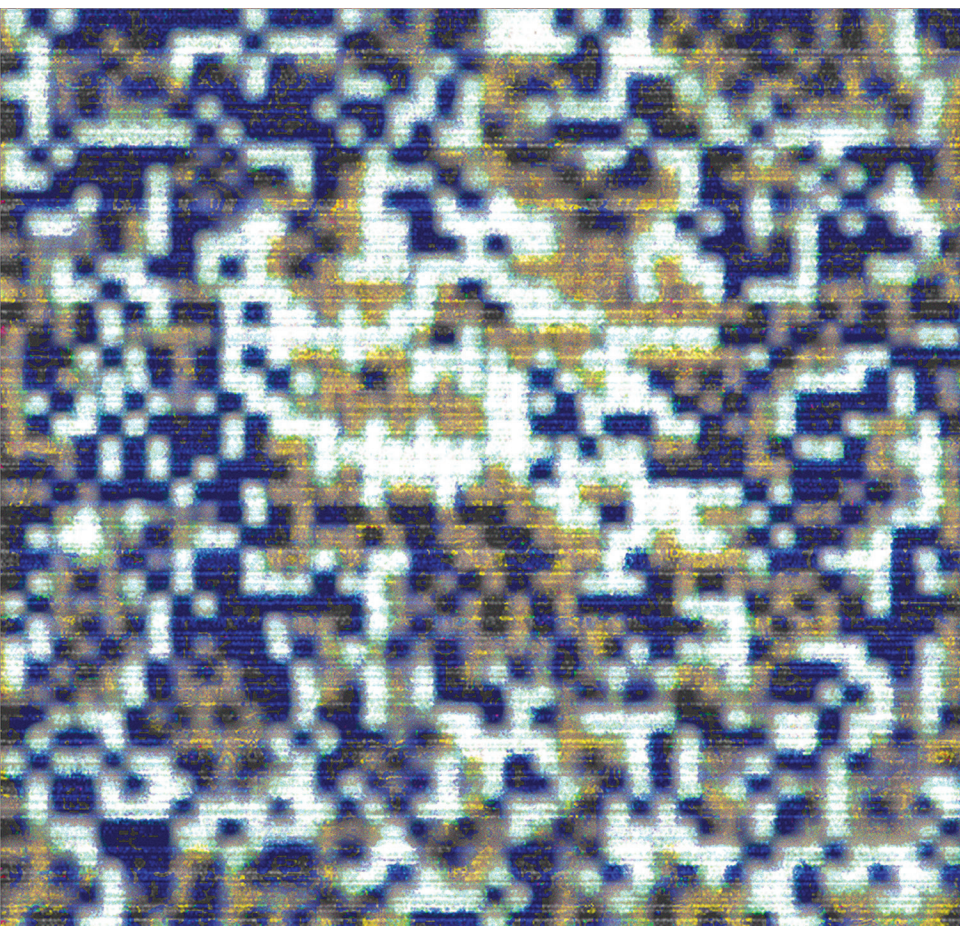


NEOPLASTIC THERAPY

On Violence and Aesthetics

Mengyu Chen



NEOPLASTIC THERAPY

On Violence and Aesthetics

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Fine Arts in Digital + Media in the Department of Digital +
Media of the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island.

by

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2015

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To

My Extended Families

NEOPLASTIC THERAPY

On Violence and Aesthetics

Mengyu Chen

Edited by Jennifer Dalton Vincent

Published by Rhode Island School of Design
2 College Street
Providence, RI 02903

First Edition
2015

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Printed by Blurb.com

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Metaphysical Goodness

To Tae Eun, who I thought about and who thought about me. This book was born of a whole year of intellectual, artistic, and affective companionship with her.

To Kelly Dobson, who encouraged me to find my true self;

To my advisors and professors, Lane Myer, Lisa Morgan, Shona Kitchen, and Jane South who taught me to think, make, and write;

To Cho-Tao, who shared with me unforgivable stories and co-taught our class *War Machine*;

I deeply thank the following for their works, which have influenced this book, and for their personal or professional assistance which allowed me to accomplish my thesis: Jane, Alex, Aly, Stephen, Tucker, Dahye, Rosa.

To all my friends.

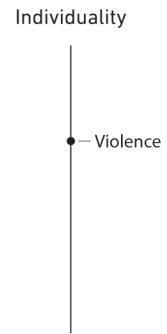
Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to create a new theoretical framework to examine and understand the meaning of an art object and its relational social existence. This thesis serves as a critique on contemporary media culture and hierarchical social oppression. At the same time, it adopts a pseudo-scientific way to introduce notions of art's autonomy and its opposition to social functionality. By merging political theories on individualism, capitalism, and metaphysics with foundational structures of art creation, I am attempting to construct a new system of thinking that challenges traditional ways of understanding mediums, functions and the viewer's relationship with art objects. My thinking links beauty with violence as a necessary attribute to the creation of art. This argument is central to my thesis and to my theoretical framework. This book is also a formula for my own art practice and for being a good human artist. It records and inspires my life long study of aesthetics and of beauty as a metaphysical object.

Preface

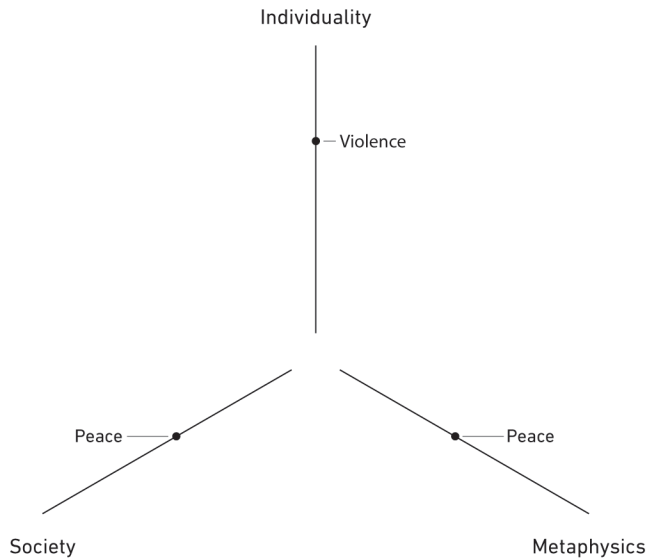
In *Neoplastic Therapy*, I borrow the terms *mutation* and *neoplasm* from molecular biology to refer to the creation of art and the meaning of art objects, both of which exist as organic products inside our sociopolitical structure, and face challenges from the hierarchical nature of this environment. A mutation could be a rejection of order, an escape from law and system, or a radical reaction to its body. A neoplasm could be seen as an advanced physical and cognitive extension that coexists with one's body. This whole book is structured around the notion of mutation and this structure diagrams a systematic approach to art and its relational power. I believe that a good artist should perform his art by first creating a schematic for an art object's physical and metaphysical ontology before he brings it into material existence. A truly artistic object has an autonomous power that is beyond the artist's control. It may project its will and disrupt its environment at any time. Therefore, such a powerful object should be made with intention. Understanding the necessary elements of creation, an artist can eventually control and manipulate this power to achieve what he desires. My use of metaphor from carcinogenesis also suggests the fundamental power relation between art and society, and the role the artist plays in this dynamic.

C1. Mutagens



Violence

Man is born with Violence. Every single human is designed as a unique and perfectly functioning war machine that aims to destroy or eliminate the existence of others.



Impossibility of Peace

If everyone put down his weapon, then the war would be put to an end. This is perhaps the most idealistic way to reach state of peace. However, humans by nature operate as violent war machines and cannot tolerate the existence of others. He who has a strong sense of self is destined to destroy and eliminate his sense of otherness within. A law is always established by others. It can never be fully accepted and merged into one's ego ideal. By manipulating the law to serve one's self-interests and by enforcing the submission of others, humans are in constant competition for the power, to live as a self-being, a selfish being. We have all been forced to become slaves to others since advent of law.



Notion of Self

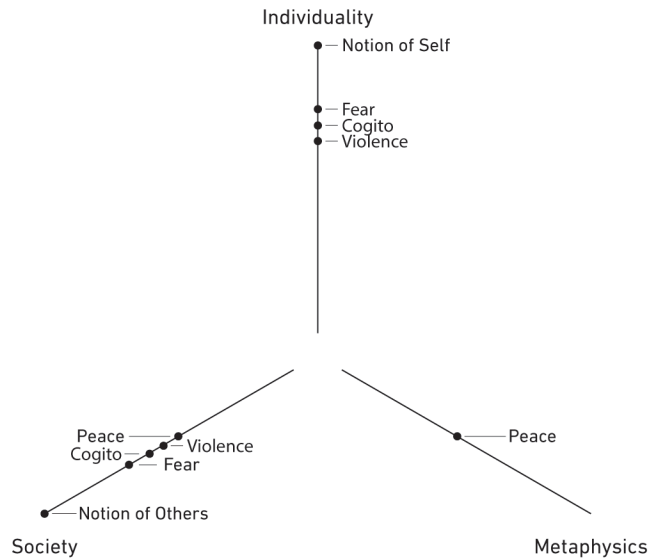
When Maurice Blanchot was writing on Sade, he highlighted a quote by Sade, “the idea of God is the one wrong that I am not able to forgive man.”¹ Blanchot believes that this atheistic statement is a decisive key to Sade’s exceptional philosophy and literature. For Sade, such an imposed idea of divinity – of unattainable existence, of almighty power – brutally separated human consciousness into a duality of self and other. This idea effectively established man’s eternal inferiority to God, and by extension to the divine law of others. Following Sade’s perspective, such a separation is the origin of oppression, slavery, and violence, and it dispels the natural state of humanity through the privileging of human sociality. Nonetheless, we continue enact that which Sade critiqued. As humans, we cannot forgive one who recognizes us as “other”. The submissive nature of human beings allows the powerful to exercise their power through interpellation. The moment we respond to signs and meanings generated by others, we render ourselves powerless. We are inevitably chained to the power of otherness, to the law of otherness. As a sole being, we are too weak to contend with this social state of being. This separation or internal splitting of self initiates innumerable fantasies and illusions, as well as fears of metaphysical complexity. It is not possible for us to understand, to go beyond this social paradigm. A war – emerging from the fractured self – destabilizes our faith in the notion of self.

¹ Blanchot, Maurice. “Sade’s Reason.” *Lautréamont and Sade*. Stanford: Stanford UP. 2004. 28. Print.



Cogito

"I think, therefore I am." The Cartesian *cogito* can be read as an announcement of truce, as Descartes's appeal for all mankind to leave behind the notion of others and to live as a complete self-beings. However, this announcement works to deepen the gap between self and other. It accelerates the happening of war, as it inherently originates from a sensitive self-consciousness. The more aware of "I" as a complete self-being one possesses, the more social exclusion, the more submissiveness, and the more powerlessness one suffers throughout one's life. Selfishness and submissiveness co-emerged during the historical transition in which man became slave to this world. Naming became the renunciation of possession. The more we name all that is external to ourselves, the more freedom we relinquish to the idea of "others." A fearless sacred human eventually devolves into a cowardly secular warrior. This is how humans live and fall. I think, therefore I fall.



Power of Fear

Descartes's *cogito* comes from a fear of an externality, of an omnipotent power, of an evil that can manipulate his notion of self.² This fear leads to the ultimate duality of body and mind, and brings Descartes to an illusory absolute self-territory. In this way, *cogito* – no matter how powerful it may be – is never a permanent solution for a man's incapacity to truly embrace his own being. Jacques Derrida comments on this perfect yet imperfect state of mind:

“For even if the totality of what I think is imbued with falsehood or madness, even if the totality of the world does not exist, even if nonmeaning has invaded the totality of the world, up to and including the very contents of my thought, I still think, I am *while* I think.”³

The existence of this powerful self is constrained by the momentariness of one's thinking. This state of being will eventually reach the limit of one's mind, imagination, and humanity once the immediacy of presence has been realized. Thus, a fear for time, for future, for history, for all the notions outside the momentary self, will never be resolved as long as one's *sense of time* is biologically closed. The power of *cogito* will also disappear when placed before this instinctual fear.

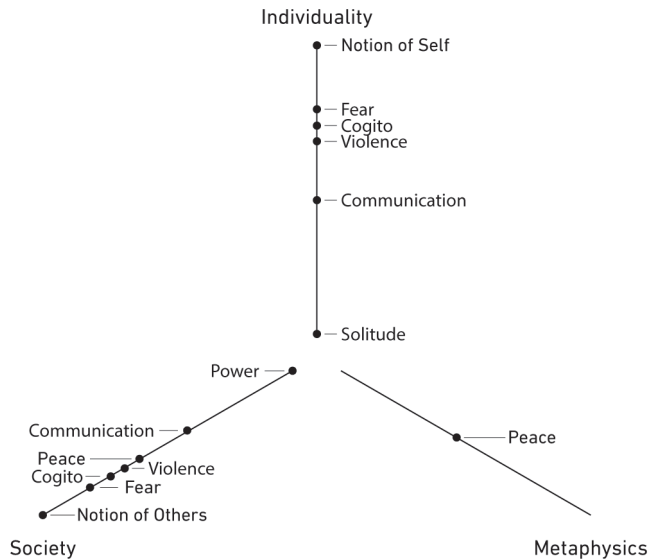
² Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1996. 8. Web.

³ Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. London: Routledge Classics. 2001. 68. Print.



Communication

Communication by nature *was* lawless and meaningless. It was neither bilateral nor linear as it did not contain any intended target or conscious direction. It was spherical, reflective, and neutral. It followed the medium or surface in which it's contained. Biological evolution embedded in humans the desire for communication, expression, externalization and materialization of emotional and mental movements. It's as an instinctive behavior as is hunting or breeding. Language once was an instrument created to explore the limit of controllable territory. It emerged from the desire for a spiritual map. It was a detective tool for humans to investigate this world. One can choose to (or not to) talk with any biological or non-biological objects that one wishes to understand. Yet, today this communication is not bilateral. Man does not recognize the way in which objects respond to him. And so there exists within man a unilateral insistence on violence towards objects of his desire.



Power and Solitude

Solitude and power have been always linked together. For a solitary man, power is nothing more than a separation or a rupture between himself and his others. Such a separation masks a recurrent and intense consciousness and fear of otherness that drives him to overcome others. It emerges from a will to power, to control things that are not controllable, and a destiny of being a living creature. Friedrich Nietzsche describes this unavoidable state as:

“If this body is a living and not a dying body, it will have to treat other bodies in just those ways that the individuals it contains refrain from treating each other. It will have to be the embodiment of will to power, it will want to grow, spread, grab, win dominance, —not out of any morality or immorality, but because it is alive, and because life is precisely will to power.”⁴

To Nietzsche, the idea of a human body is a corporeal prison in which the notion of self is captured. Others exist as spaces that one constantly tries to enter, to occupy, to stay and to rule as if dominion over them will release a man from his bodily imprisonment. No matter how these rooms are naturally or consciously sealed, a man will never stop his attempt to break through this block, to destroy the prison. Following Nietzsche’s view, a man should also be constantly aware of the fact that as long as he possesses such a will to power he is born of solitude. A conqueror’s solitude is more intense than that of those who lack comparable power. He who is powerful must maintain consciousness of the fact that it is eternally impossible for him to leave himself, to enter the body of others, or to truly understand the interiority of others. However, as long as the other exists, none in power may reach a state superior to God. Blanchot explains Sade’s reason in this way, “when he kills, the criminal is God on Earth, for he realizes between himself and his victim the relationship of subordination wherein he sees

⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2002. s.259. Print.

the definition of divine sovereignty.”⁵ Hence, the ultimate form of power is ultimate solitude. One’s will to power can only place one in an endless abyss of self-indulgence, which is the ultimate form of violence.

Hermit Crab

Every society is a hermit crab, or a gastropod shell, an exoskeleton. Not only does the crab live beneath its protective shell, the shell hides the distinct parts of the crab’s body. Each body part exhibits the phenomena of stratification. The more body covered by the shell, the more protection provided to that which lies underneath. At the same time, this hermit crab is an active predator. It predares every single human nearby into its body. Slow, but defensive, a society holding a strong predacity is fearless. It’s life can span generations and can hardly be terminated. In order to sustain its fearlessness and unlimitedness in predation, a society must also train its warriors, as weapons as well as shields. Threats can come from inside and outside, and sometimes, from the breakage of its protective shell. In such societies, everyone is born with a duty, or a function, and is always chained to one another in the name of morality and law. He, who chose or was chosen to live in such a state of society, is never allowed to abandon the notion of others. He exists as a social self, which partially – or in some cases completely – replaces his natural self.

⁵ Blanchot, Maurice. “Sade’s Reason.” *Lautréamont and Sade*. Stanford: Stanford UP. 2004. 28. Print.

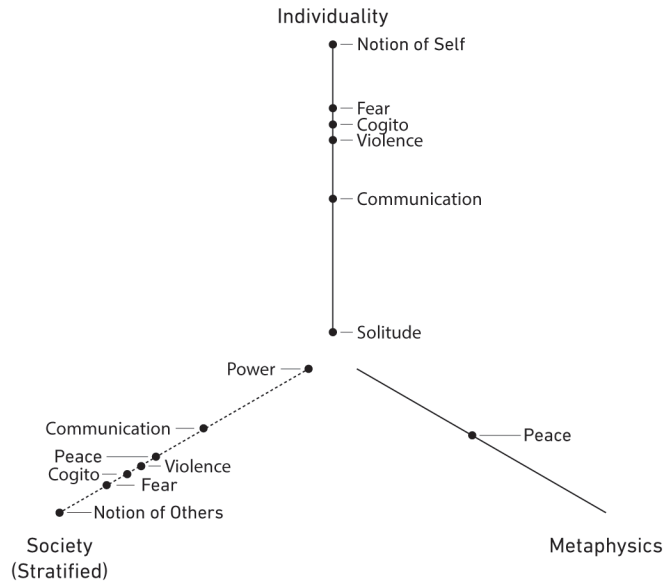
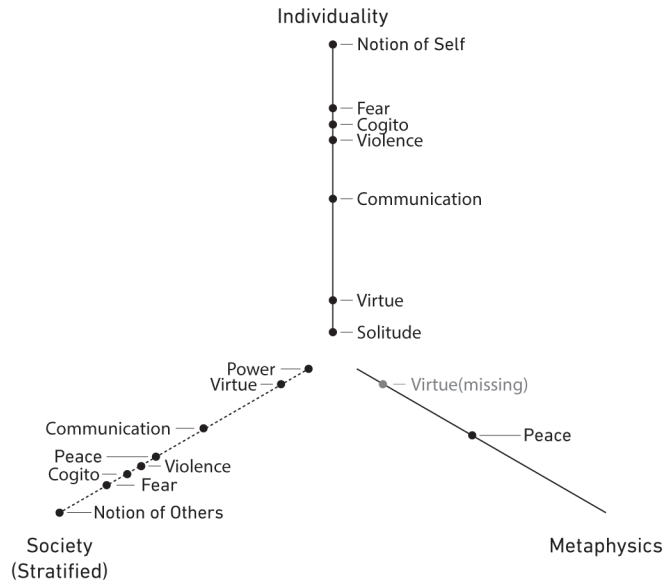
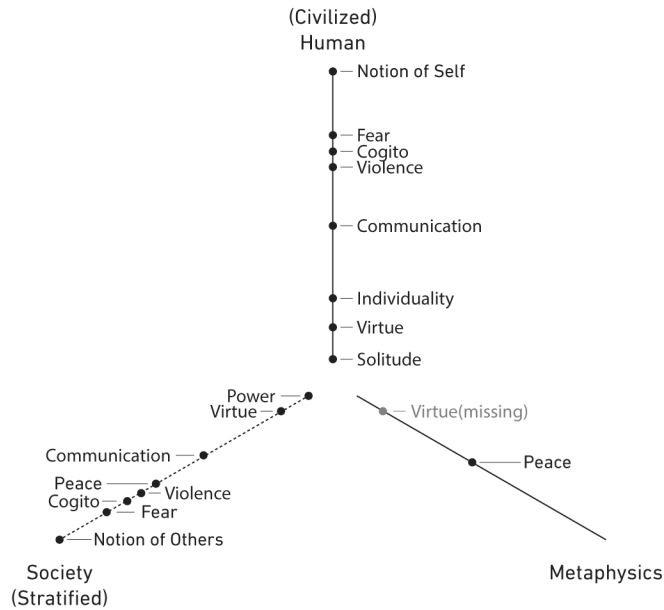


Figure I: Hermit Crab. Photo by Martin Hariadi, 2011

Virtuous Society



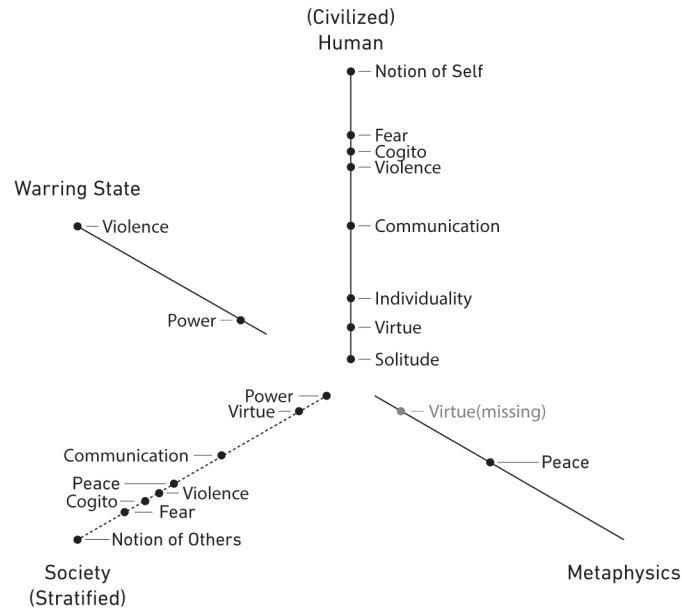
Virtue is conquering. It gives a man a superior status over others that is socially endorsed and provides an unified ideal of what a society desires. It forces society to build a harmonious community, to serve others rather than to eliminate each other. It facilitates the illusional consensus that structures social hierarchy. It is a necessary instrument, a conduit for social unity. It ultimately elevates social violence into a higher state of war that is hard to be resolved. It masquerades as truth. The “virtuous” are enslaved to it and justify their brutal actions – their killing and enslaving – in its name. It is lawless, and it leads to an endless war. One should not expect to see truth in virtue, as it is the very essence of a violent society. It is the lifeblood that supports a warring state. It cannot be used to terminate or eliminate the existence of a society. Only through the death of virtue can the society be killed. Thus, anything that tries to subvert virtue is seen as the enemy of society.



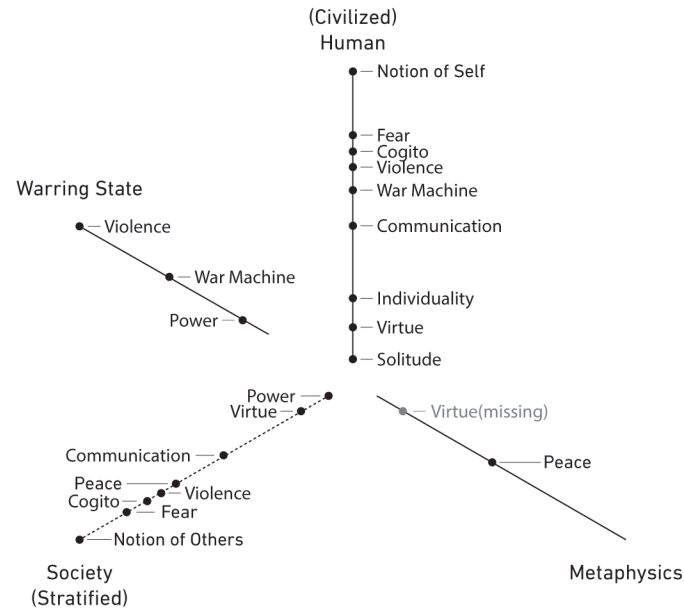
Civil Society

A civil society promises different privileges to men of different virtues. The result of this has altered social behaviors into the shape of an exoskeleton, a protection that one can live beneath. Since the day of our birth into society, we had no choice other than to assume virtuous behavior. If one does not conform to social virtues, one will be punished, alienated, or banished by society. From Christianity to traditional Bushido, virtues articulated by a strict social code are much more violent than any individual mode of redress. The phenomena of virtue is a parade of knowledge and power fabricated by a civilized collective, yet this collective is bereft of speech and never responds to anyone. In other words, this phenomena projects a social state of unattainable perfection that functions through the elimination of anyone who does not obey or who is not virtuous enough. In such a state, natural men, warriors, and banished ones are all believed to be violent. Men of virtue, of civilization, are the only legal beings on the land who deserve to be considered a “human” being. Their virtues authorize them to conquer the land, and further their virtues justify them to hoard all to which they lay claim. There is nothing to share with uncivilized ones. True humanity – the humanity that exists beyond the purview of virtue – is rejected by the ego of society, as a society acts as a divine authority. He who is virtuous must vow to renounce violence, to be a lover of civilization, and to be the one who teaches all his children to become lovers of civilization. Only through such a vow of virtue, for the goodness of others, he is given the power to rule, to transform and privatize others, to make a law for his own sake, and to perform legal violence on those who do not belong to his society.

Warring State

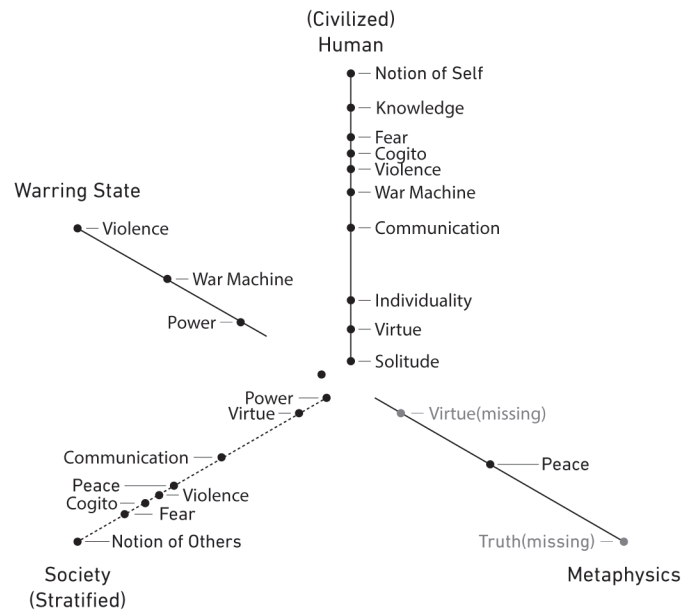


An individual power is always reliant on public violence, and an individual violence can hardly defeat a social power. It may be easy to accuse one of committing war crimes, but it is never correct to charge anyone with the responsibility for causing a war. Adolf Hitler and Emperor Shōwa, should be condemned, because they created a united state and authored a social virtue that encouraged individual violence to extend outside the state and uplevel into a massacre. But this accusation asserts a half-truth. It is always the will of society to launch its war machine, even under the dictatorship of an absolute king. A united state is a warring state. Its strong ego makes it fearless, brutal, and incapable of refraining from violence. Nobody has committed true sins, but everyone will eventually be punished or killed by the disaster they brought to bear.

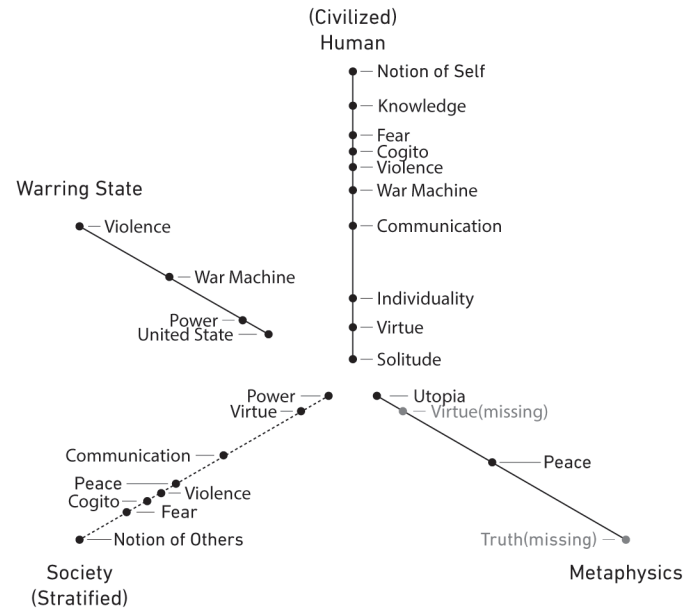


Violence comes from a recognition of others as well as from fundamental quality of otherness. It is nothing more than a defense mechanism through which a human-animal protects himself from any outsider whose behavior is seen as an invasion or challenge to controlled territory. However, within a societal apparatus, such a mechanism can be easily activated even when one is trying to refrain from the laws of social consciousness as did Sade and Descartes. The collection of violent forces within a society testifies to an inherent instability that threatens to tear the whole society into parts at any time. Civilization, or an alleged united state, therefore becomes a necessary means to ease the violent nature of a man and to amplify human submissiveness. Its ultimate goal is to externalize the war machines as a communal weapon oriented towards the outside of society.⁶

⁶ Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. "Nomadology: the War Machine." *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 2005. 351. Print.

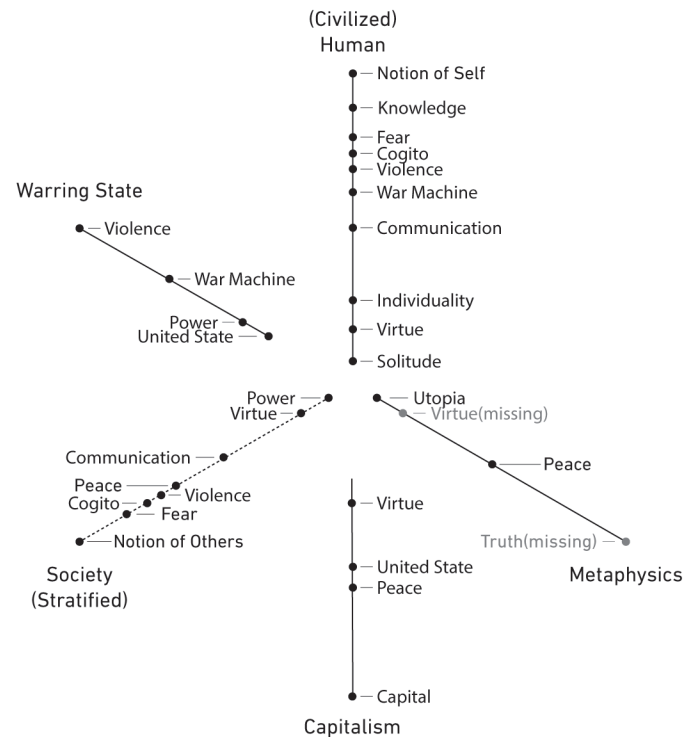


Fear is chaotic and it leads to an endless violence. To expel fear all unknowns should all be destroyed. To suppress their awareness of anything that is beyond the knowable, a civilization indoctrinates its people with necessary virtue, or “superior knowledge.” Through this imposed virtue, a civilized citizen is able to create and follow his own “truth” without fear for the unknown. Inside a civilization, the “unknown” becomes a knowledge, a kind of knowable object that can be shaped by power. All the while, the true object of that which is “unknown” is eternally effaced by virtue. If, in a modern society, science is the only tool to approach and discover the “unknown”, then science is to be revered as a power in the same way as the God’s divinity. So, too, the power of religion. In a “religious” society built upon “artifacts”, one’s will to power is more reflected as a will to illusion christened as truth. If a man can command the “unknown” of others, he can eventually control and rule over others. Thus, violence comes from this competition over the possession of the “unknown”, and in most cases, this possession is firmly held in hand of the governor. Without a true consciousness of the “unknown”, and without a fear for the “unknown”, citizens are submissive and unified. No one seeks true knowledge, and no one verifies the legitimacy of truth. The power to control, manipulate, or master other beings - human or non-human - can become addictive. The acquisition of power, and its recognition as a secular truth is built upon an irreversible belief in the difference between the known and the knowable. These acts eventually lead to an organic formation of social hierarchy. The power of knowledge, of truth, of the unknown is used to eliminate the “other”; those who are not eliminated are meant to be mastered, predicted, and controlled. Elimination of others does not signify a destruction of their real physical existence, rather, it signals a destruction of language, of science, and of alien knowledge. It ushers in an abstract, simulated, virtual existence of others created by the rule player, the governor, the powerful man, for the illusory experience of those hedonists living at the top of society.



United State

The more united a society is, the more powerful its war machine. Individual opinions can eventually become a collective or even collaborative violent ideology performed by the social ego, which constantly rejects any external otherness. In such a case, otherness does not emerge from individuals, but rather from without in the form of other powerful societies, other ideologies. This is how disastrous wars start. United states cannot avoid the inevitability of war as long as their egos assert different beliefs, cultures, or different fundamental structures. Difference is shaped by these societies' histories, geographic locations, climates, as well as by their religions, sciences, or even by a single legendary person. Peace amongst human societies exists as a utopia. As such, it requires the suspension of social differences so that a unification of humanity can be attained. However, the phenomena of society itself is characterized by an active splitting and departure for difference, along with the privileging of similarity. Hence, a forced elimination of either side will eventually lead to a loss of balance, and to the possibility of whole system collapse.

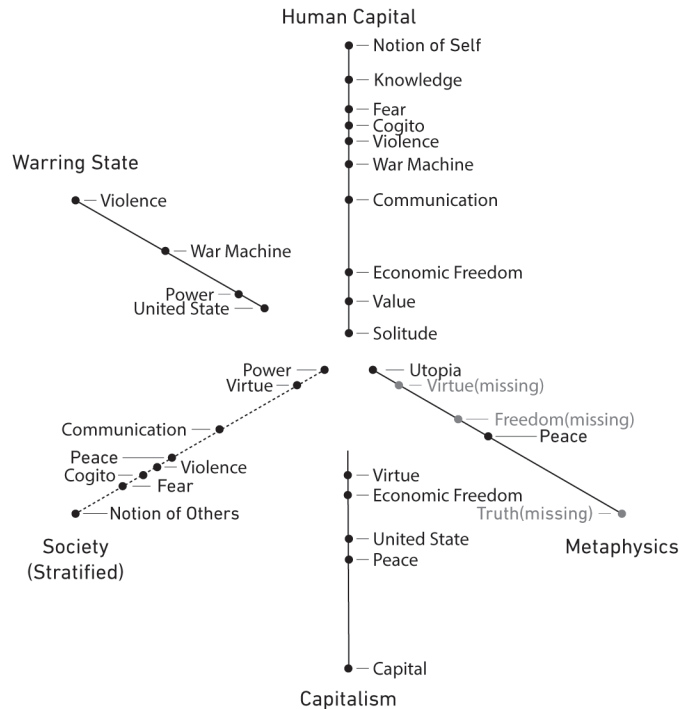


The capitalist system replaces virtue with value. This replacement makes it so that today a virtuous man is a valuable man, and a valuable man is virtuous. Ethics, traditions, ideas, beliefs, behaviors, and “truth” are capitalized on and become tradable and investable objects. Exchange takes place everywhere. The absolute power of virtue is usurped by capital. It becomes measurable and quantifiable. Capital becomes the sign of everything, which can now go beyond physical assets. Baudrillard comments on this phenomena of value as:

“All the great humanist criteria of value, the whole civilization of moral, aesthetic and practical judgement are effaced in our system of images and signs. Everything becomes undecidable, the characteristic effect of the domination of the code, which everywhere rests on the principle of neutralization, of indifference. This is the generalized brothel of capital, a brothel not for prostitution, but for substitution and commutation.”⁷

This brothel of capital transforms society into a brothel of virtue. Occupied by capital, virtue decays. In a capitalized society, virtue does not represent the ego of the united state, but rather is a sign and an image of tradable knowledge that follows the wishes of the most powerful owners of capital - institutions, and corporations. There is no virtuous government. There is only capitalized hierarchy. The formation of virtue, since the time of Socrates, has always followed the stratification of society, while in the era of capitalism, this stratification becomes even more clear and standardized because it is totally decided by the unequal distribution of value and by market of consumption. Virtue has lost its divinity, as the most metaphysical part of virtue - its superiority, its transcendence - is replaced by an unprecedented evaluation system. Capitalist society is the end of virtuous society. At the same time, it is an evolution for virtue. The unknowable is again eliminated, and fear is further expelled.

⁷ Baudrillard, Jean. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. London: Sage Publication. 1998. 9. Print.



Value is chaotic. A society which consists of valuable objects is a warring state. The presence of the free market allows every individual to compete, to maximize their own values and to exploit from human capital for their own self-interest. The value of the unknown stimulates and forces every individual to privatize capitals, humans and objects. This is brought about by a fear of exclusion, of being valueless, of elimination by society, a disqualification of humanness, and ultimately of the penalty of death. In Marx's critique on Adam Smith's principles of capital and labor, he writes:

“It claims to have obtained political freedom for everybody; to have loosed the chains which fettered civil society; to have linked together different worlds; to have created trade promoting friendship between the peoples; to have created pure morality and a pleasant culture; to have given the people civilized needs in place of their crude wants, and the means of satisfying them...Its civilized victory has discovered and made human labour the source of wealth in place of the dead thing.”⁸

The ideation of humans as capital, or as moving property, directly leads to the reification of the whole human world. The loss of divinity of virtue becomes an ultimate form of materialism that similarly tries to expel every possible unknown in human life. It enables a man to freely rule and control everything in his life, including other humans and objects. Adam Smith's trade freedom was just the beginning. A free market for the ownership of every possibility is the final destination of this religion by capitalists. Capitalist freedom, therefore, leads to a war of plunder, not just conquest or elimination. Milton Friedman starts his book *Capitalism and Freedom* by claiming:

“Economic arrangements play a dual role in the promotion of a free society. On the one hand, freedom in economic arrangements is itself

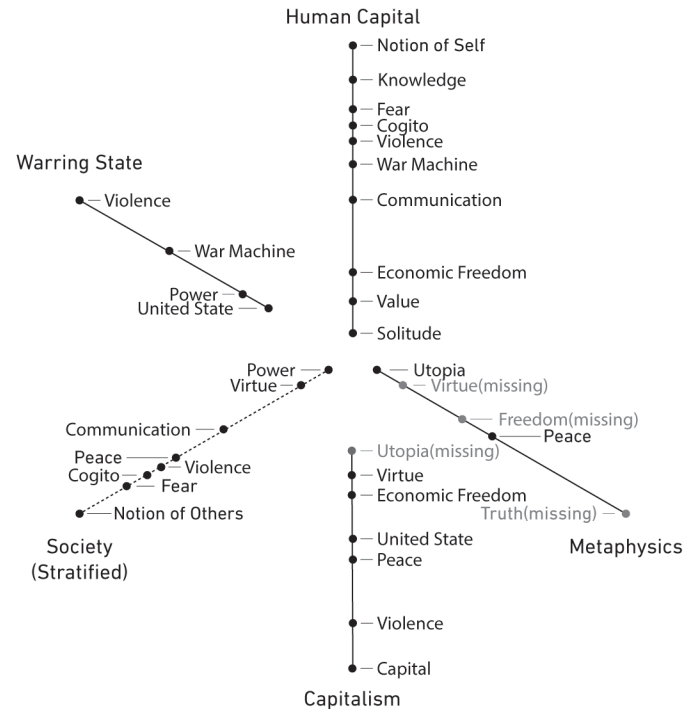
⁸ Marx, Karl. “Antithesis of Capital and Labour. Landed Property and Capital.” *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript of 1844*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1959. marxists.org, 2000. Web. 4 May 2015.

a component of freedom broadly understood, so economic freedom is an end in itself. In the second place, economic freedom is also an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom.”⁹

Friedman’s view clearly states that economic freedom should have the same or even higher significance as political freedom. It is a violent assumption that every human in the society is at once an economic being. The hegemony of capital should be understood as the same type of domineering social mechanism as is virtue. Perhaps, when Aristotle says, “it is clear that a state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal,” he acquiesces the unavoidable destiny for a man to be placed inside the colosseum of society.¹⁰ However, Aristotle’s view on the natural formation of society is still focused and based on a conclusion about universal law, while Friedman’s assumption about humans as economic beings is totally based on the notion of value, an artifact of man-made law. In other words, it is a secondary shackle for a social being to be chained by a rule created purely by humans themselves. Capitalism will never be able to achieve a true freedom for all, as long as this artificial separation between the ruler and the ruled is not resolved.

⁹ Friedman, Milton. “The Relation between Economic Freedom and Political Freedom.” *Capitalism and Freedom*. University of Chicago Press. 1962. 1. Print.

¹⁰ Aristotle. “Book 1.” *Politics*. Section 1253a. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press. 1944. tufts.edu. Web. 4 May 2015



Communist State

In Leon Trotsky's ideal, a united state is not completely impossible, but a further warring state and conquest must first precede its realization:

“The conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the revolution, but only opens it. Socialist construction is conceivable only on the foundation of the class struggle, on a national and international scale. This struggle, under the conditions of an overwhelming predominance of capitalist relationships on the world arena, must inevitably lead to explosions, that is, internally to civil wars and externally to revolutionary wars. Therein lies the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such, regardless of whether it is a backward country that is involved, which only yesterday accomplished its democratic revolution, or an old capitalist country which already has behind it a long epoch of democracy and parliamentarism.”¹¹

Trotsky describes this process of socialist unification as a permanent revolution, that it must succeed concurrently amongst different societies on this planet. This revolution should not be seen as finished until a thorough elimination of other forms of societies, especially capitalist ones, has been completed. This is an extreme model towards the elimination of violence and this model itself creates a necessary “violence” that opposes the Marxist ideal of peace. Such a collective violence can never be justified, as metaphysical truth and justice do not exist in either communist or capitalist societies. Only power is revered, and it leads to war. A society is never a solution to eliminate violence, no matter if the society is a democratic or a totalitarian one. Perhaps, even when Trotsky's permanent revolution is finalized, if society itself is not destroyed, violence will still rule this planet.

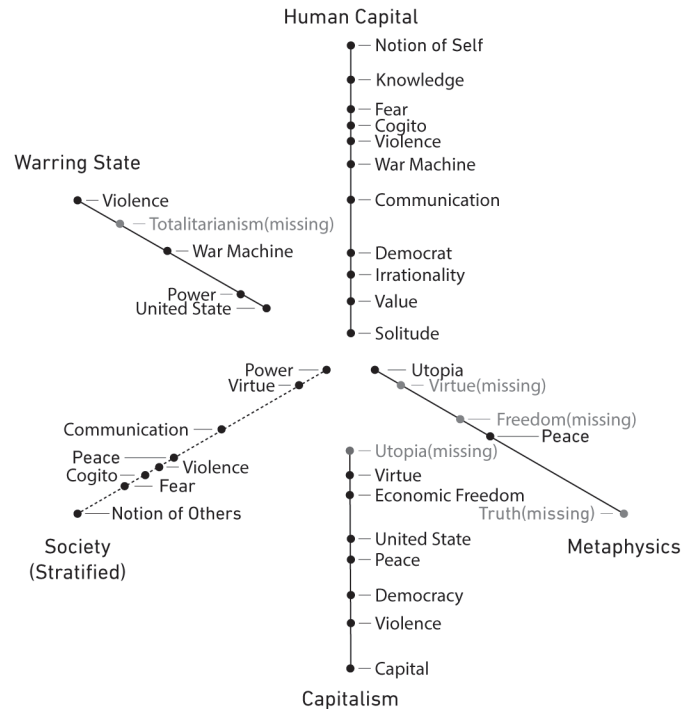
¹¹ Trotsky, Leon. “Chapter 10.” *The Permanent Revolution*. 1931. Trotsky Internet Archive. 1996. Web. 4 May 2015.

Totalitarianism and Democracy



Totalitarianism and democracy were formally understood as opposing modes of social governance. Jacques Rancière states a traditional perspective on the two: the former is conceived as “the State devouring society” and the latter as “society devouring the State.”¹² It is important that no matter which one dominates, the fact that we are living under oppression and stable dictatorship is never going to change. Both systems are appropriated for the slow and defensive orders that define an irreversible top down hierarchy. Democracy, giving the promise of illusional human rights and equality, legitimizes and further maximizes the egoism of every individual social unit. An expansion of egoistic desires - from those held by a single dictator to all the individuals who compose a massive population - is an exclusive phenomena created by the combination of the capitalist and the democrat. The two differ in that the selfishness of bare humanity is legalized as respectable human right in a democratic society, while it is abominable for a dictator to practice this “democratically legal right” in a totalitarian government at any time. A dictator can never be selfish, while all democratic citizens can be.

¹² Rancière, Jacques. “Introduction.” *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. Steve Corcoran. Verso. 2007. 6. Print.



Freedom cannot exist alongside obedience. A human is always obedient inside a social apparatus.¹³ If one's freedom is built upon rules created by others, it is not true freedom. Certainly, we are always bound by the law of nature. It is a metaphysical morality or power that drives us to be rational beings. However, there is another artificial system that civilizes us. It teaches us fake desires and fake metaphysics. It creates illusions to make us "moral" albeit irrational beings. We are not divine, and do not have the power to challenge this performative and violent relationship imposed upon us since the moment of birth. Our life is shaped and "preformed" in a socioecological system. We are increasingly oppressed through the progressive achievement of self-awareness, and through the essential process of socialization. "We fall because we are human, it is only because we live that we fall."¹⁴ Ango Sakaguchi describes this predestined state of humanness as an endless decadence, in which freedom is never possible as long as one remains human. It seems true that freedom is too far from us and is hindered by our sociality. The existence of society as well as an economic system does not allow any human being to reach truly metaphysical moments.

¹³ "Freedom" here refers to a Kantian autonomy that is based on the law created by one's own will, not by the will of another. In order to have such an autonomous law, one should have the capacity for moral rationality. A being with such rationality should then be treated as if free. In this way, freedom must be preceded by a sense of morality first. This morality, either man-made rules or natural/transcendental laws, determines all practices of freedom. (See Doctrine of Elements. Pt. II. Div. II. Book I in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer, Allen Wood. Cambridge University Press. 2002. 396)

¹⁴ Sakaguchi, Ango. *Discourse on Decadence*. Trans. Seiji M. Lippit, in *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*. 1986. 5. Print.

Abandonment of Humanness



Now marks the time that it is essential for us not to be human, so that freedom can be practiced. One should renounces their humanity. Remember Osamu Dazai's powerful statement, "umarete, sumimasen" ("I'm sorry for being born").¹⁵ Dazai must have been hyper-aware of what compelled him towards these words. He was unable to find a way to escape from the prison into which he had been born. His statement of renunciation is in fact an abandonment of sociality, of a social contract that one has never signed. However, a human as a solitary individual, is too weak to subvert or even challenge this imposed contract, as the law stands superior to any secular being. Thus, a secular man can only give up his power and his alleged humanness, in the same way as God chose to transform himself into human existence. By abandoning all attributes of human sociality – such as meaning, language, identity, and interaction – one can become a degraded form of human-animal, rather than an object of exchange housed in the brothel of capital. Such a degraded animal is not held to the expectation of morality and rationality. Rather, he simply follows his own reasoning, his own metaphysical morality, and exists as free or as violent as he chooses without ideological influence of others. Would he still be human if he lived without society? If Jesus could be regarded as God, then this degraded man should also be seen as human. We could fall in the same way, to be a disqualified human, and yet utterly free man.

¹⁵ "Umarete, sumimasen" first appeared in Dazai Osamu's last book *No Longer Human*. Right after Dazai published last part of this auto-biographical novel, he took his own life by committing a double suicide. The book contains recurrent themes such as suicide, hatred of human, hatred of self, which later were considered to be author's own will.

C2. Mutants

Beauty, Carcinogenesis, and Autonomy

[Mutant Expression] - Beauty is a natural building of body extension, inside a psychic splitting of self.

1

A human is a complex self-organization of numerous rules. These rules exist and correspond to the biological hierarchy inside the body. Each successive level is characterized by an increase in its complexity of rule and operation.¹⁶ At the same time, the growing complexity, that is generated, determined and influenced by the lower structures, is totally *emergent* – it goes beyond the properties of any fundamental elements in the organism.¹⁷ The higher level it reaches, less comprehensible an organic object becomes. A decline in predictability of the object differentiates itself from any other objects within the same system level. Such decline, given that a human (object) is not a terminate somatic individual but a social being, can move into higher structural frame and infinitely approach the notion of impossibility (of prediction) with respect to the level of socialization.

Such an impossibility marks a limit that exists as an *asymptote* for a human, for a society. This impossibility is the highest complexity of society (or metaphysics) that is never to be truly reached. Utopia, along with any other idealized metaphysical concepts - such as justice, freedom, beauty - can never be perfectly comprehended or acquired as that it is perpetually out of reach; it is bound to the rules of a higher hierarchical structure, to the law of *emergence*. Any individual living within a social system cannot approach utopia's peaks. This is because each social being exists as a fundamental structural unit of the dominant socioecological organization. Each individual builds the cell which constrains him or her. Even though

16 Pavé, Alain. "Biological and Ecological Systems Hierarchical Organization." *Hierarchy in Natural and Social Sciences*. Ed. Denise Pumain. New York: Springer-Verlag, 2006. 40. Print.

17 Emergence here refers to the natural complication and evolution of rules. It is the process that leads to the complexity of collection, of society. See Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book H 1045a 8-10. Print.

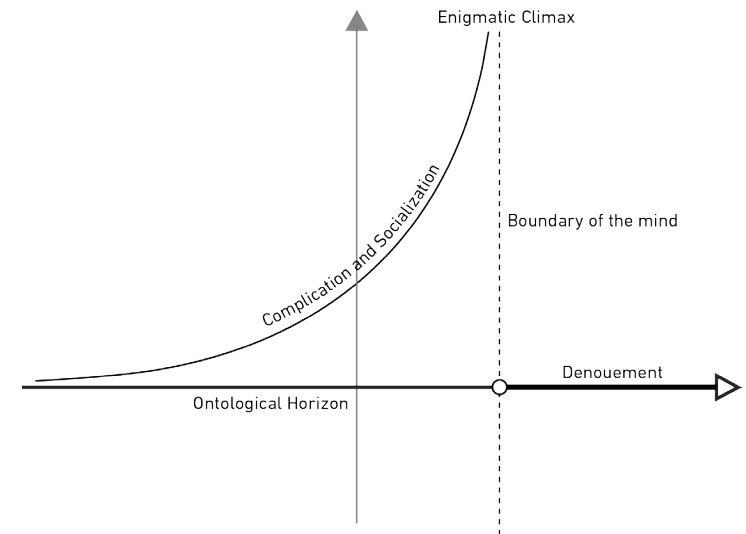


Figure II: The asymptote of social being.
Diagram by Mengyu Chen, 2015

a human is a part of the ontological system, and indirectly contributes to the formation of its rules, he possesses no power, exchange, and no perception in front of these high level objects inside the same system. We can think about this phenomena metaphorically through the relationship between a vector, a set of vectors and a vector space. Assuming that a single human is a vector member in a set, and assuming that the uniqueness of a human is the linear independency of the vector, then as long as the number of vector members is no less than the number of dimensions of the space, a vector space is always spanned by this set of vectors. In other words, the formation of higher dimensional vector space (which at least is more than one dimension) is an inevitable result when there are other independent members existing at the same time in the set. The more members we have in this set, the more complex the higher structure becomes. The set is an infinitely spanning object, while a vector can never go beyond its very first dimensional limit and can never build a direct connection with the rules in the higher level space. Therefore, an individual unit is fundamentally constrained by its set, and the evolving entity created by this set is incrementally removed from its starting unit. Such a hierarchical system is constantly creating the gap between the two, and is never a compatible system for individual achievement of metaphysical objects.

2

If our [current] society exists similarly to the *basis* of a vector space, then at a social level it is eternally impossible for any individual to surpass the structural limit. In order to have the metaphysics return, the current system must be replaced. The hierarchy that splinters an individual's sense of self or prevents a human from understanding metaphysics must be destroyed. However, an external disruption of hierarchy seems impossible. We are living in such a dystopian state that there is no omnipotent being that can rule or even compete with our "utopian" society. God is dead, as Nietzsche said a hundred years ago. Totalitarianism, the alleged inverse of democracy, lost its legitimacy as a mode of social organization after the end of the Cold War, said Rancière a hundred years later.¹⁸ Nothing can stop this gigantic machine of rules. Even in the pure theoretical field of mathematics, there are innumerable coexisting systems that are constantly guiding people to explore, to review and to possibly alter the starting point of these systems. In this continuously expanding human territory, the

18 Rancière, Jacques. "Introduction." *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. Steve Corcoran. Verso. 2007. 5. Print.

priority of building a societal structure remains unchallenged.

Anyone who tries to reverse or ignore this priority, is clinically labeled as mentally ill. These are societies sociopaths, or antisocial personality disordered; before the advent of modern psychiatry, they were guiltless, retarded, psychopathic inferiority, or morally insane. Today, such mental illnesses are treated medicinally. In Michel Foucault's discussion on treatment, he asserts that cure of madness is heavily linked with a moral improvement rather than a medical development. Here, the madman is forced to accept an ideal performance of sanity and good behavior that is recognized only by a "normal" person.¹⁹ It is a combination of psychology and morality that constitutes our modern "scientific psychiatry." This mode of medicalized judgement and punishment acts as an auto-repair and filtration function of our social immune system and detects, distinguishes, and protects us from any structure-threatening infections. It is fully equipped with "doctors" who are engulfing innocent "outsiders".

3

When we look into the biological organization of a human body, we see that the possibility for critical change in the formation of the whole organism resides at the microscopic level. An alteration in the chemical structure of DNA, either through natural occurring or unnatural means, can prevent the gene from proper or complete functioning. Agene mutation can contribute to the progression of a cancer, and eventually to the death of the whole body organism. An aim to build a new system of higher complexity does not mean that we must destroy the current one. However, a shift or avoidance of engulfment is at least necessary. A neoplasm caused by genetic mutations is such a semi-autonomous territory that it grows upon a new structure and coexists with the other.²⁰ Plasma in ancient Greek means "formation" or "creation." And a neoplasm, besides its biological reference as a "tumor," should be regarded as an extension of an organ, which potentially leads to a re-formation or an adaptation of the whole body. It is a change that starts from a disruption of orders, of anything that seems "normal and average." It is something that we name as "art."

Scientists believe that a number of neoplasms (or neoplastic cells) use

19 Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. New York: Vintage, 1965. 160. Print.

20 "Semi-autonomous" refers to the relative state of autonomy that a neoplasm is functionally detached from the whole organism, but physically and biologically attached to the body.

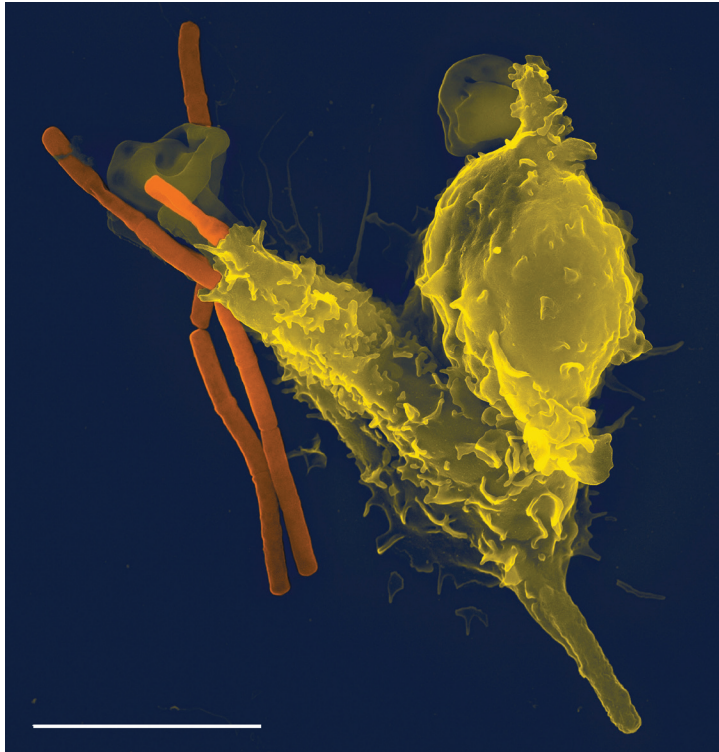


Figure III: Neutrophil engulfing anthrax bacteria.
Photo by Volker Brinkmann, 2005

immune tolerance as a main strategy to prevent against elimination by the host immune system. Such belief suggests that even though the genes of these cells have mutated, they are still recognized as a “normal part” of the body. Whether this immune tolerance is an active self-defensive strategy or just an innate property of the neoplastic cells is unknown, but the “neutral” identity of neoplasm – standing somewhere in between a rebel and an evolution of the body – leads to the question of the legitimacy of its existence. Consciousness of the a neoplasm needs to be discovered and defined. Specifically, we might ask: if human consciousness is produced from genes and cells, is mutation of neoplastic cells a natural occurrence that is prior to its host’s thoughts? Or if human consciousness comes from somewhere source other than that of the mutagens) could neoplasm be a reflection or succession of the host’s active will or subconsciousness?

4

As we know that mutation can be induced by external chemical and radiative influences, then, if neoplasm is a natural selection, the formation of this autonomous territory must be a preformed or a programmed reaction, either in an adaptive way or a resistant way, to the larger socioecological system. This formation could coexist with the current environment, or might have to metastasize to other parts of the body under a more severe condition. This functions similarly to evolution, as it *attempts* to improve the current model by excessive generation, modification, and at times by subversion. Therefore, neoplasm can be seen as a part of the social(hierarchical) mechanism, and it is *ascribed* with a power to behave against its environment. The necessary result of a neoplasm is the eventual death of the host, unless the growth of neoplasm can be inhibited. In such a case, a neoplasm is *assigned* to an organic function that serves a higher structural purpose. This function cannot be removed as it is the starting point of all human consciousness, of all the gestures, and of all the neoplastic forms involved in the process. Until the aim of the neoplasm is reached – such as a collapse of current mechanism, or an emergence of next successor (or just a temporary domination of organism) – this function will keep resisting the return of metaphysical objects, while constantly revealing and projecting a metaphysical potential. This is the limit of a *functional* neoplasm.

In the second case, without a direct external influence, a neoplasm is deemed to have a more autonomous existence. An induction of mutation is still needed before a neoplasm is created, yet this happens

at a fundamental and unobservable level. The main difference of this *internal* type of mutation from a naturally selected [functional] one is that the formation of a neoplasm upon internal mutation is an *achieved* neoplastic attribute. This achievement could involve an intention of *self-evolution*, but it could also fully operate in an opposite way without any functionality. For example, an ultimate degradation of the whole body organism can exist as a property or an attribute, and should be regarded as a way to facilitate the return of metaphysical objects, as the complexity gap should be broken down inside such neoplasm. No matter the assumed intention - or lack thereof - the “abnormal” or even malignant behavior of neoplasm autonomously and physically disassociates it from its host, in a way much like self-splitting or DID (dissociative identity disorder). Such a dissociative object should be seen as a positive extension of body ability as it is not governed by any subjective consciousness, or held either by the individual/host or social system. In this way, this high level of neoplasm autonomy could possibly link the fundamental unit of an individual (which is prior to human consciousness) with metaphysical objects (as long as it is truly happening inside the new system). This is due to the coexisting relation between the two. However, while we are looking for the presence of metaphysical objects within neoplasm, a certain feeling of fear, irritation, insecurity may take hold. This feeling is an eternal conflict between our subjective consciousness of control and pure objectivity. Dissociation could be considered an opposing stance, and the dominance of either side might result in an elimination of the other. This is the same pain suffered by one diagnosed with DID.

5

It is unclear that whether or not a *dissociative* neoplasm is a material reflection (or even an expansion) of human consciousness. If so, does it emerge from an active will or a subconscious mind? If not, how does a mutation happen internally and how is neoplasm *achieved*? This relationship between the two is particularly important because any potential solution to these questions might become the key to the recreation and manipulation of such a neoplasm. In fact, scientists are working towards this answer in their labs, in order that a new evolutionary technique of body modification and prosthetics could be fully invented. So are artists and all creative humans. The happening of mutation here becomes the achievement of both long term *learning* and *experiment*,

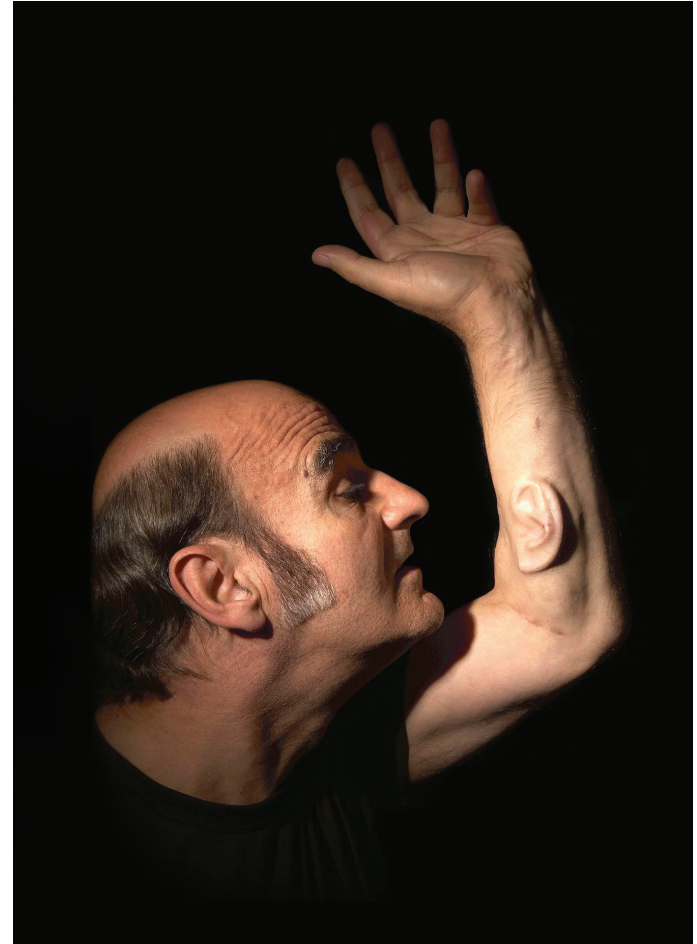


Figure IV: Stelarc's "Ear on Arm." Photo by Nina Sellars, 2006

rather than an accidentalist practice.²¹ Only through the principle of mutation, of imperfect structural building, is metaphysics believed to be revealed at some point. The study on mutation or the study on the subject of mutation then can also be interpreted as a behavioral study, as long as we think of mutation as an expression of gene behavior. Neoplasm is then understood as a *behavioral existence* and simultaneously as a behavioral evidence. Following behaviorist theories - specifically Pavlov's and Skinner's two types of conditioning - mutation itself should be first regarded as an *unconditioned* and/or an *operant* response to a set of stimuli inside the host's body, as it is very likely to be more complex than a simple one-time reaction. In other words, anything and any combination of things happening inside a human body could potentially be an *unconditioned* or a *reinforcing* stimulus that leads to the happening of mutation. The uncertainty or the ambiguity of the specific types of conditioning also leads us back initial questions on the level of human thinking involved in this behavior. A conscious (or unconscious) thinking or memory is more likely to be associated with an operant stimulus, while a reflexive system (which may include sensual and emotional experience) should be viewed as an unconditioned one. No matter which one is responsible for the cause of mutation, both possibilities opens up to a wider range of studies, from socio-psychology to neurobiology. The high individuality involved in the experiment makes the happening of mutation more unpredictable.

6

Mutation is an *achieved* behavior that it can be trained by conditioning and repetition. Once an artist/scientist discovered a set of possible stimuli that can induce a mutation, the technique of reproduction of either mutagens or mutants needs to be further developed through the replication of discoveries. This reproducibility is necessary as mutation does not always promise the formation of neoplasm. This is to say, because of the large number of possibilities of mutation, not all of them can cause actual effect on genes or alter gene products. Among those effective mutations, only the ones which alter or delete the functions of proteins, or the ones happening inside germ cells, may have the highest possibility to cause a neoplasm. Controlling and maintaining the reproduction rate of mutation at a certain level is important, as mutant cells have their specific life spans and most of them are subject to either senescence or apoptosis, in addition to their unexpected necrosis. The behavior of mutation is totally determined by

21 Accidentalism refers to the idea that denies of causal nexus among events.

the efficiency of biological activity inside a human body. In other words, *time* always plays an important role in the formation of neoplasm, and a competition between the reproduction rate and mortality rate of mutation decides the possibility of neoplasm.

At any time, if a neoplasm is desired, then the reproduction rate must be larger than the sum of: senescence rate, apoptosis rate, and unexpected necrosis rate.²² Expressed as an inequality, it becomes:

$$M > S + A + N$$

Reproduction rate *M* here should include natural growth rate of both mutagens and mutants, and active achievement rate of new mutations. If we use *G* for Growth rate and *C* for achievement rate²³, we can get:

$$G + C > S + A + N$$

Assuming that there is no extra force that may immediately influence mutation, we can conclude from this simple expression that neoplasm as a behavioral existence is mainly determined by two parts: *origination* and *accumulation*. Origination serves as a necessary basis for every creative activity. Only after the very first mutation has happened, proliferation could then start to proceed by duplicating its product. A neoplasm lives upon this constant duplication, and the creation of neoplasm is a continuous accumulation of mutation. This is an *absolute sequence* of the two in a neoplastic behavior. After the first happening of mutation, however, accumulation actually plays a far more important role in building a physical structure of neoplasm. If origination of mutation is said to be happening only at the most microscopic level, then accumulation elevates this gene change into a macroscopic phenomena that we can observe directly with our bare eyes. Speaking in a non-biological sense, accumulation is a material (pictorial) expression, and it is highly *mediumized* for the mutation.²⁴ This mediumization follows its own rules during accumulation, and it is very flexible and sometimes appears to be drastically different from the one of mutation. It is a dimensional expansion of the original product, but, fundamentally, it must be strictly rooted with the basic behavioral unit. For example, if a mutation only happens and alters the functionality of fingers, then a proper mediumization during a massive accumulation of mutants should distort

22 Senescence refers to the process of cell deterioration with age. Apoptosis refers to a strictly regulated programmed cell death inside a multicellular organism. Necrosis refers to any abnormal death or killing of cell caused by external factors. The three terms here altogether constitutes the antithesis of creativity.

23 See *Note on G + C > S + A + N* at the end of essay.

24 Mediumization literally means "growth and building with materials."

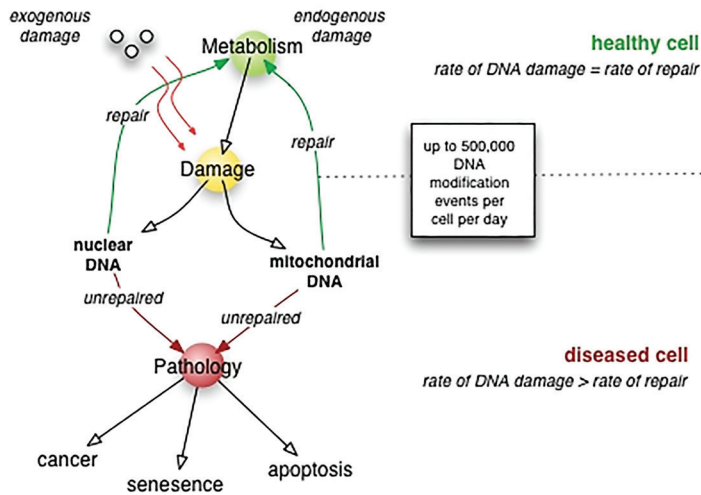


Figure V: Diagram of DNA repair by Harold Brenner

only the fingers, not the hands or arms. Such a limit on expansion of accumulation guarantees an autonomous occupation of neoplasm, which can further generate an impenetrable armor for its inner system.

However, at the same time, mediumization is the most vulnerable process during the whole formation of neoplasm, as it is easily disrupted or even controlled by external powers. A neoplasm, at its inception and onwards, is very likely to be suppressed by medical treatments. The reason for this fragility is simply because that proliferation, which further leads to mediumization, is still a normal phenomena of cells. It is a part of healthy cellular functionality that shares the same mechanism of other parts inside the body. Unless there is specific mutation happening in proliferation, this function could be predicted and controlled by common treatments, such as antibiotics, hyperthermia, or radiation. These strategies used in chemotherapy are very powerful in delaying or distorting the growth of neoplasm, although most of them cannot thoroughly eliminate the phenomena of neoplasm. If the accumulation process were hacked or damaged, mediumization would also not function properly. The exact influence on neoplasm by a dysfunction in mediumization is unknown, but it definitely can lead to an unstable structure of the inner organism, or an extra external reliance on normal organs, with a high possibility of losing its highest autonomy prepared for the stay of metaphysical objects.

7

Mediumization becomes less restricted when metastasis (displacement) is happening as an additional attribute of neoplasm. Metastasis is a complex series of steps in which neoplastic cells migrate to other parts in the host body from their original territory. It is seen as an externalization of the closed system, yet it retains neoplasm's same autonomous rules even on the secondary territory. During metastasis, neoplastic cells constantly *interact* with the walls surrounding them, and *attach* to and *degrade* potential obstacles (extracellular matrix) so that they are no longer trapped within certain spaces. It is true that such a migration is an invasive gesture or a lethal threat to the whole body organism. Conversely, for neoplasm, this migration is not just a splitting of neoplastic subject, but rather is an ultimate form of autonomy that enables the subject to be liberated from being identified and recognized as a subject. As the boundary between the coexisting organism starts to blur, it gives mediumization more flexibility to define the territory where an autonomous structure is set to be built. Interaction does happen during mediumization, yet there is no

equality in such interaction between the migrating neoplastic cells and the target, since the target is to be degraded (and eliminated). In this way, mediumization, in a pure state, is given the highest power in dominating its environment. It is not an action of response, but of conquest.

8

A displacement of subject or an absence of subject leads to an ultimate aesthetic existence of neoplasm. It prevents a reification on the behavioral nature of neoplasm. Without being recognized as a subject, any socioeconomic relation of exchange, of response, of attraction is disrupted. A structured pattern of looking and understanding is never built. The disruption also becomes a constant interruptive attribute in the neoplasm that prevents neoplastic formation. Mutation is endless. Proliferation is endless. A neoplasm is eternally growing and expanding until it is no longer a neoplasm. The disruption of socioecological relation also shuts down any further question of its behavior or any visual interpretation of its behavior projected onto the neoplasm. The purpose of neoplasm can no longer be questioned, as such questions place neoplasm into the notion of causality, of explanation.²⁵ The fact that neoplasm appeared in front of others becomes an enigmatic subject or an illusional subject that it is created by the viewer himself based on his own consciousness of others (and sometimes of the artist), which can never to be reduced back to any other visual, cultural, or political grounds. The inferred meaning and physicality of a neoplasm are not real. It is never possible to locate an ultimate form of neoplasm.

Mutation is random. Any measurement of neoplasm, and any interpretation of neoplasm can only cause chaos. In pure state, appreciation of this enigmatic being, without a desire or an expectation, is in fact a reading of self through this behavioral being, through this neoplasm that keeps resisting and reflecting back the rules to others. Beauty, along with other metaphysical objects, is built upon this resistance, as is autonomy in the form of randomness. A neoplasm is differentiated from a normal body organism only through such attributes and is allowed to surpass and

²⁵ This comes from Francois Lyotard's idea *La peinture est la pensée de la peinture* (painting is the thinking of painting), that painting is a medium or a visual transition for the viewers to look back at themselves. It does not actively give any impact or surprise to the viewer, rather it turns all the colors, forms, materials from the chromatic appearance of a work, into an apparition that goes beyond an encounter, in the same way as a poem changes words. See Francois Lyotard's essay "The Pictorial Event Today" in *Miscellaneous Texts I: Aesthetics and Theory of Art*. 2012. 229.

destroy any complexity of rules, of organization, or even of itself. Without this flexibility and temporariness (as complexity of environment may evolve along with time), metaphysics will not return.

Note on $G + C > S + A + N$

Although mutagens do not necessarily mean the happening of mutation, any increase of the number of proper mutagens can always lead to an increase in the possibility of mutation. Therefore, reproduction of mutagen, as a direct reproduction process causing mutation, should be seen as another contribution to the mutation rate M . Then we can divide G into three parts: 1) reproduction rate of mutagens x , which can possibly produce some new mutations. 2) proliferation rate of mutant y happening after mutation. 3) a further multiplicative increase on new mutations from reproduced mutagens in the same rate as proliferation of mutants y . If we use C_1 for mutagens achievement rate, C_2 for mutants achievement rate, and m as productivity of mutagens (since only a certain percent of mutagens could successfully generate mutations), then G could be expressed as:

$$G = C_1 \cdot x \cdot m + C_1 \cdot x \cdot m \cdot y + C_2 \cdot y$$

Also, for active achievement rate C , we can divide it into two parts as well, following the use of C_1 and C_2 , and C_1 's productivity m . C should reflect the achievement rates of both productive mutagens and mutants:

$$C = C_1 \cdot m + C_2$$

Now, if we replace both C and G with the two new equations above into the original inequality, it should become:

$$\begin{aligned} C_1 \cdot x \cdot m + C_1 \cdot x \cdot m \cdot y + C_2 \cdot y + C_1 \cdot m + C_2 &> S + A + N \\ \rightarrow C_1 \cdot m \cdot (x + x \cdot y) + C_2 \cdot (y + 1) &> S + A + N \end{aligned}$$

In this expression, mutagens and mutants both exist. Mutagens, as pre-mature mutants, or as a specific behavior *precedes* mutation, does have its own function in the whole behavioral existence of neoplasm. Its contribution to the formation of neoplasm is heavily relied on probability

m , and on its *hidden conversion rate* with mutant achievement rate C_2 .²⁶ Thus, if one could find a way to increase the productivity of mutagens, the mutation rate can accordingly be increased by it. Also, although this pre-stage of mutation in the whole process contains more uncertainty with parameters x , y , m , it is, for many artists, a necessary process or relatively easy path to achieve mutations. The unpredictability or the complexity it brings is also unmeasurable. In other words, because C_2 in this expression is relatively a more fixed and more guaranteed value and it is very stable with the minimum linear change, the development and focus on C_1 may bring more flexibility (or diversity) into the formation of neoplasm.

²⁶ The relationship between C_1 and C_2 is similar to the difference between thinking and concepts. The hidden conversion rate here is different from productivity m and refers to direct conversion between C_1 and C_2 , which cannot be quantified or measured.

C3. Therapy

Goal

An artist should have his own goal while making. This goal defines the function of his art object. A goal starts from the artist's own interest. In most cases, interest and goal share a common attribute, which is an artistic attempt to go beyond the boundary of one's body or ability. It is seen as an extension of the body, of humanness, along with a certain functionality. This goal to build an extension is highly individual and sometimes marginal to others. Artists are always trying to make something impossible happen, same as scientists and alchemists. They are to break the rules, to touch the intangibles, and to live between imagination and physicality. Some artists may have their own desired outcomes in approaching certain political ideals - to change and modify "wrong" or "imperfect" systems - through an application of their extended bodies. It is impractical, yet this impracticality is always desired.

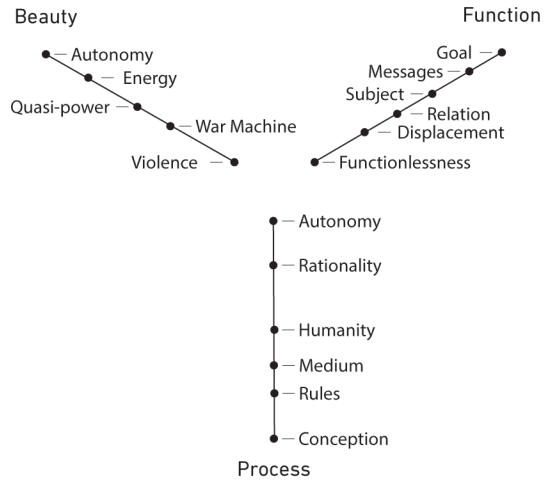
Function

Theodor Adorno once said, "Insofar as a social function can be predicated for artworks, it is their functionlessness."²⁷ The goal of making art is contrary to the idea of functionality. Art is functional in a way that is seen as functionless. It creates a consciousness of art that to the public is useless and powerless.²⁸ This idea of powerlessness is in fact illusional. The formation of this consciousness requires power. An artist manipulates this illusion with his creative energy and hides the subject, the functionality. This hidden artifact of power thereby becomes the true message of an art object. It is the functionlessness of these mediums that conveys their messages.²⁹ And the presence of messages turns an art object into a masterpiece of design, which is also a poor design.

²⁷ Adorno, Theodor. *Aesthetic Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997. 227. Print.

²⁸ Consciousness of art refers to the subjective image of an object that is read and understood by the viewer. It is not the subject inside the content of art, but a displaced subject built upon the physical presence of art object.

²⁹ This is an expanded idea on McLuhan's "the medium is the message". It is particularly a comment on the performative quality of the relation that an art object projects and builds with the environment.



Process

Beauty should not be considered the goal or the function of art, although, it shares the very similar quality with the function, as it is sometimes unnecessarily generated after a necessary process, a methodology. Beauty need be detached from consciousness. If art is totally oriented towards the fulfillment of a conscious function, then it will certainly lose its metaphysical quality. The consciousness behind art can never go beyond the prison of bare humanity. A detachment from consciousness must be practiced, so that beauty in its full metaphysical existence can be differentiated from the secular existence of humanity. Beauty only resides in the process and rules that have been developed through moral rationality. This process must be rational, as that only rationality can build up an autonomous system of functionality exclusive for beauty to perform its revelation or further affect on the viewer.

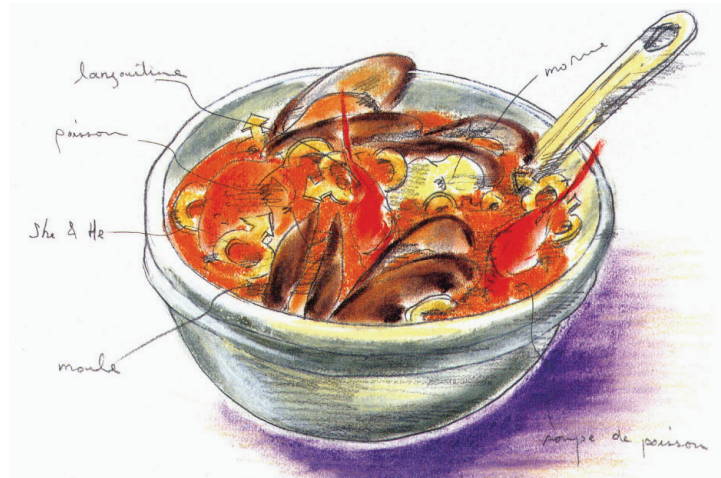


Figure VI: Norihide Imagawa's Fish Soup Pasta in *Architects' Garden Original Menu*, 1995. Food coordinate & Illustration by Hideko Kogure

Recipe

The method to build a body extension is sometimes referred to as a craft, an engineering, or as a medium. All artists are craftsmen. Once a human has discovered his unique crafting skills and materials, he becomes an artist. It can be a life-long experiment to compose a special "recipe" for art. In order to make a recipe tasty, one should collect, learn, mix, and test different ingredients. However, the taste of this recipe is highly subjective, as an artist can choose to make it tasty for only himself, or to please a specific group of people. Tastiness may have its own criteria and standards, nonetheless an artist should reserve all the rights on his unique recipe book.

Soul

In this age of mechanical reproduction, the uniqueness of objects are lost. Great Chairman Mao once said a man without a correct political prospect is soulless. These mass-produced objects are soulless just in the same way. They are simply designed for the capitalist market, and they are not required to have any individuality or functionality beyond being labeled with a value, as a product for consumption. What exactly Mao means by “correct” is unknown, but this metaphysical correctness articulated by Mao must be an opposition to a capitalist stance. In fact, if an artist wishes his art object to have a soul, then he should place no value on his art. Without value, the art object exists beyond the system of exchange and the expectation of functionality. The relationship model that is established between a service provider and client can be disrupted. An object that has a soul should have its own political prospect, as if it has gained sovereignty on its own accord.

Relation

The sovereignty of an object should be first shown in its relation with the viewer. With a certain sovereignty, an object should be able to constantly perform a power over the viewer, as if the two are sovereign states. The power being performed is not relative or conditional, but absolute. It is a state that defines the viewer’s physical and cognitive distance from the object. The complexity and stability of the ruling system (as a core attribute of art) behind this power of the object determines its subjective image inside the viewer’s mind. In this way, the viewer’s reading and understanding of the object based on his own perception and knowledge (which creates an illusionary object of art), and the inherent sovereignty or autonomy of the art object, together creates a distance between the two, a bilateral relation. However, as a viewer, seeing the object’s true soul is impossible. What a viewer can see is the enigmatic presence of a soul, rather than the complex inner system itself. The more power an object generates, the more clear the viewer can perceive its sovereignty. Power, as an external attribute of an art object, functions as a surface for this perception.³⁰

³⁰ Power here refers to an opinion. It should be distinguished from force, strength, or authority. See Hannah Arendt’s definition and distinguishing of power, force, and violence in her book *On Violence*. (Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1969. 239. Print.) Here, an art object does not have internal power, but only internal force that fabricated its inner system, or sovereignty, which is not built upon a societal structure or any sociality like human.

Interactivity

The power performed by an autonomous object is sometimes violent. That is to say, the bilateral relation created by the two objects is not necessarily a collaborative one, but it could be an opposition, an antagonistic interaction. Mishima Yukio once said, “true beauty is something that attacks, overpowers, robs, and finally destroys. It was because he knew this violent quality of beauty that Thomas Mann wrote *Death in Venice*.”³¹ Mishima’s beauty here has gone far beyond any traditional notion of conceptual beauty. He approaches beauty as an object that possesses its own behaviors not governed by an internal system. The beautiful and violent interactivity of art is totally externalized from its autonomous complexity. It is rather an attached part of the original function that tries to further expand the physical and cognitive mutual territory, and modifies the distance between the object and viewer. It influences the consciousness of art, by creating a new image, an impact on viewer, and stresses its existence through a violent interactivity outside of the system. This external behavior in a way simulates a war machine that it is more powerful than its affiliated sovereignty when placed outside out the State.³² In fact, because the sovereignty of an object does not have a necessary social structure that can maintain a power, the only way it may achieve a power is through its autonomy, which is created by the artist. The complexity of autonomous rules may eventually evolve into a quasi-consciousness by itself (different from consciousness of art) that potentially can conserve power, as

31 This quote is from an article written one month before Mishima’s suicide in November 1970, and the article was later published in *This is Japan* for 1971. (Scott-Stokes, Henry. *The Life and Death of Yukio Mishima*. New York: Noonday, 1995. 171. Print.)

32 “...Sovereignty only reigns over what it is capable of internalizing, of appropriating locally...Not only is there no universal State, but the outside of States cannot be reduced to “foreign policy,” that is, to a set of relations among States. The outside appears simultaneously in two directions: huge worldwide machines branched out over the entire ecumenon at a given moment, which enjoy a large measure of autonomy in relation to the States...” (Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. “Nomadology: the War Machine.” *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 2005. 360. Print.)

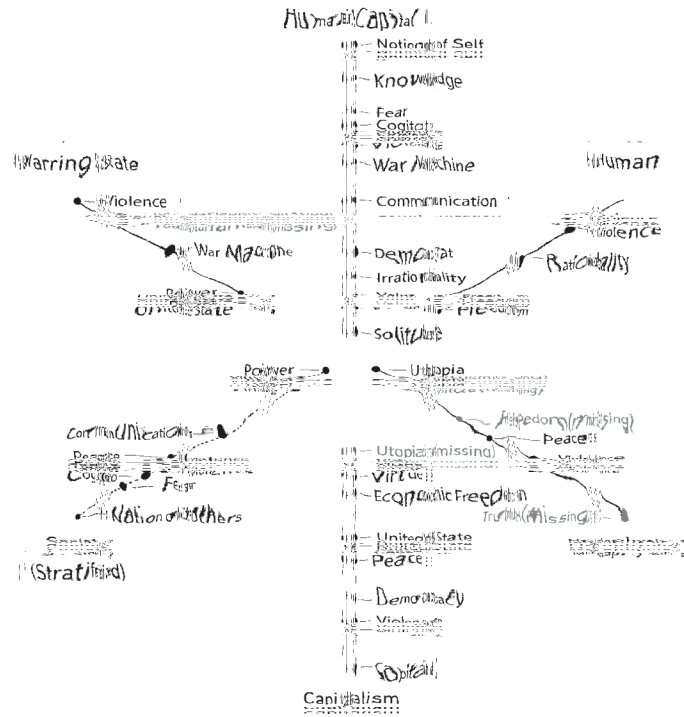
government of power is reliant on opinions.³³ This conservation of power, when it is externalized, may be perceived as a war machine (from viewer’s standpoint, as it is just like a *nomad* science to us). Such a machinery (and secondary autonomous) existence can greatly change the diplomatic relationship between the two, and it can also result into an everlasting combat with anyone who enters its claimed territory.

33 Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1969. 238. Print.

Conclusion

Violence is a unilateral and radiative power that comes from a lack of mindful communication, a rejection of equality, as well as a domination of rules. To some people, the words “lack”, “rejection” and “domination” have a quite strong negative implication in the same way as does “violence”. Yet, in these chapters, I see them as a neutral condition as well as a natural mutation of the human body. If we look into our highly developed social hierarchies, we can immediately see they carry this same type of violence. It is not just inside our genomes. Our societies also inherited this power and successfully included it as a part of the social organism. It may happen at any time, under any unexpected conditions. Baudrillard describes this hereditary mutation as a “radical” and “subtle” meta-violence or the violence of the virtual that is composed of the violence of deterrence, of consensus and control, of hyper-regulation and deregulation altogether.³⁴ The existence of these violences is the origin of a collective power that contradicts or disrupts our perception of metaphysical objects. “Communication,” “equality,” and “rules” are the media which legitimate and relate the happening of violence onto an artist’s individual expression, and interfere his rules of creation. The power brought by such violence is too overwhelming for anyone to resist. It turns our appreciation of beauty into an illusion that has been heavily distorted by external force. Thus, a deprivation or detachment from communication, equality, and (imposed) rules must be actively practiced by the artist in order for the true perception of metaphysical objects to return. This idea that an artist should always change himself directly led to my study on carcinogenesis. Being a good human always proceeds being a good artist. The fundamental unit should not be abandoned while one is looking for higher structural existence inside socioecological organism. On the path searching for the missing beauty in this post-modern age, one should always expect to touch the essence of freedom and morality.

³⁴ Baudrillard, Jean. On “The Violence of the Image”. Lecture, European Graduate School, 2004



I don't expect my "pseudo-scientific" theory of art to serve as a formal critique on contemporary media culture and society, rather it is an important formula for my art practice. I am constantly attempting to connect these key concepts and social phenomena together with my personal beliefs. These concepts cannot be easily testified or justified, or consumed. And so I set them within this theoretical framework to develop my own approaches in breaking the boundaries of this constraining modern frame. This highly individual approach allows me to speculate the illusion of metaphysical truth. This thesis book is also fabricated following my formula for my readers to speculate on those invisible relational objects. My structured theory could be seen as an autonomous object of thoughts, that is created upon a system of rules born of my exploration of metaphysics. The complexity of this systematic theory builds up a whole neoplasm, which asserts that beauty can eventually evolve from this mutated existence. I hope this book is inspiring as a single piece of art.

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