communication within open systems. In contrast to thermodynamic machines (whose dangers, again, are entropy and sabotage), Deleuze writes that control societies operate with information machines or computers "whose passive danger is jamming and whose active one is piracy and the introduction of viruses" (1992, 6). Jamming is a form of information overload that leaves a receiver incapable of distinguishing between channel and noise. The possibility of communicative stress looms continually within control societies defined by the intercommunication of components. As Haraway writes, a field of deterritorialized communication produces its own pathologies:

> No objects, spaces, or bodies are sacred in themselves; any component can be interfaced with any other if the proper standard, the proper code, can be constructed for processing signals in a common language. . . . The privileged pathology affecting all kinds of components in this universe is stress—communications breakdown (1990, 163).

[67] Shannon and Weaver *identify* information with entropy while Norbert Weiner *opposes* these terms, suggesting that entropy is the decay of informational pattern into disorganization. Semantics aside, both parties fundamentally agree.

A common language does not identify (the boundaries of) a tribe. It does not territorialize, but is a rather deterritorializing interface. This is why Deleuze warns that "compared with the approaching forms of ceaseless control in open sites, we may come to see the harshest confinement as part of a wonderful happy past. The quest for 'universals of communication' ought to make us shudder" (1990, 175). The machinic voice can and must translate without pause, connect without interruption.

The constant threat of noise thus requires "negentropic operations" like negative feedback that work actively to "*maintain* a state of low entropy across time" (Bryant 2014, 94; emphasis in original) to regulate the improbability of a structure sustaining its organization. Positive feedback occurs, like a bank run, where everyone rushes to withdraw money at the sign of economic crisis, or the noise from an ill-positioned stage microphone, when a closed loop adds to the system and leads towards system instability. Affective economies utilize positive feedback all the time: affects like fear beget more fear. Negative feedback, on the other hand, channels an output back into a system to *reduce* fluctuations. A thermostat in a space heater; automated aviation navigation. The use of feedback to produce a self-regulating system that tends towards stability pre-dates yet was widely used throughout the modern era. For example, the invisible hand of Adam Smith (1759) and James Watt's steam engine governor (1788) were both crucial developments in industrialism and both operated by negative feedback. In the 1920s at Bell Labs, Harold S. Black conceived negative feedback as a means to increase the stability and bandwidth of electronic amplifiers.

For Weiner, much as for Alexander Grahman Bell, fixing the deaf voice was ultimately a problem of feedback. Whereas the process of "ordinary speech" involves a *closed* feedback loop

of speaking, hearing oneself speak, and adjusting one's voice accordingly, this loop does not close for deaf people. There is no negative feedback. Thus as he writes:

> A good quality of speech can only be observed when it is subject to a continuous monitoring and self-criticism. Any aid to the totally deaf must take advantage of this fact, and although it may indeed appeal to another sense, such as that of touch, rather than to the missing sense of hearing, it must resemble the electric hearing-aids of the present day in being portable and continuously worn (1949, 261).

"Good quality" of speech requires continual feedback to modulate one's voice. Mills explains how Weiner was fascinated with an auditory prosthesis called the hearing glove which provided tactile feedback to its user. This device mimes the tympanic function of the ear: it extracts the essential information from speech and filters it into five narrow bands (one corresponding with each finger) translated into tactile feedback. While the glove ultimately failed since human fingers are not sensitive enough to absorb the information vibrating through wires quickly enough, we can recognize how it enlists machines to amplify the techniques of self-surveillance that Florence Hazzard suggested and represents the elocutionary tradition of self-surveillance.

Take another example of feedback machines used to produce noiseless channels. At seventeen I implored a charity and borrowed six thousand dollars from my mémère for a cybernetic device that would cure my stuttering. The SpeechEasy is a delayed auditory feedback machine, a custom-fit earpiece marketed as "the world's smallest anti-stuttering device" (Janus Development Group, 2018). The SpeechEasy delays and raises the pitch of the voice to simulate the so-called "choral effect"—a well-known yet peculiar phenomenon where a stutterer's fluency dramatically increases while singing or speaking in unison with others. While the underlying science is still fuzzy, the SpeechEasy can "increase [one's] ability to communicate effectively and confidently" (ibid) when the brain thinks the voice is not alone. Put otherwise, the SpeechEasy is a type of feedback device: it splits the voice to render it both output *and* input in

an informational system. Under good conditions the device made the world sound squeaky like a Chipmunks episode—but could more or less stabilize my body-as-communication-channel. Under bad conditions I heard only overwhelming noise. In either case, it only "worked" for a year until my brain caught onto the trick. The façade of fluency cracked and landed the SpeechEasy in a dark drawer, though its financial debt lingered for years.

We must recognize that the SpeechEasy is a cybernetic device not because of its size nor, strictly speaking, technology but because it renders its user an informational system. This is undoubtedly a clumsy informational system, just as the SpeechEasy is a crude feedback device, for it in essence jams a single modulation of feedback into the brain and hopes for the best. Yet we can also examine the *function* of this information machine. What does a SpeechEasy *do*? Its desire (Chipmunks be damned) is fluency and connection. In an admittedly ungenerous reading, the SpeechEasy is a smoothing device—my ear, neural networks, tongue, and voice (not to mention ambient spaces, sounds, and of course the technical device itself) contribute to its operation—*to annihilate the non-visible and opaque* in order to render its user (really, the assemblage) communicatively transparent, that is, open to the flow of information. The SpeechEasy desires to connect me into a network of communication such that I talk more, express more, connect more, call more, purchase more.[68] The SpeechEasy was an investment in my future and human capital—a game of mitigating neoliberal risk. I remember thinking that if I could only get my speech "taken care of" before university then life would be better.

Cybernetics did not survive the 60s. The hopes and fears in both the intellectual and public imaginary of automatic robots everywhere replacing the human had faded by the first oil

[68] Many of these connections are obviously life giving. Connection itself is necessarily neither good nor bad. It is, however, easily co-opted by neoliberalism in the form of "flexibility," "adaptability," and, as Deleuze argues, even "communication." The SpeechEasy must, moreover, be located in the context of financialization and debt. While I turned to family in order to purchase my SpeechEasy (a choice that spawned a decade of guilt and other issues), SpeechEasy now offers convenient payment plans right on their website.

crisis. The spirit of cybernetics, however, lived on in the formal theories of information, communication, systems, and control. The more immediate historical upshot of cybernetics is the transcoding of the "human" and its milieus into information systems set against noise. From first-order cybernetics (1940s-1960s) that focused on modelling the organism and its place in a chaotic world (systems of command-and-control), to second-order cybernetics (1975-) that moved away from homeostasis towards complex systems theory, these movements sought to reduce the heterogeneity of Being to a general exchange of information—Breton's radical ontology of the message. Information theory and cybernetics are in this way a cutting edge which enact a series of deterritorializations in the social field. The conception of the human (or posthuman) as a deterritorialized information processing entity "fits" with mid-century economic and management sciences. It is during this period, Larry Lohmann writes, that "quasi-cybernetic concepts like 'economic model', 'simulation' and 'price signal' really began to take hold, and that Friedrich von Hayek began to try to configure economic relations across society as an information-processing device superior to conventional statistics-based attempts to predict and control" (2016, 483). We can thus map a relation not simply between informatization and post-Fordist *production* (e.g. new media and telecommunications) but to other neoliberal machines like finance, debt, responsibilization, surveillance, targeted advertising, cyberwarfare, etc. This widespread mesh of control assumes (and thus produces) affective and semiotic assemblages that are open and interfaceable, responsive, and fluent; not passive sources of information but interactive and flexible agents. Noiseless channels are the minimum condition of these operational relations.

We can, second, consider machinic speech as executable. What is the function of a noisefree channel? This clean relation is, yes, a neutral medium to exchange information but also

a machine to convert meaning to action. Machinic speech is above all pragmatic and seeks to intervene in the machinic assemblage of bodies—to work on the real. There are two related issues: a) speech as a trigger of action and b) speech as functional. Speech that triggers action invokes speech-act theory (the performative or illocutionary act), but differs insofar as executable speech necessarily flows within more tightly controlled operational networks. Thinking about the asignifying function of code might be helpful to tease out this difference. In *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization,* Alexander Galloway argues that

> The imperative voice (and what philosophers like Austin, Searle, and others talk about in the area of speech act theory) attempts to affect change through persuasion but has little real material affect. So code is the first language that actually does what it says—*it is a machine for converting meaning into action*. Code has a semantic meaning, but it also has an enactment of meaning. (165-6, emphasis mine).

The semantic meaning of code is secondary to its executable or diagrammatic operations. As Galloway suggests, language covets the efficient ability of code to convert meaning into action. The imperative and illocutionary are also meaning-action conversion machines and both aspire towards but cannot achieve the alchemic efficiency of code. Their incorporeal transformations operate through rhetoric and persuasion and are executed via social and legal codes. The middle manager only *wishes* their orders had an executable state. However, buttressed by asignifying signs (e.g. graphs and stock market indexes) and located within networks of corporate incentives and punishments, speech inches closer to an executable state. We could here also consider voice-operated machines like Google Home or Amazon Echo (Alexa) where our "human" voices trigger a complex series of protocols bundled into a human persona that can perform a multitude of tasks. Voiced words are simply inputs. As Guattari writes "Signs and things combine with one another independently of the subjective 'hold' that the agents of individuated enunciation claim to have over them" (1996, 151). As a trigger of action within a world of asignifying semiotics,

executability thus refers not to signifying operations but the effective transmission of order-words (or, within a finite syntax—*operating* words).

Considered more generally in terms of its functionalism, executability refers to the capacity to execute or carry out orders. This includes, yes, the ability to become a noise-free channel that conveys information without delay or deterioration. But perhaps more basically, machinic speech as executable is the becoming-machine of the voice, inasmuch as "neo-capitalism asserts the primacy of languages of clarity, precision, functionality, and instrumental and pragmatic efficiency by vacating them of the expressive dimension of humanist languages" (Lazzarato 2014, 130). Machinic speech is a cutting edge that, like neoliberalism itself, decodes borderlines and limits (Wallin 2010, 87) in the production of smooth space. Machinic speech requires *speed* to take advantage of investment opportunities in the portfolio of life and thus, as I explain below, self-appreciate the value of *homo economicus*.

Jean-Francois Lyotard's notion of "performativity" provides instruction into both senses of the notion of speech as executable. The concept of performativity is an intentional riff off speech act theory that focuses specifically on the operational action of systems: how to do things with systems. Note, performativity does not ask the Spinozian inverse—what can a system do?—but, given its neoliberal marching orders, axiomatically assumes an operational state. Lyotard famously interprets postmodernity as the breakdown of metanarrative and institutional legitimacy: a crisis of the state of knowledge.[69] The marriage of information technologies to finance, military, and the state redefines the role of language and knowledge production in the second half of the twentieth century around what Lyotard terms performativity—the optimal performance of a *system*; a "sense of efficiency measured according to an input/output ratio" (1984, 88). In contemporary parlance, performativity is akin to neoliberal "best practices" (cf.

[69] It is noteworthy that Lyotard was relentlessly critical of consensus.

Brown 2015) that reorganize institutions in politically neutral terms to achieve (through austerity, downsizing, and outsourcing) maximal net profit. In either case, capitalism deterritorializes or "atomizes" language and knowledge, reducing them to a form of information transfer evaluable in operational (not humanist) terms. Education, as JD Marshall explains in his reading of Lyotard, is "no longer concerned with the pursuit of ideals such as personal autonomy or emancipation, but with the means, techniques or skills that contribute to the efficient operation of the state in the world market and contribute to maintaining the internal cohesion and legitimation of the state" (1999, 309). What counts as knowledge is not that which is true but that which increases performativity or the operational *power* of an assemblage. Lyotard was aware already in 1984 that "The effects of the penetration of capitalism into language are only beginning. Under the guise of an extension of markets and a new industrial strategy, the coming century is that of the investment of the desire for infinity, according to the criterion of optimum performance, in matters of language" (27). While one could rightly criticize Lyotard for fixating on language rather than the broad array of semiotics exploited by capital, his attention to performativity (a game orientated around the needs and goals of the machine) arguably opens upon such an analysis.

That is to say, Lyotard alerts us to the swelling machinic phylum of information upon which advanced capitalism stakes its claim. He points towards the necessary formatting of human semiosis as input/output machines so signs flow smooth across this operational surface.[70] To say that we "enunciate more and more like the nonhuman machines into which [we are] increasingly plugged and assembled" (Genosko 116) would mean for Lyotard that we are informational input/output machines—both comprised of inputs/outputs like hearing and speech

[70] As Lyotard writes of education: "The nature of knowledge cannot survive unchanged within this context of general transformation. It can fit into the new channels, and become operational, only if learning is translated into quantities of information" (4).

and *comprising* inputs/outputs as nodes in larger machines—evaluated by our contribution to efficient operation of the flows of knowledge and capital. Machinic speech is again language deterritorialized: defined by its speed and clarity and a pragmatically fixed relation between sign and signifier. Lazzarato explains in the context of information theory that "the standardization of language eliminates as much as possible the intensities and affects not univocally assignable, which, being unable to ensure stable denotation and meanings, threaten to function on their own" (2014, 72-3). Machinic speech as an operating language aims at invariant signification and thus wide translatability. Put otherwise, it desires that meaning be automatic and established without dispute. The executable voice is flushed of polyvocality and uncertainty.

Machinic speech is, third, interfaceable. The machine is defined by its operations on flows; by its (possible) connections in endless assembly. We can in this way imagine the machinic tongue as an interfacing machine. It desires to connect: to produce a new relation, a new way of relating, a new field of attention. Interfaceability is close kin to what Breton disparagingly calls "interactivity" and Berardi "connectibility." Berardi defines connection against the concept of *conjunction.* "Conjunction is becoming-other," he explains, "Rather than a fusion of segments, connection entails a simple effect of machinic functionality. In order to connect, segments must be compatible and open to interfacing and interoperability" (2011, 39-40). Connection is repetition without difference. By interoperability Berardi means the mutual capacity of two systems to interface and exchange information within an operational matrix. Connectibility is thus an index of the power of an assemblage such that we can imagine both capacity and debility (in many regards) to be functions of connectibility. It is by flattening the indeterminacy of voices and patterns of communication—as well as imposing neurotypical cues

and body languages—that otherwise heterogeneous surfaces and processes are made compatible (and thus productive). Connection curbs the virtual potential of an event.

We connect as linguistic units (in the subjective mode) but also in more deterritorialized relations. Precardio flips mid-century information and systems theory on its head (specifically Marshall McLuhan, Buckminster Fuller, and Norbert Weiner), remarking that "technologies of communication [no longer] function like an extension of the body" but that "the individual body functions like an extension of global technologies of communication" (44). Technological prosthetics do not extend the body; the (pre) individual body is rather an extended organ of global communication machines. We are an OwB since semiocapitalism renders "human users" a multiplicity of parts—our senses, tongues, attention, pre-attention, hands, and fluids activated and guided by a multiplicity of machines.[71] Lazzarato insists that "the strength of capitalism lies in the exploitation of machines and semiotic systems that conjoin functions of expression and functions of content of every kind, human and non-human, micro-physical and cosmic, material and incorporeal" (88). There are connections and disconnections across different domains of nature all the way down. Machinic speech is thus the flexible capacity to *move between* and *intervene* in these flows. Fluency machines always work on a mixed semiotic—not the ability to wax poetic but the capacity to interface with, adapt within, and increase the functional power of a heterogeneous assemblage. Consider the air traffic controller who must interface with and smooth multiple flows of differential speeds. It is worth re-emphasizing that insofar as connection is an operation of smoothing, and inasmuch as it occurs within a social field (deterritorialized though it might be) like an office or call center, a certain mastery of social and cultural codes is always implied in machinic speech. This is a minimal social condition of

[71] The subject form is always ready to swoop in and claim agential responsibility when the need arises—e.g. a system crisis occurs and *someone* must be blamed (see Bennett 2010, ch. 1)

contact. Moreover, the affect of machinic speech is carefully modulated. This is not mechanized but *effortless* speech. It adapts and connects—the machinic tongue is above all flexible.[72]

Machining the tongue (with the face-voice) to connect and be connectible transforms the communicative event. In Berardi's words:

> Interpretation follows semantic criteria in the realm of conjunction: the meaning of the signs sent by the other as she enters in conjunction with you needs to be understood by tracing the intention, the context, the nuances and the unsaid, if necessary. The interpretive criteria of the realm of connection on the other hand are purely syntactic. In connection, *the interpreter must recognise a sequence and be able to perform the operation required by general syntax or the operating system*; there is no room for margins of ambiguity in the exchange of messages, nor can the intention be shown by means of nuances (2011, 40-41; emphasis mine).

Within relations of connection, the semantic register drops out. What a sign means (or could mean) is less important than its function—what operations it can perform. There is no room for ambiguity in operational contexts that maintain very little redundancy. Consider the fast-food-drive-through as an example of a highly deterritorialized communication system designed to connect customers to food and credit through a complex series of protocols and scripts. Using a drive-through with a dysfluent tongue can be an adventure. In this non-space where disembodied voices and ears battle it out against noise of all kinds, the goal is to utter a specific sequence recognizable to a system, and more immediately, the underpaid voice in the speaker. The drive-through machine operates with a rigid syntax such that interpretation or nuance only impedes the exchange of information and the execution of operations. This means I *must* utter a specific sequence that the receiver as proxy to the system can recognize to then trigger the correct

[72] It is also worth re-emphasizing that language only plays a secondary role within relations of machinic enslavement. "The recurrence and communication among the human and non-human within the assemblage, their extraordinary creativity and productivity, is not primarily due to language. *Language is not sufficiently deterritorialized to fulfill this function in capitalist machinic assemblages; it is still too 'human.'* In machinic enslavements, the ontological barrier between subject and object established by social subjections is continually blurred not because of language but because of asignifying semiotics" (Lazzarato 2014, 83; emphasis mine).

operation so that I can eat what I desire for lunch.[73] The semantic meaning of these words do not matter—only the specific protocols they trigger.

In this regard, *working* at a drive-through would be an even greater adventure for someone like myself. While performatives *in general* where action and thus expectation is loaded on the tongue can be a struggle for a dysfluent tongue, executables like starting and stopping words—"hello" or "goodbye"—are often especially difficult for stutterers to eject smoothly. It becomes a system-level problem when the most basic executables—those which open and break connection—are difficult for an info-cog to utter automatically. I have been that voice sputtering on the phone trying to initiate a conversation while my interlocutor hears only the staccato static of a prank call. This is quite literally the struggle to not be noise; the struggle to make contact; the struggle to interface. Moreover, my Bartlebyian tongue would continually prefer not to obey the corporate script. As a fast-food attendant, substituting, skipping, or blocking on words would be a breakdown not simply of information exchange but operational protocols—the flows of operating-words that activate the kitchen and financial capital. Allowances *could* be made with, for example, text-to-speech technologies. Given enough effort (that is, desire), the assemblage could remove the tongue and be made smooth. Yet if a machinic tongue, again, must "be able to perform the operation required by general syntax or the operating system" (Berardi 2011, 40-41), then the dysfluent tongue marks a *risk* of both communication and system breakdown—the risk of becoming-disconnected.

Berardi writes that the mind-numbing field of connection has pushed (in)human powers of communication and attention to their limits and in the process reformatted these organs. He worries particularly about the capacity he terms "sensibility" or the faculty of interpreting/

[73] It is worth noting that many dysfluent people regularly order what is easiest for them to *pronounce* on the menu, not what they actually desire.

intuiting non-verbal signs: "the ability to understand what cannot be expressed in forms that have a finite syntax" (41). Sensibility is not efficient and thus, Berardi argues, is *inhibited* within connective milieus:

> In its attempt to efficiently interface with the connective environment, the conscious organism appears to increasingly inhibit what we call sensibility. . . . This faculty reveals itself to be useless and even damaging in an integrated connective system. Sensibility slows down processes of interpretations and renders them aleatory and ambiguous, thus reducing the competitive efficiency of the semiotic agent (ibid).

Over time, discouraging sensibility and inhabiting milieus of connection (where sensibility is damaging and shunned as a child of entropy) dulls the faculty. This is one cost of maintaining "competitive efficiency" in a deterritorialized field of information. But we should note the disproportionate burden of this cost. Who benefits and who is disadvantaged? The sensible faculty is intrinsic to many crip modes of communication. Although we might push back against the demand for communication and signification, to enter into non-verbal communication nevertheless requires imagination and courage. These are the faculties that make sensibility run. Machines that inhibit sensibility and render ambiguity and slowness not only useless but *dangerous* to "communication" change the material conditions of possibility of being-together and inter-action. In a more specific sense, they restrict how dysfluency can connect and what it can connect with. We are all decontextualized voices that connect smoothly and compete "equally" within fields of scarce attention.

The Call Centre

To get a better grasp on the specific constellation of bodies that activate the machinic tongue in semiocapitalism, we can consider the call center—a nexus in the mechanosphere that intervenes in and transforms flows of information, affect, and desire. By the early twentieth

century, the telephone had wound into networks of both business and leisure. Used for leisure, the telephone captured and commodified human sociality and, Sterne writes, helped develop a new social subject—the consumer class (208). "Information" in this context is an object of consumption for a mass culture. Following this trajectory of information leads through the "factories of the soul" towards the New Media. Yet set to work for business, the telephone articulated the growing bureaucratic network of economic institutions, bodies, and processes at the turn-of-the-century. This is the *machinic* lineage of information.

It is thus that Matteo Pasquinelli reads the industrial machine as a bifurcation of energy and information; a bifurcation that founds an autonomous lineage of information parallel to thermodynamics. This lineage stretches from the Jacquard loom through bureaucratic systems to cybernetics and big data and runs alongside information's growth as a mass commodity. The division of labour separated mechanical from intellectual organs. Pasquinelli claims that "information machines occupy, replace and extend the relations of the *division of mental labour* that were already present in the industrial age" (53; emphasis in original) and cites as example the Jacquard loom which was introduced in 1801 and is often considered the first computer. Both a mechanical and mathematical device, the loom deskilled mechanical and cognitive labour by decoding into information stored in punchcards the (gendered) knowledges and social relations inhering in a fabric. The Jacquard loom exemplifies Charles Babbage's definition of a machine, which was later cited by Marx, as an instrument that replaces a previous division of labour: "When each process has been reduced to the use of some simple tool, the union of all these tools, actuated by one moving power, constitutes a machine" (1846, 174). But as Pasquinelli argues, this definition also applies to proto-information machines like bureaucracy (or "production management" as it was originally termed) which emerged from the administrative sciences in the

late nineteenth century to coordinate and streamline the production process. Bureaucracy isolates information from living labour in order to govern semiotic flows at a higher plane of abstraction.

The business telephone as such replaced cognitive relations of labour and was explicitly marketed so. One telephone company touts: "The progressive manager has more than a telephone—he has a telephone *system* and a definite telephone *policy*. He realizes that the salary of an office boy or a clerk will pay for a private branch exchange and that the salary and expenses of one traveling salesman will more than equal the cost of the most liberal use of local and long distance service" (The Central District and Printing Telegraph Co., cited in Sterne 210). In replacing human labour with the operational logic of both communicative systems and protocols, the telephone is conceived in terms of command-and-control. In 1924, Bell advertised that: "In the simple act of lifting the telephone receiver from its hook every subscriber becomes the marshal of an army. At his service, as he needs them, a quarter of a million men and women are organized in the Bell system" (Popular Science, 98). This "army" of people organized into a telephone system is an assemblage of component parts—each of which must be machined to operational norms. As I argued in chapter two, SLP emerged as an industry of the means of production. Creating a standard of normalcy in practice means generalizing the biopolitical strategies used on the speech defect across the entire population. That is to say, telephone companies recognized both the economic need for fluent operators and the utility of speech improvement early on. For example, reviewing a 1916 symposium on speech, the educator Louis Rapeer remarks that "A number of large business firms in this country have been so affected by the faulty speech of their employees that they have organized and experimentally carried on systematic training in speech" (520). The operator is a technological linchpin in the emerging

industry of telecommunications and thus offer a stark example of the ableist imperative underpinning semiocapitalism. In 1916, Rapeer continues, the Chicago Telephone Company

> Uses six thousand operators, who carry on their great work of connecting up all parts of a city and surrounding towns by the use of forty-five million words a day. In their operators' school, continuing about a month for each candidate, thirty minutes a day are given to speech training, and afterward constant supervision of speech is given those who enter the service (520).

Forty-five uttered million words a day is a deterritorialized metric not merely of subjective labour but also the machinic flow of information maintained through the continual application of surveillance and self-surveillance. These words function as connective operators. The speech of telephone operators must be docile in the machinic and subjective modes, capable of facilitating human contact in a wide array of situations while remaining efficient input/output machines.

Ursula Franklin (a Canadian metallurgist, research physicist, and educator) explains that operators were "the link between the new technology and the community" and, as she stresses, "were not mechanical or electrical links; they were human links" (1990, 106). Stated otherwise, telephone operators, who had always been female, put to work general intellect in the mode of subjection. The telephone operator was not simply a semiotic relay but an affective labourer who facilitates the connection of molar subjects of speech. The operator thus represents not an entrance of ghostly voices into the flows of capital—the simple extraction of even and measurable time in service of surplus value (Foucault 1980a, 104)—but of speaking subjects that must remain human despite their machinic efficiency. Biopower enabled "the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes" (Foucault 1990, 140); voices and subjects of speech could not be inserted into capitalist production without the control and regulation of a biopolitical apparatus of speech. With Franklin's caveat in mind, the subjective is still only one mode of

operation. The disintegration of the "human" operator into the machine becomes more complete moving from the early-twentieth century to contemporary call centres.

As their name indicates, call centre operators enact transformations on flows. They alter flows of desire, information, and capital. Frustrated clients abound. How, the operator must ask, can we *change or refocus* this client's desire to ~~end this conversation~~ maximize corporate profit and brand rating? How can we satisfy? How can we smooth? Yet of course, smoothing always relies upon striation, and it is increasingly evident that call centers put to work not individuals and certainly not dialogical interaction (intersubjectivity) but deterritorialized voices, de- and re-coded, that are disciplined to function within operational parameters. "Words and propositions are the 'input' and 'output' of the machinic enslavement specific to service relations" (Lazzarato 2014, 115). Corporate protocols exploit and program the dialogical event; the call center in this way bypasses representation. Pasolini explains that "the 'prompts', replies to questions, and other forms of civility are planned out prior to the conversation. The machine automatically dials and activates the voice. Dialogue is 'triggered' according to the customer's attitude and questions" (116). All this metadata is recorded, analyzed, and fed back to the operator to increase efficiency—or what Lyotard would call a performative index.[74] What thus "speaks" to the customer on the other end of, say, a technical support line is a collective assemblage of protocols, technical machines, algorithms, data, and pre-personal elements of human subjectivity.

The global call centre highlights the intersection of machined flows of capital, labour, information, and identity. Emmanuel David undertakes ethnographic research of transgender call-center workers in Manila and what he terms "purple collar labour"—a theoretical frame to

[74] As Lazzarato writes of the call center: "The affects, intensities, and 'emotions' that animate every verbal exchange are submitted to the same semiotic training, whose aim is to program and control behavior" (2014, 116).

understand "'transgender subjects' institutional and interactional incorporation into workplace relations" (170). David notes that the explosion in "Business Process Outsourcing" (or BPO) has produced a rapid rise of call centers and demand for semio-workers in the Philippines. The Philippines BPO industry employed 700 000 people in 2013 and is expected to reach 1.8 million by 2022 (IBPAP 2018). This has created an opening for many Filipinos but specifically transgender Filipinos.[75] One worker David spoke with suggested 75% of the people in her office were transgender (179). Transgender people "cluster" at call-centers because BPOs offer a decent alternative to careers of entertainment, fashion, and sex industries and often house anti-discrimination policies. They find a "half-opened door of employment opportunities" at BPOs (178). Which is to say, the call center is a mixed bag of socio-economic opportunities. Upward mobility for transgender people is limited to middle-management and transgender workers are expected to comply to culturally gendered norms of appearance, dress etc. However, transgender workers are valuable; they produce a type of "queer-value" attached to cultural perceptions of trans people as upbeat and funny.[76] It is for this reason, David suggests, that transgender workers are often broken up and dispersed throughout the call center. The expectation of queer emotional labour arises on multiple fronts: both stimulating production throughout the drudgery of machinic enslavement while also producing queer value in *customer* interactions by relieving "tensions that come from dealing with impatient, irate, and often racist customers from the global North" (183). Angela, one of the workers David spoke with, described a strategic switch of gendered voice:

[75] With David, I use the term "transgender" throughout this section, yet also recognize the staticity of this category that does not account for the complex map of Filipino self-identifications such as *bakla* or *bayot* (David 173).
[76] "Trans subjects are often expected to produce queer value through their performance of a specifically Filipino queerness, a lightheartedness that yields comfort among workplace teams. By engaging in narrowly defined gender performances, purple-collar laborers play a pivotal role as emotional shock absorbers in the outsourcing industry by putting their customers and coworkers at ease" (188). Kimberly, a call centre worker, said, "You keep them entertained so that they don't get bored. They don't realize the time is slower than it's supposed to be. They're complaining, 'What time is it? I just want to go home.' We keep them entertained." (183).

> "If I'm talking to a guy, I have to sound like a female, since it is sales. That's my strategy, to make the guy say 'yes.' But if it is a female I have to change my voice." "Really!?" [David] asked. "Yeah! Just to make sales. If I'm talking to women, I change my name from Jenny to Josh. Like, 'Hi, this is Josh, and I'm calling on behalf of [company].' So I change my voice, because foreign males, they like 'sexy voice.' . . . yeah, some of those truck drivers in [the] States. I do the sexy voice just to make them, like, 'yes, yes, yes, yes, yes,' and give their credit card numbers" (184).

The smooth milieu of the call centre that deterritorializes the voice—reducing the operator to pure and anonymous voice that connects automatically as part of a global network of telecommunications—facilitates gender flipping and passing.[77] Yet, as David repeatedly emphasizes, such subversion is captured within diagrams of profit and entrepreneurism. Angela specifically notes that she flips and exploits gender to make a sale. But like the submarine that escapes detection—and makes the striated ocean once again smooth—we might also image Angela's action as playful escape. That is, "disappearing from the map" in a deterritorialized transnational field of voice.

Machinic enslavement can likewise be liberatory for disabled people. Recall from last chapter Mitchell and Snyder's suggestion that "non-productive bodies" have been made useful within flexible immaterial labour markets. Disabled people, like trans people, can escape some of the oppressive structures of the public sphere—where one is pinned down *as* a subject of pathology—by becoming a deterritorialized voice. In becoming-machine (by plugging their voices into inhuman machines of information), some disabled people can escape, if even for a while, some of the exclusions that come from existing-as-disabled in society. An OwB *can* become a BwO!

Of course, the possibility of escape through the mechanosphere (for the queer and crip alike) assumes a subject who meets a certain threshold of "rationality" and communicative

[77] Carl Elliot highlights the important relation in Western contexts between the voice and identity and more specifically draws attention to the use of speech correction by trans people as a technology of self-transformation (2004).

normativity. It assumes flexibility, a certain rate and noiseless clarity of information flow, and the capacity to modulate affect. Both take for granted an assemblage of communicative organs smoothed of enunciative diversity such that they interface with the operational flows of semiocapitalism. Moreover, as David argues, BPOs privilege those who perform according to stereotypical (i.e. expected) cultural norms and thus reinscribe distinctions between "good" and "bad" trans subjects. As he writes:

> The privileging of "proper" transgender subjects risks leaving others behind, particularly those without access to formal education (which provide advanced English language skills and possibilities for class mobility and thus distance from the *bakla* category) or those whose gender expressions are considered inappropriate for the workplace (189).

Highlighting the imperative to perform queerness *in the right way* aligns with what Puar terms "homonationalism" (2007) and Mitchell and Snyder call "ablenationalism" (2015). Fritsch explains, in the context of disability: "Disabled persons can be included if they can be captured by market rationality, or market values. Disabled bodies that are profitable, that can be marketed to, can be enhanced, or incorporated into the labour force are debilitated bodies that neoliberalism deems worthy" (2015b, 31). Those persons that get included are then held up as evidence of an "inclusive" or "diverse" society. Not being able to speak (either at all or within operational parameters) puts a body at risk of being unprofitable and unworthy.

3. Dysfluency as Risk

Before concluding this chapter, let's put the concept of machinic speech to work in the context of human capital and risk. I suggested in chapter two that capitalism has rendered speech a form of human capital within the milieu of the spectacle. The discourse of human capital individualizes responsibility (for the failures of capitalism) and thus centres the agential subject. Speech is a capacity *belonging* to the individual subject. But from our current perspective, we can re-evaluate the "humanness" of this capital-form that is made profitable through machinic

assemblages and speculative practices. From our perspective we can appreciate Lazzarato's claim that:

> Our most "human" actions (speaking, seeing, hearing, reproducing as a "species," feeling, affecting, and being affected, etc.) are today unthinkable without the aid of machines. If capitalists speak of "human capital," it is because nothing "human" escapes machinic enslavements, technical-semiotic assemblages, scientific laboratories and the industries that exploit them (2015, 188).

For speech to be rendered human capital it must interface with machines. We can only speak *with* and thus increasingly *as* inhuman machines of communication. However there is always a cost to machinic enslavement. The BBC, for example, recently ran a story which described the dread that many semioworkers experience when using the phone. Tethering neuropsychic energies of communication to the speed and abstraction of machines makes the performance of fluency (and thus competence) that much more precarious. In step with the axioms of neoliberalism, the article nevertheless codes this aversion in pathological terms that recentre individual responsibility: "telephobia." As the author writes: "Recognised as an offshoot of social anxiety disorder, telephobia afflicts people across countries and generations . . . Ultimately, the fear of talking on the phone can have disastrous results for productivity or job mobility" (2016). This very *act* of medicalization shifts the attention from the structures of machinic exploitation and control to individualized skills of communication. Pathologization wipes communication channels clean of noise and, just as importantly, politics.

It is with a cruel irony that neoliberalism constructs and is utterly dependent upon semiotic bodies and networks twisted to the operational demands of capital, *yet simultaneously* imagines the capacity to interface with such networks as both an individual and depoliticized skill—a "human" capital over which one is responsible. For example, Berardi explores the

psychic effect of the mobile phone which captures and recombines fractured units of labour within global semiotic machines:

> From the standpoint of capitalist valorisation, this flow is uninterrupted and finds its unity in the object produced; however, from the standpoint of cognitive workers the supply of labor is fragmented: fractals of time and pulsating cells of labor are switched on and off in the large control room of global production (2011, 35).

Berardi pens the pathologies and "neuroses" of late-capitalism that result from our collective enslavement to machines without troubling these concepts. Yet as with the example of telephobia, not only *can* we speak of the harms of semiocapitalism without reifying categories of abnormalcy and decapacity, but we must recognize the way these categories depoliticize and facilitate the very machinic exploitation that Berardi decries. This depoliticization becomes clear, I suggest, in the context of risk management. And risk management is best understood in context of financialization—including the relation between industrial and financial capital.

Recall that neoliberalism employs information technologies to facilitate and transform the speculative technologies of risk management. Yet the logic of risk management, we should note, is basic to liberal biopolitics and its own statistical technologies. The difference between liberal and neoliberal risk management turns on the distinction between normalizable vs. non-normalizable risk. What David Harvey calls "embedded liberalism" which reigned post-WW2 until the 70s *collectivized* risk across the social body—mitigating the danger to mediated growth by investing in the social welfare of the population. Risk is managed by making the future predictable. As Ewald explains, "To calculate a risk is to master time, to discipline the future" (1991, 207).

However neoliberalism fundamentally realigns the constellation of risk, speculation, and the life of the population. "Where Keynesian economics attempts to safeguard the productive economy against the fluctuations of financial capital, neoliberalism installs speculation at the

very core of production" (Cooper 2015, 10). The shift from industrial (M-C-M) to financial (M-M') capital coincides with the capture of human action within the market and the destruction of social mediations. "Contrary to the philosophy of the social state," Cooper writes, "[neoliberalism] teaches that the collective risks gathered under the banner of the nation can no longer be (profitably) collectivized, normalized, or insured against" (62). Risk is individualized and detached from the normalizable subject. The discourse of "risk" thus takes on an important role within neoliberalism, supplanting the Keynesian discourses of social need and welfare.

The upshot is a general financialization of society. Neoliberal financialization produces a new model of subjectivity: not, the theorist Michel Feher would add, a liberal subject who *possesses* a capacity of labour-power apart from the essence of oneself, a capacity measurable in biological time which belongs to a subject and can thus be sold, but rather human capital that one can invest in but never sell. "As investors in their own human capital," Feher explains, "the subjects that are presupposed and targeted by neoliberalism can thus be conceived as the managers of a portfolio of conducts pertaining to all the aspects of their lives" (30). The imperative to raise the stock of *our entire lives* destroys liberal distinctions between private / public and installs as unquestionable axiom the speculative need to perfect, modulate, and tweak ourselves (which includes the demand to avoid so-called "high-risk" lifestyles and behaviours). Wendy Brown argues that neoliberalism displaces *homo politicus* with *homo economicus* by extending the "veridiction of the market" to all spheres of human existence. *Homo economicus* must "comport themselves in ways that will outperform the competition and 'align' themselves with good assessments about where those markets may be going" (109) because the financial market and its signals form *the* singular value and truth of all life. We are all bundles of little human capitals (not a singular entity) to be invested in and enhanced.

If, as the economist Robert Shiller argues, finance is a technology for managing risk (2004), then that risk must always *first* be managed within the corporeal body itself—a field of tongues, brains, and ears. Rendering the communicative body docile is a technology to discipline the speculative future. Fluency accordingly makes speech productive not simply by increasing the flow of raw information (the productivist logic of M-C-M) but by managing the communicative future to render it predictable and thus profitable (the appreciative logic of M-M'). Fluency, under neoliberalism, is first of all the stabilization of risk. This direct and machinic responsiveness to the market means, in one sense, that we are mere *terminals* of various signifying and asignifying semiotics (Lazzarato 2014, 100). *Homo economicus* is a distinctly informational being that emits and responds to signals. Semiotic training accordingly formats the mouth, the senses, and attention to make *homo economicus* responsive to the market, to its trends and signals.[78] Fluency is the market veridiction of the mouth—a different kind of truth speaking or *parrhesia*. While many of the effects of our semiotic training goes unnoticed (e.g. the asignifying semiotics that automatically and silently evaluate almost all aspects of human activity), the production of informationally responsive and efficient beings is intrinsic to the operation of the market, which is "informationally efficient" in its unbiased prediction of future value (Davis 39) only insofar as information can flow unimpeded and symmetric across the entire politico-economic body. Each market actor is ostensibly equal within the flow of signs. As

[78] Guattari's depiction (from 1977) of the child's initiation into industrial semiotics is instructive: "The child not only learns to speak a native language; he also learns the codes for walking down the street, a certain kind of complex relationship to machines, electricity, etc. […] and these different codes have to be made part of the social codes of power. This aspect of general exchange among semiotics is essential to the capitalist economy. […] The initiation to capital above all entails this semiotic initiation to various codes of translatability and to the corresponding invariant systems" (1977, 178). Children today are fluent in a far more dense semiotic matrix: they learn the codes of touchscreens, digital images, in-app purchases, voice-recognition, pop-ups, pay-walls, hacks, memes, and credit. They move nimbly in and across data streams—fluent in codes of translatability. Browsing online feels just like walking because, as Lazzarato writes, "initiation into semiotics is the very first 'labor' accomplished" (71). More than a mere initiation into consumer culture (more than the production of consumer subjectivities), semiotic training shapes and limits the modes of affect we are allowed to feel and share (e.g. Facebook "reactions") as well as the acceptable ways (e.g. the cadences and allotted time) to speak and listen. Semiotic initiation forms machinic habits and hierarchies within the "human" sensorium.

Dean writes, our information-rich society "presumes that all contributions, all sites, are equal, equally likely to be heard or to make a difference" (28). The logic of the market presumes "perfect information" or the notion that information flows *freely* within a level playing field completely devoid of power. Neoliberalism both disembodies and depoliticizes the (human, nonhuman, and inhuman) production, processing, and exchange of information. Fluency and perfect information are similarly conceits, but valuable nevertheless.

We return to "human" capital. Understood from the speculative logic of the portfolio and life-long learning, neoliberalism tears communication from its relations, material infrastructures, and networks of power to be rendered a distinctly *in*human ability into which one must invest continually and early. What, after all, is SLP and its intense fixation with early childhood intervention but a site (*dispositif*) of investment for "human" capital and the child's informatic future? Parental anxiety about the most minor lisp or "delayed development" in speech is justified once *homo politicus* is laid bare to the vicissitudes of macro-economic growth. "As human capital," Brown writes, "[*homo economicus*] may contribute to or be a drag on economic growth; they may be invested in or divested from depending on their potential for GDP enhancement" (110). The utter disposability of citizens under late-liberalism makes investment in "human" capital a grotesque moral obligation.

This is particularly true for crips, who are born a mishmash of high-risk profiles in a financialized and speculative world. The ceaseless demand to work on (parts of) oneself as human capital is that much more difficult yet necessary for disabled people. While disability is itself a source of capitalist value: disability animates networks of debt, speculative capital, social services, big pharma, therapy, advanced technologies, and institutions of confinement, it is simultaneously an *individual* or pre-individual risk or drag within our neoliberalized world. The

only way to mitigate the risk of disability (of being an "at-risk subject") and to become a "good" disabled citizen is to accept intervention by the medical-industrial complex. We must develop or rehabilitate our human capital. Yet it is important to emphasize, in a return to Puar, that risk is no longer evaluated against a collective horizon—against a normalizable citizen. Under conditions of capacity and debility, all bodies must continually be made better. This results in differential inclusion under the need for lifelong improvement.

My speech is an uncertain faculty—it is never guaranteed what words will come out of my mouth nor how. It is never guaranteed *any* speech will come in time. This indeterminacy is not usually a problem in informal settings like talking to a friend or even lecturing: communicative games where the rules can be bent and called into question; games packed with redundancy, embodied context, and memory where *trans*individual modes of enunciation are allowed to participate. Breaks and friction can here be humoros and generative rather than entropic. The dysfluent event of contact is never-quite-smooth and requires sensibility. However, the machinic demand for smoothness turns the uncertainty of my dysfluent tongue into a risk, and one that is unacceptable in a financialized society.

We can locate the equation of dysfluency with risk at a basic register: information is the contraction of uncertainty. The first and essential act of communicative contact is to reduce the uncertainty of an event to a "set of more or less probable states and alternatives as constrained by the interplay between a channel and a code" (Terranova 24). To open a channel, information theory must either banish uncertainty or translate it into an understandable form. The very notion of information "operates as a form of probabilistic *containment* and *resolution* of the instability, uncertainty and virtuality of a process" (24; emphasis in original). Information is a restriction of

choice, the elimination of bad uncertainty (that is, noise or entropy) from a communication system.

That information seeks to enclose an event becomes clear in context of what Weaver terms good and bad uncertainty. Information is a probabilistic calculation between what *can* be sent (the total information in a system) and what an agent "chooses" to send. Desirable uncertainty marks agency and freedom, the capacity of a sender to choose one statement over another; yet "uncertainty which arises because of errors or because of the influence of noise is undesirable uncertainty" (Shannon and Weaver 1963, 19). The dysfluent voice is not a clear channel, a fixed medium that conveys information unaltered. It is rather an unstable communication channel that manifests both undesirable uncertainty (when, for instance, a stutterer encounters a repetition at the start of a sentence: "my name is ---J-J-J") as well as undesirable redundancy (a block at the end: "We live on the planet ---E--").) The bad uncertainty of dysfluency risks unleashing noise within the system and calling its operational functions and representational accuracy into question.[79]

Riffing on Terranova, we might say that risk management is a technology to contain becoming. Deleuze rejects the conceptual ecologies of both "information" and "communication" precisely because these regimes posit entropy as enemy rather than condition of possibility of life. These discourses operationalize possible connections and eliminate chance. Put otherwise, information and systems theory seek to regulate the powers of life through the mere repetition of the same. With Nietzsche, Deleuze rather desires the positive affirmation of chance and difference. He suggests a "counter-actualization" or the re-working of the event to introduce a

[79] Day insists that Shannon and Weaver conflate the operational and the liberal political senses of freedom when they delineate between desirable and undesirable uncertainty. "It is through this rhetorical conflation of subjective agency with that of statistical possibility that technical and social regimes are merged in a normative and operational model of society" (33).

difference within repetition and release the virtual potentials of an assemblage. Counter-actualization is a practice closely related to what Guattari terms an existential affirmation, which I take up in the conclusion of this dissertation. I will there suggest that we imagine dysfluency as a form of *parrhesia*—courageous or honest or *risky* speech. What might release in a dysfluent event not immediately operationalized and synthesized in fluent channels of communication? What might we become? How might we relate differently? Here we might imagine the BwO as an experiment, a risk *without guarantee of return*.

The obstacle to such a line of questioning is of course the radical ontology of the message: what Breton describes as a religion, a cult, an axiom. The clerics of the information age who attend to the machines of compulsory-fluency never stop asking: "Yes, but in the end, wouldn't you rather be more like me?" (McRuer 2006, 382). Why would anyone *desire* noise or the breakdown of communication? But perhaps the question we should be asking is this: who does fluency benefit? What does it achieve? Faucher rightly notes that "Practically speaking, when dealing with technology, it is perhaps a favourable desire to reduce noise and stave off entropy" (231). I hate it as much as anyone when calls drop and Skype conversations are delayed or fuzzy. But a shift occurs when we insist on machinic norms as a normative social category. Faucher continues:

> Again, the genealogical question arises here in discerning *for whom* is such a desire worthy? The answer is clearly *for us*, yet it is one thing to construct machines that can reduce noise and ensure some degree of reliable function, and quite another to map this onto life in its entirety, reterritorializing life according to the same demands we apply to our technological instruments (231; emphasis in original).

The radical ontology of the message overcodes society to equate any disruption to clear communication as a social risk. The premise here is that the free-flow of information will benefit society as a whole—the neoliberal rising tide which (one day TBD!) will smooth over inequality.

But this "for us" can never be taken for granted; it is a category of differential inclusion within networks of semio-capital. Inequality is baked into the architecture of neoliberalism (cf. Brown 2013); not everyone benefits from smooth space. Breton depicts the radical ontology of the message in distinctly religious terms that highlight our cultish obedience to the axioms of information and communication.

4. Conclusion: Universally Designed Lines of Flight

"Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 500). I wish to consider, by way of conclusion, this chapter's epigraph in the context of disability access. Despite the transformative potential of a smooth space to produce new relations and ideas, it is easily co-opted by hegemonic powers. Take disability access. Both assistive technologies and practices are, in their most basic form, smoothing machines. Whether technical devices like motorized wheelchairs which physically intervene in material flows like bodies and sidewalks and curbcuts, or ASL translators who enable a hearing and Deaf person to interface, technologies of access *desediment* territories that have delimited the possibilities of the disability community. We cannot, after all, ignore the historical entanglement of disability and striation—diagnosis, institutionalization, sterilization, eugenics, and structural inaccessibility. As Goodley argues, the disabled-body-as-organism is thoroughly disconnected. In any case, Universal Design shares the deterritorializing power of neoliberalism. It seeks to decode all social flows into a *design*—to account in advance for any body and any context. And despite the revolutionary potential of Universal Design, it too is prone to capture.

Dolmage (2017) offers three metaphors for access that can help frame this discussion: steep steps; retrofit; and Universal Design. First, the "steep steps" of the academy are designed

"to keep certain bodies and minds out" (1) and epitomize technologies of striation or hierarchical assemblages that are characteristically modern. Retrofit, second, is the practice of slapping a ramp onto a building after the fact, or waiting until the final moment before an event to ask of the disabled community their specific needs. These are practices of jerry-rigging access on the terms of the able-bodied with minimum investment (often to satisfy juridical requirements like building codes). Universal Design, third, represents smooth space open to all. The practice of Universal Design always *begins* with the assumption of heterogeneous bodies and thus attempts "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design" (Mace 2008). Universal Design self-adheres to seven principles: 1) Equitable use; 2) Flexibility in use; 3) Simple and intuitive use; 4) Perceptible information; 5) Tolerance for error; 6) Low physical effort; 7) Size and space approach and use (ibid). The aim behind each is the desedimentation of territories. This is a smoothing machine *par excellence*—it seeks to adapt any-body to any context. It has gained purchase not only as an architectural method but a pedagogical tool—an array of flexible strategies to meet the needs of any student.

Again, one cannot understate the revolutionary importance of access for the disability community. Access is the affordance to connect and be included within the flows of life. Access is a "war machine" that breaks down hierarchical barriers to participation. For example, the "independent living movement" that emerged in the US during the 1960s (O'Toole 2015) is a smoothing machine that busts disabled people out of the gaze of medicine and grids of the institution. Independence is a line of flight. The independent body is becoming-smooth. Goodley in this way suggests that smoothing can open lines of flight from the delimiting strata of the organism. Becoming-smooth can be a means to escape detection, "to find hiding places,

subterranean regions or plateaus, high flat expanses to wander" (ibid). And much like purple-collar labourers in the Philippines escape gendered codes within the networks of global telecommunications, so can fluency be liberatory for many dysfluent people. Fluency is a capacity that enables the subject to connect to the social machine and access education, employment, social services, etc. Fluency "fits" a subject to the speeds and rhythms of control societies; it can help smooth over misunderstanding and foster new relations.

It is thus no surprise that disabled people have long considered communication technologies the promise of a better world. When Helen Keller visited Bell labs in 1949 she was transfixed by the curative possibilities that communication technologies offered:

> Everything I saw at the Bell Laboratories bespoke the civilization to which Dr. Bell looked forward that would unite mankind in one great family by the spoken word. It is true, we are still far from peace despite wider, more swift communications [. . .]. If we only use the advantages worthily that cybernetics is placing within our reach, science will, I am confident, elucidate to us relationships more marvelous than any we have yet comprehended (303).

There is no question that assistive technologies like text-to-speech can be tremendously important and life-giving. Google, for example, recently demonstrated voice assistant technology that could have multiple applications for disabled people. Google Assistant will soon be able to make reservations or book appointments with a lifelike voice that mimics the casual intonations of human speech. This artificial voice can navigate conversational turns and even language barriers. Such technologies could forge new connections and powers. Technologies of power, Foucault reminds us, are always constraining *and* enabling. But the world united by communication and mutual understanding that Keller desires sounds too much like our society of control, and just as Bell's vision was deeply assimilationist and eugenic, so, in Keller's terms, can humankind only be united "in one great family by the spoken word" through the political establishment of a dominant (or major) language. That is to say, through the oralist demand that

we *speak*; ableist norms that police intelligibility; the neo-colonial expansion of English; a demand for purity that overcodes complex voices (Lugones 1994, Spelman and Lugones 1983); eugenic practices that screen disability from the world; logocentric prejudices formalized in technical protocols that reduce dysfluency and ambiguity to noise; etc. With Deleuze, "The quest for 'universals of communication' ought to make us shudder" (1990, 175).

While she concedes that swifter communications *have not yet* created understanding and peace, Keller maintains that the information sciences will "elucidate to us relationships more marvelous than any we have yet comprehended." Keller would have been dazzled by mobile phones that collapse distance and fragment time so we are ever connectible. She would be impressed with assistive technologies that enable many disabled and Deaf people to engage their worlds in a more meaningful and independent way. I venture to argue, however, that the majority of these changes are extensive rather than intensive. That is to say, the relations of communication, while multiplied and extended, have arguably not grown more marvelous but rather operational and reductive, as neoliberalism continues to grind the potentiality of human intra-action into human capital. In step with its erasure of all social bonds, neoliberalism disavows the very relationality of communication and is left with univocal enunciations reduced to information that freely usher from and necessarily *belong* to individual speakers—deterritorialized voices that must compete in a field of limited attention. This has significant implications for disability politics. Neoliberalism of course recognizes communication as assemblage insofar as profit can be made through technical assistive devices and global telecommunications whose production and use are easily captured by capital. Yet when we cannot recognize the political assemblages of communication within which technical assemblages always exist (and serve), complex relations mediated by technology such as

"facilitated communication" become unintelligible and even anathema. There is no space left to politicize and critically appraise such practices of communication. We cannot imagine the enunciation as a co-production. All that is left are operational relations to be managed by the seemingly value-free expertise of science and medicine.

Although Dolmage finds much to admire in Universal Design, he refuses to let it off the hook. Universal Design highlights the dangers of aligning access with smoothness. "It is highly possible," writes Dolmage, "that a concept such as Universal Design could simply become a proxy system for demanding the flexibility of bodies, increasing the tenuousness of social and physical structures, re-branding our intellectual work, constantly moving the target for technological innovation as flows of information are made ever more proprietary" (10). The smooth and potentially revolutionary space of Universal Design is captured by neoliberalism and market rationality: becoming a function of efficiency, profit, and expansion. Access becomes a smooth surface that extends seamlessly into that of finance, communications, and even precarious labour.

I suggest the efforts to straighten, assimilate, and erase dysfluent subjects should be understood as forms of eugenics intrinsic to the operation of neoliberalism and globalized semiocapitalism. Of course, the stakes of disability politics are always eugenic, far exceeding liberal projects of "inclusion" and "being heard." The issue on the table when protesting architectural inaccessibility and pre-natal screening alike is habitability. Who are we making our world for? Who should belong? Who are its inheritors?

We often tell the story of eugenics in spatial terms: topographies of bell curves and boundaries of selective immigration practices (e.g. Levine and Bashford 2010; Mitchell and Snyder 2006). But we can also recognize eugenics in a temporal register as the management and

streamlining of differential speeds of life. Consider, for example, Francis Galton (the father of eugenics) who defined it as

> the science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a *better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable* than they otherwise would have had (1883, 17; emphasis added).

Galtonian eugenics is a characteristically modern project tied to the myth of progress and the production of an ameliorative future. "Less suitable" kinds of people were a danger to society precisely because they persisted through time, threatening to overtake the desirable (read: able-bodied, white, and straight) inheritors of the future—or at least to put the "brake on social progress" (Davenport 1934; cited in Cogdell 270 n.3). Garland-Thomson follows this temporal thread, suggesting that "Eugenics is about controlling the future. It is the ideology and practice of controlling who reproduces, how they reproduce, and what they reproduce in the interest of controlling the composition of a particular citizenry" (2013, 351). To put this more starkly, disability threatens the very project of "the future" because disabled people "embody the unpredictable and intractable nature of temporality" (352) that runs counter to and frustrates chronobiopolitics. Eugenics, much like fluency and risk management, attempts to rigidify the passage from the present to the future, trading in the present—at times legitimizing mass violence and injustice—for an imagined future that will never arrive. These are the marks on our collective bodies and minds that produce a smooth society.

Christina Cogdell explains in *Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s* that the metaphor of a "stream" symbolizing blood, inheritance, and history was highly prominent in the 1920s—the heyday of eugenics. As an example, she cites the 1926 winning sermon submitted to the American Eugenic Society's annual contest by the Rev. K. S. MacArthur:

> Look at the *whirl-pools* of drift and refuse, its *eddies* of loathsome flotsam and jetsam. . . Note its slimy scum and noisome odors. What has happened to this stream? . . . Find the impure streams of social disease, bred of vice and sin, flowing into this river of human life. See the putrefaction of criminal strains of life added to it. Note the currents and eddies of diseased mind or enfeebled intellect (55-56; emphasis in original).

Whirlpools, eddies, scum, and odors result from meandering dysfluency that allows life to pool and gather in unexpected and non-productive ways. Eugenics is the act of streamlining life in service of a transcendent value (perhaps GDP, Whiteness, Progress) yet life cannot exist in sterile fast-moving water.[80] Life expresses a plurality of intensities and rhythms. "Progress," writes Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "is a forward march, drawing other kinds of time into its rhythms. Without that driving beat, we might notice other temporal patterns" (2015, 21). Taking this invitation to *notice,* we can imagine an intertwined ecological and counter-eugenic aspect to the unruly and wild character of dysfluency. This is Richter's impulse in their suggestion that dysfluency "grows without regard to human attitude, without care of productivity and without taking account of industrial efficiency standards" (2014, para 2). The ecological call to cultivate dysfluency in its unruliness and wildness is a call for accessibility within the whirlpools of drift and refuse rather than the clean stage of UD and projects of universal communication. Wildness produces unexpected and unanticipated life. As Richter argues, diversity in "feeling, speaking and touching in unusual ways can offer new bases for friendship and community in an age in which non-profitable types of community are becoming fewer and fewer" (2015, para 6). Perhaps this is one example of what Deleuze calls a "vacuole of communication" (1990, 7) that allows one to elude control (ever impurely of course) in a world of organs machined to connect smoothly and perfectly.

[80] My thanks to Danielle Peers for this excellent point.

Conclusion: Stuttering *Parrhesia* (Three Modes of Enunciation)

[F]or too long I have been afraid of my own name / the word invented only to -d—esscribe me / I have let it sit heavy in my ttthroat / a tool / a b-betrayal / I introduce myself and I ssstutter / I'm a –poet and I –ssttutter / I call my –-pparents, and I –ssttutter / I love you and I stutter / I love myssself and I ssstutter /

The sstuttering is the most honest part of me / it is the only thing that never lies / it is how I know I still have a voice, I am still -being heard, I am still here / When I stutter I am speaking my own language fluently / When I sound like this I know my loved ones can find me / this is what I sssound like when I speak for myself / this is what I sound like / this is what I sound like.

—Erin Schick, "Honest Speech"

The slam poem "Honest Speech" went viral, at least in the stuttering community. It resonated in a deep way with many whose voices have long been a locus of shame and silence precisely because Schick reclaims their voice with each fierce stutter to make it a type of scandal on stage. Although the poem furiously resists pity and attributions of inspiration, Schick received a generous dose of both. In addition to the usual culprits like supercrip narratives and compulsorary able-bodiedness, I suggest this misreading of "Honest Speech" stems from of a flattened conception of honesty that turns on authenticity rather than critique. I argue the power of Schick's voice comes from a specific self-relation that cannot be reduced to one of identity.

In this conclusion, I thus outline three modes of enunciation from within the framework of *parrhesia*. Defined literally, Foucault explains, *parrhesia* is the act of "frankness, open-heartedness, plain speaking, speaking openly [or] speaking freely" (2001, 366). The paradigmatic example of *parrhesia* is to rise before the Greek assembly and speak truth-to-power at the risk of one's life. Foucault's own interest lies specifically in the type of self-relation the *parrhesiast* forms in the act of risking oneself in truth. How might *parrhesia* generate critical

breaks within contemporary modes of subjectivization? In considering the possibilities of dysfluent enunciations, I wish to examine with Foucault and his interlocutors three modes of truth-telling available in in late-liberalism: therapeutic truth-telling, Platonic, and Cynic. Therapeutic truth-telling is an apolitical enunciation that indexes the model of authenticity. This mode of truth-telling is limited to speaking truth about oneself and here in a normalizing register. "Platonic truth-telling" is a form of equality-based political discourse that aims at recognition and inclusion. Finally, I consider Cynic truth-telling as a radical life that embodies critique.

1. Honesty-as-Authenticity: Therapeutic Truth-Telling

The suggestion by Schick that "stuttering is the most honest part of me / it is the only thing that never lies / it is how I know I still have a voice" resonated across the community. The consensus in the small blog and podcast stuttering network was an articulation of what we might call an honesty-as-authenticity model summarized well by Katherine Preston in *Psychology Today*:

> I was instantly attracted to the idea, to the rallying-cry of [Schick's] words, but there was something about the term "honest speech" that gnawed away at me. If my stutter was the most truthful and sincere part of me then what did it mean to try and change that voice? What did it mean for the hundreds of people I knew who sought out speech therapy to speak more easily? (2014, para 6)

Preston here equates honesty with authenticity, which leads her to ask the anxious question: "did speaking 'dishonestly' mean covering up your true identity?" Or asked inversely: what voice most *accurately* reflects who I *truly* am? She eventually settles the problem of honest speech within the field of authenticity by suggesting that people change their voice to reflect their self-posited and thus true identity.

According to Charles Taylor, Preston is in good company, since being authentic is a thoroughly modern concern. The moral imperative to be authentic is one an ideal born in the Romantic era, one that augments preceding forms of individualism. After this period, explains Taylor, "There is a certain way of being human that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's. . . . If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for *me*" (1992, 28-9). Within today's late-liberal context, we can now manage this gap between (a postulated) inner and outer life with a wide range of therapeutic technologies. For example, in *Better than Well: American Medicine Meets the American Dream*, Carl Elliott demonstrates that technologies like cosmetic or hormonal surgery and speech-language pathology have become "a means of remolding the outer body in conformity with the inner being . . . for a person to achieve her true identity" (32). Much like the thin person hiding in each fat body, there is a presumed authentic voice (whether one is MTF or dysfluent) waiting to be heard in us all that only the Speech-Language Pathologist can unlock. I would suggest that Preston models this desire for what Elliot calls the "perfect voice" which—shorn of unwanted accents, patterns, or gendered pitches—expresses one's true self.

Practices of self-transformation are politically complex: they can reference and circulate dominant norms, yet can also be an ethical practice of self-relation that *exploits* the breaks in these systems of normalization. It thus comes as little surprise that these practices do not share universal political goals, even (or especially) within critical feminist communities. To take one example, trans* activist Leslie Feinberg proclaims (1998) that "We are all works in progress" in hir open call for gender expression. Commenting upon this text, Cressida Heyes suggests that such an emphasis on freedom of individual self-expression evades certain normative questions. Namely, it disallows "important political distinctions between progressive transformations of

consciousness initiated from within marginalized communities and disciplining moves that attempt only to reinforce established divisions" (2007, 55). Heyes argues that the discourse and practice of self-transformation needs to be supplemented by an *ethics* of self-transformation. I turn to the Cynics because they push to its limits such a critical ethos of the self.

My immediate concern is how we bundle practices of truth-telling with therapeutic technologies; with the way honesty-as-authenticity slips into a confessional mode of normalized truth-telling. For Foucault, the moral imperative of authenticity traces past Rousseau to the Greco-Roman mandate of *gnothi seauton* ("know yourself") as a distinctly philosophical activity. Christianity will pervert this activity of self-knowledge into a practice of expressing internal states—speaking the truth about oneself—as the means to access truth in general.[81] The birth of psy-disciplines, which carved out and laid discursive claim over a vast interiority, augmented pastoral power in the nineteenth century such that knowing and acting in an authentic relationship to oneself becomes the modern path to happiness and well-being. Therapeutic technologies of the self short-circuit the possibility of political critique. This, Povinelli suggests, is part of late-liberalism's governing strategy:

> Late liberalism marks a period in which the population would be secured by a new reading of society and individual, a reading that ignored people and their freedoms as a kind of truth-speaking (*dire vrai*, *parrhesia*), and focused instead on the care of economic and cultural aptitudes and attitudes that enhanced the life of the population (2015, 31).

Late-liberalism seeks to enhance the life of the population, yet always according to and constrained by market veridiction. The truth of the market restricts the *kinds* of truths we can tell and the possible modes of subjectivization from which we speak. In Brown's terms, neoliberalism replaces *homo politicus*—the classical liberal subject of liberty and right—with

[81] Foucault writes in the *History of Sexuality*: "The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, *lodged in our most secret nature*, 'demands' only to surface" (60; emphasis mine).

homo economicus—the calculating market actor and entrepreneur of the self. Much like the corporation, "human capital's constant and ubiquitous aim, whether studying, interning, working, planning retirement, or reinventing itself in a new life, is to entrepreneurialize its endeavors, appreciate its value, and increase its rating or ranking" (2015, 36). In this way, therapeutic technologies are a means to cultivate one's capital (social, genetic, linguistic, etc.) at the same time as they depoliticize this speculative process. A therapeutic regime is fundamentally at odds with politics. Brown writes that neoliberalism reduces public life to "problem solving and program implementation, a casting that brackets or eliminates politics, conflict, and deliberation about common values or ends" (127). What remains is a series of problems and crises to manage with seemingly value-neutral knowledges and techniques.

The insistence on an authentic voice generates an impoverished relation to oneself, to others, and the world; this practice of self-transformation will not help us escape "the veridictional cage of the market" (McFalls and Pandolfi 2014, 174). But what if, with Foucault, we take a different approach and imagine honesty as *critique* rather than authenticity? This would pick up on a different trajectory of truth-telling in Western thought: not the "analytics of truth" concerned with knowing and recognizing the truth (especially of the self), but the "critical tradition" in the West concerned with the importance of *telling* and knowing *why* we should tell the truth (Foucault 2001, 170). In other words, we might hear the proclamation that "Stuttering is the most honest part of me / it is the only thing that never lies / it is how I know I still have a voice, I am still being heard, I am still here" as the embodiment as a type of critique rather than a claim of identity.

2. Honesty-as-Critique: *Parrhesiatic* Truth-Telling

The sovereign voice presumes to signify monolithically and thus anticipate and linearly sustain the givenness of what is. Dysfluent voices that *can't* be made to signify monolithically and that *can't* summon univocal futures produce a rupture not only in the smooth order of meaning (the intelligible/unintelligible) yet more basically the division of the sensible. McRuer, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, suggests that "disability" can refer to "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of bodily, mental, or behavioral functioning aren't made (or *can't* be made) to signify monolithically" (156-7; emphasis in original). Dysfluency is a somatic dislocation of time. An attention to dysfluent voices as material enunciations offers one specific way to think about this crip excess, which is never contained within the symbolic realm. The rupture of crip voices is itself a material interruption of a hegemonic order that seeks subjectification without dispute. We might, in other words, imagine the ways that crip voices stage dissensus both in the self and the world.

What might it mean to desire dysfluency and its destabilizing effects within our world? This desire itself opens the question of who can access, participate, and even *belong* within collective time. For Tanya Titchkosky, "access is a way to orient to, and even come to wonder about, who, what, where, and when we find ourselves to be in social space" (2011, 3) and we might extend this analysis into a temporal register. The temporal rupture of dysfluency may be answered with violence, but it can *also* call from us what Foucault might term an "ethical" mode of relating to people, places, and time. The material excess of crip voices and the aporetic, dysfluent event calls from our relations not better communication skills, nor simply "more" time, but what we might term "responsiveness": an orientation towards the other *through* the body.

This is not an orientation to essentialized attributes and identities, nor an imposition of neurotypical modes of attention and other ableist choreographies of communication, but rather a reading of Butler's claim that "responsibility is not a matter of cultivating a will, but of making use of an unwilled susceptibility as a resource for becoming responsive to the Other" (2005, 91). The responsiveness called forth by dysfluency is a dual commitment to the other and to the "fugitive present" (Connolly 144, 5) *through* the embodied uncertainty, instability, and possibility of the encounter.

The "unwilled susceptibility" to the other, as Butler says, is accentuated in the embodied friction of dysfluency. The stubborn materiality of disability offers a resource for becoming responsive to one another, and responsiveness thus offers a way to imagine access as relation alongside the requisite flexibility of crip time. Communication access must of course transform the structural norms of communication that are distributed within social, political, and economic systems. Yet seeking "more time" is in itself reformist, a "retrofit" practice (Dolmage 2017) that leaves the hegemony of fluency and fluent time unchallenged. Responsiveness is rather an embodied and dynamic comportment to the complex and dysfluent becoming of the other and approaches an *ethos*, an ethical mode of relating to one another and ourselves.

I venture to call this comportment "ethical" in the Foucauldian sense of a continual practice upon/of the self. Foucault helps us attend to the ethics and politics of dysfluency simultaneously. To refuse individualizing forms of subjectivity that underlie technologies of biopower requires a political praxis of courage that Foucault terms the "care of the self" (2003a). Working upon oneself is neither individualist nor solipsistic since, as Foucault argues, it "implies a complex relationship with others insofar as this *ethos* of freedom is also a way of caring for

others" (ibid, 30). Useful for my own project, Foucault returns often to the Greek concept of *parrhesia* as his central example of an ethical practice of the self.

We can imagine *parrhesia* as a crip practice: characterizing in this context both the irruption of dysfluency taken up as an experimentation with the self, a form of critique, and the shared practice of responsiveness: an embodied opening that, as Lazzarato says, "restructures and redefines the possible field of action for the self and for others" (2014, 231). Dysfluent temporalities rooted in material and lived experience open distinctly crip space and time to cultivate responsiveness and mutual care as ethical and re-subjectifying practices. They interrupt the ostensibly stable and self-present passage through time to open an aporetic space within which we can cultivate nonhegemonic modes of relating to ourselves and others. This practice might require courage, for crip communication forges meanings that are necessarily without heading nor assurance—it accepts Markell's invitation to embrace with others a contingent future. What might happen if fluency didn't govern our time and interactions? What would it mean to understand communication as a critical practice upon the self and across difference? How might we destabilize hegemonic ways of relating to ourselves and others through these practices? These questions by necessity cannot be answered here since dysfluency is an act of natality that, like *parrhesia* in Lazzarato's reading, "creates a fracture, marks an intrusion into a given situation, and 'makes a certain number of effects possible' that cannot be known ahead of time" (234).

The Parrhesiastic Crises

Foucault defines *parrhesia* in his 1983 Berkeley seminar entitled "Discourse and Truth" (published in 2001 as *Fearless Speech*) as:

> a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type of relation to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty (19).

Important for Foucault is the specific *relation* the speaker constitutes with the truth and thus themselves. Unlike a teacher who reproduces a knowledge of *techne* but risks nothing in his or her relation to truth, the *parrhesiast* must summon courage to speak truth in the face of danger about "individuals and situations in their ethical singularity" (McFalls and Pandolfi 2014, 173-4). *Parrhesia* is thus critique; it necessarily takes place within and alters an asymmetrical relation of power. It creates difference in a field of equality—opening a space of danger, hostility, and in some instances even death.

What is critique? Although I addressed this question in the introduction of the dissertation, it warrants repetition. At the most basic level, again, critique is a posture or push-back against being governed. This implies today not the refutation of hegemonic ideology (a strategy of the symbolic) but disrupting the biopolitical technologies of control that operate in the most intimate parts of our being. "Critique," writes Foucault, "is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth" (266). Critique is, negatively, to question the relations of power and truth that inhere within the subject but, positively, an ethical practice of re-subjectivization to break with neoliberal subjectivization or *homo economicus* in order to imagine another life. To embark upon a "critical ontology of ourselves" is always a risky practice.

Foucault stages the discussion of critique within the Greco-Roman practice of *parrhesia*, which, more specifically, he locates within a "crisis" and general struggle between the political and the philosophical life. *Parrhesia* for the Athenian aristocracy was the means of speaking truth for the good of the populace. However, this right and duty of aristocratic rulers was

threatened by the emergence of democracy. The Athenian constitutional guarantee to *parrhesia* was buttressed by guarantees of both *isonomia*, "the equality of all citizens in front of the law," and *isegoria*, "the legal right given to everyone who speaks his own opinion" (2001, 72). But who now is entitled to use *parrhesia*? Who can speak the truth? *Isonomia* and *isegoria* in themselves lack the ability to distinguish between the truth known by the person and the truth in the statement: knowing truth and speaking truth. This is to say, the democratic "crisis" of *parrhesia* emerges when equality becomes the singular and ruling political axiom. *Parrhesiastic* truth-speaking is lost in the democratic mob and many, from Socrates to Arendt, have worried that truth would give way to flattery, the reproduction of common opinion or *doxa*, and thus error—what Foucault calls "negative parrhesia" or ignorant outspokenness (66-72).

The *parrhesiatic* crises highlight the powerlessness of action when governed by the single axiom of equality. Lazzarato accordingly suggests that robust democratic societies comprised of agonistic struggle must have what he calls "ethical differentiation" between subjects. With Foucault (2010, 158-9) Lazzarato argues that *parrhesia* depends on the overlap of two heterogeneous regimes: that of right (*poletia, isonomia,* and *isegoria*) and that of power (*dunasteia*). While the Athenian constitution guaranteed the equality of speakers before the law, *isegoria* in itself does not determine who will rise to speak. Put otherwise, one does not engage in *parrhesia* due to juridical status or formal equality: these are the necessary but never sufficient conditions of political speech. The power to speak the (embodied and always risky) truth comes rather from that specific self-relation of ethical differentiation:

> What effectively makes one speak is *dunasteia*: the power, the force, the exercise, and the real effectuation of the power to speak that mobilizes the speaker's singular relations with himself and with those whom he addresses. The *dunasteia* expressed in enunciation is a force of ethical differentiation because it means taking a position in relation to the self, to others, and to the world (2014, 230).

We might say, thinking back to our discussion of Tully, that the *parrhesiast* alters the rules of the political game. *Dunasteia* is the exercise of this local power: the capacity to speak from and to one's singular position.

Late-liberalism as articulated within societies of control seeks to neutralize *dunasteia* so that *parrhesia* can only draw upon formal right and equality in a hollow expression of "free speech." This move is particularly evident in the collapse of speech to a form of capital that must circulate unimpeded. Recall Brown's reading of *Citizens United*. SCOTUS declared speech to function like capital and thus be in need of government deregulation. One implication of the resulting barrage of speech-capital is a process of de-stratification that seeks to level out significant juridico-political differences between speakers: "Whether the speaker is a homeless woman or Exxon, speech is speech, just as capital is capital" (161). Of course, this hides the many inequalities of communication embedded within institutions. But by reducing speech to the singular logic of capital and thereby erasing distinctions between speakers under the economic banner of unfettered freedom and equality, neoliberalism has produced another crisis of *parrhesia*. In a perverse twist, this time not merely by drowning out truth in a sea of equality, but by first disavowing and then erasing the very (discursive and material) conditions of ethical differentiation. This crisis intersects with others. "Democratic consensus neutralizes *parrhesia,*" Lazzarato suggests, "[it] cancels the risk of truth-telling and of the subjectivation and action that follow from it" (232). Equality without differentiation negates agon and leads to deadened silence. It is for this reason that the Cynic project of radical embodied truth-telling might be worth reflecting upon.

From the ancient *parrhesiastic* crisis, Foucault argues, emerge two traditions of truth-telling—Platonic and Cynic—which stretch across Western history.[82] More specifically, these traditions spring from the Socratic *response* to political *parrhesia*. Socrates used interlocution and argumentation to awaken people to their ignorance (and anger). Socratic *parrhesia* engages in political life only indirectly; it prepares for the political life by helping others govern themselves and others well. Embodying the truth is here important. The *parrhesiast* must know herself, yes, but also match her words (*logoi*) with deeds (*erga*) as a sign of truth speaking. In the *Laches*, for example, Socrates not only gives a definition of courage, but stands up to power and is thus courage himself. Foucault argues that this harmonic accord between word and deed is what distinguishes Socrates from the Sophists—the masters of political *parrhesia*—who can speak eloquently on courage but are not themselves courageous (2001, 100).

While both the Platonic and Cynic traditions seek to overcome the crisis of political *parrhesia*, each do so by emphasizing a different aspect of the Socratic life. The Platonic tradition seeks to prove that it is the true life through introspection and reason focused around the imperative to know thyself (*gnothi seauton*). The politics of recognition draws from this tradition. Rancière stands in this tradition; his theory of radical equality where anyone can make their voice of account to short-circuit orders of domination is guaranteed by *logos*. In contrast, the Cynic practice of *parrhesia* seeks to overcome *doxa* by pushing the Socratic embodiment of truth to its absolute limits. This tradition of philosophy proves itself by taking the self, and life more generally, as a continual challenge. It scrutinizes and experiments with forms of life in order to alter the possibilities and conditions of this world.

[82] For the sake of simplicity, I will bracket Foucault's discussion of Stoic *parrhesia* which occurs within relations of friendship.

One significant point of departure of Cynic from Platonic-Socratic *parrhesia* is accordingly the radical affirmation of life—a belief that truth must be embodied to overcome the political conditions of error and negative *parrhesia*. Vanessa Lemm offers a helpful overview of the problematic: "Whereas both Foucault and Arendt can be read as defenders of the philosophical life because of its ethical–political effects, Arendt argues that the Socratic philosophical life is a life that allows a distance to the body" (2014, 208). As I argued in the first chapter, this is the retreat in Western political theory to a type of universal position. Foucault, on the other hand, turns to the Cynics precisely because the true life is revealed in the material body. Lemm explains this difference and its significance using Roberto Esposito's notion (2011) of "immunitary devices." Life, they argue, sometimes adopts the strategy of immunization to protect itself from its own self-destructive potentiality. That is to say, forms of life often preserve themselves against becoming-other by repressing such impulses of life—despite that fact that life ultimately *is* differentiation and alteration.

In Lemm's reading of Foucault, the Platonic tradition aspires to a purity of soul protected "from the deviating influences of the instincts and passions of the body on the individual's capacity of truth-telling" (216). Disability is one such deviating influence of the body. One must, through proper care, constitute oneself as a pure "vessel of truth" (Forti 2014, 205) in order to tell the truth. The Platonic way beyond opinion and error is being closed to nature, nonhuman life, and to other forces of becoming-other. The vessel of truth is the sovereign self; with others they converse in a "reasoned, metaphysical convergence of souls" (McFalls and Pandolfi 2014, 175). The Cynics, as we will see, take the quite opposite approach in affirming the material necessities of life. They seek to shock and provoke—to reveal truth and the hypocrisy within common opinion through *parrhesiatic* displays of the body.

I suggest the Platonic closure of body—both individual and political—does not adequately serve the project of disability justice. Foucault explains that the Platonic tradition of care aspires towards purity because its ultimate movement (via truthful knowledge of the self) is directed towards to the "other world"—a transcendent world of unchanging truth where souls bask in harmony. This eschatological aspiration takes both theistic and non-theistic forms. Yet the Cynical tradition develops along a different path and models a different politic. As Foucault writes, the Cynics posed a different question. "Not the question of the other world, but that of an *other* life (*vie autre*). . . . The other world and other life have basically been the two great themes, the two great forms, the great limits within which Western philosophy has constantly developed" (2012, 245). To cultivate an other life—one of radical and embodied otherness—is to seek to change *this* world here and now, not to seek refuge in (or draw from) a metaphysical beyond.

One finds in the history of the disability rights movement the influence of both traditions. On the one hand, crips have had to play the part of the detached and impartial "rational speaking animal" to have our truths heard in the most minimal sense. This bid for recognition and inclusion in the major grammar has, historically, meant excluding those who fall outside the bounds of the "human" linguistic community. The act of composing ourselves as proper disabled subjects for State recognition (however inescapable) reproduces liberal-humanist binary politics that always invokes the "other world" of Right, Justice, and Equality. Where is this world? *When* is this world? Governments offer promises and even foretastes to disabled people of this world-to-come; but this is cheap talk undercut by continual waves of austerity measures that make crip lives unlivable. But at the same time, one can also describe the history of disability rights as composing an "other life." For example, Corbett O'Toole (2015) depicts the communitarian

ethos that marked the early days of disability activism at the Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, CA. She describes raucous dances and parties as an important feature of their social life—bodies marked as deviant or asexual reclaiming pleasure. In this framework, to cultivate an other and unintelligible life might be equally political. To produce new types and *possibilities* for relation is already to alter the world.

3. Cynic Truth-Telling: Stuttering from the Anus

Dysfluent speakers will always be deficient in the Platonic model of action where they must aspire to the major grammar (or the master tongue). The Cynics, however, offer a possible exit both from language and market veridiction. They told the truth through actions like shitting in the street; they dramatized the mundane reality of life by living exposed, publicly, and without shame. To make sense of the Cynic project, let me first specify their related use of two concepts: truth and nature.

Foucault explains that the Cynics prove their way of life as truthful, set against both political and philosophical *parrhesia*, by turning upside down and pushing to their limits the four Ancient Greek characteristics of the true life: truth as non-hidden; truth as unalloyed; truth as straight; and truth as unchanging (2012, 218-9). They, first, turn truth as non-hidden or unconcealed into a *scandal* of absolute visibility where "One risks one's life, not just by telling the truth, and in order to tell it, but by the very *way* in which one lives" (234; emphasis mine). Second, a life of truth as unalloyed or without impurity becomes a life of radical poverty and indifference. Third, the "straight" life set in conformity with both *logos* and *nomos* is now judged by the single law of nature. This is a challenge to live a life of animality insofar as "no convention, no human prescription may be accepted in the Cynic life if it does not conform

exactly to what is found in nature, and nature alone" (263). Finally, the Cynics recast the idea of a self-mastered and self-fulfilled life. Sovereignty becomes a type of philosophical *militancy* for and against the world. We live another life to produce another world.

One dominant theme that runs through these reversals is the self taken as a continual challenge rather than an object of knowledge. The Cynics seek to dissolve the immunitary devices of civilization, to strip away conventions and beliefs that have no basis in nature. The true life is revealed in fearless and creative undoing of the self: the continual test of absolute visibility, radical poverty, animality—and above all, of shamelessness. In Lemm's reading, this Cynic turn to nature is more than the simple reduction of *bios* to *zoe*, the stripping of culture from nature, but a return that "reveals *zoe* as *bios*, where *zoe* is understood to be that force which gives style and form to life" (210). From the excesses of life, the Cynics find new resources to re-create the conditions of existence.

The Cynics thus engage in the radical political project of transvaluating values. This practice is reflected in their motto "deface the currency" (*parakharattein to nomisma*), which Foucault suggests we read as an imperative to *alter* rather than simply scrub the value of the current coin. This reading highlights the link between currency—*nomisma*—and law—*nomos.* To alter the currency, Foucault writes, is "to adopt a certain standpoint towards convention, rule, or law" (2012, 227). The scandalous life targeted those habits, customs, and institutions that conceal the natural law. The Cynics sought to alter the stamp on existence; to give a new form (*bios*) to life (*zoe*). This, Foucault writes, is a transvaluation of values, an immanent political project that stages "life in its material and everyday reality under the real gaze of others" (253). Dramatic acts that transgressed social codes like eating and making love in public were meant to

shock and force others to think, to feel. And in our context, changing, debasing, or altering the coin when speech has essentially become capital might be a thoroughly political act.

Insofar as Cynic truth manifests in the radical affirmation and transvaluation of nature, the body, and its passions, we can understand Cynic subjectivization as a Deleuzian war machine that destroys territories and barriers like shame. Lemm explains that "the Cynics abolish the public/private division by dissolving the immunitary barriers of civilization, thus opening up the possibility for a public life that is truly communal" (219). Shame keeps many people, especially in the disability community, hidden away from public life and from community. The fear of pissed pants, shitting in public, or stuttering uncontrollably before others are real barriers that keep crips "in their place." But such barriers won't be overcome by clawing after formal equality and right. What we need is a transvaluation of shame and a transvaluation of shit. We might as a start consider Daniel Martin's essay "Stuttering From the Anus." In a twist of psychoanalytic readings of stuttering, Martin suggests that speech, like feces, is a bodily link to others that reveals our radical intersubjectivity:

> Here's my ultimate thesis for anyone with dysfluent speech: spew your shit. Let your speech stutter from the anus. Don't preach inclusivity, awareness, or acceptance; such weak emancipatory goals are thoroughly infused with pedagogical desires for fluency. A demand for one's voice to be heard is a demand for fluency. Be a constant reminder to anyone who will or won't listen that the voice doesn't just come from the mouth. It's physical, crypt-like, and buried (129).

With Martin, we must affirm the material and uncanny source of speech if we are to undo the privacy of the dysfluent voice and "blast it into the social" (ibid). And with the Cynics, I suggest this requires challenging in radical ways the public/private divisions that keep marginalized peoples removed from the *polis*.

We can elaborate the notion of stuttering-from-the-anus in the context of three Cynic themes: animality, the rejection of recognition, and becoming-imperceptible. First, the namesake

of the Cynic tradition (*kunikos*—Cynic; *kuōn*—dog) is a reflection of their shameless affirmation of life. People commonly called them dogs because they lived radically poor and set against social convention, yet nevertheless without shame and with indifference to prevailing opinion. The dog's life is the unconcealed life embodied by *zoe*, "the human being's animality taken up as a challenge, practiced as an exercise, and thrown in the face of others as a scandal" (Foucault 2012, 265). For Lemm, again, to affirm animality is to attack the immunitary devices that divide life from truth, nature from culture, animal from human (211). To this list I would add those devices that separate noise from speech, the tongue from the face from the head from the body. If, as I argued in chapter three, we are in danger of becoming talking-heads designed to cut through noise and connect, to let the stutter come from the anus or at least to "relocate it away from the mouth or the brain where others would prefer it remain" (Martin 129), is a resolute practice of animality that tells language, drunk on its power, to go fuck itself.

Lazzarato suggests that the singular power of the Cynic *parrhesiast* to open "an other life" comes from the fact that the Cynics are not "speaking beings" but bodies that enunciate through diverse semiotics: "Gestures, actions, example, behavior, and physical presence constitute expressive practices and semiotics addressed to others through means other than speech" (243). For instance, the first-century orator and historian Dio Chrysostom explains how Diogenes the Cynic once addressed a crowd extolling the virtue of Heracles. Diogenes tells the crowd that Heracles took to cleaning a stable full of shit before his death since "he considered that he ought to fight stubbornly and war against opinion [*doxa*] as much as against wild beasts and wicked men" (397). His message is that we consider cleaning stalls to be loathsome only due to common opinion; this labour too is virtuous. When Diogenes sees that the crowd approves of his message, and "possibly with this thought of Heracles in his mind" (399), he squats and shits

on the ground. The Cynics *prove* that they are not just signifying beings. This shit is an enunciation that exits language; a non-discursive rupture; both a test of animality and *parrhesiatic* critique of an audience that *appears* to be in agreement or consensus.

The exit of language is worth dwelling upon for the purpose of rethinking the politics of the dysfluent enunciation. Lazzarato argues that language, in the Cynic enunciation, carries not merely a denotative and representational but also an *existential* function. "It affirms an ethos and a politics; in Guattari's terms, it helps construct existential territories" (2014, 243). The Cynics participate in *logos* but their speech does more than represent or denote—it gives a form to existence. Language has become a stable and fixed capacity, a trait, upon which political and moral judgments can be overlaid. But we forget that language is first a political operator. We forget that "voice" is not a capacity that divides the human from the animal (*bios* from *zoe;* rational from non-rational; agential from non-agential beings) but a type of relational *action* whose meanings, possibilities, and limits we cannot know in advance. Key to this shift is the affirmation of the shitty, material nature of speech. Sharp's project of renaturalization once again brings the issue into focus:

> When we see words as bodily motions caused by our mutual involvement with one another, we can discover ourselves, not as individuals, but as situated within a complex constellation of causes. *We can then, together, endeavor to transform that environment and build the conditions of genuine freedom*, which will necessarily be a freedom of degree rather than an absolute power to determine ourselves. Deliberation and communication might be interesting, from the perspective of renaturalization, not primarily for the content of the words uttered, but for the affects they uncover and the energetic resources they foreclose or offer to a community (Sharp 53, emphasis mine).

Non-fluent speech need not be a failure to represent—either information or subjectivity—but can be an ethico-political practice that constructs new relations and ways of relating to others, ourselves, and our voices. Thinking with Sharp (and with Garland-Thomson who (2012) articulates disability as an anti-eugenic resource), we can imagine disability as a resource to

collectively transform the possibilities of communication—a resource not merely symbolic but material.

Second, to touch back to chapter one, stuttering from the anus is to reject recognition. It is important to keep in mind that Foucault takes the ancient model of *parrhesia*—the exact co-incidence between belief and truth, action and speech—to be impossible in today's epistemological framework.[83] What interests him instead is the specific relation the *parrhesiast* engenders with themselves: what Foucault calls a critical ethos and Lazzarato terms ethical differentiation. We must thus understand the Cynic challenge to affirm animality and the material life within a model of "militant subjectivization" that attacks "the conventions, laws, and institutions which rest on the vices, faults, weaknesses, and opinions shared by humankind in general" (Foucault 2012, 284-5). Unlike other philosophical schools, the Cynics had no interest in proselytizing to gain the most followers and thus needing to conform to rules of propriety and full intelligibility. The Cynic life is one of fierce and relentless critique, a militancy against and for the world, but this is always first and foremost a work upon the self. Militant subjection is a creative undoing of the self, the formation of a BwO. Lazzarato, thinking with both Foucault and Guattari, accordingly suggests Cynic subjectivization is a weapon "for resisting the powers of contemporary capitalism, which makes the production of subjectivity the primary and most important of its effects" (246). To become unintelligible is to embody a form of critique that makes visible the boundaries of intelligibility. To reject recognition is to embody critique and to fashion another life for another world. With Schick, "the stuttering is the most honest part of me

[83] Although this lies outside the scope of this project, Ruth Miller takes up the issue of *parrhesia* in the context of machinic systems and agrees with Foucault at one level: "Given its nonlinear, system-oriented, message-poor, and information-rich physicality, *parrhesia* is in fact impossible in a modern framework that focuses on embodied human subjects exercising agency within a given discursive field" (102). She nevertheless continues by arguing that *parrhesia* is yet quite possible in in a machine-centric world where speech is understood first as a computational language in a distributed network. The possibilities of machinic *parrhesia* warrant further study.

/ it is the only thing that never lies." The affirmation of a dysfluent life can likewise be a continual subversive practice of the self.

Closely related to the rejection of recognition is, third, becoming imperceptible. Stuttering honestly—stuttering from the anus—invokes a minor politic in a similar way that the Cynics invert the politics of recognition. The absolute visibility of the Cynic life not a bid for but a mockery of recognition. Since the Cynics were not bound by conventional principles, they could live a life "that is always in the process of becoming other, different, strange, and in this sense is always changing identity and cannot remain self-same" (Lemm 218). This scandal of otherness, Lemm continues, is in fact the *munus* or common material ground that predicates both the philosophical and political life yet is unrecognized by both. Becoming-other, I suggest, is on the same line of flight as becoming-imperceptible. The dysfluent enunciation resists intelligibility and stages becoming-other. Foucault famously claimed that "the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are" (2003b, 134), and we must soberly ask whether we can refuse neoliberal subjectivization fluently.

Parrhesia at its Cynic limits is a form of becoming-imperceptible. The stutter is a chop-shop that breaks rational speech into buzzing sounds and uncanny noises, inhuman intensities and forces that unsettle the ear. This decomposition—a becoming-noise or even becoming-insect of sound (Braidotti 2011, 100)—calls the human into question but also opens new horizons of politics. "If human beings have a destiny," suggest Deleuze and Guattari, it is "to escape the face, to dismantle the face and facializations, to become imperceptible, to become clandestine" (1987, 171). What does this mean, particularly here? Becoming-imperceptible is again a turn towards denaturalization. We must "see words as bodily motions caused by our mutual involvement with one another" (Sharp 53). At this register—jerked from the spell of the

sociosymbolic order—disabled voices that break and repeat, stretch, and render language otherwise unintelligible are alive with forces and intensities that resist any attempt at signification. They invite a becoming-other.

But becoming-imperceptible is also critique. Sharp argues that Deleuze and Guattari the concept of becoming-imperceptible "target[s] not the perceptive power of nature itself but the dominant regime of perception, the social imaginary that filters, contours, and categorizes beings into intelligible entities" (177). To stutter wildly, to stutter as a poetic, to fling one's shit and exit language is not an escape from the world. Becoming-imperceptible is a rejection, yes, of universal ideals and projects (recognition, consensus, communication, identity) but also an invitation to cultivate new existential territories and refrains in a minor key. Becoming-imperceptible targets the hegemonic regime of perception or division of the perceptible. Experimenting with and decomposing ourselves and the ways we connect demands courage. Yet shielded from the harsh gaze of fluency, and stepping outside the demand for intelligibility, understanding, and agreement that structure and smooth our relations, we could together build another world. It does not yet exist, but must be stuttered together.

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