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The Embodied Rhetoric of Cognitive Labour

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Abstract

This dissertation traces the roots of neoliberal selfhood to the rationalist ontology of modernity in the 1600s. The historical tension between materialism and immaterialism is expressed in the historicisation of work into Fordism and post-Fordism where embodied factory toil is apparently replaced by immaterial work, recalling Descartes' mind-body split. If post-Fordist work addresses the Marxist critique of alienation in its emphasis on entrepreneurial inner selves, it does not explain the post-Fordist preoccupation to efficiently "Taylorise" the body through obsessive productivity. I argue that the factory prevails in the entrepreneur's adoption of factory efficiency as a learnt behaviour from the Fordist era to enable perpetual self-fashioning, creating a productively pliant body to aid in self-discovery – an embodied rhetoric of cognitive labour. This follows the rationalist tenet of a rational mind ordering the causal body. Descartes and Marx converge as both the *cogito* and the commodity-form are retroactively rediscovered as essence. Both the *cogito* and the commodity-form are arrived at while the body is doubted, and the production process is mystified respectively. The entrepreneurial goal is the achievement of selfhood that is financially verifiable. Neoliberalism is capitalism's version of humanism, allowing for self-actualisation, but rationalised by market forces.

Rationalism, negating contingent, embodied contexts, remade reality in negative terms that is measurable. The fallible body, in the face of the mind, became a site of deficiency to be transcended, recalling Original Sin. This state of deficiency provided the scarcity paradigm that justified endless capitalist growth. In the scarcity paradigm, the neoliberal individual must overcome indebtedness – student loans, housing mortgages – to achieve a redemptive financialised oneness. However, indebtedness in anarchist societies did not carry guilt but was instrumental in creating lasting bonds, notes David Graeber. Debt as transgression has not only

created entrepreneurship under punitive market forces, it corresponds to negative freedom –

reinterpreted by Eva Illouz as negative relationships – the freedom from bonds. This also has

consequences for the environment as ecomodernism views modernity unbonded from nature

which needs technocratic reordering to solve climate change. My project examines the material

consequences of the Cartesian *cogito* and a way out of growthism through care economies.

Key Words:

Post-Work, Neoliberalism, Negative Freedom, Mind-Body Dualism, Debt Economy, Climate

Change

Summary for Lay Audience

I examine the roots of neoliberal entrepreneurship to rationalist history that prioritised the power of the mind over the body. The present time is described as the era of immaterial work as opposed to embodied factory work before the 1970s. This view of history repackages Descartes' mind-body problem. Although the body is no longer central to work, the entrepreneur has a heightened sense of productivity, on the way to profitable self-discovery. I relate Descartes's discovery of the mind as human essence to Marx's commodity-form – the final form an object reaches at the end of the production process. Both the mind and the final form are *arrived at* but treated as how humans or commodities were *meant* to exist. Descartes treats the body as a site of lack that must be rationally overcome. This translates into the debt economy in the real world where individuals must redemptively undergo financialisation to overcome this state of lack. This process towards rationalised security involves the body through obsessive productivity and voluntary regulation through habit trackers, smart devices and sleeplessness techniques such that the unfree body adheres to the free-willed mind. This self-fashioning stance of disembodiment is the embodied rhetoric of cognitive labour.

Disembodiment occurs along three levels – individual, social and ecological "bodies". By relegating the body to a state of deficiency, Cartesianism parallels Original Sin. Sin translates into initiatory financial instruments like loans and mortgages – the debt economy. The entrepreneur seeks absolution through financialised reinvention of the self, enacting the assigned sacrificial function of the deficient body. However, debt as guilt is a modern concept. Anarchism informs that indebtedness would build interpersonal trust, forming communities. Socially, the rationalist principle of unmaking embodied reality transforms into the unmaking of bonds – what Eva Illouz refers to as negative relationships. The productivity paradigm upholds

the working relationship such that any social bond becomes a self-serving tool. The negation of

the body is transferred to the climate crisis as ecomodernism views human civilisation as

opposed to nature which needs profitable technocratic solutions. I examine the material

consequences of rationalism and ways out of endless growth through care societies.

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Best,

Shubhayan

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Introduction

THE ERA OF IMMATERIAL LABOUR

This dissertation aims to locate neoliberal selfhood within the wider history of Cartesian rationality. I will examine the material consequences of the version of mind-body dualism that gained prominence in the 1600s, its legacy providing the idealist and theological underpinnings of modernity including bureaucratisation, the factory, and capitalism. The decision to study the entrepreneurial present by travelling back in history to Descartes is necessary because of the way modern work has been shaped from the perspective of post-Fordism or post-workerism, as exemplified by Franco Berardi and Maurizio Lazzarato. In the writing that addresses post-Fordism, factory production was central to the functioning of capitalist society during the period of industrialisation (Lazzarato), up until the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, this view informs how Marx is conventionally read (Graeber), where society is neatly divided into the class of capitalist employers constituting the bourgeoisie who own the means of production – the *brains* and beneficiaries of businesses – and the exploited class of the proletariat who are employed for a wage comprising the alienated *brawn*. Marx's materialist conception of history has been formulated by reference to how society is built around the factory, and how they influence each other. Materialist history is centred on factory production in this reading of Marxism. Therefore, the history after factory production should naturally be its opposite. Thus, when factory work was outsourced to regions with cheap labour, ushering in post-Fordism in advanced capitalist economies, inaugurating the phase of neoliberalism, work integral to capitalist production has been conceptualised in terms of 'immaterial labour', 'cognitive capital' (Moulier-Boutang 2011), or the 'knowledge economy'. Of course, there are other aspects to the neoliberal turn such as the energy crisis of the 1970s (Wellum 2023), the abandonment of the gold standard during the

Nixon administration (Zoeller 2019), growing labour militancy (Luce 2014), and the falling rate of profit (Mejorado and Roman 2023). While these are useful lenses to study the major patterns of neoliberalism and are often connected to the move towards post-Fordist work, I am focusing on the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism to examine neoliberal "immaterial" work within the broader history of mind-body rationalism. Byung-Chul Han has presented a similar thesis highlighting the primacy of the inner self, positing that Foucauldian biopolitics has been replaced by 'psychopolitics' birthing the achievement subject, shaping desires of self-actualisation as per the 'coercive freedom' of market forces instead of the 'obedience subject' cowering to authority (Han 2017, 1;Han 2015, 9–11). The shift highlighted the rise of the entrepreneur who could bring his or her private self to engage more directly with the market. Countering the charge of de-skilling factory workers by making them perform repetitive tasks, their work "Taylorised" under Fordism, the post-Fordist or post-factory worker is accorded the dignity of possessing innate qualities that could be used to expand capital. It is here where the humanist journey of individual growth and the impersonal and rational growth of capital become entwined.

With the conception of an era of immaterial work, the post-Fordist assumption, arguably, is that the Cartesian prophecy of the mind living on without the body has come to fruition, at least in ideological terms. This is less a matter of Descartes anticipating neoliberalism centuries after his period as opposed to the presence of Cartesianism in contemporary thought and practice. In *Meditations*, Descartes concluded that 'I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it' (Descartes 1996, VI–54). Post-Fordism mirrors the journey of the Cartesian self – that there was a body that had run its course in the industrial era where the factory was made as efficient as possible, after which the logical evolution of the self would be enabled by unbridled thinking things not needing the body. By granting the body an apparent reprieve, neoliberal

capitalism seemingly addresses the Marxist critique of alienation where the worker is self-estranged, a mere physical cog in the wheel whose personal self is not invested in production (Marx 1992, 327). Courtesy of the formulation of immaterial work, the mind is at large, as post-Fordist capitalism prioritises inner faculties like knowledge and creativity, aided by similarly immaterial media like cybernetics and inner faculties like knowledge and creativity (Moulier-Boutang 2011). The paradox is that, accompanying immaterial work that apparently does not require the body, there is an incessant preoccupation with productivity, self-help and advice, and the proliferation of habit trackers, sleep and health applications and smart devices aimed to manage the body at all times. Further, there is a sacrificial component to the body in this age of disembodiment, exemplified by hustle culture, sleeplessness, and the social atomisation of entrepreneurialism in a 24/7 economy, that produces debility and further control of the body through its pathologisation. Thus, although the body is seemingly granted a reprieve, it is being rediscovered in the era of cognitive work in a new form that is measurable and productively financialised. Although the factory era is supposedly in the past, one wonders why the body is still being Taylorised when the mind is all that is needed by post-factory and post-manufacturing capitalism. Here, I argue that the factory was not just about the physical location of work. In fact, this is in line with Marx's view, as he conceived of the factory as a complex system of production (Tronti 2019, 26). My position is that the factory was a historical period which invented its specific form of efficiency. It is this factory efficiency that has been passed down as a learnt behaviour to the cognitive worker obsessed with productivity and optimisation. Thus, the factory body has not gone but is rediscovered in the rational terms of productivity and efficiency for the process of entrepreneurial self-discovery to occur. The self must constantly remake the

body to render it productively pliant to rational disciplinary principles. I call this the embodied rhetoric of cognitive labour.

CARTESIAN RATIONALISM AND SECOND NATURE

My proposed definition of the embodied rhetoric follows the Cartesian journey of the body in *Meditations*. Throughout *Meditations*, Descartes begins with the body, recalls lived experience vis-a-vis the inability to tell dreaming from waking life, the supposed sensory error in mistaking a large object as small when viewed from afar, and the wax argument to make a case that sensory perception is unreliable and that the body must be cast to doubt. Since he at least has the capacity to doubt using his mind, Descartes infers that he is essentially a thinking thing and can live on without the body (Descartes 1996). However, he does admit to feeling an unshakable presence of his own body by a 'special right', although he concludes that he, with his mind understood as essence, can transcend the unreliable body (Descartes 1996, VI–52). Descartes begins *Meditations* with the body, casts it to doubt, and then brings it back within the rational realm of the mind or *cogito*-centric reality to be disciplined. I call this the Cartesian trajectory. The body, by a special right, is available to be made productively pliant until its exhaustion.

The era of cognitive work requires an embodied rhetoric because the Cartesian mind requires the body by a special right to enact disembodiment. Thus, the embodied rhetoric is a stylisation inherited from the period concretising factory efficiency. In *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor writes, 'Cartesian dualism *needs* the bodily … Not that Descartes doesn't conceive our entering into a disembodied condition after death, but rather that in our present condition, the way to realise our immaterial essence is by taking a certain stance to the body … the Cartesian discovers and affirms his immaterial nature by objectifying the bodily' (Taylor 1989, 146).

If the journey towards disembodiment is a 'stance' or a stylisation, it requires material regulation of the body. Following the critics of immaterial labour, my project questions the factory and post-factory split. I am arguing that the factory is not a relic but is present in the form of disciplinary behaviour that the entrepreneurial self has adopted to discover their inner essence, echoing the Cartesian trajectory of doubting the body to discover the *cogito* – the human as a thinking thing sharing God's nature as a thinking thing (Descartes 1996, III–34). Doubt is the first form of regulation, translating into various practices of reordering the body. If the factory is not a relic of the past, then it stands to reason that manufacturing also exists in the era of immaterial work. Through the constant reordering of the body, the self manufactures a pliant second nature. Through this manufacture of the second-nature body, the body becomes primed for financialised self-actualisation.

I am reading the Cartesian thinking thing as Marxian second nature. The concept of second nature is used by Marxist theorists to describe the final commodity-form reached at the end of the production process where a commodity can be measured in terms of abstract monetary value (Marx 1887, 1:33). It follows the logic of commodity fetishism which holds that the final form is considered inherently valuable in capitalism because it mystifies the material process of production, including tools and workers that came before and resulted in the final product. The fetish object is built on the idea that any object can truly exist only after it reaches its commodity-form or value form – its essence that it was always meant to arrive at. In *Meditations*, Descartes arrives at the mind which transcends the body. For Descartes, the thinking thing is human essence or the form in which it could truly exist. There is a paradox in the fetish object. It is produced or arrived at. At the same time, it constitutes an essence or its ideal form which it always had in itself, realised through the rational process of manufacturing.

Thus, the body reaches a second nature – its true form that can be measured in abstract monetary value. The presence of doubt leading the body towards second nature is exemplified by the deliberate attack on biological rhythms like sleep, sex, and hunger for the achievement subject to attain the state of 24/7 productivity as observed by Jonathan Crary in his exploration of the proliferation of sleeplessness techniques that spreading from the military-industrial complex to society at large (Crary 2014). This is in line with the broader tenet of rationalism from 1600 onwards of a 'rational mind' with free will ordering a 'causal body' (Toulmin 1992, 107). In capitalism, the body exists by being absorbed by the financial realm and turned into a measurable, and forever productive second nature.

The feature of second nature that unites the Cartesian *cogito* and the Marxian notion of the commodity-form is the retroactive rediscovery of a lost essence. Descartes arrived at the thinking thing at the end of *Meditations* and concluded that the *cogito* was humanity's essence – that humans were always truly meant to exist in that way. In this manner, Descartes supplants embodied history with a new essence and a new ontology featuring the rational self realising itself. Similarly, the Marxian commodity-form mystified the production process and the state in which raw materials used to exist in nature and how human workers used to live before being absorbed by capitalism. Similarly, the Marxian commodity-form, precisely because it mystifies the real physical reality of the production process, the state in which the raw materials used to exist in nature or the lives of workers and, by extension, humans before being absorbed by capitalism, compelling them to financialise themselves. Put simply, retroactive rediscovery substitutes a contingent account of human nature through embodied histories of diverse groups with a universal ontology conforming to rational immaterialism. There are religious undertones in the striving for second nature because it assumes a lost oneness or a lost state of pure

rationality that is being rediscovered through the abstraction of the body – an essence that is retroactively posited as an ontology such that the rational self achieves a context-free, ahistorical state of 24/7 productivity. Since this ontology is expressed in terms of a lack – a result of the unreliability of the body – the world needs to be built with innately human rational principles. This, in fact, serves as the instigation for the assumption of scarcity requiring growth, constituting the rationale for capitalism as such.

The whole of the embodied world assuming the 'stance' of immaterial second nature occurs through the function of abstract measurability. For Marx, capitalist exploitation is based on a situation where someone's labour is abstracted for a wage, which does not account for the real physical reality of the worker's tasks. Similarly, the price of a commodity does away with its sensuous characteristics such that all of embodiment is measured in abstract terms (Sohn-Rethel 2019). What financialised abstraction (or money) does is to replace the embodied characteristics, unique to diverse bodies with uniformly measurable value that enables anything to be exchanged for anything else. Within second nature, everything is uniformly united by abstract measurability. Financialised abstraction severs things from their unique embodied contexts, such as an object's physical utility to its user, the effort to source raw materials, and people's ability to invest themselves in the exchange process, as found in care or gift economies. Gift economies involve personal qualities like pride, honour and social customs as found in the work of anthropologist Marcel Mauss (Mauss 2002), and trust and interpersonal capacities to drum up contingent arrangements found in anarchist accounts in times of crisis or the sudden lack of finance capital like bank strikes (Graeber 2019, 210). In fact, there are plenty of ways to organise an economy, as found during crisis situations compelling informal care systems among people helping each other. For David Graeber, economies began with interpersonal indebtedness or reciprocity

creating trust, resulting in communities built on interdependence (Graeber 2011a). An economy is simply an arrangement among people for distributing resources to keep each other alive and perpetuate society. The idea of a self-regulating market is a rationalist view upholding abstraction, where economic activities can be measurable outside of broader social activities. Economies need not be dependent on markets, but modern capitalism makes it seem so. The market economy leaves little room for the social realm of interpersonal reality unless they too can be financialised in the market. In a market economy, 'market' and 'economy' are synonymous.

Karl Polanyi also observes that the markets are a part of modern capitalist economies which produce impersonal, measurable social relations. Markets existed in premodern times but were specialised spaces for long-distance trade and were regarded as outside the local economy (Polanyi 2001, 61). Polanyi uses the term market embeddedness to explain the relationship between the market and society during various historical periods. In such periods as the gift economy, the economic realm was governed by social customs and laws. In capitalism, society must belong entirely to the market – 'Instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system' (Polanyi 2001, 60). It depends on the economic policies of a region as to how the dynamic of embeddedness between society and economy will be determined. For instance, welfare measures might be able to assuage the precarity of workers such that they could potentially commit more to the social realm. However, the embeddedness of society in the market economy is so far advanced that, at present, capitalism is not destitution-proof, necessitating the wage slave. Nancy Fraser, in her work on social reproduction theory, makes a similar claim that the economic realm has absorbed the social realm, turning social reproduction essentially into a form of economic reproduction

(Fraser 2016). In short, Polanyi's 'market society' comprises members whose acts are abstractly measurable in terms of monetary value which are exchangeable (Polanyi 2001).

THE QUEST FOR CERTAINTY OR NEGATIVE DOGMATISM

So far, I have been discussing the presence of abstract value with respect to monetary value mediating interpersonal social reality in capitalism. However, there is a history to abstraction that that takes us back to the era of Descartes. The goal of Cartesian rationalism was to find an ontology of humans devoid of context or historical background – a static interpretation of what it means to be human that would last forever. Hence, Descartes had announced that he could live on without the body. Stephen Toulmin (1992), in *Cosmopolis*, looks to recontextualise Cartesian rationalism within the history of religious violence between the Catholics and the Protestants that culminated in the Thirty Years War. For Toulmin, the years preceding the rationalism of the 1600s exemplified the humanist thought of Montaigne and Shakespeare, and a diverse array of disciplines provided often incompatible accounts of the human condition. These disagreements were treated as a sign of desirable complexity in the human experience. Rationalism was a punitive response to humanism, with the latter being deemed a failure. Pluralism was seen as the cause of warring discord. The rationalist perspective is that the need of the age was to find consensus by discovering irrefutable human essence. The quest for certainty would replace the exploration of contingency (Toulmin 1992, 69). Timeless ontology would replace embodied history. Rationalists wanted to remove the human story from Renaissance humanism, resulting in the unilinear view of modern progress and humanity as one unified civilisation. Certainty was to be found in mathematical abstraction. Rationalists wanted to remake reality in terms that could be measurable. The *cogito* became the basis of this objective. The Cartesian trajectory is, hence, a condensation of the historical split between humanism and

rationalism, while the 'stance' of a body by a 'special right' reflected the rationalist aim to create a reality adhering to rationalism where the 'causal body' could be reordered by the 'rational mind'. As Taylor writes, 'The Cartesian soul frees itself not by turning away but by objectifying embodied experience. The body is an inescapable object of attention to it … It has to support itself on it to climb free of it' (Taylor 1989, 146).

The quest for certainty was not to be procured by validating contingent lived realities but a journey inward towards the mind, which was rational and reasonable by nature. While Descartes used doubt to define the self, this is an individualised representation of what the rationalists wanted to do to create reality anew, using the rational faculties that the human being innately possesses. Therefore, there was no need to seek contingent, working truths from the experience of unreliable bodies, when it is possible to build a *cogito*-centric reality based on abstract, mathematical principles. Toulmin calls this 'negative dogmatism' – 'a quest for certainty … away from practical issues to an exclusive concern with the theoretical – by which local, particular, timely, and oral issues surrendered their centrality to issues that were ubiquitous, universal, timeless, and written' (Toulmin 1992, 70). Negative dogmatism reinforced the aim of bodily ruin as righteous sacrifice as regards the rationalist realm, repackaging the Judeo-Christian trope in secular terms for an era needing existential and intellectual consensus.

Toulmin provides the historical basis for a retroactive rediscovery of essence required to fill an ontological void that was hitherto serviced by contingent agreements. The historical circumstances of religious strife behind rationalist thought pitching the *cogito* as the chief tenet for abstract, consensual reality is hard to ignore. In this respect, the Cartesian trajectory adheres to the Biblical Fall narrative. Like Adam and Eve, who are in a state of deprivation that is corporeally perceived, Descartes establishes a state of deficiency in the body which must be

transcended by the essential mind, restoring oneness with God through the shared essence of a being thinking things. Viewed this way, negative dogmatism is the attempted restoration of disembodied oneness with God - in other words, an approach of renewed ignorance wherein the rational being severs itself from embodied history and tangible surroundings. For Han's achievement subject, this entails redeeming the self by achieving financialised oneness with capital when individual growth is measurable in monetary terms such as net worth.

While discussing the rationalist iteration of immaterialism, negative dogmatism helps to understand the focal point of modernity, how a principle of negating embodied contexts helped lead to the consolidation of modern institutions, and increasingly impersonal forms of bureaucratisation as documented by Weber. The primacy of abstraction in world building under the thumb of negative dogmatism segued into biopolitical systems of rule-following and entrenched hierarchies in organisations. However, this is not to say that there are no contradictions within the history of immaterialism, or that there were no alternatives to rationalist thought. When it comes to tensions within immaterialism, one could look at the Cartesian revision of Platonism. Plato posited that idealist Forms already existed in an immaterial, higher plain beyond the sensible or a plain that is 'supersensible' (Taylor 1989, 146). Unlike Plato, for Descartes, there is a strong distinction between the outer and the inner world (Taylor 1989, 143). Descartes argued that such an order could be found in the inner self that is made up of rational faculties. Using innate rationality, one could remake the outer world or reorder the 'causal body'. Further, while rationalism was the dominant spirit of the Cartesian age and would have a lasting legacy, Cartesian rationalism did have contemporary critics. Pierre Gassendi, for example, aimed at a revival of Epicureanism and also wanted to ground his personal observations in earlier literature in a way that could inform his current ideas. Therefore, Gassendi's approach did not

align with the solipsism and atomisation that Descartes promoted (Bellis, Garber, and Palmerino 2023, 1, 2). Hence, while I use Toulmin's historicisation, this is not to claim that all periods had rigid philosophical customs with no exceptions. The broad historicisation in the spirit of Toulmin and other intellectual historians who study periods is intended to identify the major patterns that help to navigate long eras in relation to each other. Thus, Toulmin has left readers with a useful distinction of periods comprising Renaissance humanism followed by rationalism.

HOW NEOLIBERALISM RECONCILED HUMANISM AND RATIONALISM

Humanism and rationalism, as two distinct outlooks, have been in constant tussle with each other. In fact, the Marxist concern of worker alienation is often seen as a humanist critique of the rationalist mechanisation of bodies. Kathi Weeks's identification of the two major strands that inform the modern growth model, even within communist projects, reveals the conflict between rationalism and humanism. Weeks's typology includes socialist modernisation and socialist humanism. Socialist modernisation refers to the development model followed by Soviet regimes who intensified factory production adhering to the Leninist model of Marxist thought. Socialist humanism has been built on the history of the critique of alienation, found in the 20th century American New Left, and ironically adopted by HR departments in modern capitalism, promoting "be yourself" entrepreneurship where self-development and expansion of capital work in tandem. Weeks's identification of the two strands refer to rationalism and humanism and is a reminder that the growth model has not been limited to capitalism alone. The conventional reading of Marxism simply entails a change in ownership to supersede alienation, while Weeks herself advocates less work and more free time (Weeks 2011).

For most of industrial modernity, mechanisation has been associated with rational efficiency and was counterposed to humanist valorisations of individual dignity and self-

expression. It is reasonable to tie the two strands to the history of the factory. Fordism would

constitute the expression of rationalism, where the body is moved by rational systems like

Fordism, while Taylorism enabled the body to be defined within the scope of time-and-motion

studies as a productive tool among inanimate tools (Suzman 2021, 330). There was also

mechanisation in the way enterprises were bureaucratically ordered with well-defined job roles

and hierarchies, paralleling the impersonality of the factory assembly line. Post-Fordism brought

the de-unionised entrepreneur who could develop through the financialisation of the self,

apparently unshackled from bureaucratic oversight and state interference. Neoliberalism

addressed the problem of alienation by uniting the two strands of modernity – rationalism and

humanism – transforming itself into capitalism's iteration of humanism. Neoliberalism

encourages individuals to see themselves as projects who engage with the market to reveal their

inner worth as they undergo their journey of growth and self-discovery. However, this growth-

orientated journey must still adhere to the punitive dictates of the market. Thus, inner worth – an

idealist notion – is used to add value to the measurable reality of capitalism. This follows the

Cartesian position that rational faculties are already present in the mind, through which the self

can produce the world in rational terms, deviating from the Platonic theory that a formal order of

things is already *out there* in a realm beyond the senses (Taylor 1989, 146). I am referring to an

individualism that is subject to market forces as rationalised humanism. This necessitates the

adoption of factory efficiency by the body to keep itself rationally productive at all times, in

order to discover a marketable inner essence. By managing the body, the self attempts to curate

financialisable iterations of knowledge and creativity that meet market demands.

Rationalised humanism has been possible because the philosophical justification of

capitalism has not moved away from the growth model built on the scarcity paradigm. Factory

production served industrialisation including the developmental ethos of the post-World War II boom. The post-factory era repackaged growth as self-discovery, where the achievement subject must pursue his or her mysterious inner self as a 'calling', bringing to mind the 'Protestant ethic' of Max Weber (2005). As mentioned, the growth model resulted from an ontology of lack or deficiency which was a consequence of rationalist retroactive rediscovery of essence. Adhering to the Fall narrative, the unreliable causal body of Cartesian rationality must enact a state of guilt with respect to a lost essence, which must be redeemed through a new oneness once second nature is achieved. Retroactive rediscovery has material consequences. As Charles Taylor has explained, the mind needs the body to enact the rationalist objective. Hence, modern capitalism, based on scarcity, must radically alter the "physics" of the world through gentrification and biopolitical control to establish a financially measurable reality with optimised bodies.

SPECULATIVE HISTORIES OF INDEBTED MODERNITY AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

A new essence, expressed in terms of a lack or void, prompted philosophers to fill it with speculative origin stories. Philosophers reflected on what the past might have been like, but through observing their contemporary historical moments and respective social experiences. Examples include the social contract theorists John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, who imagined an originary 'state of nature' in which humans existed. While the states of nature were different for particular philosophers, it was a period of deprivation that required the advent of limitless progress, an increase in complexity in social organisation, modern capitalism and of course inequality. David Graeber and David Wengrow argue, by contrast, that no such state ever existed and highlight the uncanny similarity between the state-of-nature ideation and the Fall narrative (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 60). Yet, the state of nature played a significant part in the acceptance of the growth model as it aligned with the deficiency-based ontology created by the

rationalists, one that also had clear religious roots. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche wrote that the roles of buyer and seller were innately present in human nature, often resulting in violent conflict and retributive justice for the nonpayment of debt. Again, Graeber writes that there is no evidence of such a history (Graeber 2011a, 77). However, the notion that a debt has to be paid under the threat of punishment has become ingrained in contemporary society. Further, debt and guilt share etymological relations in many languages, including German, where they are treated as synonyms (see Nietzsche 1989, 62, 63). In this project, I am treating sin, guilt, severance from a lost essence or oneness, scarcity and debt in the same context of overarching deficiency that demands disembodied transcendence, as laid out by rationalism inflected with Biblical sources. The causal body is ontologically guilty because it does not live up to standards posited by the rational mind. Therefore, the body is in a state of indebtedness as long as it takes for the body to achieve free-willed rationality or oneness with God. Nietzsche's account of debt is a possible consequence of his observations of a Christianised world of sinners using their suffering as value, paying off their debt for a future state of absolution. Debt, understood as a manifestation of sin, persists in advanced neoliberal economies, especially in North America, in the form of such financial instruments as student loans, housing mortgages and auto insurances. Furthermore, since capitalism is not destitution-proof, the achievement subject must financialise her- or himself, engaging in sacrificial bodily toil in order to obtain security out of precarity, playing out the debt-penance-redemption arc. This ritual is passed off as self-actualisation in the modern debt economy, reinforced by quotidian ideas of *finding your passion* or *growing together* at work, based ultimately on religious ideas of the "calling" and communion, respectively.

The social contract theorists, in their formulations of a state of nature, also offered rudimentary versions of the modern state understood as an external disciplinary faculty that

would facilitate progress, including the unavoidable misfortune of inequality. Depending on market embeddedness, the state has either taken welfare measures to introduce safety nets for individuals or it has enabled the necessary preconditions for neoliberal market forces compelling entrepreneurial growth. Byung-Chul Han writes that allo-exploitation – exploitation from an external authority – has given way to auto-exploitation referring to the self-driven achievement subject (Han 2017, 5). However, recent developments show that a powerful state is perfectly compatible with the norm of the auto-exploitative entrepreneur. In fact, the best examples of this are China and the Middle East where market freedom is kept separate from political freedom which is restricted, as evidenced from curtailed human rights. For instance, the Middle East has become a hotspot for entrepreneurial ambitions in the 21st century while retaining limits to political freedom due to religious conservatism (Schröder 2013).

In his examinations of spaces which the affluent use to access various forms of financial exemptions, Quinn Slobodian describes the seeking out of freeports, tax havens and special zones as 'anarcho-capitalism' (Slobodian 2023, 102). This exposes the propagandist tool of America often using "democracy" and "capitalism" interchangeably as if to suggest that one would naturally bring about the other (Marie 2019). In fact, the deliberate conflation of the two terms also brings about the conflation of the citizen and the consumer (Foster and (the class) 2023). Therefore, following the personalisation of the public sphere, recent political campaigns have rested on the cult of personality like Trump, Modi, Bolsonaro, and Hungary's Viktor Orban who do not have voters but fans. These figures generally become faux-outsiders to the establishment and pitch themselves as members of the disaffected. In other words, the state engages in its own form of rational humanism by presenting an entrepreneurial face who mirrors the growth journey of achievement subjects. The state brings out the consumer in their citizens

by using its mechanisms to accentuate neoliberalism. The state does this by undermining itself,

becoming – in Alberto Toscano's words – 'an anti-state state' (Toscano 2023, 53). Examples

include the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 weakening its federal

autonomy, when it has been quite common for many Indian states, especially border states, to

enjoy special provisions in keeping with India's federalism (The Wire Staff 2019). Further, the

right-to-information civic facility has been diluted post-2019 which has, since 2005, helped

activists dispute land rights, preserve environmental laws, and seek transparency from the

government in the use of public funds (Newsclick Report 2023). Additionally, the Modi

government introduced electoral bonds that would allow anonymous donations to election

campaigns in 2017 besides attempting to, as interpreted by farmers, override state-sanctioned

minimum support price for farmers with new laws that were successfully halted due to protests

in 2021 (Chowdhury 2023; Prusty 2021). Bolsonaro's attempts to make the Amazon region

productive have involved human-caused fires to raze the forests, diminishing existing flora and

fauna (including indigenous peoples) in the service of extractionist crony capitalism

(Purkayastha 2019). Thus, the state, itself, becomes a locus of order-building and allows for a

selection of hypermobile people to remap the world.

Such is the case made by Slobodian in *Crack-Up Capitalism*. Here, Slobodian uses the

term 'crack-up capitalism' to describe the preoccupation of free market zealots to undermine the

state and to reorder the world once again. While modern nations were compatible with

capitalism, market radicals wish to dig deeper and find new jurisdictions for an even smoother

flow of capital that would not even have the ever-diminishing oversight of the state – 'The

proponents of crack-up capitalism envisioned a new utopia: an agile, restlessly mobile fortress

for capital, protected from the grasping hands of the populace seeking a more equitable present

and future' (Slobodian 2023, 16). Slobodian seems to be referring to the idea of the capitalist bunker as posited by Sloterdijk. But, Sloterdijk's world interior presented a new, exclusionary map facilitating the flow of capital which was, for the most part, compatible with the existence of nation-states. For example, the current order of a Global North and a newly industrialised Global South feature countries who are allies in trade and share mutually beneficial policies in immigration, such that much of the Global North procures cheap labour from Asia and Africa. What Slobodian describes is an intensification of the process of the insulated bunker where the existing political entities must make 'zones of exception with different laws and often no democratic oversight' (Slobodian 2023, 9). These special economic zones could range from warehouses to smart cities, private schools, gentrified areas to cryptocurrency, Swiss banks, offshore banking enclaves like the Cayman Islands, and countries with extradition protection (Slobodian 2023, 10). Slobodian uses the metaphor of perforation to signify the search for an area that would not be subject to state regulations. Such anti-state sentiments of zone formation, in fact, are a perversion of self-dependent anarchist gift societies that have their own laws. Every time a state enacts anti-state measures, it signals to proponents of crack-up capitalism to act. For instance, the legalisation of anonymous electoral bonds was Modi's attempt to choose a global electorate that could undermine the legal citizenry. The abrogation of Article 370 invoked the perpetual fear of secession. But zone formation works on the principle of opting out. Crack-up capitalism is expected since capitalism is a product of rationalism. Rationalism, as a project, always looks to perpetuate the objective of ordering and reordering to undermine any sense of stable embodiment to continue the stance of reorientating the body from away from indebtedness towards immaterial oneness.

The state of nature or, rather, a state of debt could be seen as a result of negative dogmatism where the quest for certainty has rendered existing embodied reality to be insufficient in the face of rationalist goals. Rationalism, in the quest for certainty, therefore, aims at abstract universality in the terms set by the *cogito*. Thus, instead of historicising various forms of societies and lifestyles as found in anthropology, modernity starts from indebtedness to create a unilinear history of constant progress featuring a monolithic civilisation, justifying colonisation and absorption of societies previously outside modernity. However, Graeber provides a very different picture of debt based on Maussian reciprocity. For Graeber, debt could simply be passed on from one person to another creating shared indebtedness and trust, creating resilient communities (Graeber 2011a). Recalling Polanyi's concept of embeddedness, the social realm is not embedded in the economic realm because resources are not valued in abstract monetary terms but through mutuality.

Thus, there appears to be two kinds of debt economies. One is the debt economy understood as part of neoliberal capitalism that involves debt that needs to be paid off – both literally in monetary terms, but that also incorporates a spiritual dimension of growth and redemption, as when the achievement subject attains financialised security from destitution and is (hypothetically) guilt-free. The other kind of debt economy is that found in anthropological accounts, primarily in groups living outside modernity or those from history before they were colonised. Indebted modernity owes its roots to the compatibility of *cogito*-centric reality with the Fall narrative, creating a state of deficiency that must be rationally overcome, paralleling the mind transcending the body. The objective of the *cogito* to apprehend the universality of humans resulted in a monolithic iteration of modernity. Indebted modernity, thus, comprised people who were part of the project of infinite progress and those outside modern civilisation were regarded

as people who could not keep up (Graeber and Wengrow 2022). The unilinear history of modern civilisation has been the story of growth, of industrialisation, of complex bureaucratisation, the factory system, and the post-factory era involving advanced capitalism operating on a hyper-competitive globalised market. However, anthropological evidence reveals that there are many ways to organise society away from the scarcity or guilt paradigm and away from forced competition. The alternative is the indebtedness of spontaneous cooperation resulting in tangible communities not dependent on a market economy of abstract value.

The two kinds of indebtedness reveal different ways to organise society that, in turn, affects how individuals experience freedom. Referencing Isaiah Berlin's work on negative and positive freedom, it is arguable that indebted and growthist modernity increasingly practises negative freedom in its specific form of indebtedness and competitive market subjects. On the other hand, gift economies or care societies practise positive freedom. Negative freedom refers to the pursuit of freedom vis-a-vis surrounding people and things (Berlin 2002). It is evident that negative freedom is possibly the logical outcome of the philosophical position of negative dogmatism. The atomisation of the liquid modern individual reflects a financialised extension of the solipsistic thinker looking for rational order from within. This has ramifications for sociality, especially in the hypermobile post-internet age. Eva Illouz provides an intervention in the form of negative relationships (Illouz 2021), building on negative freedoms and Bauman's ideas of fleeting bonds of liquid love (Bauman 2021). Just as negative dogmatism strips away embodied reality, negative relationships involve unmaking bonds to keep relationships temporary and establish individual autonomy through atomisation. Polanyi's idea of a market society is in line with Mario Tronti's theory of a social factory where the whole of society partakes in the factory system (Tronti 2019, 27–28). Polanyi and Tronti seem to be saying that, in advanced capitalist

societies, the market and the factory have penetrated each and every element of social life. I relate negative freedom to the social factory, highlighting the pervasive presence of the working relationship that views people as resources for one's own entrepreneurial journey, after which the transaction can end. The indebtedness of care societies exhibits positive freedom where individuals gain in their autonomy by forming more stable bonds with surrounding people and things.

The negation of embodied reality in negative dogmatism, extending to the negation of relationality in negative relationships, informs the modern view of the ecological body as something that is opposed to modernity. Here, I develop the problem of climate change as a post-material concern that views climate change at a distance from the space of growthist modernity. Further, the ecomodernist stance which seeks to provide technocratic fixes to the climate crisis, preserving the capitalist status quo, is informed by post-materialism which itself is a product of dualistic thinking. This assumes that a perennially productive space of modernity can be bunkered away from embodied nature, the latter viewed from a distance to be clinically examined. This recalls the rationalist premise of the need to order the deficient body. In fact, Descartes says as much in *Passions of the Soul*. For Descartes, passions are emotions in the soul existing for an organism's self-preservation. But, sometimes, passions are unruly and must constantly be ordered. Taylor writes that, for Descartes, 'passions are … functional devices that the Creator has designed for us to help preserve the body-soul substantial union'. Taylor explains that Descartes posits that passions must perform their instrumental function as ordained by reason (Taylor 1989, 150). In the 50th Article of *Passions*, Descartes concludes that 'For since with a little art the motions of the brain in beasts who are void of reason may be altered, it is evident they may more easily in men and that even those who have the weakest souls, may

acquire a most absolute empire over their passions, if art and industry be used to manage and govern them' (Descartes n.d.). This excerpt follows the rationalist objective to order the causal body. In capitalism, bodies must be made financially productive. Thus, the most extreme form of reordering would be exemplified by the ecomodernist dream of de-extinction – bringing back extinct species using genomic technology (Dawson 2018, 178). But, the resurrection – yet another religious objective – would result in the species being remade exclusively for the rational realm, its embodiment rendered inconsequential due to the resurrected body's compatibility with capitalist activity.

Post-materialist climate action, of which ecomodernism is a prominent example, looks to separate the ecological body from the 24/7 body of growthist modernity. However, as de-extinction proves, the boundaries between the two spaces could be strategically changed. Here, I propose a reinterpretation of the base-superstructure continuum in an era that practises growthism when care or maintenance is needed. The superstructure acts as a post-material bunker discovering productive bodies that can then be pathologised, such as endangered ecosystems and unhoused people living in precarity within the bunker. The most prominent example of bunkers revealing concealed bodies for philanthropic pathologisation would be the Indian lockdown leaving migrant workers stranded on highways in 2020. On the other hand, crisis periods reveal that capitalism requires the intervention of informal care economies to organise themselves and clean up after it, such as the delivery systems patched up by civilians to distribute food to patients recovering at home. When the free market withdraws, the social realm becomes truly free to engage in positive freedom.

The alternative to the 24/7 temporality of growthist modernity would be deep history or deep time – the probable candidate for care temporality – that connects social history to the vast

account of geological time (Smail 2008). It is possible to think about resuscitating embodied reality using the temporality of deep time. In fact, deep history is quite literally material as it is studied by the material presence of geological formations, DNA remains in permafrost, and geological excavations which provide researchers with the time taken for life to form (Bridle 2018, 56). Deep history is the opposite of an ontology of deficiency, as it is as yet to be a fully recovered account of the collective past of bodies. The move from growthist modernity and indebtedness towards an economy of care, disembedded from the market and the factory, would require perceiving time differently. This is consistent with the post-work concern of free time as detailed by Kathi Weeks – free time not as an obverse of work optimising the worker but time to do 'what we will' (Weeks 2011, 15). The insight from anthropological accounts of societies parallel to modernity is that they would finish daily tasks of communal self-preservation, and still have plenty of free time to pursue individual and communal interests.

WHAT IS WORK IN THIS PROJECT?

The way I define work is congruent with and should anticipate the theoretical use of deep history. I use "work" and "labour" interchangeably, referring to commonly regarded notions of work as waged jobs or careers. To eschew notions of work under the scope of growth, indebtedness, and other moral and religious parameters, I adhere to the scientific definition of work, understood in terms of entropy and energy transfer through which all bodies in the universe are *at work*.

Gaspar-Gustave Coriolis is originally credited with conceiving of work in bio-physiological terms. Commenting on Coriolis's contribution to science in the early 1800s, James Suzman writes: '"Work" is now used to describe all transfers of energy, from those that occur on a celestial scale when galaxies and stars form to those that take place at a subatomic level.

Science also now recognises that the creation of our universe involved colossal amounts of work'
(Suzman 2021, 28). Living things use energy to organise cells and organs into working structures
to mature and reproduce until they cannot hold them together and, consequently, die. Cosmic
systems like stars are said to be 'alive', although not in the way living creatures are. Stars use
their own mass to fuel themselves to its depletion, after which they "die". Living beings and
systems have a flourishing life cycle despite the second law of thermodynamics – entropy
(Suzman 2021, 27).

Life prevails until it succumbs to entropy. Suzman notes that Satan and similar tricksters
in religious and mythic narratives symbolise entropy such that all living beings sign a deal with
the devil and thrive until their time comes to fall apart. Entropy can be expanded and be observed
in quotidian reality in the decaying of aging bodies of people and objects. All physical things use
energy and move towards entropic disorder. Entropy either increases or remains constant but
cannot be decreased (Urone and Hinrichs 2020). However, Erwin Schrodinger, known for
sadistic thought problems featuring cats, inferred that there are moments when living organisms
are able to bring matter together to create order by using free energy. He calls this negative
entropy or negentropy. That said, negentropy still does not contradict the law of entropy because
the decrease in entropy in the life form rests on the increase in overall entropy of surrounding
matter (von Stockar and Liu 1999). Thus, when viewed broadly, negentropy appears as an
illusion. Negentropy still contributes to entropy because living things achieve bodily maturity
and strength but eventually die. There are biological immunities that life forms can design to
guard against entropy, such as protective shields, shock-absorbing organs, the ability of the
human body to store fat to deal with the possibility of starvation, as well giving birth to self-
replicate. Socio-cultural measures involve immunities in the form of collective practices

transforming the human into what Peter Sloterdijk calls *homo immunologicus* or the being with immunitary practices – 'methods of mental and physical practising by which humans from the most diverse cultures have attempted to optimise their cosmic and immunological status in the face of vague risks of living and acute certainties of death' (Sloterdijk 2013b, 10).

This project traces the present time to rationalist thought and attempts to historicise the body as disciplined and valorised by rationalism through abstract mathematical terms. While it adds to the critique of immaterial labour, the project does not intend to resolve the tension between the material and the immaterial. In fact, Descartes required the body to transcend it as found in the Cartesian trajectory. The embodied rhetoric involves the management of the body using rationalist principles of measurability to make it productive. Therefore, this project is aimed at examining the material consequences of idealist thought whilst also accepting that ideas are present in material processes, such as the Weberian 'spirit' of capitalism (Weber 2005), indebtedness understood in terms of ontology, idealist motivations behind the unmaking of social bonds, and the pursuit of a post-material world where de-extinction and solar geo-engineering create the perfect rationalist bunker.

CHAPTERS

Chapter One establishes the historical background of the *cogito*, locating the birth of context-free reality within the religious strife between the Catholics and the Protestants in Early Modern Europe. Using Toulmin's periodisation comprising Montaignian humanism in the Renaissance, followed by Cartesian rationalism 1600s onwards, I formulate a history of modernity from the events in the 1600s after which the two strands – humanism and rationalism – have been in constant tussle with each other to the point of informing the history of the factory. The factory era represented rationalism while the post-factory neoliberal era has been

capitalism's offering of humanism. However, neoliberal humanism involves a rationalised humanism where the achievement subject's growth journey is always mediated by market forces. Further, this chapter uses Weber's accounts of rationalisation to investigate the material ramifications of the arrival of the rational *cogito* and, along with it, impersonalisation and abstract measurability as found in modern bureaucracy, Fordism, and the scientific management of Taylorism. Following the *cogito*, the body chases debility to restore disembodied oneness with divine rationality in the form of sleeplessness techniques, meal replacements, and social atomisation. The restoration of oneness comes from manufacturing productive second-nature bodies.

Chapter Two investigates the relationship between work and guilt. It builds on the rationalist principle of negative dogmatism that retroactively rediscovers an ontological state of deficiency following the tenet of the causal body not living up to the idealisations of the rational mind. In this chapter, I relate deficiency as found in Descartes to the story of Original Sin, which provides the justification for capitalism's scarcity paradigm and the modern debt economy. Using the anthropological accounts of James Suzman and David Graeber with David Wengrow, I explore alternatives to the scarcity paradigm in the premodern care societies of the Kalahari Ju/'hoansi and North American indigenous groups. Through shared rituals, premodern societies created socio-biological immunities against entropy. Since these societies focused on embodied rituals, I used Peter Sloterdijk's work on anthropotechnics to study a history of the immunitary constitution of the body against adversities that runs against reordering the body based on retroactively constructed histories. I conclude this chapter with a discussion on limbic capitalism – an acute example of reordering and making the body perpetually productive by activating the limbic system with habituating products, pushing the body more towards 24/7 time.

Chapter Three traces the material manifestations of negative dogmatism through the prevalence of negative freedom in a market economy with competing players. Negative freedom translates into negative relationships in the sphere of sociality and intimacy, resulting in a preoccupation with the unmaking of bonds to so as to assert autonomy as demanded by liquid modern living. I relate Illouz's negative relationships to Tronti's social factory through the principle of relative surplus value that is used to reduce social processes to their productive minimum. I refer to this miniaturisation of social processes as small talk which involves seeing social actors as resources for individual growth, and the swift, pre-emptive unmaking of bonds that also results in the waning of the public space. The optimisation of public space is exemplified by ethnic enclaves arising out of pro-work immigration, where communities pre-emptively ghettoise themselves only to meet during work hours preventing the possibility of radically new ways of life.

Chapter Four relates dualistic thinking to the climate crisis by viewing climate change from the lens of post-materialism. Post-materialism involves constructing growthist modernity as a bunker or – in Sloterdijk's words – a world interior of capital. Here, I provide a reinterpretation of the base-superstructure continuum where the superstructural bunker interpellates or hails bodies vis-a-vis the bunker to eventually discover them as deficient bodies in need of rationalist technocratic solutions and philanthropy.

I conclude with some reflections on deep history as an alternative temporality to the 24/7 ahistoricity of capitalism that taps and sinks productive bodies. Deep history is meant to replace the scarcity or debt paradigm by connecting the present to the embodied past. While 24/7 time was the temporality of growthist modernity, deep history could feature as the temporality of care and free time liberated from the work dogma.

Chapter 1 – Cartesian Doubt: Disciplining the Body towards Second Nature

'The data rate or the communication rate between you and the cybernetic extension of yourself that is your phone and computer is slow. It's very slow and that is like a tiny straw of information flow between your biological self and your digital self and we need to make that tiny straw like a giant river – a huge, high-bandwidth interface. It is an interface problem, a data rate problem'. (PowerfulJRE 2018)

Elon Musk reflects thus on the purpose of his secretive project Neuralink to Joe Rogan. Musk claims that Neuralink, his brain implant technology, will be a generalised solution to all brain injuries but will also enable human-machine interfacing at superspeed such that humans would be able to control phones, laptops and anything else in the digital sphere with their minds. Musk wants humans to embrace their cyborg selves, aiming for humans to be in a symbiotic relationship with artificial intelligence. The excerpt implies that Musk sees the time taken by human bodies to use devices as a 'data rate *problem'*. There is no mention of system crashes, slow booting, refresh speeds and other causes constituting what is known as tech rage – a biological reaction to imperfect machines including anger, frustration, irritability, and helplessness. For Musk, the digital world seems sacrosanct which is being dragged down by the body. This raises the question if the data rate problem is, in fact, a problem. It is reasonable to assume that most people using devices would gladly use their fingers on keypads, turning their ideas into words and inputting them into a computer, and then going about their day, possibly, away from what Musk claims is their 'cybernetic extension'. Musk regards the body as a liability which needs digital intervention in the form of Neuralink implants. He speaks highly of the ability of devices to store memory and access information – all being essentially cognitive tasks. Musk claims that phones and laptops, connected to the internet, make humans exponentially

smarter. Hence, the Neuralink brain chips would connect the internet-powered realm to the body. The 'interface problem' has already been described with a different term throughout the history of philosophy – the mind-body problem.

Musk refers to Neuralink as a 'tertiary cognition layer' (PowerfulJRE 2018). The technology is meant to enhance the cognitive capacities of humans, namely, making the cognitive experience resemble the abilities of digital devices to solve an alleged 'data rate problem'. This recalls Descartes' issue with the apparent fallibility of the senses. In *Meditations*, Descartes claims that bodily sensory experience cannot be trusted because it deceives the self. He cites the example of a tall structure appearing small from afar, people with amputated limbs still feeling pain where their limbs used to be, and the apparent confusion arising from trying to distinguish between dreaming and waking life (Descartes 1996). These supposed mistakes of the senses are not binding. The senses realise that the tall building only seemed short upon walking towards it. Musk's despairing take on the body's capabilities in cognitive work and Descartes' suspicion of the senses seem to emphasise the question of speed as being synonymous with efficiency – considered a problem in post-industrial society, explored by thinkers like Paul Virilio in his formulation of dromology – industrial modernity's obsession with speed – in *The Original Accident* (Virilio 2007), and Zygmunt Bauman's deduction that a chief facet of modernity is 'order-building' which is related to progress in *Wasted Lives* (Bauman 2004).

ABSTRACTION: FROM RATIONALISATION TO FINANCIALISATION

Some broad descriptors of modernity include rationality, the search for efficiency, related order-building, especially characteristic of industrial and post-industrial society which could, further, be tied to the centrality of the factory in the development of capitalism where bodies would be rationally ordered by systems of management, developing into Fordism and Taylorism.

For post-Fordists, the factory era of industrial modernity has given way to post-Fordist work where workers are increasingly de-unionised, presenting themselves as, in Nick Dyer-Witheford's words – 'market subjects' (Dyer-Witheford 2004, 10). In the post-Fordist era, capitalism has enabled the entrepreneurial individual to overcome factory self-estrangement. In order to fully realise inner potential, the self-driven individual must use innate faculties of knowledge and creativity to produce what is referred to as immaterial labour by Maurizio Lazzarato (Lazzarato 1996), Franco Berardi and other post-Fordist theorists. There are, of course, critics of immaterial labour such as David Graeber who highlight that the conceptualisation of labour that is immaterial follows extremely rigid Marxist readings where truly material work is done inside a factory (Graeber 2008). Whether this is the factory era or a post-factory era, those broad descriptors of modernity have lingered – efficiency that can be rendered productive to make goods for money by adhering to rational systems disciplining the body. The advent of smart devices and habit trackers, especially in the post-factory era, indicate that the prerogative of disciplining the body to make it productively efficient has not left with the supposed denouement of the factory era. Neoliberalism promises the culmination of the market subject, also called 'achievement subject' by Byung-Chul Han (Han 2015, 9–11), from supposedly efficient use of rational faculties. Thus, the absent presence of the factory in Fordist and post-Fordist history raises the question about where the rational self came from and if the factory as a workspace as well as a historical era manufacturing disciplinary efficiency to be passed down to post-Fordist individualism is tied to the rational self. By using smart devices to voluntarily Taylorise productive bodies, one could wonder if individuals are relating the factory to an ontology of the self, thereby, retroactively holding the factory as essential to the discovery of inner selves that are rational and profitably unique.

Provisionally, one can speculate that capitalism, itself an economy built on valuing things and people in abstract monetary terms, tied rationality to the factory – the space for abstract, mathematically perfect systems to be embodied by workers producing the perfect commodity-form or the final form reached at the end of the production process where goods are ready to leave the factory and be sold (Žižek 2008, 4). To clarify – some thinkers like Alfred Sohn-Rethel use 'value form' while Žižek uses 'commodity-form' to refer to the final form (Sohn-Rethel 2019). Žižek uses it to investigate the final dream world that the subconscious produces that purportedly hides latent content, according to conventional psychoanalysis, a view that Žižek refutes in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* which I discuss in Chapter 4. I am using 'value form' and 'commodity-form' interchangeably to refer to the financialised second-nature form that things must achieve to valuably exist.

Commodity fetishism entails that the final form at the end of the production process is the only form in which an object can be said to truly exist in capital leaving its sensory characteristics and entering the system of abstract monetary exchange (Marx 1887). In other words, the commodity is financialised. What happens to a commodity on its way to the commodity-form corresponds to the whole of reality as it is absorbed by capitalism. By the claim of the whole of reality being absorbed by capitalism, I am referring to transformation of bodies – living and inanimate – from their first-nature identities to their second-nature existence where they become financially measurable and productive – capable of expanding capital by joining the 24/7 economy. Before financialisation, bodies would exhibit their first nature or natural form – bodies of the earth, complex eco-systems, animals including humans and plants. Upon absorption, erstwhile first-nature bodies assume financialised second nature where they could be uniformly valued in monetary terms. This is how bodies can truly exist in capital. For example,

an individual within capitalist modernity can exist if she or he can acquire necessary skills and have a job after which the person could build a social and political life around acquired financialisation including access to healthcare, fitness, and education which the person had to buy even before starting work.

One can ask why financialisation became paramount and how it relates to rationalisation, how rationalised order-building – modernity's project – resulted in factory production involving replaceable workers, followed by a renewal of individual dignity by which post-Fordist immaterial or cognitive workers would discover inner selves for the market. The historicisation of factory production in terms of Fordism or the material manufacturing of goods and the later post-Fordist period epitomised by supposedly disembodied intellectual faculties carries with it the mind-body split, integral to rationalist thought. Furthermore, there are direct parallels between the conception of immaterial labour and post-Fordist historicisation and how Descartes wrote *Meditations* to arrive at the thinking thing – his final form in which the self can truly exist – through the intellectual production of the rational space using scientific doubt.

As customary with mind-body thinkers, Descartes had his own interpretation of substances – believed to be the constituents of the world since the beginning of philosophy. For Descartes, who was a dualist, the universe was made up of two distinct substances: mind and body. The two substances were distinguished with the aid of their attributes. The body is extended, referring to all bodies, including human bodies, one of which Descartes recognised as his own, separate from his external surroundings (Descartes 1996). The mind's attribute is non-extensity. In his remarkable exercise in doubt, meant to decipher human essence, Descartes puts the body in doubt by presenting a series of now-famous arguments to put forward the notion of the fallibility of sensory experience. Since Descartes cannot really confirm the reality of the

extended body given that there is room for deception because of the supposed deficiencies of bodily senses – the root of the interface problem in Silicon Valley parlance - he would always know the mind more than the body. His knowledge of the mind is affirmed by his ability to doubt which, in turn, proves his existence as a thing that thinks. Descartes sidelines the body while leaving enough leeway for it to exist as long as it is subservient to the mind:

> … on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body, in so far as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing. And accordingly, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it. (Descartes 1996, VI–54)

By pushing the body to the margins while acknowledging its possible existence by 'a special right' (R. Descartes 1996, VI-52), Descartes paves the way for the body to be perpetually subjected to the rationalised genius of the mind in the form of discursive institutions of power as found in Foucault's works (Foucault 1995). Descartes is arguably the first modern philosophical voice to discipline and punish the body, his views consistent with the theme of bodily subjugation found in many religions and, later, in factory and post-factory efficiency.

I am using the central trajectory of disciplining the body that Descartes provides to investigate the material consequence of idealist thought – that the body would be marginalised – or doubted – for the mind to construct reality in rational terms upon which the body is brought back by a 'special right' to assume the form that the new rational reality requires of it. In short – the body must embody rationality. The objective is to reveal how the rational self resulted in the factory body which today manifests in the preoccupation with productivity and perpetual self-actualisation. One returns to the question about where the rational self came from. To search for answers, a historical examination of Cartesianism is necessary.

A broad reading of *Cosmopolis* indicates that Stephen Toulmin juxtaposes Renaissance humanism before the 1600s – roughly around mid-1400s to the majority of the 1500s (Toulmin 1992, 23) – epitomised by Montaigne with Enlightenment rationalism exemplified by Descartes from the 1600s (Toulmin 1992, 29). Before Descartes, Renaissance humanism allowed for the plurality of philosophical views. This period prioritised scepticism but of a different kind. Instead of other bodies being subject to doubt, they were given the *benefit* of doubt. Different schools of thinkers could devise their own iterations of human ontology and all differing views could coexist. Thinkers could use theology, philosophy, or the sciences. What is humanist about this is the respect for the diversity in how the world is experienced. Truth could be arrived at locally. Limitations of such localised truth-seeking would, in fact, reinforce what it means to be human – that human faculties are not capable of being omniscient and therein lay humanity's beauty where it is possible for humans to formulate contingent systems that were sufficiently functional to serve immediate existential needs – 'Tolerating the resulting plurality, ambiguity, or the lack of certainty is no error … Honest reflection shows that it is part of the price that we inevitably pay for being human beings, and not gods' (Toulmin 1992, 30).

Generally speaking, thinkers from 1600 onwards emphasised the search for universal, timeless truths as opposed to local, timebound speculations (Toulmin 1992, 30). The move from relational thinking to solipsistic reflection has significant ramifications in the debate between materialism and immaterialism as well as the question of political subjecthood found in isolation as opposed to relational identities. Relational truth is collaboratively achieved and is a continuous process. The key insight from Marx's materialism is that humans are in communion with their 'inorganic body' of nature where nature and humans change each other (Marx 1992, 328). Graeber and Wengrow highlight that worldbuilding is easier when there are two or more

interlocutors as opposed to the lone thinker who struggles to hold on to a train of thought for a long time (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 94). The effectiveness of the dialogic search for truth and shared worldbuilding hint at the potential of consensual democracy. The rationalist counter to pre-1600s Renaissance humanism was the prioritisation of the one true definition of what it means to be human that can surpass intellectual and experiential contingencies. This is where Descartes comes in.

Toulmin writes that the received view of modernity was that the 1600s saw prosperity and increase in general wellbeing resulting in scientific inquiry and robust philosophy. This view was revisited by historians as late as the 1930s. The primary rebuttal involves asking why an age plagued by often-violent conflicts between the Catholics and the Protestants in 1500s Europe leading to the Thirty Years' War, lasting from 1618 to 1648, could facilitate stability. Hence, philosophical and scientific endeavours could be said to be a response to perpetual turmoil (Toulmin 1992, 16–17). Renaissance humanism, exemplified by Montaigne, was Aristotelian in spirit. All fields of study were open to rational analysis but the yardsticks for rationality were unique to the form of each discipline – 'what is "reasonable" in clinical medicine is judged in different terms from what is "logical" in geometrical theory (Toulmin 1992, 20). However, for the rationalists, some fields were better than others. With hindsight, one could speculate if they considered some fields were more efficient than others and that efficiency could be identified in narrow contexts. Thinkers in the 1600s prioritised apprehending reality in abstract mathematical terms – As Toulmin writes, 'Descartes and his successors hoped eventually to bring all subjects into the ambit of some formal theory: as a result, being impressed only by formally valid demonstrations, they ended by changing the very language of Reason – notably, key words like "reason", "rational", and "rationality" – in subtle but influential ways' (Toulmin 1992, 20).

The rationalist response to political turmoil was insulation or what Toulmin calls 'negative dogmatism' or the 'quest for certainty' (Toulmin 1992, 50, 70). I will develop the metaphor of insulation or the bunker further on. By insulation, I mean that the quest for abstract certainty insulated the rational self from embodied contexts in its surroundings such that the *cogito* could become context-free truth. Negative dogmatism characterises Descartes' method of reaching human essence by negating relational possibilities to offer context-free, universal truth. This reaction, according to Toulmin, was against the failure of preceding humanism which encouraged the coexistence of contradictory worldviews, testifying to the rich complexities of human experience. However, in Toulmin's historicisation, humanistic dissensus in philosophical and theological thought was materially manifested in warring factions (Toulmin 1992, 80). As a result, the hegemonic project in the 1600s was to find a consensus in ontology by viewing reality in abstract, geometrical terms to arrive at the universally rational *cogito*, in order to rediscover humanity in the disembodied realm of thought, away from the evils of embodied strife that could then be used to order the world.

The *cogito* was derived from some shared assumptions among the main players of rationalism. A popular principle posited by Pythagoras was that any theory that carried mathematical soundness will universally have practical use in the lives of humans (Toulmin 1992, 105). For Descartes, the mind, using the revised scepticism of negation, would fulfil the role of creating a mathematically potent reality free from the unreliability of bodies. Cartesianism is, thus, premised upon 'the distinction between the *rational freedom* of moral or intellectual decision in the human world of thought and action, and the *causal necessity* of mechanical processes in the natural world of physical phenomena' (Toulmin 1992, 107). Cartesian dualism, therefore, resulted in a thinking thing that has free will and can shape the

perception of reality while the body is mechanical and must be moved by an external, rational ordering force. The tenets of mind-body dualism were treated as established, irrefutable facts and became integral to the evolution of modernity over the next 200 years (Toulmin 1992, 107). Rational mind and causal body constituted the order of things.

To recall the Cartesian trajectory in *Meditations*, Descartes had doubted the fallible mind to arrive at the thinking thing after which the body, by a special right, was rediscovered to adhere to the newly established rational realm. Toulmin provides a historical account which Descartes seems to have condensed. Toulmin had noted that the stripping away of relational contexts leading to the atomised *cogito* was a response to the perceived failure of political and, to a key extent, religious pluralism. The move inward was an insulation against infernal public turmoil. In later chapters, I discuss negative freedom, theorised by Isaiah Berlin (Berlin 2002), which neatly follows as a social consequence of the philosophical position of negative dogmatism. At this stage, it is clear that the Cartesian move towards disembodiment has material consequences. The body is viewed as deficient to the mind. It does not have free will and must be caused to move in subservience to rationality. Over the next few hundred years post-1600s, one could find rationalism manifesting in the organisation of society. Of course, rationalism and the mind-body problem existed before Descartes in philosophies and religions. What makes the history of post 1600s rationalism pertinent is its role in framing the conditions for rational organisation of real bodies and, finally, rationalised abstraction translating into financialised abstraction using bureaucratic management of bodies as a conduit. Rationalism was showcased as unreliable bodies moved to the directions of predesigned rational systems. What ties rationalisation, bureaucratisation, and financialisation together is the emphasis on conceptualising reality in uniformly abstract, mathematically measurable terms.

The 'Cogito' or The 'Iron Cage'

To examine the material consequences of the new beginning of humanity spurred by the *cogito*, in the way it manifests in the rational ordering of all bodies – biopolitics, to use Foucault's term - one must turn to Max Weber who analysed the processes by which the newly discovered essence ordered social processes, literally called rationalisation. In fact, Weber uses a metaphor for rationalisation and bureaucratic processes that aligns with the *cogito*, which is the 'iron cage' (Weber 2005, 123). The *cogito* was arrived at through the negation of relational possibilities and healthy dissensus. As Toulmin records, this was a response to historical strife where the rationalists turned inwards to seek reality that has the spirit of abstract, geometrical concepts. The *cogito* or the thinking thing looks to insulate the rational essence of the self from embodied imperfections. This, of course, has relevance in how material reality and the evolution of modernity and capitalism have transpired. Thus, Cartesian doubt of the body is not just a self-contained philosophical thought-problem. Doubt could be said to be a shorthand to initiate the disciplining of the causal body by rediscovering it in the realm of free-willed rational thought or the biopolitical processes resulting from rational thought. The primacy of the thinking thing and Descartes' banishment of the body do not imply a literal disappearance of the body, at least, not yet. The dream of disembodiment is represented in crackpot goals of space colonisation or uploading consciousnesses into the cloud. As of this moment, doubt entails an embodiment of inner rationality through order-building – bureaucratisation, Fordism and Taylorism. The thinking thing is a condensation of decontextualised rational truth, arrived at through negative dogmatism.

The Cartesian-rationalist turn in history is the discovery of the thinking thing as second nature which retroactively discovers the whole of human history as inherently made of rational

laws. Societies that do not seem to adhere to rationality appear, in this case, to have fallen behind or requiring civilisational intervention in keeping with "the white man's burden". Graeber and Wengrow write of A.R.J. Turgot who was of this view (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 60). I discuss this at length in Chapter 2. David Smail notes that the advent of modernity, with characteristic rationalism, entails that the West views prehistory in negative terms or that which 'we are no longer' – a heart of darkness with brutish ways (Smail 2008, 4). Of course, this is not to say that anything before Descartes or the 1600s was prehistory. But, modern history as a journey of moral progress through increased rationalisation, including industrialisation and order-building, could be said to have been initiated during the Cartesian era. Therefore, history as growth, gradually transforming into limitless capital accumulation including continual gentrification and management of bodies, stems from the 1600s where the causal body must be made to rationally grow, supposedly antagonistic to what came before. Embodied, contextual living in space and time was negated for uniform order within which the doubtful body can manifest reason. This calls for an examination of the Weberian iron cage, how it relates to rationalised abstraction, the growth model based on a unipolar history of rational subjects and concurrent financialised abstraction favouring decontextualised, abstract monetary value over contingent embodied arrangements.

The arrival of Weber in the discussion of the *cogito* dovetails with the analysis so far. Toulmin's position is that Cartesian rationalism was, to a great extent, a response to the religious strife between the Catholics and the Protestants. Toulmin parallels Weber in that Weber has famously linked the emergence of modern rationalisation and consequently capitalist development to a burgeoning Protestant ethic in the same historical period that Toulmin explored. Further, Weber plays with the tension between idealism and materialism. Stanley Udy

identifies Weber's split approach as a sociologist and as a transcendental idealist historian (Udy Jr 1959, 791). Weber was not necessarily an idealist but documented the manifestations of idealist and religious thought by leaning into the materialism/immaterialism tension. For instance, he advanced the ideal of capitalism as a 'spirit' instead of merely a rational economic system. On the other hand, he identified the material legacy of Protestantism as an ethic, which is consistent with Peter Sloterdijk's position that religions are not metaphysical or idealist entities but comprise a set of practices (Sloterdijk 2013b). Therefore, Protestantism as an ethic featured real-world practices like frugality, accumulation, entrepreneurship, and hard work (Weber 2005). Put simply, Weber found the idealism in capitalism and the materialism of religion. He bridged these two realms with the advent of formal organisation and bureaucratic rules in his analysis of rationalisation. The iron cage metaphorically encapsulates the material, existential ramifications of rationalisation – tracing the *cogito* through bureaucratisation and a focus on efficiency in workspaces and social life where mental models arising out of the rational mind would move the causal body.

While there are disagreements among critics about the exact meaning of the cage since Weber never offered a definitive description (Douglass 2016), it is largely considered to be a poetic takedown of the shackles of rationalisation. While introducing Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Anthony Giddens provides his interpretation of the iron cage as 'an increasingly bureaucratic order from which the "spontaneous enjoyment of life" is ruthlessly expunged'(Giddens 2005, xviii). This follows the basic premise of Cartesian dualism where the vagaries of the body must be smoothened by the rational thinking thing. Further, the removal of spontaneity recalls the issue of contingent, embodied truths that had enabled Montaignian humanism. Weber, himself, writes that worldly asceticism, gradually

decontextualised vis-a-vis its religious roots, has been responsible for the 'tremendous cosmos of modern economic order … bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which today determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force' (Weber 2005, 123). In Chapter 4, I attempt a reinterpretation of the superstructure where the rationalised space of growthist modernity hails or brings in disposable bodies in the form of migrant workers and gentrification-ready ecological systems like lakes and forests which constitute what Weber describes as those not directly concerned with acquisition but absorbed by the economic order. Weber seems to refer to Marx's critique of capitalism here as he identifies rationalism run amok as being responsible for entrapping humans into a system of machine production and order-building. However, he deviates from Marx in that Weber does not think that this was meant to happen in a historical-determinist fashion (Kalberg 1980, 1151). For Weber, there are clear historical causes for this specific form of rationality – specifically the theological underpinnings also found in Toulmin's reading of modernity.

For Weber, humans did not become rational with the *cogito*. *Cogito*-centric rationalisation is a specific historical era he identifies with Western civilisation (Kalberg 1980, 1158). Weber notes that capitalist forms have existed in premodern times in various regions such as Babylon, Hellas, India, China and Rome. There have been various kinds of loans and banking systems in the 1500s. There were entrepreneurs who acted as moneylenders, colonial enforcers working as planters with slaves, and sponsors of civil wars. Weber refers to this figure as the capitalist adventurer (Weber 2021, 105). To highlight the uniqueness of the specific form of capitalism in growthist modernity of the West, Weber involves Marxian concerns – '… the Occident has developed … a very different form of capitalism which has appeared nowhere else: the rational

capitalistic organisation of (formerly) free labour'. Weber adds that the organisation of free labour outside the West had isolated instances before its normalisation in modern capitalism featuring rational industrial organisations and markets (Weber 2021, 106). Weber's remarks on the advent of a rationalised form of waged work recalls two broad themes of relating to the body. First, the universalisation of free labour in exchange for a wage is tied to the rationalist principle of rationally controlling the causal body. Further, for business owners, capital accumulation, from the work of others, serving as future capital for ongoing business recalls Weber's own observation of Protestant asceticism involving self-restraint for future rewards.

Capitalism, directly based on labouring bodies, what Weber calls 'bourgeois business capitalism (Weber 2021, 108), could be considered to be the point in time when rationalisation transformed into financialisation insofar as financialisation is the most prominent example of rationalisation in modernity as every sphere of reality assumes second nature. This distinction is relevant because, before the historically unique kind of rationalisation involving capitalism and bureaucracy, for Weber, many spheres of life could be rationalising tools such as social customs, religions, and disciplines that rationalised or ordered human life in differential ways, following Toulmin's description of humanism before rationalism (Weber 2021).

In his typology of various rationalisation processes, it is possible to find Toulmin's distinction between contextual truths and Cartesian universal, abstract truth that seeks geometrical certainties. In categorising different types of rationalisation processes, Weber argued for four kinds – practical rationality, theoretical rationality, substantive rationality, and formal rationality – the last constituting the specific historical moment in the West featuring industrial modernity, bureaucratisation and capitalism (Kalberg 1980, 1158). These types are not necessarily mutually exclusive and are not intended to be treated as manifestations unique to

different civilisational stages in history. However, formal rationality is unique to Western civilisation and modernity. In fact, it is the kind that is popularly attributed to Weber's work informing the cage image. The other forms of rationality could be said to be intercivilisational and across history. At the same time, formal rationality, apparently seeking de-contextualised certainty through formal rules, is contextualised by the reordering principles of Protestant asceticism as well as rationalist negative dogmatism.

To begin with, practical rationality involves the Montaignian logic of contingent arrangements to serve a practical purpose for participants who would create rules of engagement in the moment to create a comprehensible shared reality (Kalberg 1980, 1152). It follows means-ends logic. Means-ends rationality would be exemplified by foragers finding new regions and deciding on the best ways to hunt and procure food. Theoretical rationality refers to philosophical or religious systems or all-encompassing worldviews that people create to master reality (Kalberg 1980, 1152). Substantive rationality is based on a set of values (Kalberg 1980, 1155). Protestantism, one could say, exemplifies substantive rationality since it is dependent on a set of values like industry, frugality and worldly asceticism (Weber 2005). Formal rationality follows the means-end approach of temporary agreements, but it depends on impersonal rules upholding efficiency – 'An orientation of action to formal rules and laws is tantamount to a rejection of all arbitrariness: universalism and calculation in reference to enacted regulations stand here strictly opposed to decision making in reference to the personal qualities of individuals concerned' (Kalberg 1980, 1158). Formal rationality adheres to the project of Cartesian rationalism that looked to rediscover the world in rational terms. For instance, formal rationality could coincide with theoretical rationality if universal systems are involved. However, the point of formal rationality is that it must be impersonal. Theoretical rationality could be

exemplified by shamans and philosophers who could put their own subjectivity into their thoughts. For Weber, formal rationality marks a decisive break from preceding rationalisation processes – 'formal rationality generally relates to spheres of life and a structure of domination that acquired specific and delineated boundaries only with industrialisation: most significantly, the economic, legal, and scientific spheres, and the bureaucratic form of domination' (Kalberg 1980, 1158). There is still some conceptual tension given that post-1600s rationalism was a result of preceding and concurrent religious history and both Toulmin and Weber tie rationality to those events. Therefore, one could argue that there could be some trace of substantive rationality in formal rationality given that rationalism and ensuing capitalism rested on religious strife and the Protestant ethic. In substantial rationalism, Weber writes that 'the aim is rather to find a type of law which is most appropriate to the expediential and ethical goals of the authorities in question' (Weber 2021, 251). Authorities could involve a monarch with divine justification or elders with an ethical position rationalised by local customs.

Formal rationality can be recognised in negative terms in keeping with the *cogito*. However, recreating the world in negative terms is based on substantive goals like Protestantism and immaterialism. In fact, the presence of context in the apparently context-free formal rationalism is present in Descartes. It is up for debate whether Descartes' philosophy is Protestant or Catholic. But, Charles Taylor noticed the parallel between Cartesianism and Protestantism as identified by Weber. To recall Taylor, Descartes *needs* the body to climb out of it – The Cartesian soul 'has to support itself on it to climb free out of it. By analogy with Weber's famous description of Protestant spirituality as an "innerworldly asceticism", we could describe Descartes' dualism as showing the way to an "innerworldy liberation" of the soul' (Taylor 1989, 146). Thus, there is a trace of embodied asceticism of Protestantism that the Cartesian soul takes

in its 'stance' of immaterialism. As with the critique of creating watertight historical eras like that of immaterial labour against factory work, it is useful to consider these typologies as conceptually rich but with occasional overlap in ideas. The point of exploring the different types of rationalisation is to reinforce the theme of historical continuity that modernity tries to eschew.

As with anthropological accounts of "premodern societies", Weber says that humans always had the ability to reason (Kalberg 1980, 1150, 1151). Practical rationality was inherent in social organisations along with the presence of abstract philosophical and religious conceptions of reality as well as behaviours guided by strong moral codes. However, the most recent form of rationality that is associated with bureaucratic modernity looks to depersonalise human social processes to favour efficiency. It follows the doctrine of negation, discounting contextual reality. Negative dogmatism was the core of Cartesian rationality. Weber wrote about the material manifestation of negative dogmatism through the gradual bureaucratisation of society from the 1600s to the Industrial Revolution. Weber found the evolution of Protestantism, rationalisation in factory and bureaucratic work, and capitalism to be an intertwined process, Protestantism serving as the theological foundation of the stylisation of the body governed by 'calculable rules and "without regard to persons"' (Weber 2021, 248). The post-industrial era, where the work ethic transmuted into Han's psychopolitics and the achievement subject, capitalism purportedly addressed the charge of disregard to persons through the working family as well as monetising the social realm which I will explore in Chapter 3. Although there are detailed accounts of rationalisation in Weber, one is always returning to the basic principles of the *cogito* which include a severance from embodied truths and the primacy of abstraction. Negative dogmatism, upon entering the factory, becomes Marxian self-estrangement.

Disembodiment as a result of negative dogmatism informs Marx's labour theory of value and criticism of the wage system. In industrial capitalism, with the advent of mass production, someone owns a factory, tools, and raw materials. The worker is hired to not only earn back the value of the production process but also create surplus value for the owner to make a profit, acquire more wealth, and perpetuate the business (Marx 1887, 1:146). In return, the worker gets a wage – the job measured, or abstracted, in terms of money. The worth of embodied work, skills, endurance unique to each individual can never be measured in mathematical terms. This is the foundation of self-estrangement in labour theory of value. The factory owner also is the job owner and has already designed a set of tasks to be completed and has transformed the physicality of the job into its rational financialised form – 'The value of commodities is the very opposite of the coarse materiality of their substance, not an atom of matter enters into its composition' (Marx 1887, 1:33). The division of labour that the factory system brought about, upending cottage industries and agrarian societies ensured that unreliable bodies would be further depersonalised as work was divided into constituent parts. This system, based on efficiency, itself, sought to be more efficient. This was made possible by Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford as the factory system evolved in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Today's smart devices with their ability to track habits, sleep, steps and calories belong to the legacy of Frederick Taylor. With family roots in people who boarded the Mayflower, Taylor was part of the first generation of Americans who grew up 'inhaling the sulphurous fumes emitted by big American factories … in 1915, he was eulogised by the glassy-eyed titans of industry like Henry Ford as the "father of the efficiency movement" and declared by management consultants to be the "Newton [or] Archimedes of the science of work"' (Suzman 2021, 330). Taylor's design of scientific management was to guard against slacking – what he

called 'soldiering' – as well as deeming the practices of sincere workers as innately inefficient. Thus, human bodies and embodied industrial machines needed to be rationalised or ordered into one great productive system. Taylor worked with Ford to turn cars into a consumable item resulting from hard work instead of a luxury of a few by perfecting the assembly line where workers performed time-efficient simple tasks that would add up to the finished car. Suzman observes the Puritan worldly asceticism identified by Weber as the motor car became an 'accessible, and very practical, symbol of success and good hard work' (Suzman 2021, 332) – work would set you free producing heaven on earth. Interestingly, private cars still carry their social status, especially in North America, despite innovations in public transit like the underground railway network – a perfect metaphor for caged freedom. The spectre of Puritanism is never lost as rationalisation advanced. Taylor realised Benjamin Franklin's dictum that 'time is money', but 'where Franklin believed that time spent on any earnest endeavour nourished the soul, Taylor saw no point in working inefficiently … determined to translate every second into profit, courtesy of the decimal stopwatch he carried everywhere in his pocket' (Suzman 2021, 331). The difference between Franklin – a known Puritan – and Taylor epitomises the evolution of rationalisation into the iron cage where Taylor sees efficiency as an end in itself and not necessarily serving any theological or immaterial purpose (Suzman 2021, 229–30). The connection between religion and rationalism is irrefutable as so many figureheads of modernity, like Franklin, were also grappling with their faith, looking to accommodate their beliefs into their rational worldview – as was Descartes and many of his rationalist colleagues.

From the discussion thus far, one can form a dependable definition of rationalisation based on the principle of negative dogmatism, which involves stripping contingent factors of reality away such that one is left with geometrical certainty in abstract terms – the thinking thing

for Descartes. This matters for anthropology because "primitive" societies, assumedly prototypes

for anarchist groupings, depended on building contingent realities. Not only did this enable them

to construct functional social organisations, it avoided blind adherence to dogmatic rules and

consequent authoritarianism. I will explore anarchist groupings in Chapter 2 as detailed by

Suzman and David Graeber with David Wengrow. In the case of European history, contingent

realities accounted for the ineffable richness of diverse human experiences. Toulmin notes that

the aversion to pluralism was a response to religious conflict between the Catholics and the

Protestants which came to a head in the Thirty Years' War. From the 1600s, the philosophical

project was to build consensus by finding the one thing that makes us human instead of the many

antagonistic accounts of humanity. As rationalisation became the epistemic norm, it manifested

in the material world through the search for impersonal efficiency. Weber explored the evolution

of rationalisation in bureaucratic organisations that upheld disembodied reason over interlocutors

reaching agreements. Rationalisation included economic rationalisation. Embodied economies of

care and personal exchange were replaced by an economy which can be uniformly measured in

abstract monetary form. Value is created when objects and people are divorced from their

sensory characteristics and financialised. That is how they can truly exist – their second nature

which is retroactively rendered their essence, following Descartes' *cogito*. Marx had identified

abstraction in his critique of alienation or self-estrangement. But, winding the clock back a

couple of centuries, this self-estrangement seems part of the Enlightenment rationalist project to

discover a humanity that is measurable. Therefore, the wage slave came into existence and,

today, humans, especially affluent people are often discussed in terms of *net worth* – a sum of

professional achievements, investments in financial instruments and similar involvements in the

world of abstract monetary value. This negation of contextual embodiment allows for Original

Sin to seep into selfhood. For the rationalists, the existing form of the self was deficient. Descartes' solution was to deem the body deficient and unreliable and, therefore, to negate embodiment in order to achieve the purest form of rationality. Rationalism of the 1600s initiated a new history that resulted in the material reordering of modern society into a timeless, decontextualised entity. The *cogito*, followed by the iron cage, the factory system and finance capital, constitutes this singular spirit of disembodied rational efficiency devoid of historical time and embodied contexts retroactively informing a human ontology of measurable productivity. In neoliberalism, this severance from spatio-temporal embodiment is captured by Jonathan Crary as capitalism's 24/7 time (Crary 2014) and the only way to ensure existential security is to entrepreneurially financialising the self by opting into abstract value, what Oli Mould has critiqued in his account of creativity for profit (Mould 2020). One recognises the rootlessness that the *cogito* has necessitated and the compulsion to make second nature reparations.

In the next section, I elaborate on the neoliberal conflation of rationalism and humanism whereby entrepreneurial subjects are able to rationally order their bodies for their inner essence to manifest itself. Humanist self-actualisation is now allowed as a response to alienation but it must be mediated through financialisation. Thus, supposedly personal qualities like creativity and knowledge would appear in the outside world in the form rationally allowed by capitalism.

RATIONALISED HUMANISM

Alon Segev writes of his 'realisation that the statement *cogito ergo sum*, which is supposed to convey the highest point of intimacy that we can ever achieve, that is, the identity of the human subject with itself, the home to which the subject is called back from its dispersion in the world, turns out instead to be the highest point of alienation' (Segev 2019, 1). The intimacy that Segev speaks of is evangelical – the religious ecstasy experienced during an epiphany when

a subject feels one with God – "the oceanic feeling" – the Cartesian self identifying as a thinking thing which is also a Godly attribute. When the subject returns home from its dispersion in the world, it relinquishes embodiment. Segev probably uses the term 'alienation' in a broad sense, but it coalesces the themes at play surrounding the negation of the body – negative dogmatism producing a highly ordered body, and cognitive work as capitalism's answer to Marxian alienation, enabling the worker to assume a disembodied Cartesian self monetising her or his private faculties towards self-actualisation.

From Toulmin's historicisation in the previous section, one recalls that the Cartesian *cogito* marked a split between Renaissance humanism based on relational embodiment and Enlightenment rationalism built on measurability and the quest for a mathematically certain productive reality. Toulmin observes that Shakespeare, Montaigne and their early modern contemporaries provided the humanist origin of modern thought resulting in poetic explorations of intuitive human experience, individuality and sovereignty. On the other hand, Descartes and Newton provided the mathematical and scientific strain developing the rational mind and modernity's instrumental vision (Toulmin 1992, 42–43). Even Marx's body of work has been anthologised as early or Hegelian Marx and mature or scientific Marx. It is the latter Marx which was adopted by Lenin resulting in the display of overly ordered Soviet Communism. The Industrial Revolution is largely characterised by a highly ordered, mechanistic mode of work and life antagonistic to humanist pursuits involving creativity, innovation and subjective, poetic ways of viewing reality. The factory space informed the economic realm, characterised by brutish, alienated labour. The humanist realm served as its critique.

Kathi Weeks, in *The Problem with Work*, notes parallel growth models in Marxist philosophy following the dual beginnings of modernity. Her work reveals that Marxism, for the

most part, has been able to critique capitalist exploitation, both of mortified bodies as well as ruined minds (Marx and Engels 1988, 74), but has not provided alternatives to the growth model centred on work. Weeks observes that feminist demands for equal opportunities in work presuppose the sanctity of work, apparently, also found in Marx – 'Marxism is so often understood in terms of its commitment to work's acclamation, to the liberation of work from exploitation and the restoration of its dignity in unalienated form' (Weeks 2011, 81). This dignity in unalienated form is the driving force of increased entrepreneurial work, supposedly immaterial labour, and gamified precarity in the gig economy. The term "gig economy", itself, implies the inherent creative capacity in individuals which they must leverage to succeed. The neoliberal economy, courtesy the atomised aspirant, appropriates the unstructured world of art where artists earn a precarious living from gigs. The self's creative capacity creates the demand for 'better work' which is also loosely fashioned after artistic pursuits (Weeks 2011, 86), in a post-Steve Jobs world – 'The residues of the traditional ethics of work also appear, I would argue, in the ways that the language of creativity is in some instances deployed as a synonym for labor, at least when it has the effect of not only selectively expanding what counts as labor but also elevating its status as a worthy human practice' (Weeks 2011, 82).

Weeks postulates two strands of Marxist thought, at least, within the received version of Marxism – socialist modernisation and socialist humanism (Weeks 2011, 82). Socialist modernisation is in line with the popular notions of Marxist struggle where a revolution occurs after which proletariat rule supervises a heightened phase of production or 'factory discipline' – a stage which must be undergone for the eventual coming of the promised communist utopia (Weeks 2011, 83). Once again, the idea of transcending a deficient state is present since the workers' bodies are intended for sacrifice which would result in the utopia of unalienated

communism. The second strand Weeks apprehends is socialist humanism. It is the humanist assumption of innate human creativity, that humans have an inherent capacity to reach their full potential through unalienated creative work inherent in human essence.

Weeks's observation of the two strands – socialist modernisation and socialist humanism – reveals their presence in the contemporary world of capitalism – 'Whereas the former focuses on notions of social progress, social justice, and social harmony, the latter privileges the individual as a crucial category and fundamental value' (Weeks 2011, 85). Socialist modernisation is consistent with the Leninist venture of accelerated production, inspiring the often-cartoonish depictions of communist regimes in pop culture where streets are filled with tanks and moustached military personnel.

Socialist humanism, on the other hand, underlines the importance of improving the individual lived experience primarily through unalienated work such that the human creative capacity shines through. Weeks's case study is the New Left exemplified by Erich Fromm which arose in 1960s America. Fromm writes, 'Labor is the self-expression of man, an expression of his individual physical and mental powers. In this process of genuine activity man develops himself; work is not only a means to an end – the product – but an end in itself, the meaningful expression of human energy; hence, work is enjoyable' (Fromm 2004, 33). Fromm seems to be talking about the experience of creating art and similarly aesthetic experiences like gardening and writing, and not the mandated work hours that provide access to food, clothing, shelter and intimacy to millions of people. Socialist humanist notions of work as self-fulfilling creative endeavour need to be explored in the context of care and gift economies. Examples include court jesters, buskers and small entertainers who require voluntary patronage to sustain themselves as well as

celebrity-artists like Quentin Tarantino and Christopher Nolan pursuing preservation of the film format and theatres.

The idea of self-fulfilling 'better work' has been parodied by the advent of YouTubers, Instagram entrepreneurs and Uber drivers who own their means of production and the embedment of a similarly entrepreneurial "be yourself" gambit in the organisational workplace. Capitalism has adapted to the Marxist critique of alienation by allowing humanist self-expression. However, this self-expression must be mediated in market terms and be viewed as a financialised hero's journey. Further, the bogey of better work has been coopted by management studies and human resource departments who offer work as a space for self-discovery:

> By the 1970s, managerial theories and practices were responding to this critique of work that engaged too little of the self by shifting the focus from securing the compliance of the recalcitrant, effort-avoidant Fordist worker … to encouraging the commitment of the work-loving, self-directed, and responsibility-seeking model worker. (Weeks 2011, 105–6)

Workers were encouraged to reflect on how they can achieve *their* goals by working in the organisation which served as the site of personal development transforming them into Byung-Chul Han's achievement subjects (Han 2015, 9–11). By encouraging the workers to bring their private selves to aid in their entrepreneurial self-discovery within capitalist organisation, the post-Fordist era popularised the notion of immaterial labour for the self-driven entrepreneur engaging in 'better work'. Weeks is not convinced as she advocates for less work and more free time (Weeks 2011, 104). From Weeks's analysis of the inadequacies of 'better work', it is suggested that the humanist strand pitched itself as revolutionising work, marking a clear break from factory alienation whilst safeguarding work-centred living. Among other developments, the

conception of immaterial labour in post-Fordism is significant. I will briefly discuss immaterial labour and its problems since it plays a significant role in the humanist strand of work upholding individual dignity and inner uniqueness.

Dealing in ostensibly immaterial capital such as creativity and producing similarly immaterial work in the form of expertise-based entrepreneurial innovation is part of the humanist reaction to alienating factory discipline. An advent of immaterial labour also complies with Han's thesis that society has transitioned from biopolitics to psychopolitics such that (Han 2017), as Berardi puts it, a *soul* is at work (Berardi 2009). Lazzarato, himself, clearly anticipates psychopolitics in immaterial labour – 'we have here a discourse that is authoritarian: one *has* to express oneself, one *has* to speak, communicate, cooperate, and so forth' (Lazzarato 1996, 134). These directions, further, track well with the general supposition of neoliberalism where one is to monetise one's private self. Lazzarato defines immaterial labour as labour which 'produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity' (Lazzarato 1996, 131). The informational content, for Lazzarato, involves the increased role of digitisation and computers in the work experience. Cultural content refers to the work put in by society as a whole, creating cultural significance around various products from personal consumption habits, tastes and preferences. For instance, digital content can go viral or start trending depending on how it is being consumed. In David Graeber's words, the creation of the cultural content of the commodity entails that 'we are all immaterial workers, insofar as we are disseminating information about brand names, creating subcultures … or developing our own sense of style. As a result, production – or, at least in the sense of the production of the *value* of a commodity, what makes it something anyone would wish to buy – is no longer limited to the factory …'. Therefore, the commodity-form becomes impossible to measure (Graeber 2008). The assumption is that the

monetary value of immaterial labour is no longer comprehensible because this form of labour is not tied to factory production which formed the basis of the material value of labour.

Graeber provides a critique of immaterial labour by pointing out the rigid historicism at play distinguishing the post-factory era from the factory era. The distinction assumes that production takes the commodity form as long as it is inside the factory and, hence, is material labour. However, there were several forms of cultural production or what Lazzarato describes as 'mass intellectuality' (Lazzarato 1996, 133) – 'Whatever happened to all those dandies, bohemians, and flaneurs in the 19th century …? … Wasn't the creation of value always in this sense a collective undertaking?'. Graeber also highlights the recognition of the value of domestic work of women and informal carers integral to flourishing of any society (Graeber 2008). Capitalism encourages the line of thinking where compromising the social space of care is empowering leading to pro-work social justice movements. True liberation is not sending women to work but to bring men and women back home to social and cultural reproduction and related free time.

The core of Graeber's critique of immaterial labour addresses the base/superstructure binary which recent Marxist thinkers like Althusser and Žižek have investigated to highlight the no less material nature of the superstructure. I discuss this at length in the section on ideology in Chapter 4. Following traditional Marxism, immaterial labour contributes to culture and information, adding to the superstructure. This would explain why contemporary technological workers adopt the posture of artists which also justifies gig work and the American idea of innovating oneself from rags to riches. Real value, according to traditional Marxist critique of capitalism, lies in the material base – the raw materials, tools, people and the natural environment involved in commodity production. This discounts the material reality of social

relations enabling daily cultural work in the arts as well as spontaneous care work and neighbourliness. Immaterial labour attributes different levels of materiality to things and people and, for Graeber, ignores the essential Marxist insight 'that the world does not really consist (as capitalists would encourage us to believe) of a collection of discrete objects, that can then be bought and sold, but of actions and processes' (Graeber 2008). Intellectual and cognitive work has existed during the factory era. Material production exists at the present post-factory time.

This is not to discount the ideas of the post-Fordist thinkers as Graeber cautions. There, indeed, has been a change in capitalism. However, a suitable way to apprehend this change is by investigating the individualisation of the worker on her or his way towards self-actualisation. Psychopolitics, therefore, is an evolution of biopolitics and not meant to retire Foucault's term. Han mentions that Foucault stopped short in his analysis of biopolitics by not being able to arrive at the psyche (Han 2017, 23). Psychopolitics involves controlling the psyche such that individuals become market subjects voluntarily. That said, psychopolitics still requires the participation of the body to assume Han's achievement subject. Thus, psychopolitics is the biopolitics of the era of neoliberalism and not the absence of biopolitics. Discipline still exists in the form of empowerment and facilitation. The self visits therapists, coaches and performance evaluators to access the latest disciplinary body which neoliberalism prescribes in the manner of system upgrades as well as in the form of smart technology. This is not intended to dismiss Han. This is simply in keeping with the critique of immaterial labour that the distinction between material and immaterial labour is a false binary although they both can exist as conceptually rich terms describing work practices relating to unique historical periods. Tangible changes typifying the concerns of thinkers deliberating on immaterial labour are exemplified by intrusive digitisation in academia. This involves the introduction of learning management systems,

pedagogy research and digital applications marketed as teaching aids promised to optimise the interaction between instructors and students. It is hard to tell what optimisation could mean in liberal arts and humanities disciplines. These portals and applications come with their own learning curves having little to do with the instructor's or student's actual discipline of interest. Concurrently, there is a clear continuity between material and immaterial labour which critics highlight given that psychopolitics could apply to the Weberian work ethic producing a self-driven bureaucratic class motivated by wealth accumulation, frugality and related self-discipline. The cognitive class in Weber's time exhibited psychopolitical traits spurred on by the Protestant work ethic that inspired voluntary achievement subjects seeking signs of predestined Calvinist grace. On the other hand, the achievement subject of today is continually alerted by market opportunities of financialised personal growth. Thus, there is a parallel between the Weberian work ethic and psychopolitical compulsive achievement that makes the material/immaterial labour split into historical stages even more tenuous. Hence, one can see why Weeks questions the credentials of white-collar better work as a supposedly radical break from alienating factory work in favour of humanist creative endeavours (Weeks 2011, 107).

In her postulation of socialist modernisation and socialist humanism, Weeks demonstrates that Marxist critiques of capitalist exploitation are unable to do away with the growth model. This is because the growth model has been a defining position for modernity as an epoch. The scientific temperament of modernity had managed to design society as productive in terms of shaping and gentrifying bodies in objective, social reality. This has also been the Marxist prerogative in materialist history – that social history of production, just like natural history, is governed by laws. In socialist modernisation, exemplified by Leninist-Marxism, the scientific management of society, based on social ownership, would end alienation. Production would

enable technology and workers – constituting what Marx calls productive forces – to reach their full potential and facilitating the conditions for revolution and takeover. At the same time, modernity never lost sight of the individual and valorised individual creativity as a solution to mindless, alienating work. The purportedly humanistic alternative to brutish industrial work has been brought to fruition by, in Nick Dyer-Witheford's words, 'market subjects' (Dyer-Witheford 2004, 10). Workers can bring in their private selves, their lived experience and personal qualities as long as they are mediated through the process of abstract valuation and measured.

In both the humanist and rationalist forms, the former manifesting in the achievement subject building a financialised self and the rationalist strand which recognises something as real only in its final form arrived at from negating relational contexts, the modernist assumption is the need to build from a state of deficiency. The rationalist lens cannot identify anything unless it is presented in terms of mathematical certainty. The capitalist justification for growth is scarcity which would be overcome by continuous production and its realisation in abstract value (Marx 1887, 1:28). This same drive for growth to overcome deficiency is experienced as an existential crisis for the entrepreneur to heroically triumph over. In the neoliberal era, humanism is validated by its rationalisation. Not only are achievement subjects supposed to increase in value through entrepreneurial adventure, they must regulate their bodies to manufacture its most efficient form to take them close to their inner humanist essence. In the supposedly post-discipline era ushering in neoliberalism, tailored immunisation like therapy and self-help has gained prominence over the long history of social immunity found in congregational activities like festivals, funerals, mourning rituals like the Jewish *shiva* allowing for empathetic emotional communism. Hence, humanist approaches have returned but tied to their rationalised forms in capital increasingly with a focus on addressing the individual decontextualised from social realities. The self-help

boom follows the adherence to deficiency as a starting point requiring a compulsive drive towards self-improvement and efficiency.

The neoliberal era is capitalism's iteration of humanism realised in the rational commodity form. The free market of the self where anything is up for sale encourages anyone to innovate things, people and habits into a product. Neoliberalism builds on liberal individualism and proceeds to dignify capitalist production by monetising inner creativity. The result is rationalised humanism. The factory worker wanted to preserve his humanity away from the factory. The neoliberal individual wants to improve his or her humanity with factory efficiency. The market has, of course, been internalised and now treated as a unit of reality. The market is what philosophers used to call substance and neoliberalism is the reality the market creates. Additionally, *what has been adopted at the level of individual embodied existence is the rational factory system of manufacturing that preserves the process of alienating bodily debility*. It is this specific argument that informs the whole of this project. Unique selfhood is produced through factory efficiency at the cost of the body. Hence, alienation which was part of the factory labour process now recalls the *cogito*, rendered an existential concern that is foundational to self-actualisation. Economic alienation, found in Marx, and existential alienation become the same thing. As neoliberalism promotes cognitive work in its humanisation of work, creating San Francisco-style creative classes in developed regions, manufacturing has been outsourced to regions with natural resources including human bodies. As a result, the lingering history of rational efficiency that was practised during the manufacturing era has become integral to the bodily experience of existential growth. The worker still 'mortifies his body and ruins his mind' (Marx and Engels 1988, 74), but this time, it is a stylisation of the post-scarcity body, what I am calling an embodied rhetoric. This has happened because neoliberalism has made the humanist

position comply with the growth model. Individuals can use their bodies to practise rational factory efficiency and debility. At the same time, neoliberalism allows individuals to ask existential questions through capital such as finding a purpose, leaving a legacy, finding a job one is *meant* to do and so on. Factory capitalism was alienating because it supposedly got in the way of humanism. Neoliberalism has rendered finance capital humanist. Growth is meant to be both personal growth and the growth of capital and the two must be conjoined.

Neoliberalism requires the history of the efficient worker to carry over and tie itself to the humanist history of the entrepreneurial worker such that the embodied rhetoric of work, in its factory efficiency, continues. Here, alienation becomes spiritually empowering – through negative dogmatism producing a state of originary deficiency requiring rationalised self-fashioning – and the humanist starting point of one's entrepreneurial growth towards a second nature with an entirely monetisable body. Self-estrangement becomes integral for the individual because deficiency must be perceived from a state of lost perfection for the growth journey to begin. Manufacturing begins in the form of new ways of experiencing the body productively. Not only is the body disciplined in terms of factory efficiency, the body must also debilitate itself and produce pathological products by disrupting biological rhythms through optimisation tools like smart devices which help it to remember and recreate the history of factory efficiency. Both debility and efficiency constitute empowerment within the confines of neoliberal humanism which puts a premium on compassion in the form of therapy, coaching and loving one's work.

Alienation, as a result of negative dogmatism, was the position for Descartes and modernity as well. Modernity wanted to leave behind the ills of irrational premodernity and saw itself as a new ontological state of humanity based on reason. The growth model, in the factory era, depended on rational systems that subjugated the body. However, the memory of the

manufacturing era informs the cognitive worker's neoliberal body in the post-factory era. It manufactures habits and pathologies that are reasoned with. The body still carries the twin origins of modernity by idealising a humanist inner uniqueness. The uniqueness manifests itself in the body through its voluntary pathologisation. Alienation from the first-nature body is the humanist position which allows the self to reclaim a lost essence through rational intervention by building anew. In the absence of the factory, there is an explosion of preoccupation with bodily routines for optimisation that often act on or against biological routines like eating, sleeping and sex which promise a posthuman second nature. Alienation facilitates personal growth which is validated by financial verification. Descartes needed to work on the body with doubt to reach a second nature in the form of the thinking thing. The neoliberal self must challenge the body in a financial-humanist project of transcendence by creating work-related ailments as well as holding the body to standards of productivity which keep evolving. The body would be able to transcend itself by leaving behind universal sensory experience which Descartes doubted, which Marx had accounted for as mandatory animal needs.

In the previous pages, I have traced the origins of the *cogito* in the historical context of the strife between the Catholics and the Protestants peaking in the 1600s. That period created a split between Montaignian humanism prioritising relational lived reality and Cartesian rationalism aiming to universal consensus by apprehending human essence in abstract terms. Weber provided the real-world implications of rationalisation. Marx's critique of alienation, broadly speaking, has highlighted the tussle between the often-depersonalising traits of rationalism and the yearning for a humanist renewal of embodied reality. The *cogito* resulted in a wilful severance from relational contexts towards abstract truth resulting in considering deficiency and rationalised reordering as part of human ontology. As a result, the neoliberal form

of alienation becomes the starting point of selfhood when the financialised production of the self begins. Thus, the beginning of financialisation mirrors the beginning of rationalisation. In both cases, embodied reality is sacrificed for measurable, abstract truth. In the past pages, referencing Toulmin, I detailed negative dogmatism as a philosophical exercise practised by Descartes and other rationalists. However, the intellectual practice has had material consequences such as decontextualised individualism. Further, the attempt to make the causal body rationally productive has resulted in the effort to negate the reality of the individual body itself by challenging biological rhythms for the body to adhere to the free mind. The practice of negative dogmatism sought a severance or alienation from the first-nature body towards a financially pliant productive body. The first-nature body, seen as deficient due to its biological limits, is seen as an obstacle to productivity. Therefore, the body must be challenged and pathologised such that its "animal" needs can also be rationalised.

CHASING DEBILITY: CAPITALISM'S ANSWER TO MARXIAN ALIENATION

Before Marx used 'alienation' to delineate the plight of the worker under capitalism, the term has had a rich history in the foundations of philosophical and theological thought. The most generalised notion of alienation constitutes a lost wholeness or exile. Descartes' project in *Meditations* is to establish an alienated subject by way of having extensity, who must transcend the body and become the thinking thing. The thinking thing is retroactively rendered human essence by the time Descartes ends his argument. The body's inability to live up to the non-extensity of the Godly thinking thing is Descartes introducing Original Sin which is embodied on earth, as it is in heaven. For Hegel, alienation is endured by the slave as his consciousness is absorbed by the master. Similarly, the slave must journey inward to find a similarly disembodied form of freedom from alienation (Hegel 2004).

Marx locates alienation within the paradigm of capitalism between the worker and the owner. Workers are alienated from the product they create (Marx 1992, 327), from the production process since it does not constitute free activity but that of a wage-slave, from their species-being which refers to the ability of humans to create social reality with a unique historical identity, and from other workers through competition for job placements (Marx and Engels 1988, 79) Marx writes, 'Man is a species-being, not only because he practically and theoretically makes the species – both his own and those of other things – his object, but also … because he looks upon himself as the present, living species, because he looks upon himself as a *universal* and therefore free being' (Marx 1992, 327). Here, Marx seems to be saying that humans can create and perceive nature in transformative ways. This makes humans more 'universal' than animals.

The neoliberal market of the self has been capitalism's sleight of hand against possible worker mutiny. Hence, Byung-Chul Han reflects that, in the absence of the prospects of mobilising against an external enemy, the new revolution of the productive individual is depression. The transformative powers of the species-being as a social reality is parodied by corporate communities changing the world. Transformation towards second nature is performed on the individual body which itself adopts behaviours and rituals which are financialised. Social organisation is replaced by self-help. Financial growth has become embodied – 'There is no society, only individuals'. Neoliberalism incentivised individuals to de-communalise and produce second nature out of themselves. The species-being has been controlled since socialised production is punitively recreated by the economy through work relations. The transformative capacities of the species-being, resulting in material history, is replaced by the self-driven entrepreneur in 24/7 time.

Byung-Chul Han writes that capitalism under neoliberalism has undergone a mutation (Han 2017, 18). In the entrepreneurial era, workers and owners have left the suffocating biopolitics – control of bodies – of the factory towards psychopolitics – control of the psyche. In fact, the owner's external presence is not even needed. In what Han calls 'auto-exploitation' (Han 2017, 6), authority has been internalised producing the expectations of innate drive and ambition for success. It is a mutation because capitalism has seemingly addressed Marx's charges of alienation. The market, as a real place as well as a lived metaphor, allows for self-ownership and mandates self-fulfilment within the neoliberal context. Remote work during Covid-19 lockdowns would not have been possible if workers had not owned the means of production or did not have the freedom to plan their own schedule. In organisations, workers, increasingly entrepreneurial, do not work for but in collaboration with friendly managers, transforming themselves from obedience-subjects to liberated achievement subjects (Han 2015, 9–11). Following the history of immaterial philosophy, capitalism is rendered a system which explains reality, following whose rules entrepreneurs could manifest their secret true selves. The growth model is metaphysical transcendence experienced in rational, economic terms. Transcendence as growthism is not exclusive to capitalism as revealed by Kathi Weeks in her formulation of socialist modernisation and socialist humanism. The economic origins of neoliberalism – Reagan and Thatcher's response to inflation – was aggressive adherence to the growth model by individualising welfare such that growth is mandated by the threat of individual destitution.

As mentioned, neoliberalism provides a platform for entrepreneurial creativity as achievers could indulge in "being yourself" for profit. As neoliberal society becomes increasingly dependent on cognitive work, it seemingly takes Marx's humanist assumption of the

human species characterised by 'free, conscious activity' to heart (Marx and Engels 1988, 76). In

his critique of alienation, Marx makes a distinction between work done due to animal needs and

thoughtful work independent of those needs. The four forms of alienation are purportedly

overcome as the market is internalised and treated as a stage for nourishment and selfhood. All

four forms of Marxian alienation in the factory stage have apparently been addressed.

Entrepreneurs can own their products. They can have enough say in the production process. The

whole of nature including human nature is available for monetisation. They can collaborate with

others and become larger enterprises often self-identifying as communities. Mergers are

takeovers seen as natural evolution in the history of capitalism. In his analysis of the human as a

species-being, Marx differentiates between humans and animals in terms of their productive

capacities – 'It is true that animals also produce. They build nests and dwellings, like the bee, the

beaver, the ant, etc … they produce only when immediate physical need compels them to do so,

while man produces even when he is free from physical need and truly produces only in freedom

from such need' (Marx 1992, 329). Marx's conceptualisation of free, conscious activity seems to

be his intervention on the Cartesian thinking thing in that humans, though not non-extended, can

thoughtfully work with their bodies unlike animals as per Marx. This distinction between human

needs courtesy free reflection and involuntary animal needs calls for an examination of Marx's

anthropological history of alienation. Self-estrangement has been apparently solved by

neoliberalism. The oppressive external force of governance has given way to the ethical,

motivated auto-exploitative worker. It seems that Marx's theory of history has, indeed, ended up

with the awakening of emancipatory consciousness. It just has not resulted from the abolition of

capitalism. Hence, Han's description of the socio-economic present as a mutation is apt.

Animal needs shared by humans constitute mammalian activities developed as Darwinian evolution throughout geological time, also called deep history or deep time. Neoliberalism is carrying out the interruptions of the natural rhythms of the human body which enable sleep, eating, procreation and relationality, mobility and animal athleticism to make the body more rational. To clarify, whenever I am using the term "relationality" in this dissertation, I am referring to the living conditions enabled by positive freedom which facilitates individuals to view their identity in relation to other people and places through the formation of social alliances, intimate relationships, and communities.

The biological disruptions aim to bring the causal body within the realm of the free-acting rational mind. This alienation seems to be voluntary, having the exceptionalism generally characteristic to humanism. As post-industrial society transforms the workforce into the cognitariat, also increasing urban living comfort through technological advancements, this age encourages individuals to experimentally dissociate from natural rhythms and facilitate bodily debility. Expectedly, neoliberal conceptions of selfhood harp on inner worth, self-discovery, self-love and self-care.

A conspicuous instance of participation in bodily debility is the adoption of 24/7 time, explored by Jonathan Crary in *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. The subtitle not only indicates that capitalism is on its way to *end* sleep. More interestingly, sleep seems to have a productive *end*, a part of free reflection, exemplified by late nights where individuals would indefinitely procrastinate on the prospect of sleep while considering the myriad ways to spend the night not least due to nightlife retail attractions. Crary notes the relationship between the military-industrial complex and post-industrial society in how methods from the former trickle down to the social level where sleeplessness techniques are adopted in compliance with

productivity rituals. This, of course, involves both actively arresting sleep as well as obsession with bedtime rituals, getting the right number of hours and sleep cycles, and morning routines through smart devices and sleep trackers.

Ironically, the attempts to reduce or control animal needs is stemming from the study of animals as found in the US Defense Department's research of the wakefulness capacities of migratory birds during long flights in order to turn soldiers into alert killing machines (Crary 2014, 1, 2). Sleep deficiency has, historically, resulted in restricted cognitive and biomechanical functioning. In the car-dependent design of Northern American cities, drowsy driving is considered as dangerous as drunk driving – Gary Howard of the Canadian Automobile Association states that getting less than 5 hours of sleep is the same as being impaired (Steeves 2016). A 2016 study by the American Automobile Association reveals that missing 1-2 hours of sleep doubles crash risk (Gross 2016). The oft-mentioned solution of getting enough sleep before driving for Northern Americans seems like letting workers in various levels of precarity eat cake, also considering the notoriously bad public transit service of the individualist societies of Canada and the USA.

The study of animals who remain awake for long hours is not an attempt to be closer to nature. It is cherry-picking from nature to create the perfect *beast* out of humans by finding animal traits which happen to be compatible with the 24/7 profit-driven conception of time. From the advent of modernity, sleep has been socially experienced as the period of worry-free repose. This is exactly why harmful deeds, crime and even hazardous accidents are likely to occur at night. Crary mentions the Bhopal gas tragedy in India, 1984. The gas leak happened after midnight killing 'tens of thousands of nearby residents, most of them sleeping at the time …the continuing repudiation by Union Carbide of any responsibility or of justice for the victims

confirms that the disaster itself cannot be posed as an accident, and that, in the context of corporate operations, the victims were inherently superfluous' (Crary 2014, 28). This puts the onus on the sleepers for not being vigilant at night. The implication is that sleepers would be safer if they could responsibly sleep less.

Crary's commentary on night assaults by the US military on Afghanistan, Iraq and other war-on-terror countries offers, besides the consequences of ravaging villages, an insight into 'the calculated ruination of nighttime itself. Part of the larger strategic intent, in the context of tribal cultures … is to shatter the communally shared interval of sleep and restoration, and impose in its place a permanent state of fearfulness from which escape is not possible' (Crary 2014, 32, 33). Crary's observations highlight that the animal needs of humans have been part of longstanding social realities which must make way for new forms of free, conscious activity. Far from the liberating potential of the kind of free work Marx had envisioned for the unalienated worker, free, conscious activity for the auto-exploitative cognitive worker is challenging the limits of biological rhythms to create a second nature exclusive of compelled bodily needs. Romantic intimacy and procreation have been overly intellectualised as belonging to the paradigm of productive choice in cushy compatibility with one's work life – the worker's youthful virility is meant for precarious capital accumulation. The body can be salvaged at a future date courtesy happiness products like therapy and extra-medical coaching, self-help, IVF, testosterone boosters and erectile dysfunction medication. As Bauman notes, bonds are temporary resulting in short-lived love experiences (Bauman 2021, 7). This is most evident in the similarity in user interface between online shopping and dating applications. I will speak further on sociality in Chapter 3.

A long history of the dream of disrupting biological needs is that of meal replacements, speculations surrounding meal pills as well as hunger inhibitors. A recent iteration of end-of-food

imaginaries is Soylent created by Silicon Valley innovators led by Rob Rhinehart. Soylent came into existence from around 2012 to 2014. After a failed start-up, three tech aspirants in San Francisco were running out of money looking for startup ideas. Rhinehart created the formula of Soylent initially to avoid expensive grocery bills. Eventually, he would pitch Soylent as a meal replacement, suggesting a distinction between daily food consumption for upkeep and what he calls recreational eating – eating as sporadic luxury to experience sensory and social joys. Rhinehart's line of thought, of course, has the existence of work time as a necessary fait accompli such that food habits must be tailored around work. Leaving work for meals is just not productive (Widdicombe 2014). This goes without saying that notions of meal-prepping, storing and the working lunch have constituted the sacrality of the workday. Prepping does not necessarily take into account cooking as an art form that need not be televised but socially enjoyed daily. The difference between consuming stored food from days past and freshly cooked food is self-evident. Meal replacements are for the cubicle worker or the precarious grad student who would gulp and grind. This does away with any considerations of not only the pleasures of tasting food daily but also the elaborate rituals surrounding cooking, serving, and eating and the role of food in fostering tangible community, familiality and neighbourliness. Community is redeemed daily. There are, of course, additional benefits to chewing. Chewing tough foods, for instance, has generally resulted in a more defined jawline, enhancing aesthetic appearance ("Chewing Harder Foods Leads to Stronger Jawbone Formation" 2019)("Chewing Harder Foods Leads to Stronger Jawbone Formation" 2019). Meal replacements and the cynical idea of recreational eating recall neoliberalism's attempts to provide necessities as luxuries as is the case with the Americanisation of higher education and healthcare. Basic needs must be chosen and bought. This is why Crary highlights the control of sleep because it is the biological activity that

was assumedly choice-proof which sleep inhibitors, sedatives, night shifts, bright nightscapes and digital screens are looking to disrupt.

In relation to screen time and scrolling, the smartphone has enabled the neoliberalisation of laziness such that one is inactive in specific, rat-like ways, trapped in the pleasures of circuitous interfaces as found in the writings of Mark Kingwell and David Courtwright which I discuss later. Since sleep, eating and intimacy have been dissociated from embodied, relational rituals, it is only natural that laziness itself has been incorporated into monetised time. Doomscrolling curbs the exploratory and reposeful possibilities normally attributed to non-work time. In fact, the ruin of biological acts is streamlined. One can postpone sleep in order to be lazy on a device, putting off the soporific pleasures of nighttime languor. The ubiquity of morning rituals and the hunt for the most productive ways of waking up in self-help suggest a desire to have the bright start to the workday, having routinised the killing of unproductive sleep the night before.

In short, the attempts to disrupt animal needs and activities constitute neoliberal capitalism's attempt to perfect a second nature and retroactively define what is ontologically human. Neoliberalism carries the legacy of humanism where humans are distinguished from animals as superior beings capable of rational thought and aesthetic capacities. In this case, a rational second nature is achievable after individuals can wilfully destroy biological immunitary states including relationality. Individualism, in the context of maiming fundamental bodily capacities, is practised by attacking precisely the capacities which are either completely or partially involuntary. The freedom of neoliberal humanism is experienced when bodily limits bound by sleep and hunger are needlessly challenged. The deprivation of bodily well-being becomes part of performing the cognitive worker's conscientiousness, enhancing feelings of

masochistic sincerity as the body finds ways to be hard at work during supposed increase in physical comfort with civilisational advances.

The act of retroactively defining what is human is Cartesian. In *Meditations*, Descartes uses his body to propose that it might not exist. He ends his investigation with the inference or, rather, the decision that he was a thinking thing all along. For the auto-exploitative worker who denigrates the body for the neoliberal clinic, the body is defined in terms of rational productivity. This transition is seen as the body coming into its own, taking a form it was always meant to be. It is not a coincidence that mental health has virtually replaced psychiatry and it is made to look like the default state of a healthy individual is to be in therapy. Poetic forms of experiences like sadness, heartbreak, grief, melancholia, excitement, euphoria are to be pathologised by their speculative medical counterparts and extramedical advice-giving resources. Once again, the productivity paradigm replaces contextual, relational experiences of the body such as mourning the departed as a family or as a community. Christopher Lane notes that shyness can be medicated and insured if it is renamed 'social phobia' (Lane 2007, 3). With the thinking thing, Descartes created a second nature which would be used to define what came before it. The body is concealed by the fetishised thinking thing just as the workers are concealed by the commodity. This aligns with Toulmin's documentation that the history of rationalism in the 1600s looked to supersede all other preceding worldviews. Below, I intend to relate the Cartesian thinking thing to Marxian second nature by providing an account of Marxist thinkers who wrote on second nature. What relates the thinking thing to Marxian second nature or the commodity-form is that both are retroactively discovered as essence.

DESCARTES' THINKING THING AND MARXIAN SECOND NATURE

Throughout *Meditations*, Descartes treats the body in specific ways to purportedly uncover its inadequacies such as the vulnerability of the senses to be duped, supposed confusion from seeing objects change form from solid to molten state, objects' size dependent on distance from the onlooker and the apparent inability to tell wakefulness from dreaming. Descartes uses real, universal bodily experiences to doubt the body. In other words, the Cartesian body has been at work in its own philosophical marginalisation. On the other hand, the definition of the mind is pretty static – a non-extended thing that thinks – coming with divine endorsement. The Cartesian body, whose existence cannot be made completely invalid due to a 'special right', must accept the authority of the thinking thing as essence. The thoughtful, rational self has been an obsession in metaphysics from scriptural wisdom.

In the vast history of the deification of the mind, the body, by a special right, has been present to perform its own deficiency. Most religions feature physical self-torment to cleanse the everlasting immaterial self. Aristotle's ideal societies required slaves to ensure daily upkeep for the free class to engage in philosophy (Smith 2020). Descartes required his body to undertake his phenomenological study to prove its metaphysical inefficiency. The neoliberal subject disrupts biological rhythms, deeming them unproductive. The thinking thing is produced as a result of the disciplinary machinations the body is subjected to. Yet, it is treated as if it is sovereign and its relationship to the body is tenuous at best. Human experience begins with the body for Descartes and the religious masochist but is established fully with the supremacy of the thinking thing. The thinking thing, like the Marxian fetish object, is considered inherently valuable disregarding the bodily toil behind it. In short, the body is tasked with producing the preconditions to restore mental essence. This should not come across as something unusual as late-capitalist inventions are often attributed to cognitive innovation and the cult of the tech-genius while physical labour

is made largely invisible or historically trivial. Descartes uses the mind's supposed powers to dismiss the body. Elon Musk has similar thoughts when advocating Neuralink. Descartes decides that the body is deficient by using clear and distinct perception to venerate the mind. Elon Musk has decided that the body cannot keep up with the pace of machines resulting in the need for brain-chip interfacing. Machines were invented to aid the body. Now, the body is being demanded to keep up with electronic speed created by the rational mind.

I will return to the fetish object in Chapter 4 while analysing Žižek's take on ideology and the dream form. At this stage, it is clear that the thinking thing looks to denigrate the body in search of true human selfhood. The thoughtful second nature is arrived at. The body is present at the outset to be replaced by its rationalised iteration. Just as the thinking thing, arrived at, assumes essence, the neoliberal subject looks for an embodied second nature by postponing sleep, aging out virility and physical capacities to participate in physical communities by opting into careerist work, drinking Soylent and seeking productive reason from the therapist.

Marx has never explicitly written about second nature per se. However, several writers use the term to describe the achievement of the commodity form from production. Marx's critique of history, dependent on random acts of great individuals, written by bourgeois beneficiaries, implies a second nature which mystifies the material process in which bodies and tools build reality. Peter Beilharz writes, 'Marx's premise here is that the reign of capital depends on a severance from nature. The wage-labour-capital relation depends on releasing the worker from the soil as his natural workshop. Precapitalist or for that matter premodern property forms depend on community relations that are naturally grown'. Further, Beilharz recalls Marx's view of nature as inextricably linked to human bodies while the wage labour is the product of history (Beilharz 2003, 29). The distinction refers back to Crary's exploration as capitalism forming an

atemporal 24/7 time. 24/7 time goes back to early theories of history such as Vico's position on history as exclusively social history (Chakrabarty 2009, 205), separate from ecological or deep history. The worker's severance 'from the soil' in Beilharz's words recalls the embodied rhetoric of the neoliberal worker achieving transcendence by denying animal rhythms.

Alfred Sohn-Rethel writes that second nature is the production of things in the monetised commodity form on top of 'the earth, with plants and animals, with our own bodies – in short, with first nature, the nature that was here first and which continues to exist' (Sohn-Rethel 2019). Descartes would say, in acquiescence with ecology-free human history proponents, that this first nature is irrelevant. Descartes doubts it away. Capitalism cripples it for profitable bodily and ecological collapse. Human history begins with the acts of great men consequently producing conscious and continuous 24/7 time. Biological rhythms of gathering food, sleeping, bodily expulsion and sexual acts precede consciousness or 24/7 time. This idea of the Bakhtinian grotesque body is tied closely to the evolution of biological life and cannot be pinned down to an epochal moment in social history or 24/7 time. Crary's position is that sleeplessness research is attempting to undo precisely this lack of control over first nature and bring first nature into 24/7 time. Bodily debility is enabled because it is experienced in terms of superficial ideas of freedom which keeps the work dogma intact. Recalling Soylent, Rhinehart and his team created the meal replacement so that they could work during mealtimes and find a solution to expensive grocery bills. The solution to capitalism shoring up time and space – the dimensions of embodied existence and deep time – is profitable and precarious band-aids.

Sohn-Rethel notes, citing *Capital*: 'In Marx, the differentiation between first and second nature appears as the opposition of the "natural form" and the "value form" of commodities. "Not an atom of matter enters into the objectivity of commodities as values; in this it is the direct

opposite of the coarsely sensuous objectivity of commodities as physical objects'" (Sohn-Rethel 2019).

Second nature or the commodity form in the capitalist context is enabled by the advent of exchange. However, exchange, itself, has not been inherently alienating as found in the gift economy in Mauss, revitalised by David Graeber in contemporary society in his formulation of the caring class – people who do things for other people such as healthcare workers, teachers, firefighters and so on. Unlike capitalist exchange, the gift economy involved exchanging objects as an extension of the people involved in the exchange. Care is embodied. Caring acts include the subjects. This is what drives anarchist thought. Unlike the social contract theorists like Hobbes who emphasised the need for an external ordering force to marshal humanity, anarchists believe that humans have the ability to naturally cooperate (Kinna 2018). This goes against the popular misconception of holding anarchism as synonymous with rioting and creating chaos. While Mauss cited premodern societies where gift exchange involved codes of honour and pride (Mauss 2002), anarchist exchange has been exemplified by strangers helping each other during Covid-19 and similar emergencies through informal, spontaneously organised means.

On the other hand, capitalist exchange requires abstraction. Everything becomes everything else in the form of money. Although real people are involved in financial exchange, they remain separate from the exchange. For instance, one can go the bank after receiving monthly wages, meet the teller and draw money. The exchange reinforces the customer's role in whichever line of work he or she is in and similarly consolidates the teller in his or her role of a teller. Unlike gift exchange, capitalist exchange does not include individual subjectivity insofar as it is not monetised. Neoliberalism intensifies this as organisations outsource various services to other organisations. The meeting of real people becomes pointless. Jean-Marc Vallée's film

Demolition (Vallée 2015) starring Jake Gyllenhaal has a good example. Gyllenhaal's character is

at a hospital after his wife's fatal accident. While he waits, he tries to get soda out of a vending

machine which does not work. He asks a receptionist to fix it who, with curt politeness, tells him

that the vending machines are the responsibility of a different company. Capitalism is in motion

through monetary exchange without the need to address immediate human needs. Abstraction

results in money acting as the ordering mechanism which social contract theorists had advocated.

Humans themselves need not be involved in the exchange.

Abstraction looks for the absence of embodied humanity, in search of the rational self.

Descartes abstracts the body by presenting the thinking thing as truly valuable. The thinking

thing, for Descartes, is the essence of all humans that ever existed or will exist. Cartesianism is

found in neoliberalism with the emphasis of inner uniqueness to be brought to work for profit.

The body, itself, need not be present in that the work demands could disregard sleep hours,

private life even without the need for a domineering authority figure. Biological rhythms could

be disrupted voluntarily in service of manifesting inner creativity for profit.

Biological rhythms are later realised in their debilitated form which can be productively

regulated. The final frontiers of the body need to be rationalised in order to create the perfect

working body in keeping with the rational mind. On top of learnt sedentariness, individuals adopt

sacrificial rituals such as delaying sleep or eating. Even the sphere of bodily expulsion has

potential for monetary realisation in the proliferation of the bathroom selfie. Stanley Kubrick

used bathrooms as spaces of vulnerability where a kind of literal or figurative nakedness, far

more potent than in the bedroom, is achieved. Kubrick portrayed marital dysfunction in *Eyes*

Wide Shut (Kubrick 1999), a maniacal writer ruminating on homicidal possibilities in *The*

Shining (Kubrick 1980), or a soldier deciding to end things after perceiving the loss of his

humanity in *Full Metal Jacket* (Kubrick 1987) inside bathrooms. Bathrooms evidently allow users to discard all masks and drop all social acts. It is only fitting, then, that the bathroom selfie, primarily taken by but not limited to women, is standard fare on social media and online dating profiles. Referencing the allyship ritual of women often visiting washrooms in groups, Eva Wiseman writes that makeup artist Charlotte Tilbury was hired to make the washroom of a London club 'Instagrammable' such that the bathroom 'with its flowered ceiling and vaginal colour palette, was the optimal space for applying, then documenting, your makeup. She added lighting dials, for guests to perfect their reflection'. Wiseman adds, 'While bathrooms have always been the places where we bond and lounge and rebuild ourselves with new layers of bronzer, now they are being designed with the performance of femininity in mind' (Wiseman 2018). The neoliberal self is able to highlight the most private version of itself for the market. Privacy is on display. By being in constant touch with the body by facilitating its debility through the interruption of the remnants of first-nature bodily processes, neoliberalism solves self-estrangement.

Georg Lukàcs, in *The Theory of the Novel*, investigates second nature in aesthetic terms, highlighting the relationship between the material design of socio-economics at a given time and its resultant artistic and cultural production. For Lukàcs, the birth of the novel reflects abstraction of material reality – 'The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality' (Lukács 1971, 56). The world of epics involved heroic people with clearly defined tasks with their surrounding universe having comprehensible laws. The epic, thus, consisted of what Lukàcs calls 'extensive totality of life' (Lukács 1971, 46), as did scriptural narratives. The epical world comprised Edenic oneness where all objects, events

and characters were secured with meaning. The epic hero does not compulsively look for purpose like the depressed individual. Reality has its boundaries. The epic world seems to be built out of first nature although it is still using divinity as a conduit. With the death of God in modernity, it is down to the subject to create meaning. This age of disenchantment anticipates the psychopolitical individual rebelling inward. Novelisation is the narrative form of the disenchanted modern era in need of meaning. Therefore, in novels and ensuing storytelling which followed, the hero is hidden. His or her motivations are often a subject of construction just as career days at school compel children to think about future job options. For Lukàcs, the novel is the narrative form of second nature featuring the rookie protagonist as opposed to the communally revered epic hero.

Lukàcs anticipates his theory of reification as he observes that second nature is that of 'man-made structures' which humans use to order society but find the experience alienating (Lukács 1971, 63). Lukàcs observes, 'Estrangement from nature (the first nature), the modern sentimental attitude to nature, is only a projection of man's experience of his self-made environment as a prison instead of a parental home' (Lukács 1971, 64). Weber calls this phenomenon an iron cage (Weber 2005, 123), typifying bureaucratic rationalised modernity. As industrial modernity was followed by post-industrial neoliberalism, the iron cage evolved into coercive freedom (Han 2017, 1). The epic hero meeting destiny is supplanted by the novel's hero looking for one in the abstracted commodity form. The world of the novel creates second-nature meaning because it is preoccupied with the abstract reality created by financialisation.

Second nature as the dominion of the commodity follows Cartesian retroactive essentialisation of the human. Quotidian examples of this include defenders of capitalism claiming that it is the economic system most in tune with human nature – something Marx's

version of communism never accounted for, that desire in its capitalist form is natural and humans need an external ordering principle in the commodity form of things and people. Descartes' inference that humans are thinking things is arrived at. The thinking thing is the second nature which is used to negate the body.

The creation of the standardised, docile working body rests on this assumption that true human nature must be worked towards. It presumes the generalised notion of alienation as severance or exile following which attempts to restore true nature must be made. The embodied rhetoric involves training the body to be docile as well as to perceive disruptions of biological rhythms to be acts of revolt. After the work of the wage slave, the worker transforms non-work time into productive "me-time" either in the form of a side-hustle, where a supposedly more authentic version of the self is monetised, or leisure rituals like doomscrolling and night-outs that cripple any opportunity for unalloyed rest and rejuvenation. Accepted leisure rituals constitute productive rebellion against the workday's toil. However, not only is the sanctity of the workday preserved, the body partakes in capitalist leisure precisely to challenge its first-nature biology. Another instance of dehumanising rituals being presented as aspirational is long-distance air travel. Used exclusively by the moneyed, "low-flying" budget airliners notwithstanding, air travel carries the veneer of elite status. This comes with being cramped into undersized seats, being overbooked, and putting oneself through the toil of shifting time zones, the harassment of being perceived as guilty before proving innocence by post-9/11 immigration and experiencing jetlag. Jetlag, now, like previously unpathologised behaviour like shyness, can be medicated with emerging chronobiotic drugs. Jet lag disorder has been removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) V and classified in 'Circadian rhythm sleep disorders' (Arendt 2018), a subtype category of International Classification of Sleep Disorders.

This is not to mention that air travel adds to a network of profiting industries comprising business or pleasure. Hotels will be booked. Arenas will be packed. New job positions will be filled. New regions will be Californicated to invite a creative class to work hard and play harder to enable areas to *thrive* through financialisation.

Tellingly, Josephine Arendt writes that the term 'jet lag' 'has now come into widespread use to describe "social jet lag," a state whereby body rhythms are not fully synchronised with the social/employment environment' (Arendt 2018). Social jet lag is precisely what the neoliberal self is chasing to cripple itself to the other side of second nature. Jet lag is a poster-experience of disrupting bodily rhythms through mental innovations. The fact that most innovations as well as work and non-work rituals do not take the body into account render them physical forms of philosophical thought-problems. For instance, Arendt writes that 'Jet Lag derives from the simple fact that jets travel so fast they leave your body rhythms behind'. This statement sharply mirrors Descartes' 'I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it' (Descartes 1996, VI–54). For turbocapitalism, speed is an acceptable substitute for non-extensity. The liquid modern, perpetually self-actualising self is so productively hyper-mobile that it is barely present anywhere and its body is continually manufacturing new pathologies to define itself in the commodity form.

In revisiting alienation, I am tying traditionally Marxian economic ideas to their more traditional roots in religion and idealist thought. Given the link between religion and modernity, I intend to explore the material world of capitalism from the lens of these primordial ideas like alienation, exile, and redemption through second nature oneness. The next section is introducing exile in the way I intend to use it in the second chapter, relating the debt economy to Original Sin.

EXILE: CREATING THE BODY FOR POST-MANUFACTURING CAPITALISM

The body must be made to not feel itself to usher in a new, profitable state. The thinking thing is second nature in the metaphysical sense. Descartes cripples the body philosophically by doubting it to arrive at thoughtful second nature. Second nature is a rationalised recreation of a lost essence and the redefinition of the body and its capacities. Descartes' presumption of the doubtful – hence, deficient – body is his adoption of the alienated position as an originary or ontological state. This alienation follows the logic of severance or exile from oneness. There are several philosophical and religious precursors to the idea of oneness. The Bible has Edenic oneness between God and the apple pickers before the Fall which resulted in Adam and Eve's cognizance of their own bodies. Exile and severance play a significant role in Judaeo-Christian thought including the Fall and Babylonian exile. By doubting the body and reclaiming humanity in the form of the thinking thing, Descartes creates the preconditions of a second coming – a return from exile to a new oneness – Neuralink, for instance.

When the neoliberal self disrupts biological rhythms to impair the body, it is enacting doubt to restore this new oneness in the abstract commodity form where the body can be offered to financialised reality. The body, through debility – doubt for Descartes – is being exiled towards financialised oneness. Even in Marxist theory of history, when there was, once, primitive communism, there will come a time of post-socialist communism (Weeks 2011).

Capitalism, during the stage of manufacturing in factories, operated on the basis of scarcity – there must be enough goods and resources to produce for society to flourish. In the 20th century, World War II provided the rationale for an exiled society which spurred development as post-war restoration. Neoliberalism justified the dissolution of welfare economics paving the way for the private self to be put on the market. Exile was individualised,

marking the return of the Cartesian subject who must achieve through reflective innovation. The lack of economic safety nets meant that the achievement subject must innovate itself out of precarity. However, the preceding decades saturated space for scarcity-based production. Physical scarcity was a lesser concern, manufacturing having been outsourced to poorer regions with more natural and human resources. Neoliberalism initiated the entrepreneurial subject who must pay his or her debt to return from exile in the credit economy. The neo-Cartesian subject must achieve its way out of deficiency into the financialised promised land. By adopting the commodity-form, the individual is on the way towards second nature. This is why, in the digitisation of entertainment, all the popular arts have collapsed into "content". If the novel was the artform of bureaucratic modernity for Lukàcs, the novel form drawing attention to the way in which industrialised society marvelled at its own form, social media content is the appropriate artform of 24/7 neoliberalism. Solid modernity, in Bauman's terms, had rules if followed, would provide some form of stability, epitomised by the welfare state. The worker could finish the day's tasks and return to a potentially non-work home although it did provide a space of support, solace and recovery but to a lesser degree compared to the neoliberal productive home filled with optimised, arbitrary alliances Bauman speaks of.

In a post-scarcity society, the debt economy ensures the continuation of the growth model which would enable the endless return from exile. Since the economy is individualised, growth becomes an obligation to succeed such that the economic realm is traversed as a Campbellian hero's journey parodying the epic world and the novel of solid modernity. In such a situation, manual work gives way to cognitive innovation. The body of the cognitive worker, ontologically exiled, must learn bodily best practices in service of rational essence including crippling animal

abilities towards financialised second nature – the new oneness to end alienation to complete the

Cartesian journey of the transcending thinking thing leaving the body behind.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have been talking about a Cartesian-rationalist move towards

disembodiment which the body undertakes by training itself to disrupt biological rhythms to

bring about a second nature of the body which would be completely within the scope of

financialisation. However, this has its roots in the birth of rationalisation based on negating

relational contexts to reach universal consensus by abstraction, resulting in the *cogito*,

manifesting materially in Weber's iron cage as rationalism advanced alongside capitalism.

Descartes' project heralding the thinking thing as human essence created the

philosophical precedent of second nature. It mirrors the religious arc of debt and redemption of

oneness in the afterlife which is manifesting in the attempt of an immaterial reality where the last

vestiges of biological first nature such as sleep, eating, bodily expulsion, procreation, leisure and

spontaneous sociality are in the process of being rationally financialised. The Cartesian essence

is an encapsulation of the legacy of rationalisation overtaking humanism as noted by Toulmin.

But the reunion of the two strands is suitably accommodated in neoliberalism as humanism is

rationalised. This self-actualisation is performed on the crippling deficient body to bring about

second nature. It is evident that rationalism and capitalism cannot be explored in the absence of

the history of religious developments in the 1600s. Therefore, Toulmin's account explains

Cartesian negative dogmatism in its historical context away from the intention of rationalists to

find context-free truth. Considering the relationship between religion and productive work, in the

following chapter, I explore the originary state of exile or voluntary alienation that the self craves

through the embodied rhetoric by investigating the role of guilt in disciplining the deficient body

and preventing work refusal.

Chapter 2 – Work and Guilt

The last chapter argued that neoliberalism was capitalism's offering of humanism after the highly rationalised factory era that had producing the dehumanised alienated worker. Stephen Toulmin had historicised the distinction between humanism and rationalism by identifying Montaignian humanism during the Renaissance until the 1600s and Cartesian rationalism post-1600s. Rationalism was against the pluralistic, contingent and practical worldbuilding of the humanists who used diverse intellectual approaches to create functional realities around embodied experience. Rationalists wanted a singular explanation of reality in abstract, mathematically measurable terms. Addressing this milieu, Kathi Weeks enumerated two Marxist strands – socialist modernisation and a socialist humanism – that paralleled Toulmin's broader historicisation of late Renaissance and Enlightenment periods. The twin origins of modernity – humanism and rationalism – have been in constant tussle. Rationalism has been preserved by bureaucracy and scientific management in factories prompting a humanist critique of the iron cage. To be clear, socialist humanism maps onto Renaissance humanism, and socialist modernisation onto rationalism. Weeks advocates for less work and increased free time as opposed to marketised opportunities offered to the entrepreneurial achievement subject to manifest inner essence (Weeks 2011). I have referred to neoliberalism's emphasis on individual self-actualisation mediated through and measured in terms of financialisation as rationalised humanism. Put differently, purportedly immaterial, individualistic qualities like knowledge, creativity and related entrepreneurial faculties must be made measurable in abstract monetary terms to exist within capital. This chapter builds on the premise of rationalised humanism in evoking a collective aversion to and fear of refusing capitalist work. The influence of rationalised humanism is effective, to a great extent, because of the inescapable presence of religion in the

history of rationalism. Weber traces the Protestant roots of capitalism, which itself is regarded as the economic manifestation of evolving rationalisation of reality and social processes. Toulmin had noted that the rationalists wanted a new ontology of humanity through negative dogmatism (Toulmin 1992). Since embodied reality was stripped away by rational doubt, what it means to be human has been characterised by a lack or a state of deficiency that must be overcome by rational growth. Capitalism has mirrored this state of deficiency through the logic of scarcity necessitating growth. For Descartes, deficiency manifested in the unreliable body must be transcended by the thinking thing. Since rationalism creates decontextualised, static truths, it is impossible to identify when transcendence would achieve completion and the growth project would end, making way for free time and care work. Deficiency, in its status as an initiatory mechanism, demanding participation in the ritual of entrepreneurial redemption, recalls Original Sin, reinstating the religious background of rationalism. The rationalist need to move beyond the untenable dark ages of unreliable humanism towards modernity, condensed in Descartes' identification with his mind as essence, enabling him to live on without the doubtful body, mirrors the general framework of Original Sin involving a Biblical Fall into an embodied state of deficiency and the quest for redemption. Therefore, refusing work in its commodity-form is untenable because Original Sin has been weaved into rationalism, through negative dogmatism creating a state of lack, and into capitalism in the form of the debt economy. Rationalised humanism requires the cognitive faculties of the entrepreneur who must also offer the body in sacrificial service to financialised absolution.

PROFITABLE CREATIVITY: DISCOVERING MARKETISED INNER SELVES

In the introduction to the dissertation, I had defined the embodied rhetoric of cognitive labour as the process through which 'the self must constantly remake the body to render it

productively pliant to rational disciplinary principles' in order to manufacture a second nature that transcends the causal body. The productive body is perpetually on high alert for entrepreneurial achievement opportunities. As the embodied rhetoric rationally orders the productive body, it supposedly enables inner essence to shine through in its correct form as marketable creativity and knowledge, following the Cartesian trajectory in *Meditations*. Thus, the self-fashioning of the embodied rhetoric, resulting in the productive body, includes producing material iterations of purportedly immaterial qualities in their commodity-form to be abstracted into money in the market. One could speculate what creativity could look like outside capitalism, without deadlines and with more of what Weeks calls 'what we will' time (Weeks 2011, 15). Graeber had offered a possible example of a Spanish civil servant who, having fallen out of favour with his managers who were not assigning him any tasks, briefly managed to create a new reality. He was able to skip work for six years to become a Spinoza expert (Graeber 2019, 3). The only feasible way to become a Spinoza expert within capitalism would be to enter the highly regulated schedule of a graduate scholar which would come with deadlines, considerations of funding periods, conference attendance, progress reports, and other university tasks not directly related to reading Spinoza. The budding researcher is also expected to attend workshops concerning mindfulness, stress management, writer's block, and procrastination. Eventually, the scholar would be able to gain the social approval of a doctoral degree which he or she would use to access secure livelihood including prevention of social ostracisation. Outside capitalist time, notions of expertise would change. The civil servant, in fact, was reading Spinoza as an amateur. Amateur comes from the Latin 'amare' which means 'to love' ("Amateur" n.d.). Anthropological accounts of Suzman and Graeber with Wengrow indicate that "premodern" tribes have had plenty of free time to pursue rest and play (Graeber and Wengrow 2022; Suzman 2021)

The first-nature materiality of the body becomes increasingly inconsequential, as regards capitalist 24/7 time. Humanism is rationalised by the market as individual skills are monetarily measured. But, financially acceptable material iterations of individual inner qualities – cognitive work – are produced by productive bodies. The embodied rhetoric manufactures the second-nature productive body which makes inner qualities discoverable, ripe for financial rationalisation by the market – the graduate scholar's creative inner self after workshopping the body will be discovered, made publishable and citeable with impact scores.

Rationalised humanism is overtly exemplified by the relentless marshalling of creativity for profit as explored by Oli Mould (Mould 2020, 3). Mould notes that creativity, in the neoliberal sense, is any act that is consistent with the search for profit. He observes the gradual divorce of creativity from its social and communal contexts towards individualisation which is congruent with the Enlightenment individual – 'creativity … had gone from being a divine power, to a socialised and collective endeavour, to an individual characteristic that could be traded. Being creative now had value. It was a character trait that was much sought after by employers, businesses and governments; it was an exchange value to be exploited' (Mould 2020, 8). As a result, far from being a revolutionary act of artists, creativity enabled the preservation of the status quo. Hustle culture celebrates the rags-to-riches story fundamental to the American dream where an individual must innovate himself or herself out of precarity, inner creativity expressing itself in the financialised commodity-form. In *Manufacturing Happy Citizens*, Edgar Cabanas and Eva Illouz cite the biopic of Christopher Gardner in *In Pursuit of Happiness* (2006) starring Will Smith. Gardner, as essayed by Smith, begins his financialisation journey as a lowly family man who becomes instantly inspired while standing in front of a stockbrokerage firm. He loses his wife who does not support his dream, faces myriad challenges but never loses his

entrepreneurial resolve, eventually landing his dream job – or happiness – at the company. The promotion of the film featured the common refrain in these stories that only in America is such a miracle possible. The moral of the biopic is that individuals can remain determined, optimistic and take responsibility to reach the state of financialised security (Cabanas and Illouz 2019, 1–5). America enabled Gardner to "be himself" on his way to success by giving him a stage to showcase his inner qualities which were rationally measured, giving him the possibility of redemption. Further, Gardner's personality was also ordered as he leveraged his temperament. His wife is shown incapable of keeping up with him, her humanity proving to be insufficiently suitable for rationalisation. Mould presents a similar example of a genuinely gifted but homeless busker asking for money after a performance, claiming that he is just a few dollars short of a musical theatre programme. Mould reflects that the busker, though talented, is following the only blueprint – a hopeless dream he would perpetually work towards but never realise, roping audiences into his fantasy – available to him to make it out alive – 'This man clearly had a gift, and he was using it in a way that many others with similar talent use it: he was selling it' (Mould 2020, 1–3).

The tyranny of rules is supposedly dismantled in neoliberalism, and anyone could be an artist and anything could be art. Steve Jobs was one of the chief proponents who repackaged factory work in terms of innovation and creativity. Of course, the bodies behind these massive corporate endeavours stay hidden, but, the aura of creativity is often injected by artists themselves. Significantly, Apple's advertisement for its Macintosh in 1984 was directed by Ridley Scott. The advertisement features a revolution which brings change in the world from Orwell's novel. Scott was chosen to direct the advertisement because of his cyberpunk film *Blade Runner* which had been released two years earlier (Isaacson 2015, 150). Scott paralleled

struggling artists far beneath his stature who would have to resort to small gig-offerings from corporations and political parties in the form of jingles, event programming and short films. Art has been used to increase the mystification process of the commodity form. Ridley Scott's filmmaking and artistry have nothing to do with Jobs and Apple. The often-coerced collaborations between artists and corporations allow for the latter to partake in the aura of the former while the former runs the risk of being seen as selling out. It banalises art, demoting it to the realm of precarious wage seekers by emphasising the routinised, physical regime of prolific creative output while business leaders can project themselves as unique minds.

In a post-Steve Jobs world, creativity has increasingly been claimed by business leaders as an engine for innovative growth where the growth of capital is tied to personal development and private resourcefulness. The humanism of neoliberalism involves the belief that everyone has a creative self with sound intellectual faculties built inside them that would neatly come together with external market demands. Thus, one perceives the severance of creativity from arts and aesthetics, rendered a generalised faculty to be used in any kind of profitable work. Neoliberal freedom enables individuals to embark on their humanistic journey subject to punitive market forces. Like the toiling body that must be conceived in rational terms, inner qualities like creativity must also assume a specific form conducive to capitalist valuation. The post-factory stage of capital is to be built on inner qualities, accompanied by the removal of purported hindrances of governmental bureaucracy and inefficient welfare.

Yann Moulier-Boutang describes an intensification of such globalised liquification of organised society and institutions in neoliberalism – 'The administrative levels that had slowly been built out of the decomposition of the Middle Ages (the city-towns, the modern state, the nation, and latterly the international organisations) lose both their substance and their relevance

when it comes to addressing problems and taking decisions independently and coherently'.

Unlike colonialism, globalisation does not expand territory. Instead, 'it "de-territorialises" and

"re-territorialises" spaces, and it disarticulates homogeneities and cohesions instantly' (Moulier-

Boutang 2011, 49). Thus, it undermines the material identity of spaces and things or creates

models of post-globalisation places in what Mould describes as placemaking – urban planning

that attracts affluent, entrepreneurial residents or Richard Florida's creative class while

unhousing existing local people and traditions (Mould 2020, 158). This explains the tired

corporate trope parroted by tourists and university students who claim to be enriched by

experiencing different cultures. The notion of multiculturalism is left unquestioned and

uncritically celebrated inside what Peter Sloterdijk calls the world-interior of capitalism in *The*

World Interior of Capital or Slavoj Žižek's cupola in *The Courage of Hopelessness*, both

referring to a specific post-industrial, urban class. The materiality that remains is utterly

replaceable. This explains why many American films set in American cities are shot in Toronto

and Vancouver (Epstein 2006). Many cities of the Global South, like Bangalore, rebranded from

"Garden City" to India's IT hub, and Kolkata, with its Rajarhat New Town area built primarily to

attract affluent or non-resident Indians (NRIs), follow suit. These cities are aping North

American cities in the design of social and residential spaces instead of following the internal

design rationale of a place based on geological, environmental, and historical characteristics. The

feasibility of skyscrapers considering the climate and population of India is always a question. I

will return to the last point in the later chapter on environmental decline and Covid-19 lockdown.

While arriving at Moulier-Boutang's definition of cognitive capitalism, the humanist

stance of post-factory immaterial work assuming an innate creative capacity in individuals to

monetise becomes apparent. His definition features a technical use of the term 'accumulation' –

'the investments that a society makes both via its public authorities and via the behaviour of private agents, whether in business or in households' (Moulier-Boutang 2011, 56). Moulier-Boutang is not just referring to wealth accumulation, but the effort put in with expected returns of wealth and functioning of society within a capitalist paradigm. Industrial capitalism depended on machinery, organisation of manual labour. On the other hand, 'cognitive capitalism is a different system of accumulation, in which the accumulation is based on knowledge and creativity, in other words on forms of immaterial investment' (Moulier-Boutang 2011, 56, 57). Moulier-Boutang goes on to highlight the role of creativity facilitated by the humanist bogey of 'better work' noted by Kathi Weeks (Weeks 2011, 86). Moulier-Boutang writes, 'the capture of gains arising from knowledge and innovation is the central issue of accumulation, and it plays a determining role in generating profits' (Moulier-Boutang 2011, 57).

Moulier-Boutang defines cognitive capitalism thus – 'By cognitive capitalism we mean, then, a mode of accumulation in which the object of accumulation consists mainly of knowledge, which becomes the basic source of value, as well as the principal location of the process of valorisation' (Moulier-Boutang 2011, 57). In *Capital*, Chapter 7, Marx uses the term valorisation to describe the realisation of capital when it exceeds its own use-value to generate profit (Shapiro 2008, 76). Valorisation is also popularly understood as the production of surplus value. Moulier-Boutang asserts that the body does not disappear although relieving the body had been promised by "being yourself" where the self manifests in immaterial creativity producing work that is to be identified as more thoughtful than embodied. The body supposedly stops being the site of work where value is created. It is relegated to concealment – the phenomenon explored as the myth of immaterial media by Sean Cubitt where he highlights that apparently immaterial cloud-computing depends on large amounts of fossil fuel-dependent server rooms (Cubitt 2017).

Moulier-Boutang, himself, implies the manipulation of physical spaces and bodies – 'The strategies of this capitalism are determined by the quest for a spatial, institutional and organisational positioning likely to increase its capacity for engaging in creative processes and for capturing their benefits'. The reordering of the body is done in faux-stealth mode as the Cartesian, post-industrial creative class looks away in disciplinary denial in keeping with the doctrine of negative dogmatism:

> The mechanical transformation of matter by means of a twin expenditure of energy and labour power does not disappear, but it loses its centrality in favour of a cooperation of brains in the production of the living by means of the living, via the new information technologies, of which the digital, the computer and the Internet are emblematic.
> (Moulier-Boutang 2011, 57)

Besides the bent towards non-extensity in the body's loss of centrality to cooperation of brains, the production of the living by means of the living is interestingly phrased. The words recall the celebrated aphoristic definition of democracy attributed to Lincoln, now used in more recently self-governing countries like India – "of the people, by the people, for the people". Descartes could be regarded as an earlier proponent of political equality in his identification of the sovereign *cogito* as the essence of all humans. It stands to reason that technological, cognitive work is becoming increasingly aspirational in the era of neoliberal creativity. Production of the living by the living is contrasted with the production of things by machines during industrial capitalism. Moulier-Boutang seems to suggest that production of the living by the living has an immediate impact on the lived experience of humans. Since the site of work is the mind which produces knowledge, it creates more ways of being which are more cognitive than embodied – 'I can achieve an easier and more evident perception of my own mind than

anything else' (Descartes 1996, II–23). In *Discourse,* Descartes propounds a similar sentiment – 'I knew I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is simply to think, and which does not require any place, or depend on any material thing, in order to exist. Accordingly, this "I" … is entirely distinct from the body, and indeed is easier to know than the body' (Descartes 1985, 1:Part Four, 127) . The nature of work is meant to become increasingly non-extended, in the Cartesian sense, and immaterial, in a Marxist sense, addressing alienation. However, as mentioned, Descartes does perceive the body by a special right. Moulier-Boutang acquiesces by saying that mechanical transformation of matter courtesy energy and labour power does not disappear. The crucial marginalisation of the body as well as its present inability to disappear constitutes the foundation of this discussion. The immediate dismissal of the body during the transcendence of the mind is not possible. During the cooperation of unalienated brains using digital networks, the body is provided with a reprieve or so it seems.

Adhering to an ontology of deficiency due to the unreliability of the senses including the construction of contingent, embodied realities, the body takes on a sacrificial role, in line with the evangelism of the exaltation of the Godly thinking thing. The post-industrial body does work in the form of producing debility, aiding in its own destruction to live up to the free-acting rational mind, leaving its own causal nature. The embodied rhetoric complies with the cooperation of magnificent brains carrying out the Cartesian project of mental transcendence, actively alienating the body from its biological predispositions towards a manufactured second nature. Moulier-Boutang notes the same – 'Knowledge of the living and the means of producing it are at the heart of the transformation of the contemporary paradigm of production. Biotechnologies are currently in the process of domesticating the living in order to turn it into a

transformation vector that will be far more powerful and better suited to the constraints of the biosphere' (Moulier-Boutang 2011, 56).

 The sacrificial role of the body that Descartes and the rationalists introduced in modern philosophy through negative dogmatism is comfortably compatible with major world religions that modernity had purportedly left behind, allowing for seamless secularisation of prioritising the immaterial mind over the subservient body. Max Weber had implied that the presence of immaterial motivations was significant in his exploration of the different strands of Protestantism in relation to the work ethic – 'We are interested … in the influence of those psychological sanctions which, originating in religious belief and the practice of religion, gave a direction to practical conduct and held the individual to it' (Weber 2005, 55). The adoption of psychological sanctions in Weber's time anticipates psychopolitics sans religion in neoliberalism. The process of bodily denigration is starkly described in David Courtwright's term limbic capitalism which capitalises the body's capacities for addiction with more overtly invasive methods to make the body docile and forever for sale. I will come to limbic capitalism later in this chapter. Currently, an investigation of the drives behind evangelical bodily denigration is required. Chief among them is guilt.

GUILTING THE REFUSAL OF WORK

 Max Weber is the foremost of thinkers tying modern work cultures to religiosity in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* by highlighting that the near-universally revered principles of hard work in tandem with frugality and denial within the industrial class lead to accumulation, constituting a capitalist ethos. It is not a coincidence that the facilitation of religion, specifically the Judeo-Christian tradition out of which Weber singles out Protestantism as the theological framework for capitalism, requires Moulier-Boutang's cooperation of brains.

The religious text could either be perceived as a mythified rendition of the human experience or a rudimentary form of virtual reality since the player-believer is superimposing a new layer of meaning, moral principles including the assumption of future consequences from current actions on top of tangible bodies. The monotheistic religions, in their function of community and a shared experience of textual reality, involve believers in at least a foundational form of cognitive work. Religious texts assumed an elemental form of the promise of "bringing people together". To a large extent, they have been more successful than their neoliberal counterparts, considering the actual congregation of a significant amount of people in mosques and churches on Fridays and Sundays respectively. The Christianisation of time as evident in the secularisation and universalisation of the Gregorian calendar is an agreement to enable the perception of the passage of time in those who have opted into civilisational progress. Thus, cognitive work was to believe. Faith is especially interesting when it is strongly exercised in the absence of a physical religious environment – how one conducts oneself in the post-religious world during the remaining six days. This also accounts for a potent work ethic which invades non-work hours of the post-industrial worker. What religious activity, with the gradual trivialisation of congregation, and post-industrial work, with the receding presence of workers' mobilisation, have in common is individualisation.

Weber points to the formation of an affluent cognitive class who had become Protestant although he concedes that historical factors also played a role of Protestantism dominating wealthy demographics – 'business leaders and owners of capital, as well as the higher grades of skilled labour, and even more the higher technically and commercially trained personnel of modern enterprises, are overwhelmingly Protestant' (Weber 2005, 3). However, since the owners

of capital at the top are few in number, capitalism is now transformed for the entrepreneurial self with self-owned material, leveraging supposedly immaterial cognitive capital.

While relating capitalism to Protestantism, Weber writes of the ascetic approach to life for the aspirational individual aiming for accumulation, which has translated into a displaced evangelism at the cost of the body in the realm of individualised work. The primacy of physical congregation receded and the personalisation of faith or the complete lack of it has been considered as progressive developments. Weber mentions that the intensification of capitalism resulted in the redundance of an identifiable theological justification like Protestantism (Weber 2005, 124).

Weber notes that Christian Protestantism, among other factors, supplied the individual with an authoritative metaphysical framework to enact the spirit of capitalism. A key facet of Protestantism that Weber studies is the notion of predestination among the Calvinists. Following the doctrine of total depravity (Weber 2005, 82), Calvinists pursue man's innate Fallen nature. It is not a stretch to perceive the fusion of philosophical and theological thought such as total depravity translating into a post-religious nihilism or, more recently, antinatalism which could further be pathologised as depression. In fact, antinatalism could be read as a desire to reverse Original Sin since the introduction of life, itself, enables total depravity or Original Sin. In Cartesian terms, the existence of the body could be the work of an evil demon duping humanity and the knowledge of the mind superseding the doubtful body amounts to reattaining divine grace. Descartes, while identifying the body as deficient, being subject to doubt, reaffirmed Original Sin in *Meditations*. Descartes' prophecy of mental transcendence mirrored the desire for heavenly salvation – 'I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it' (Descartes 1996, VI–54)'.

A critical intervention regarding Original Sin is found in the work of American existential psychologist Rollo May, specifically, his term 'ontological guilt' which is a literal translation of Original Sin (May 1958, 64). Away from the overly clinician gaze of the typical psychologist in the Freudian tradition, May emphasises the significance of exploring the self in its metaphysical or philosophical contexts, referencing phenomenological notions like being and non-being (May 1958, 52). For May, both anxiety and guilt are ontological in that they are not a response to a specific life experience but are innately present in the human condition. May likens anxiety to dread and defines it as the feeling of the threat of being turned into non-being (May 1958, 51). Anxiety is characterised by inner conflict which is the constant tussle between being and non-being, anticipated or disciplined by the Cartesian doubtful body. For the modern desk worker, this inner turmoil is perceived in the obsession with productivity. Being is renewed daily and is measured and rationalised through smart devices. The bodily effort of a run, including mental or psycho-physiological qualities like tenacity, attention and endurance, found in heroic epic narratives are legitimised only on an application and measured in terms of *cogito*-centric reality. Bodily sensations must translate into numbers. On the other hand, work that is primarily cognitive in nature must carry the respective bodily signifiers of disrupted biological rhythms and homeostasis like physical stiffness, backache, various ophthalmological concerns like computer vision syndrome, sacrifice of sleep and food rituals as discussed in the previous chapter. Bodily debility from biologically disruptive work performed is perceived as existential relief after successful adherence to productivity, the absence of which would result in non-being or the usual feelings of a day wasted. For May, anxiety and guilt lie close together – 'We have stated that the condition of the individual when confronted with the issue of fulfilling his potentialities is anxiety. We now move on to state that when the person denies these

potentialities, fails to fulfil them, his condition is guilt' (May 1958, 52). It is reasonable to see

May's observations operate in the world of precarity where the neoliberal self, a perpetually

reinventing project instead of a subject – as noted by Byung-Chul Han, is always looking to milk

multiple opportunities for never-ending, profit-driven self-actualisation. May's reference to

Kierkegaard's description of anxiety as '"the dizziness of freedom"' parallels Bauman's concerns

in his case of liquid modernity (May 1958, 52). The kind of existential anxiety voiced by Rollo

May, mirroring Original Sin, is traced in the context of liquid modern neoliberalism as a nagging

feeling of existential dread by David Goldberg.

In *Dread: Facing Futureless Futures*, Goldberg notes a diffuse sense of dread normalised

by geopolitical instability tied to socioeconomic precarity, differentially experienced based on

one's skin colour, age and sex. Like Matthew Huber, Goldberg highlights humiliating post-9/11

air travel stress and belligerent border police overreach. Goldberg highlights the phenomenon of

individuals being 'randomly selected' for often unwarranted and variously trumped-up screening

tests, particularly at airport arrivals (Goldberg 2021, 1). Of course, this authority was bolstered

by Covid-19 which provided currency to the moral justification of random selection of

passengers for testing. This meant that some passengers, by sheer bureaucratically engineered

luck, would be able to swiftly move on with their lives, infected or not, from the airport while a

randomly selected number would experience significant delays. However, this was the case

before Covid-19 as well especially at American airports as authorities had the power to stop

anyone for additional screening. Covid-19 humanised surveillance measures as benevolent

protection. Goldberg observes that the dreaded prospect of being randomly selected follows

individuals around outside airports such as being at the site of a mass shooting or bombing

(Goldberg 2021, 24). One's existence at any place could potentially transform into being in the

wrong place at the wrong time extending to precarious housing and jobs ended by unceremonious evictions and lay-offs.

Crary had mentioned that military practices seeped into society in the ways sleep is interrupted for profit and efficiency. Likewise, Goldberg states that surveillance capacities of a post-Snowden world have entered commerce. Goldberg mentions a Jay-Z concert in Toronto, 2014, where the concerned marketing and analytics company tracked smartphones of concertgoers, how long they were at the venue, where they had been before and after the event (Goldberg 2021, 73). Ticketmaster, which monopolises ticket sales capacities in major popular events, has aggressively made mobile tickets the norm. An Ontario resident Debbie Ervine had trouble attending an Elton John concert because she uses a flip phone and a landline. CTV News reporters picked up her story and contacted Ticketmaster who asked them to contact Rogers Centre who further asked them to get in touch with the venue's box office for assistance. Ervine reflects – 'I can't believe I can't see Elton John because I don't have a smartphone' (Foran 2021). While Ervine eventually had a smartphone-owning friend buy her tickets, that is not the point. The point is enforcing consumption practices and characterising digital technology as smart and empowering due to supposed speed and efficiency. One is supposed to want to use smart devices and be tracked.

The proliferation of smart technology entails an odd quietism. One comes back to the acceptance of ontological guilt which is now socially distributed through the apparently voluntary participation in surveillance. Employers use tracking apps and smartwatches to evaluate employee performance, time spent at the desk and so on. Biopolitics is still at large. It appears as psychopolitics because the devices of control are titillating and toy-like, pacifying users while keeping them in a nominal sense of dread. Other forms of communication are

concealed such that individuals run out of options in order to *choose* forms of control. Goldberg refers to this form of political economy as tracking-capitalism (Goldberg 2021, 79). Ervine wanted to see her idol live. She was randomly selected for harassment for the phone she used. Digital supremacy forces a technological quietism out of people who would surrender to lifestyle demands made by companies. It could be speculated that the anti-vax movement is a part of this quietism involving bodily surrender. Since there are no avenues for opting out, the anti-vax movement is refusal as parody. Since all of autonomy has been financialised, anti-vaxxers possibly hold on to a new opportunity to refuse even at the cost of bodily safety and good health. Since refusing capitalism is impossible, the anti-vax stance appears as a secret, short-circuited critique of capitalism especially by those who are quick to associate governmental policies they do not like with socialism, used as an abstract catch-all term to describe the enemy.

It is not a stretch to see that random selection follows religious predestination. One must be a good conformist in the hopes of not being randomly selected. Random selection cannot be refuted because everyone is a sinner and can face damnation at any moment.

In The Bible, Original Sin begins with the body, but, more specifically, with mobility. Adam and Eve were tasked with the covenant of bodily passivity which was broken because they could not be Cartesian enough to doubt away their curiosity about their material reality. Their corporeal inaction and mental apprehension of a possible Eden instead of partaking in its tactile pleasures was to be human essence. In the end, they were condemned to a life of toil outside the garden. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, this image of the Fall works as an archetype of work as penance and serves as the basis for ontological guilt. In this case, one works because one is guilty. Guilt explains why work is mandated in the modern world even where the urban class has dealt with scarcity. Adam and Eve sinned by becoming aware of their body, losing God's grace

and were to work to redeem themselves. In other words, redemption was the aspirational loss of

perception of corporeality and the embrace of blissful, divine doubt.

The refusal of work is rendered untenable because work aims to win back grace and this

justification is accentuated by the Calvinist strand with its belief in predestination. But, one

wonders how work could be justified without the need to mitigate scarcity in post-industrial

capitalism where several urban centres are living in affluence in the Global North and an

increasing number of regions of the Global South. In this situation, the post-scarcity worker

continues to work by wearing his or her body down.

The modern worker must invent ways to enact and embody guilt. The industrial age had

newly discovered bureaucracy, a grand display of mental prowess which provided prescriptions

for controlling bodies. Weber explores this as rationalisation (Weber 2005, 30). Solomon J. Spiro

in his analysis of Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, notes that the protagonist known only as K is arrested

on his birthday and must appear at hearings on following Sundays, which he does so voluntarily.

Much of the novel is about K not prioritising efforts to find details of the charges against him but

trying his best to follow up on the scheduled hearings and becoming frustrated by the lack of

clarity of the nearly immaterial authorities in their official communications with him.

Throughout the novel, K never entertains the idea of simply ignoring the event of his arrest given

that, to his knowledge, he never committed a crime. What Weber identifies as rationalisation in

modernity and what is known as Kafkaesque in popular imagination amount to the same thing –

an exhibition of the marvel of bureaucracy which aims to put the body in a bind. Spiro notes that

K performs ontological guilt by playing along with the mysterious officials who arrest him as

well as execute him in an unceremonious fashion such that the event is in keeping with the

banality of daily rationalised life (Spiro 1971, 170). Weber's concerns of the marvel of

bureaucracy have been the dominating theme in Kafka's works. What Kafka's characters reveal is the internalisation and individual participation of rationalisation, anticipating the neoliberal, self-policing individual (Kafka 2010). The neoliberal self would not only adhere to K's behaviour by working on a Sunday but also assume an entrepreneurial spirit during other periods of leisure in the search for opportunities, creatively monetising anything which could possibly be monetised. This is consistent with the basic idea of May's ontological guilt which is the fear of not fulfilling one's potentialities. Limiting bodily socialisation, barely affordable access to fitness and the bureaucratisation of love as explored by Bauman in *Liquid Love*, Alain Badiou in *In Praise of Love*, and David Courtwright in *The Age of Addiction* constitute the final frontier of monetisation.

It is fair to see the pervasive presence of Original Sin in a post-religious world where theology, pathology and philosophy are entwined. A cross-cultural account of Original Sin is warranted to understand why the post-scarcity individual is primarily driven by guilt. Adam and Eve had transgressed divine law. Sin was sexually transmitted from Adam to Eve as the progenitors of humankind upon which sin became universal. In his *The Story of Original Sin*, John Toews reflects, 'To use theological language, I was taught as a young Christian and a college student that sin was an ontological reality, that I was sinful by nature apart from any choice or action of my choosing. Sin defined my being from the moment of conception' (Toews 2013, 14). A most notable religious contrivance in this regard is the notion of a Virgin Mary. Toews writes, 'The Virgin Birth of Jesus, we were told in class, was necessary to remove the male from the reproductive cycle in order to stop the transmission of sin' (Toews 2013, 13). While religious prudery is well-documented in Puritanism, the legacy of the virgin birth has translated into the use of dating applications and pornography in the age of digital neo-nunneries.

To clarify, within the scope of this project, I am using "pornography" to specifically describe online content that self-identifies as pornography, contributing to disembodied atomisation by offering potentially habituating products that could be used to avoid real-world physical intimacy (Yoder, Virden, and Amin 2005). For instance, in an instance of disaster capitalism, the website Pornhub was offering free premium membership worldwide in 2020 to encourage people to stay home during the Covid-19 lockdown (Ramirez 2020). I do not include fan fiction, erotic novels like the *50 Shades* books or sections of films, music videos or magazines that could be repurposed by consumers for personal use but which do not market themselves as pornography.

Just as the male needed to be removed to create a Virgin Mary birthing a miracle baby who would bear the sin of mortals, dating applications remove the prospect of bodily attraction to create the perfect match. In agreement with Badiou, Žižek discusses the promise of risk-free alliances in online dating which are, in fact, as Badiou points out, chance-free recreations of the arranged marriage (Badiou and Truong 2012, 8). Žižek discusses an advertisement of a dating service which pitches the scope to be in love without the fall (Big Think 2015). "Fall" here is loaded. The Fall of Man entailed a recognition of the body and the senses. To be in love without falling in it complies with the removal of socialising bodies as dating services perform their algorithmic miracle. Taken this way, the Virgin Mary, giving birth without the aid of a male body, is the first beneficiary of a match.

An earthly manifestation of the disembodied miracle of the guilt-free, unfallen Virgin Mary is the medical procedure in vitro fertilisation (IVF) to help women with fertility problems have a baby. The NHS website states the following: 'During IVF, an egg is removed from the woman's ovaries and fertilised with sperm in a laboratory. The fertilised egg, called an embryo, is then returned to the woman's womb to grow and develop' ("Overview - IVF " 2021). This is

indubitably great news for women with health problems who can afford the technology. However, several leading news organisations report the rise in single mothers choosing to give birth with the aid of IVF. Jericka Duncan of *CBS News* writes that medical advancements in fertility treatments and expansion of medical insurance are leading more women to choose to become single mothers either with the sperm of their partner or a donor (Duncan 2022). Jen Christensen of *CNN Health* had noted record number of IVF procedures having been performed in the early 2010s – 'This growing trend doesn't necessarily mean Americans are having more trouble having children. It may point to the fact that couples are having babies later … In 1980, the average age of a new mom was about 22. Now, the average age of a new mom is closer to 26, according to the CDC … fertility does decline as people age' (Christensen 2014). An increase, although not exponential, in fertility problems and people being able to live longer produces an odd situation. One needs to inspect why the world has created a social environment where men and women have to shelve romantic unions including baby making.

Atomisation in the modern work-infused urban living spaces has made finding love difficult with the attempted eradication of chance. Covid-19 has simply accentuated this phenomenon to exponential degrees. Additionally, economic precarity faced by adults has been allowed to fester requiring the physical effort and mental anguish spent behind student loans, auto insurances and affordable housing. In the presence of such unwarranted challenges, young people seemingly appear sufficiently Fallen and repentant while the disembodiment of the myth of virginity and paradise regained reveal themselves in the form of prolonged infancy in adulthood due to delayed financial independence, along with medical miracles like IVF during later adulthood with possibly more financial stability. These technologies follow a redemption arc consistent with theological thinking, including ever-expanding compassion discourses like

mental health increasingly responsible for relocating social maladies on to the individual. A true refusal of guilt would be to focus on creating socio-economic environments where such tools as IVF and anti-depressants are no longer needed. Stopping the attack on biological clocks of women and men as well as selling isolation in the guise of independence and preventing the stifling of in-person socialisation would be good starting points.

In the Biblical story of Original Sin, Adam and Eve were given the responsibility to look after the Garden of Eden and bask in their innocence of the knowledge of the human condition, especially mortality and suffering. During the period of innocence, Adam and Eve, though ignorant, were primarily characterised by abundance wherein an Edenic state was essentially a pre-scarcity state. This abundance extends to food as well as bodily pleasures. Toews notes that Adam and Eve did not begin making love after the Fall (Toews 2013, 24). After sinning, their bodies simply became self-aware. They did not begin working after exile either. That was their task in the garden as well. Toews writes that the connotations of sin and the salvation narrative became pronounced much later from the original creation of the text. The embellishment is attributed to Methodius of Olympus, a notable Greek Christian priest in the 3rd and 4th century (Toews 2013, 33). Toews observes: 'Why is it profoundly significant that this much later Christian and Greek "fall" construal is not stated or even suggested in the text? Because that means the story of salvation history, which is a fairly normative interpretive framework for a Christian reading' is an embellishment on 'broken relationships and exile' – a Jewish point of view. Toews writes that the original writers and the audience of the Bible were Jewish people 'living in exile trying to understand the profound tragedy of the destruction of their country … and their exile in Babylon' (Toews 2013, 34). Sin, Toews concludes, was present in relational terms and was not individualistic. In other words, sin could be interpreted in historical terms of

communal worldbuilding. Ontological guilt, therefore, is a later phenomenon congruent with Christianised modernity and the atomised individual which could be retroactively traced back to the entrepreneurial apple-pickers Adam and Eve. Before holding the individual guilty, sin was preceded by the collective trauma endured by a community. Without trivialising Jewish history, one could assume that what is now considered sin identified in the individual as ontological was the sum of collective pains of humans struggling against enemy tribes as well as the elements.

To understand a pre-Christian "sin", so to speak, is to refer to the needs to address immediate concerns of the living looking to ward off deprivation, being deficient in protection. There is no grand design of sin and redemption. This feels surprisingly close to premodern hunter-gatherer communities whose notions of work, sin, and, most significantly, scarcity, reveal their difference from modernity but also explain why the universalisation of Original Sin, order and chaos, good and evil was possible. James Suzman explores the history of work from a pre-scarcity state. In his *Work: A Deep History, from the Stone Age to the Age of Robots*, Suzman begins with the economic justification for work which is scarcity – a conclusion established by several economists throughout history (Suzman 2021, 4). Humans have always fought against the elements, various warring tribes have battled over resources. With civilisational advancements into modern capitalism, scarcity is transformed into desire. Scarcity was never-ending for primitive humans while they were living in what Agamben calls 'bare life', a state of earthy existence where humans look for means just to not die (Agamben 1998). With technological sophistication, surviving was replaced by thriving for some, at least, the aspiration to thrive.

The problem of scarcity is the most prominent defence of capitalism and the apparently ontological condition of always wanting more. In psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan refers to this as

objet petit a – his term for desire. For Lacan, desire is never quenched (The Dangerous Maybe 2019). No matter how much an individual accumulates, there is always an omnipresent lack, a desire-shaped hole. Dopamine has become a buzzword of interest amidst the rise of fitness and mental health discussions as well as the dominance of digital technology on the senses. Often characterised as a happiness hormone along with serotonin (Eske 2023), dopamine is the hormone which sends positive signals to the brain after a perceived achievement such that the individual feels encouraged to seek more goals to pursue. In short, it is the built-in reward system in humans and is also associated with mobility ("Dopamine " 2023). While both dopamine and serotonin play a role in the perception of pleasure, it is best to relate dopamine to desire and motivation and serotonin to happiness and stability for this discussion. Dopamine is also linked to studies in addictive behaviour, seeking the next rush or hit in gambling, heroin use, pornography browsing or Adam and Eve's quest to win back God's grace. Scarcity in Descartes' case translates to deficiency – the body's inability to be the thinking thing and to exist beyond reasonable doubt like the mind and God. The feeling of scarcity, especially the kind related to dopamine, is responsible for the archetypal dissatisfied artist looking for the next tune or the sportsperson aiming for the next record to break. However, for many people at work, dopamine-related pursuits are to occupy leisure time. Workers are left to enact bodily guilt by sacrificing dopamine-related priorities during the day while moonlighting in rushed side hustles.

Suzman claims that the problem of scarcity appears natural, given humanity's collective struggle for resources. However, that does not seem to apply to hunter-gatherer lifestyles as investigated by Suzman and other forms of social organisation that were outside modernity as detailed by David Graeber and David Wengrow in *The Dawn of Everything* (Graeber and Wengrow 2022) . In his study of the Ju/'hoansi "Bushmen" of the Kalahari Desert, Suzman notes

that the members have lived in a state of perceived abundance using their hunting skills, making the most of their immediate environment. Suzman's accounts are also quite recent, dating back to as late as the 1990s (Suzman 2021, 17). Hence, his observations are not to be treated as describing a society that is a prequel to the story of modernity. Countering the economic problem, Suzman writes, 'we now know that hunter-gatherers like the Ju/'hoansi did not live constantly on the edge of starvation. Rather, they were usually well nourished; lived longer than people in most farming societies; rarely worked more than fifteen hours a week; and spent the bulk of their time at rest and leisure' (Suzman 2021, 6). Suzman details further that the members of the group were able to spend most of their time without work because they did not spend efforts in storing food, did not aim accumulation of wealth or status and focused primarily on their immediate requirements. The way Suzman phrased the paradox of modernity reflects the ramifications of Original Sin: 'Where the economic problem insists that we are all cursed to live in the purgatory between our infinite desires and limited means, hunter-gatherers had few material desires, which could be satisfied with a few hours of effort' (Suzman 2021, 6).

The experience of deprivation or limited means is the one felt by the sinning exiles. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were one with God which is why they were innocent of the awareness of individual bodies. Hence, guilt is a result of an originary severance from an erstwhile oneness. However, for the Ju/'hoansi, oneness was embodied relationality before colonisation and absorption into the scarcity paradigm – what Suzman is referring to in his investigation of hunter-gatherers' depending on their environment. They would not worry about the next meal because it was already present. The mention of storing resources or the lack of it in the group also alludes to an absence of the conceptualisation of collecting value for a later reward which typifies Adam and Eve, and their modern financial framework for living built

around the sinners – the debt economy. The individualisation of sin takes the form of ceaseless, entrepreneurial adventure, exhibiting creativity. For economists, the human journey was 'a story of progress and that the engine of progress was our urge to work, to produce, to build, and to exchange' motivated to solve scarcity (Suzman 2021, 6). This stance, overtly rational, held in economics, mirrors the predestination assumption – that one should work and that good work is a sign of a predestined passage to the promised land – a capitalist world-picture made in the image of God and heaven. Given that Adam and Eve were tillers of the garden and later of the cursed earth, Suzman's claim about the advent of scarcity might not be a coincidence: 'there is good reason to believe that because our ancestors hunted and gathered for well over 95 percent of Homo sapiens' 300,000-year-old history, the assumptions about human nature in the problem of scarcity and our attitudes to work have their roots in farming' (Suzman 2021, 6–7).

In *The Dawn of Everything*, Graeber and Wengrow, reveal that primitive societies did not lack complex hierarchies. Neither was farming necessarily a death knell. Tribes and indigenous groups did have leaders and kings. Graeber and Wengrow mention that this is, in fact, how the term "noble savage" came about in Eurocentric anthropology. The nobility here is not one of naïve goodness, mirroring projected Biblical innocence, but aristocratic nobility (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 38). Life in these places also had the foibles of modernity, with contradictory capabilities of kindness and cruelty. However, the difference is that leadership did not command blind obedience and had to earn the trust of tribe members in decision-making as found in the Wendat group in North America encountered by Jesuits in the 1600s (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 41). This was an example of consensual democracy instead of democracy's contemporary iteration of the tyranny of the majority including elected officials having near-absolute power exemplified by weakened democracies like India as well as executive powers systemically

enjoyed by the US president. Graeber workshopped consensual or direct democracy during the Occupy meetings of invested participants in early 2010s (Graeber 2011b). The biggest takeaway from these accounts is how freedom worked and can be rescued from its post-religious, postcolonial corrupted form of free subjects subservient to all-knowing benevolent order. In fact, tribal leaders had to reason with members for their support (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 46). Graeber and Wengrow note that basic Enlightenment principles of individual autonomy reached imperial Europe after encounters with indigenous groups during colonial projects (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 35). Instead of the modern preoccupation with inequality, based on wealth parity, Graeber and Wengrow discuss existing forms of freedom which were later borrowed and mangled by European cultural chauvinists like Turgot (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 59), finding their way into Adam Smith.

Graeber and Wengrow's analysis highlights that freedom was not a zero-sum game, privately enjoyed at the cost of others, but the preservation of communal commons. Relational responsibilities would ensure the preservation of dignified individual autonomy. This involved acts like not refusing food requests, preventing people from drowning when possible and other forms of what Graeber calls baseline communism in several of his works. The Wendat censoriously observed – 'Europeans were constantly squabbling for advantage; societies of the Northeast Woodlands, by contrast, guaranteed one another the means to an autonomous life – or at least ensured no man or woman was subordinated to any other. Insofar as we can speak of communism, it existed not in opposition to but in support of individual freedom'. Thus, individual autonomy was far from atomised avoidance of people (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 48). Graeber and Wengrow's accounts reveal that modern forms of socio-economic organisation are, in fact, quite unreasonable, noticed by tribal leaders. It is humanly possible to actively aid in

the preservation of individual autonomy of another instead of neurotically attempting to shore up resources and bolt doors to preserve some form of fragile inner uniqueness that can be perceived only through atomised reasoning.

The Wendat form of individualism did not believe in the bunker. An increase in communality increased individual autonomy which itself is truly perceived in relation to others. Thus, autonomy through communally practised care was the answer to the question of scarcity. This is related to Eva Illouz's critique of negative freedom in modernity which is the pursuit of freedom from people instead of freely seeking bonds and mutuality.

Graeber and Wengrow explicate that equality was communally preserved and was not practised as equals under a sovereign ruler or institution. Thus, equality was directly tied to freedom. One could exercise one's autonomy without the fear of external control. Communality, in fact, increased accountability and made individuals more aware of the stakes of individual responsibility. In instances of crime, the entire clan of the perpetrator was held responsible for providing reparations. Therefore, committing crimes meant involving allies without their consent. Conversely, this 'made it everyone's responsibility to keep their kindred under control' (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 42). Thus, good conduct was a matter of personal pride and not the result of fear of punitive and retributive Hobbesian measures. Freedom in modernity is experienced in the presence of fear of disciplinary apparatuses such that it becomes individualised, something to be enjoyed in private. This has a lot to do with how human history was perceived with the introduction of Christian teachings during colonialism by which Europeans indoctrinated others into the progress project of one single human race. Marx has viewed history this way as well – that humans would naturally evolve into a single productive class finding freedom in unalienated growth.

The common insight from both Suzman and the accounts of Graeber and Wengrow is that there have been different models of social organisation existing until today. History of civilisation included many histories – that of the Wendat, of the Kalahari Bushmen, of farming societies as well as agrarian societies besides the history of industry-led modern civilisation. The notion of a common civilisation was a chauvinistic reaction to the favourable response of Enlightenment Europeans to indigenous accounts of freedom popular in the 1700s. Graeber and Wengrow write that A.R.J. Turgot, a French statesman, proposed that egalitarianism was possible for groups like the Wendat because of lack of progress and, therefore, their inferiority to European civilisation – that the indigenous groups enjoyed self-sufficient independence because they were equally poor. Turgot presented a history of growth which would become a lasting defence of capitalism for unimaginative economists that, the more a society develops, the difference in individual ability and skill becomes more apparent, therefore, free societies are bound to become unequal which would curtail some freedom. The world of the European colonisers was more unequal than that of the indigenous Americans because the former were ahead in history. Tribes, existing at the same time as industrialised modernity, were seen as remnants of what industrialised modernity used to be – in an earlier stage of social development that had failed to modernise like the Europeans. Hence, the social contract theorists were able to design a common state of nature out of which all of humanity sprang and had unequal progress (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 60).

Both Suzman and Graeber with Wengrow detail the influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition on premodern societies in their colonisation and integration into capitalism. Both the Wendat, in Graeber and Wengrow's accounts (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 48), and the Ju/'hoansi, studied by Suzman (Suzman 2021, 5), were bemused by the competitive scarcity

paradigm compelling work. There is also the moral component of scarcity-based work that warranted the involvement of authoritarian disciplinary measures upon the colonised tribespeople. Weber related modern capitalism to Protestantism. Weber plays with the tension of a modern world secretly dependent on religious beliefs from premodern antiquity. Both the anthropological accounts, in Graeber with Wengrow and Suzman, and Weber's sociological analysis aim to find a continuity between religious antiquity and modernity. In this regard, a relevant philosophical account contributing to the discussion of guilt, debt, and capitalism is found in Nietzsche in *On The Genealogy of Morals*.

Like the social contract theorists, Nietzsche also offers a speculative anthropology of events that never really happened (Graeber 2011a, 77). However, what makes Nietzsche interesting is his view of the inherently human ability to make economic transactions serving as a source for advanced economies with money. Further, Nietzsche's position that human transactions were first in the form of interpersonal and social indebtedness is consistent with David Graeber's thesis in *Debt: The First 5000 Years*. Unlike received wisdom in economics where barter, followed by coinage and money led to advanced credit systems, for Graeber, it is debt that facilitated alliances and humans learned to function with each other using debt, flipping conventional economic history found cross-culturally (Graeber 2011a, 21).

Just as Weber outlined the role of Protestantism in the emergence of modern, rationalised capitalism, Nietzsche related contemporary morality to the Judeo-Christian tradition, especially in his critique of the glorification of suffering as a promise of rewards in the afterlife (Nietzsche 1989, 68). One could see the connection between religious thought and economics that Nietzsche is underlining where current suffering is a price for future salvation. Using the world contemporary to him, Nietzsche, like his Enlightenment colleagues, looks to reverse engineer an

ontology of human existence – 'the feeling of guilt, of personal obligation, had its origin … in the oldest and most primitive personal relationship, that between buyer and seller, creditor and debtor: it was here that here that one person first encountered another person, that one person first measured himself against another'. As a result, human morality, including pride, comparisons to others and the threat of violence emerged that can be measurable – the human as the 'valuating animal' (Nietzsche 1989, 70). Graeber writes:

> … much of our contemporary moral and religious language originally emerged directly from these very conflicts. Terms like "reckoning" or "redemption" are only the most obvious, since they're taken directly from the language of ancient finance. In a larger sense, the same can be said of "guilt", "freedom", "forgiveness", and even "sin"' (Graeber 2011a, 8).

Nietzsche points out that both 'debt' and 'guilt' are related to the German *schuld* (Nietzsche 1989, 62, 63). This is also the case in many languages including Indian languages like Bengali and Hindi where words for "atonement" and "repayment" have shared connotations. Nietzsche seemingly suggests that such primordial forms of indebtedness were filtered through rationalisation processes, reaching Christianity and, eventually, informing modern capitalism – 'it was rather out of the most rudimentary form of personal legal rights that the budding sense of exchange, contract, guilt, right, obligation, settlement, first transferred itself to the coarsest and most elementary social complexes … together with the custom of comparing, measuring, and calculating power against power' (Nietzsche 1989, 70).

Nietzsche says that indebtedness was used by creditors to inflict gruesome pain upon guilty debtors by dismembering their bodies as punishment (Nietzsche 1989, 62). The compulsion to pay off dues that are impossible to settle continues as Nietzsche surmises that

members in primeval tribes were beholden to their departed ancestors and founders of the tribe (Nietzsche 1989, 89). Thus, sacrifices and ritualised payments were offered to ancestral gods. The debt payment was impossible by definition because the work of the founding generations was priceless. If the living conditions of members improved or they were faced with good luck, more offerings were called for because it was a sign of the continued leadership of ancestors. Hence, debt begets more debt. Furthermore, following the stated premise, the more a tribe prospers, the more it is indebted to ancestors who must be suitably satisfied through payments. On the other hand, a tribe falling on bad times diminishes the value of ancestors. For prospering tribes, Nietzsche says, the logical outcome of having powerful creditor-ancestors is that the tribe reaches a point when even rituals as part-payments become worthless because the ancestors have transformed into Gods. Thus, the debtor becomes the transgressor and outstanding payments mutate into sin that is passed down from one generation to the next, beginning with Adam and Eve – 'The advent of the Christian God, as the maximum god attained so far, was therefore accompanied by the maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness on earth' (Nietzsche 1989, 88–90).

While Nietzsche's accounts are speculative with no historical records, there are material consequences in bourgeois life since Nietzsche, like Locke and Hobbes, was retroactively recreating a history based on his bourgeois assumptions and observations (Graeber 2011a, 78, 79). For instance, the issue of bodily sacrifice passed through religion as self-flagellation, fasting and related acts of self-mortification. Additionally, the sacrificial body is tied to quotidian instances of workaholism, restlessness and fear of leisure unless it is a brief reward at the end of a hard day's work. The "work hard, play hard" motto, itself, follows the debt economy rationale as it is a vicious cycle of embodied offering and leisure enjoyed as reprieve, itself, forever tied to a future offering, work and play renewing each other. As mentioned earlier, debility from hustle

is enjoyed as existential relief relating to Nietzsche' image of embodied suffering. Moreover, debt begetting more debt especially in a prospering tribe is a feature of neoliberal capitalism. The late 20th century saw the privatisation of national debt where debt was sold as securitised credit (Morgan Wortham 2013). The 2008 subprime crisis began in the United States as a result of Wall Street selling high-risk financial products to people who would become transgressors. Sacrifice was made to the ancestral gods as stimulus packages were given to the big banks instead of the debtors (Sirota 2021). Interestingly, Canada's decision to provide stimulus packages to residents during Covid-19, in a rare turn to emergency socialism, became a divisive political issue, especially among libertarian-conservatives critical of interference with the invisible hand of the market (Breen 2020).

The element of retroactive recreation of history ties Nietzsche's account of the origins of debt to the *cogito*-centred reality whose entire project was to scrap embodied experience and recreate reality from scratch based on rational terms. While Descartes discovered an essence that was rational, Nietzsche posited a similar rational essence expressed in supposedly innate logic of banking and commercial transactions. Retroactive rediscovery has been a facet in major strands of Western thought. Beside Locke and Hobbes, Graeber contests that Adam Smith's postulation of a barter era – completely imagined – not only resulted in currency to increase the ease of doing business but is also a founding principle of the science of economics which wanted to separate itself from quotidian realities not typically related to mathematical thinking like eating, death, sex and adventure (Graeber 2011a, 33). Of course, quotidian realities in the social realm have gradually been absorbed by the economic realm in their financialised second nature as a result of neoliberal rationalised humanism (Fraser 2016). Rational thought also caused the pitting of irrational self-interest against ordered, almost disembodied, *society* in which the self must

practise altruistic denial for the greater good. Modern civilisation holds that a state is required to regulate behaviour while self-interest has been rationally controlled by capitalism as market subjects are to approach capital accumulation in competition with one another. However, anthropological evidence shows that prioritisation of individual autonomy was paramount in the functioning of premodern care societies because self-interests often overlapped, facilitating participatory democracy. Such was the case in the Indian Chipko movement as well – an instance of spontaneous direct action of forest dwellers to preserve their own habitat which I discuss in Chapter 4. The debt economy, from Nietzsche to neoliberalism indicates the knotting of economics with morality that was reinforced by Christianity as a state of sin, finding its way into capitalism in the form of the scarcity paradigm. An underlying feature of the historicisation of modernity is retroactive rediscovery based on contemporary principles. In my project, I have been collating debt, guilt, sin, scarcity, and severance within the scope of deficiency or lack that must be rationally overcome. Taken this way, the *cogito* is the archetypal debt state of modernity, requiring due payments through retroactive rediscovery. Thus, colonisation projects aimed to retroactively reinstate the premise of scarcity, competition for resources and unavoidable work that did not make sense to the Wendat or the Kalahari Ju/'hoansi.

Returning to the Kalahari region, Suzman suggests that Christian teachings contributed to the changed perception of work and the advent of scarcity. This seems reasonable because the basic nature of work for Adam and Eve did not change due to the Fall. They were tillers before and after the Fall. It was a different awareness of work that came into effect including fatigue, wear and tear, pain, and anxiety involving the amount of work done in the experience of debt and reward. Suzman notes:

For the Ju/'hoansi, the market economy and the assumptions about human nature that underwrite it are as bewildering as they are frustrating. They are not alone in this. Other societies who continue to hunt and gather into the twentieth century, from the Hadzabe of East Africa to the Inuit in the Arctic, have similarly struggled to make sense of and adapt to norms of an economic system predicated on eternal scarcity. (Suzman 2021, 5)

Suzman recounts an episode involving a preacher travelling to the Kalahari desert and speaking to the enslaved congregation working for ranchers in 1994. Sure enough, the preacher's tale involved Genesis and the Fall of Man (Suzman 2021, 17, 18). The Ju/'hoansi were cursed to a life of toil whose rewards became immaterial because the ranchers worked in mysterious ways for which the slaves were to be grateful – 'Over the preceding half century, it was their hands that did the heavy lifting that transformed this semi-arid environment into profitable cattle ranches. And over this period the farmers, who were otherwise not shy of using the whip to "cure" Ju/'hoansi workers of idleness, always gave them time off on Sundays' (Suzman 2021, 19).

Although the Ju/'hoansi members were unpaid slaves, they were incorporated into the modern work schedule. This highlights the obvious scriptural nature of free work in the industrial and post-industrial, post-religious age where self-styled atheists, animated by a quazi-zealotry in favour of hustle, gamifying the top 1% as a milestone, are obsessed with productivity and may not take the weekend off. The formerly free Ju/'hoansi members took comfort in the story of guilt, taking spiritual refuge in the assumption that all the world is a stage in God's plan and they are divine players. For the urban aspirational achievement subject, God's plan is received in the form of an unflinching faith-based progress project.

Details of the Ju/'hoansi's identification with the story of Original Sin reveals the universality of the events of the Fall which has had the ability to be widely accepted as an archetypal image of human suffering and deficiency even outside the Christian context in the face of disease, crop failures, forest fires which predate Anthropocene-induced environmental changes. Suzman writes that elderly members would recount wisdom echoing the Fall myth. In the version of the Ju/'hoansi, God created the universe in two distinct phases. His creation included a lesser trickster god who would engage in devilish acts. Instead of resting on the seventh day, God took what Suzman calls a 'cosmic sabbatical' in the middle of his work, resulting in his creation having two sessions. Order and norms are infused in the second phase before which the lesser god would work his evil upon everything (Suzman 2021, 22). Not only is the archetype of Satan present in the imagination of various regions but so is the preoccupation with a virginal state. A prominent example is the character of Kunti in the Indian epic *Mahabharat*. Thematically, these two ideas could be boiled down to the continuum of order and chaos. This is where Suzman states that the events of the Fall could be comprehended in terms of thermodynamics, specifically, the law of entropy (Suzman 2021, 27).

In *Genesis* 3:17-19, the wrathful God of the Old Testament provided the well-known verdict thus:

> Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'you must not eat from it' / Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. / It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. / By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return. ("Genesis 3:17-19" n.d.)

Descartes' notion of extensity as one continuous physical body to be doubted is found here as God punishes humans by cursing the earth on which humans depend. Human bodies are not specified in the curse. Humans would return to dust but the attribute of decay is shared with everything else that is organic. Elon Musk and other crackpot space colonisation advocates simply wish to physicalise the rational mind leaving the causal/cursed body as well as the dues and rewards to follow by leaving the cursed earth. Leaving the cursed earth is consistent with terrorist organisations pursuing a "scorched earth" policy coincidentally also seeking salvation in the afterlife.

ENTROPY

Suzman suggests that the serpent's visit to the Garden and Adam and Eve's Fall constitute the introduction of entropy in the universe. The lines above from Genesis 3 essentially encapsulate entropy as everything is destined to turn to dust. This is precisely what Descartes asserts in *Meditations*. Entropy is what post-industrial work has embraced. If one is to keep exploring the expansion of the meaning of entropy, it is reasonably easy to see why atomisation is so successful. Entropy distributes itself uniformly (Suzman 2021, 28) . Entropy and sin are twin experiences. Increased atomisation is a result of entropy in socialisation. Developing social skills is a challenge children would assumedly encounter which could be for nought when caregivers use digital pacifiers. The uncritical celebration of multiculturalism would also add to entropy in socialisation since different cultures from different regions interact differently as well as the issue of the language barrier in a global crowd. Silence becomes reciprocal and infectious. United by work, the use of smartphones and air-pods in public transforms the devices into the new contraceptives. The need for a relational experience is substituted by the exorbitant investment in a therapist. The intensification of entropy in the post-industrial age has gone

beyond tech rage and now features brand new ways to experience bodily suffering including conditions such as smartphone pinky, cubital tunnel syndrome also known as smartphone elbow, texting thumb and text neck ("Orthopaedics: Is Your Smartphone Affecting Your Pinky, Thumb, Neck or Elbow?" 2022).

However, there have been several defences against entropy both biological, as Suzman points out, as well as through cultural practices – what Peter Sloterdijk describes as anthropotechnics in *You Must Change Your Life*. The notion of anthropotechnics is especially relevant in the context of inventing new forms of debility by the normalisation of passivity and docile body postures. The capitalist solution to these problems are toylike goods like standing desks or exercise balls to use as chairs besides the digital solutions in the various forms of smart devices proliferating the appification of life.

By 'anthropotechnics', Sloterdijk means that the body itself is a technological apparatus, a meeting point between the human and the machinic, but not necessarily in the cyborgian sense. Sloterdijk posits that the history of humans is essentially a history of bodily practices, including religion, by which humans have attempted to transcend their present condition. No matter what the specifics of a given religion are, for Sloterdijk, the overarching objective is that of becoming more. This informs the contemporary obsession with self-improvement and self-help as well as the monetisation of fitness and beauty aspirations. Following Foucault, Sloterdijk implies that there is not any objectively foolproof method towards self-improvement and transcendence which is why there have been so many practices. This also seems to account for what counts as transcendence since for major religions and Cartesian philosophy, the practice is geared towards negation of the body through doubt or – its Christian companion faculty – faith. In the context of Original Sin or guilt, sin appears as the framework for practising existence, enacting deficiency.

Sloterdijk's Nietzschean call to individuals to design their own philosophies of practice to overcome deficiency faces these broad, established cognitive and physiological states such as guilt, virginity, and denial which enable humans to have a sadomasochistic relationship with their own neoliberal achievement avatars – what Byung-Chul Han calls auto-exploitation.

In any case, in his study of practices, Sloterdijk points to the 'immunitary constitution of human beings' (Sloterdijk 2013b, 3). People have been inducting themselves into symbolic immune systems which religion provides. In his view, religion does not even exist in its metaphysical sense. All religions simply comprise a system of rituals and practices performing which the self increases spiritual immunity and comes closer to transcendence. Sloterdijk's expansion of immunity makes sense in the context of weightlifting. Lifting increases strength and makes one more immune to weakness in the specific regions of the body practised upon. Athleticism is also aesthetically pleasing and, in principle, seems to increase chances of attracting a mate. Hence, the practice of lifting has the rationale to ward off entropy. Beauty as a social construct or lying in the eyes of the beholder are simplistic intellectual cop-outs increasingly used by capitalism, while monetising anthropotechnic solutions to entropy in the form of expensive gym memberships and supplements.

Sloterdijk seems to be referring to immunity being life-affirming in terms of biology. Immunity in scientific or medical terms has been aspirational because the roots lie in a pre-existing immunitary outlook towards existence. This is evident in the assumed strife of premodern humans right from the point of the evolution of life and humans finding designing shelter in their environments like caves – 'Only hesitantly did people begin to understand that the immune *dispositifs* are what enable systems to become systems, life forms to become life forms, and cultures to become cultures in the first place'. Sloterdijk is talking about the survival instinct

which exists even in people committing self-harm, often resulting in botched suicide attempts as well as patients in hospitals coming back from a coma or similarly hopeless situations. Such events go beyond the question of free will and ask whose will it is, if free will exists in the body but is involuntary. In other words, free will as a philosophical concern reflects the primacy of the mind whereas an Eros or a life drive, focused on immunity, is certainly present in the body. In Sloterdijk's words – 'life forms to become life forms'. Speaking of the capacities of simpler life like insects to be alert to threat, Sloterdijk concludes, 'immune systems at this level can be defined a priori as embodied expectations of injury and the corresponding programmes of protection and repair' (Sloterdijk 2013b, 8).

Sloterdijk's account of immunity is found in the history of work as Suzman highlights the expansion of the term "work" in the scientific community, referencing the various biological and evolutionary adaptations and changes organisms have had to make to perpetuate life. The struggle against entropy is pithily encapsulated thus – 'to live is to work' (Suzman 2021, 17). It is easy to see how industrial and post-industrial work have transformed this fact into a slogan along with faux-Darwinism like artificially creating a survival-of-the-fittest environment in overly docile, white-collar workspaces like banking and the stock market encouraging cutthroat competition.

Suzman writes, 'It is no coincidence that tension between chaos and order is a feature of the world's mythologies. After all, science also insists that there is a universal relationship between disorder and work' (Suzman 2021, 24). If Satan and his equivalent devilish and trickster incarnations signify the introduction of chaos and entropy, then evolutionary processes as well as cultural codes upholding the objective of symbolic immunity, which have carried out life-affirming counteractions are responsible for the abundance of life on earth, including human life.

Sloterdijk refers to the methods the body uses, transforming itself into a technological apparatus, to protect itself from harm, as anthropotechnics. Suzman notes that Gaspar-Gustave Coriolis, renowned for the use of the meteorological phenomenon known as the "Coriolis Effect", would study the evolutionary capacities of life forms to aim to live on in the context of work. To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield – anthropotechnics for Sloterdijk, is work in bio-physiological terms for Coriolis. Work, in the scientific realm, denoted the transfer of energy among particles, evolution in creatures and the creation and the ongoing expansion of the universe (Suzman 2021, 24, 27). For existence to continue, things are at work, or rather, at play because work for sustenance and maintenance is what the hunter-gatherers did. This work did not necessarily contain the connotations of modern work involving drudgery, suffering, penance and reward which sin-inflected work has had in the contemporary world.

Taking anthropotechnic work as primarily life-affirming, it is possible to attempt to find answers to existentialist questions like the point or meaning of life as well as challenging the brilliantly articulated case of antinatalism. Antinatalism is an overly rationalised form of anti-life philosophy propounded by David Benatar, among others, although its roots could possibly be found across time and philosophical thought. Chief among the beliefs is that existence is inherently malignant, and the weight of suffering outweighs that of pleasure in the face of disease, precarity, wars and looming death. Hence, procreating is considered immoral for antinatalist. To quote Thomas Hardy's concluding flourish in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, 'Happiness was but the occasional episode in the general drama of pain' (Hardy 1998). Discussing antinatalism is not a digression from the Cartesian rationalism this discussion began with because the former, like Descartes, wishes to negate the body with the powers of reason and intellect. Benatar does not advocate suicide. It is too late not to have been born but antinatalism

prescribes against perpetuating suffering through procreation. One of the key factors in the antinatalist position is consistent with contemporary sexual politics – that of consent. In *Better Never to Have Been*, Benatar writes, 'Those who do indeed decide to have a child might do so for a number of reasons, but among these reasons cannot be the interests of the potential child' (Benatar 2006, 2). In 2019, a 27-year-old businessman Raphael Samuel in Mumbai stated his intention to sue his parents for giving birth to him without his consent (Pandey 2019).

From the point of view of Original Sin, antinatalism seeks to arrest the inheritance of the ills of life. The question of a decision to procreate is compelling when considering relatively short eras of life on earth. From a broader perspective of the existence of a universe and possibly many universes and life forms on earth, one of which is humans, the antinatalist argument becomes less tenable. It is acceptable that parents are accountable for deciding to give birth to a child. However, from the perspective of the bigger picture of the unfolding of nature mentioned, humans did not decide to create humanity. Tying antinatalism to stated ideas of entropy, antinatalism does not consider that life has prevailed not with the aid of nature, although that is occasionally the case as with sunlight, clean air, food, but despite entropy – through anthropotechnic work – to link Suzman's observations about Coriolis with Sloterdijk. Adam and Eve's decision to go apple-picking was the original anthropotechnic act. It exposed Adam and Eve to knowledge of good and evil, in other words, to entropy and disciplinary techniques to immunise against it. Samuel's charge against his parents recalls holding Adam and Eve accountable for disobeying God and infecting progenies.

Antinatalism as well as its companion schools of thought in religion and philosophy is predicated on the fundamental premise that life is suffering, considering suffering and entropy as

synonymous. However, from the point of view of evolutionary adaptation including anthropotechnics, life has prevailed by being the antidote to suffering.

The notion of cognitive or immaterial work harks back to a time before the Fall where corporeality was not actively perceived. The pervasive presence of Original Sin is consistent with the removal of corporeality and obsession with repentance by facilitating entropy. Recalling Moulier-Boutang, cognitive capitalism works through accumulation based on immaterial investment using the human capacities of knowledge and creativity. The Fall introduces guilt, entropy and Marxian alienation because the body is subject to hierarchical toil which the self allegedly does not derive metaphysical nourishment from. From the observations of Suzman and Sloterdijk, it is clear that work, in its expanded sense, defined by Coriolis, is chiefly embodied. With the advent of modern civilisation, industrial and post-industrial capitalism have bastardised Suzman's dictum – 'to live is to work'. The reasonable justification for mandated work does come from science. Everything in the universe, including the bodies of humans along with other organisms, has been at work. In this sense, work is part of the order of things in existence and is natural. Full employment is, thus, found in nature, predating the Soviet Union, concentration camps and work-centred capitalism. From an evolutionary standpoint, work did set you free.

It is due to the preoccupation with demonising the irredeemably deficient body that work as penance became paramount – from the wageless slave labour to entrepreneurial precarity. The search for profit is the economic equivalent of apprehending deficiency – ontological guilt found in the body. Work, for Coriolis, was universal – cosmic – mandated and natural. For the hunter-gatherers studied by Suzman, work followed the objective of the adaptive capacities of nature fighting entropy. In the space of pre-scarcity abundance, the hunter-gatherer lifestyle did not wait to be affected by entropy and would gather resources for life to thrive. This work was not a

religious calling but addressed immediate needs with little regard for consequences and future rewards.

In the debt economy, suffering must beget more suffering to ascertain existential relief that accompanies bodily debility. In this regard, Sloterdijk's distinction between good asceticism and bad asceticism could be beneficial. Sloterdijk finds Nietzsche relating bodily practices to moral positions around asceticism such as Zarathustra's exaltation of the tightrope walker (Sloterdijk 2013b, 115). Sloterdijk suggests that health is a moral choice resulting in related bodily practices resulting in the following – 'The healthy … are those who, because they are healthy, want to grow through good asceticisms; and the sick are those who, because they are sick, plot revenge with bad asceticisms' (Sloterdijk 2013b, 33). Health and sickness are not destinies, but moral orientations actively experienced through the body. This is not a plea to not be understanding of people in pain. The choice between good and bad asceticisms is really how one chooses to respond to entropy. The universe is built on entropic randomness. Things are meant to fall apart. As mentioned earlier, life occurs due to apparently brief immunitary glitches in the entropic process after which entropy resumes to bring about suffering and death. Bad asceticisms like nihilism and antinatalism look to expedite and magnify the process of painful existential ruin. Life *will* burn out or fade away. Good asceticisms are attempts to hold on to and prolong the glitch or steady state, the more erudite term of which is Schrödinger's negentropy or negative entropy as explored by Bernard Stiegler in his conceptualisation of a Neganthropocene countering the entropic, body-denying Anthropocene (Stiegler 2018). The meaning of life is to keep entropy at bay.

Stiegler and Sloterdijk appear to be in agreement on finding practising life itself as an antidote to suffering. Both rally to reclaim anthropotechnics from entropic capitalism. The

randomness of entropy is mirrored by the randomness of capital's boom-and-bust cycles and experts' speculative cluelessness about the economy and stock value on the evening news. Capitalism has added a layer of randomness on the already volatile geological realm, the inorganic body in communion with the chaotic bodies of humans. To build immunitary defence against entropy, Sloterdijk invokes what he calls 'cripple anthropology' (Sloterdijk 2013b, 40). Sloterdijk references violinist Carl Unthan who, born without arms, achieves success by being compelled to play the instrument with his feet (Sloterdijk 2013b, 41). This exemplifies good asceticism. Of course, citing Unthan is not meant as the relative deprivation fallacy or the "children-in-Africa" argument to delegitimise someone's pain by arguing that others have it worse. An individual's biological luck is completely arbitrary. In fact, it is quite expected that one's life would be accompanied by suffering given the entropic law of the universe. For Sloterdijk, everyone is a cripple under cosmic law. The more one is crippled, the more potent one's immunitary defence to reach a negentropic state needs to be.

Unlike social organisation which does not need to be random as exemplified by consensual democracies and egalitarian care societies revealed by Graeber and Wengrow, nature will forever remain unpredictable, socially perceived as unfair. The two forms of freedom neatly correspond to good and bad asceticism. Relational freedom found in the Wendat group ensures that individual autonomy is communally ensured such that everyone is responsible for everyone else. Competitive freedom, practised by the European colonisers, created additional social suffering over and above natural entropy. Competitive freedom over communal freedom is bad asceticism willing entropy to finish the job, sparing a few predestined chosen ones who are socio-economically bunkered. Crippledom is monetised which explains the proliferation of expensive help-offering. For Sloterdijk, everyone is a part of cripple anthropology in the face of

entropy and must immunise against it. But, capitalism challenges the biological predispositions of the body. Hence, one must cripple the body in order to attain second nature as argued in Chapter 1. Capitalism can now produce both the debility and the defence. This is where limbic capitalism operates as scientists study the brain to provide the perfect bait and then offer an inoculation in order for the user to repent – both being profitable.

LIMBIC CAPITALISM

The weaponisation of anthropotechnic ability encapsulates what David Courtwright calls limbic capitalism. It could be argued that limbic capitalism is a natural progression and intensification of cognitive capitalism. Further, it legitimises the critique of immaterial labour since limbic capitalism looks to invade mental, emotional and psychological faculties by engaging the very material limbic system. Cognitive capitalism involves the human capacities of knowledge and creativity, moving the site of work from the body to the mind. Work as an embodied rhetoric subjects the body to a sacrificial role – the highest good the body is worthy of during the mind's rightful journey towards glorious transcendence. The desk worker exhibits frailty and weakness and premature debility in the body and is then castigated for a sedentary lifestyle. Limbic capitalism continues the invasion of leisure which Mario Tronti had posited in his theorisation of the social factory (Tronti 2019, 27). Many other writers on work have investigated the attack on boredom. Composer Ramin Djawadi explained that the starting point of his writing process is silence which leaves him room to fill in with his inspirations. When asked on his Reddit thread what his usual inspiration is for writing, Djawadi responds, 'Silence. I wake up in the morning, and when it is completely quiet, that's when I have my ideas. Because there is no external influence' (rdjawadi 2014). Limbic capitalism is after the blank canvas of the mind, targeting the potential for true creativity. Despite Adorno's criticism of the culture

industry, 20th century capitalism, with the boom of film and pop music molded socially useful hobbies. An owner of a radio or record collector could potentially become an informal musicological archiver even if the person was not up to pursuing a career in music. Quentin Tarantino worked at a video store where he discovered his love for Hong Kong cinema as an American in Tennessee (Dellecaccie 2017). Developing genuine interests which could provide a true dopamine rush, cognitive and physiological delight is increasingly difficult in the age of doomscrolling and push notifications.

In *The Age of Addiction*, Courtwright holds limbic capitalism as behind addictive habits. He defines limbic capitalism thus:

> Limbic capitalism refers to a technologically advanced but socially regressive business system in which global industries, often with the help of complicit governments and criminal organizations, encourage excessive consumption and addiction … by targeting the limbic system, the part of the brain responsible for feeling and for quick reaction, as distinct from dispassionate thinking. The limbic system's pathways of networked neurons make possible pleasure, motivation, long-term memory, and other emotionally linked functions crucial for survival. Paradoxically, these same neural circuits make possible profits from activities that work against survival, businesses having turned evolution's handiwork to their own ends. (Courtwright 2019, 6)

The paradox in the limbic system concerning its role in life-preservation as well as its capacity to be hoodwinked present ontological guilt and bodily deficiency in terms of neurology. Throughout the book, Courtwright traces addiction within a larger history of pleasure. In fact, pleasure sources, like digital devices and software, have been constantly upgraded and refined to appeal to the body. A significant example provided by Courtwright is chocolate which, in its

original form, was unbearably bitter. The Aztecs mixed chocolate in chili peppers and vanilla while the Spanish added sugar, cinnamon and other European spices after which sweetness muted other sensations resulting in chocolate in its current form which became available with European cacao imports between 1770 to 1819 (Courtwright 2019, 57).

The first forms of pleasure have been incidental as humans travelled across the earth and ate, drank or smoked various things found in nature after which several food-drugs like alcohol, tobacco and sugar were selected to be mass-produced. With the advent of the digital realm, the focus of limbic capitalism has switched from the palate to the brain (Courtwright 2019, 60). It has been discussed earlier that despite the promise of 'better work' (Weeks 2011), the body does not stop production. Cognitive work renders the body sacrificial. It must gratefully bear the brunt of its own intellectualisation as well as that of the rest of the earth. Once pleasures are identified, they must be mobilised to trap as many customers as possible by modelling drugs on the one Cartesian body, whose special right reveals its frailties beginning with its inability to dispute doubt. The objective of limbic capitalism is to sell 'habituating products' – a perfect condensation of the causal body ordered by the rational mind (Courtwright 2019, 4).

Habituation and conditioning play consequential characters in designing the biomechanics of cognitive work, where a significant bulk of the embodied rhetoric is "in play". Passivity begins during childhood when orders to sit still are meted out. This transforms into weak and sedentary bodies of the white-collar worker who innovates away in a room of one's own. Oli Mould observes that the United Kingdom has devised a 'bedroom tax' for those houses with spare bedrooms while new real estate properties have dedicated work rooms at home like a study (Mould 2020, 37). Previously, such rooms would be the prerogative of artists and writers. The permission to fashion the cubicle with photos of loved ones and various memorabilia

ensures that everyone has a studio in which art takes place. Such spaces are also aspirational because white-collar jobs have the veneer of luxury with swanky workspaces. As documented by many, leading corporations have begun mimicking the home with laidback, informal offices (Erami 2012). This not only blurs the work-life binary but, stealthily, provides a universal indicator to the worker of what a home should look like. In an urban socio-economic class where bodily ability to acquire resources for life has been outsourced, frailty and passivity become potential markers of high status, coupled with luxury homes and cars which further signify status although permanent ownership of these things is increasingly being replaced by some form of rent in the gigification of the economy. Passive bodies embodying the acquisition of status has historical precedents:

> The wine rations of Roman soldiers and slaves were cut with water. Only the wealthy could afford a regular diet of rich food and heavy, sweetened wine, quaffed from silver goblets and foaming conch shells. Small wonder gout became the signature disease of obese, sedentary elites. Podagra, gout of the foot, appeared early in Egyptian and Greek medical texts and proved a reliable source of income for physicians who catered to wealthy patients. Their ministrations demonstrated and enduring principle: The sorrows of excess could be turned to profit. (Courtwright 2019, 25)

While blue-collar work, like those of construction workers and firefighters, having low status despite their indispensability, comes with obvious physical risks of fatality and injury, white-collar work invents debility. Its quality of being aspirational is in line with doctrines of repentance and redemption. Constructs of urbanity such as the good life have gamified the tedious race to reach the top earners.

For the cognitive worker, good health is deferred in favour of present toil and the bodily work towards passivity. Ailments are graciously accepted with in-house chiropractors and ophthalmologists at the ready. Work towards voluntary debility signifies an enactment of Fallenness and a diffuse notion of redemption in the potential acquisition of 'the rarefied atmosphere' which purportedly insulates the self from danger. This process reveals the capitalisation of entropy as well as the anthropotechnic defence against it.

Capitalisation of entropy can be closely perceived in the killing of boredom and leisure time under siege after the pervasive presence of the smartphone resulting in the appification of life. The culture industry is no longer relevant. Adorno had derided the notion of the hobby (Adorno 2001, 188). However, in the age of constant stimulation in the digital realm, it has become arguably difficult to even have a hobby which could potentially turn into a meaningful pursuit.

Leisure is on its way to be reduced to seeking numbness instead of feeling enriched and happy. People not only use smart devices to avoid socialisation but also surrender their participation in pop cultural history. Entertainment, thus, with each new image or video, transforms into a series of drug hits as the user continues scrolling in search of digital highs. Users disavow possibilities to pursue leisure skills with greater rewards, whether monetised or not. Forever connected to the internet of trivial things, the smartphone is the pacifier for infantilised adults. Courtwright notes, 'Like gambling machines, social media and other digital diversions offer alternative flow states through virtual shortcuts that exact their price in money, time, and diminished real-life accomplishments, satisfactions, and tolerance for electronically unvarnished life itself' (Courtwright 2019, 209).

In the age of omnipresent digital media, leisure is being redefined with compulsive supply of eyeballs and attention to apps. The near-collective acceptance and normalisation of the destruction of active leisure in which one could pursue activities of interest and socialisation reinforce ontological guilt. The ubiquitous use of smart devices and decreasing the possibility of developing creative interests out of curiosity and romantic imagination courtesy the partnership between digital drug dealers of global technocracy and consumers who mistake passivity for comfort is an admission of deficiency. Giving up leisure and sleep time in order to give in to compulsive use of smart devices is an enactment of guilt where the self is not worthy of more. Habits are being tailored for profit since all apps, even in their free versions, are earning through such mechanisms such as Google's Adsense – 'Google's AdSense provides a way for publishers to earn money from their online content. AdSense works by matching ads to your site based on your content and visitors. The ads are created and paid for by advertisers who want to promote their products. Since these advertisers pay different prices for different ads, the amount you earn will vary' ("How AdSense Works" 2023). This refashions leisure as work.

Boredom researchers highlight that users employ the smartphone as a means to avoid boredom (Hand 2017, 123). On the other hand, capitalism is offering the anthropotechnic solution to the bad asceticism they had previously created. Podcaster Manoush Zomorodi advocates using boredom as a wellspring of innovative ideas inviting listeners to sign up to her Bored and Brilliant Project – a weeklong set of challenges in order to boost productivity in place of time wasted on phone use (Zomorodi 2015).

Leisure as work follows the embodied rhetoric of work closely since digital leisure is marked by debility and presenting a sacrificial body. The pervasion of work is triumphant because one is either unemployed and using the devices in which case the user is not making

monetary gains or an employed user is engaging in device use during non-work time. In both cases, it is evident that the users are not facing social stigma because a smart device-heavy lifestyle is in vogue and serving the figurative greater good. Governments and corporations have had a history of legalising substances for mass use because it proved just too profitable. The addiction narrative is commonly used to moralise or pathologise one's social experience such that socially created ailments should be solved individually through Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and digital detoxes which involve confessing individual guilt. As with analogue drugs, the digital experience does not provide pleasure beyond the initial fascination with the hardware, the user interface, and the animalistic derivation of pleasure in micro-doses in the form of clicks and swipes. Courtwright observes, 'People keep on doing what their brains tell them is highly rewarding, often past the point where it is still pleasurable … Addicts want something after they have ceased liking it, even if they realise its harmful effects'(Courtwright 2019, 7). There is also the flavour of predestination in the business of smart devices. Courtwright notes that some people could be genetically predisposed to addiction. Innovation and creativity are monopolised by the other side of the devices. Increasingly, the passive customers can be creative if they join forces which explains the proliferation of start-ups and the ever-expanding scope of what constitutes entrepreneurship.

Work as leisure continues as people scramble for solutions to addictions in order to cope with incredibly designed devices calling out to them. This provides the way for anthropotechnic capitalism in the form of regulatory apps on top of apps which are addictive. Netflix, Instagram and Facebook have built-in time-outs as well as external app-blockers. In response to Netflix's near-future feature of a timer, Paul Levinson, an instructor in Media Studies, Fordham university notes, 'Too much media consumption can leave not enough time for work, chores, and other

essential activities'. Referencing Covid-19, clinical psychologist Meghan Marcum opines, 'If the new normal becomes a routine, it can mean less time interacting with friends and family' (Brodsky 2021). The concerns mentioned are justified. However, a focus seems to be on the risk of deviating from some conception of healthy time spent whereas Netflix had been incorporated into that very conception. Levinson brings up the consequences that work suffers while Marcum talks about the effects of screen addiction on immediate social life. Both are right. However, the area that is left unmentioned is the question of resplendent leisure whose time the apps have managed to drain.

Capitalism has successfully produced a parody of leisure and now pitching the opposite of leisure as the solution in the form of blockers and timers. Netflix has monetised older artforms, especially film, and introduced it into the addiction paradigm with endless streaming and thousands of forgettable releases which will be watched in parts or never clicked. The possibility of watching thousands of films and shows has reduced the probability of watching even a thousand over a significant portion of anyone's lifespan. Brodsky's article is even titled "Why Netflix Wants You to Take a Break" – an admission of the docility of the consumer incapable of biting the digital hands that feed. This is not to mention that Netflix mimics the interface of torrents where true cinephiles would bootleg rare or commercially unavailable films. The metaphor of infantilisation by corporations is worn on their sleeves. A popular pornography blocker is called Net Nanny ("Block Pornography" 2023). Other app and website blockers are similarly fashioned after passivity, corporatised spirituality as documented by Ronald Purser in *McMindfulness*, and productivity – Y-Productive, Focus, Zero Willpower and Mindful Browsing being some of the top picks (Brooks 2023).

The expansion and the aggressive transition to work and leisure dependent on digital technology is tantamount to the body being disciplined adhering to the objective of immaterialism re-inventing the body and rewriting its strengths and weaknesses. Individuals in or aspiring towards urban affluence are indoctrinating themselves into a life officiated by techno-grooming. The interface between eyes and screens is now normative including the compulsive sojourns to devices. Increasingly, individuals surrender other, often more tactile and various, interfaces to the digital interface and be controlled by algorithmic design. Corporations successfully induce the paradigm of addiction and hits infecting the experience of pleasure where the user spends leisure on smart devices which pet them for being compliant. Instead of richer feelings of accomplishment, users micro-dose on the penance-redemption continuum as wasting time on unfulfilling tasks is followed by dread and desire to change in vain which manifests in the self-help boom.

CONCLUSION

In Chapter 1, citing Toulmin, I had presented two successive historical eras in conflict with one another, comprising discarded Renaissance humanism and post-1600 rationalism in response to the failures of humanism, leading to the evolution of modernity accompanied by advanced bureaucracy and capitalism. The latter informed the idea of a unilinear progress project building anew from the *cogito* state of deficiency. In this chapter, I relate deficiency in a more direct sense to the Biblical story of Original Sin and how that is connected to the debt economy. The anthropological records of Suzman and Graeber with Wengrow enabled a reunion of the two worlds – humanism and rationalism – as premodern groups were colonised and were introduced to guilt and mandated work for future rewards. Modernity and its parallel anarchist or care societies present two different kinds of freedom which could be traced back to humanism

prioritising embodied, contingent arrangements and competitive rational freedom which enforces a rigid, mathematical view of humanity also informed by religion, itself, using commercial language . Modernity and its parallel societies present two different interpretations of debt – debt as guilt requiring punishment and debt as a form of owing that can be passed on to create a network of interdependent people. In guilty modernity following the scarcity paradigm, religious and commercial spheres share key terms like debt and redemption. Anarchist societies in their unique conception of freedom and resultant social organisation present possibilities to construct socio-biological immunities to guard against entropy while capitalism, resulting from the Judeo-Christian tradition as per Weber and Nietzsche, embrace entropy and what Sloterdijk calls bad asceticism weakening the body. Limbic capitalism is an acute form of capitalism practising the proliferation of entropy and offering monetised immunities. Limbic capitalism is informed by the rationalist tenet of negative dogmatism where the body's diverse capacities are discounted in order to recreate it within the realm of addiction. As a result, the body can be moralised as well as rationally pathologised to expand capital. Using the two different types of freedom, I will explore the pervasive presence of competitive negative freedom causing increased social atomisation and dilution of the public space. I intend to propose a theory of small talk referring to the miniaturisation of social processes in keeping with negative freedom. Negative freedom is how the rationalist negative dogmatism is socially experienced. In the past pages, I have been attempting an examination of material consequences of rationalist declarations of human essence. In Chapter 3, I explore the financialisation of the relational social body where the Nietzschean claim of human nature as essentially commercial comes to pass. This is due to the primacy of the working relationship and the treatment of potential friends and lovers as resources to aid in one's own self-development journey. Disembodiment is further experienced in inert

public space and using the public space as an extension – a resource – of private self-actualisation. This also has ramifications for global cooperation and the possibility of new, vibrant civilisations as many major cities host ethnic enclaves encouraging faux-sociality for profit and insulation from the other.

Chapter 3 – Small Talk

THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP: NEGATIVE FREEDOM AND THE SOCIAL FACTORY

Thus far, negative dogmatism has been a governing principle to think of reality from the premise of rationalist idealism. This chapter continues the investigation of material ramifications of rationalist thinking by examining how financialised second nature disciplines the relational body or social processes such as intimate relationships as well as relationality in the public space like the formation of new communities. For the hypermobile, entrepreneurial achievement subject, other bodies function as resources for her or his personal growth such that all interactions carry the connotation of the working relationship – a transactional arrangement with an expiration date – a key quality of sociality in Zygmunt Bauman's liquid modernity, detailed in Liquid Love (Bauman 2021). The evolution of rationalism, built on negative dogmatism, featured growing impersonality in bureaucratic processes and the abstract value of finance capital. In Chapter 2, the social organisations of Kalahari Ju/'hoansi and the North American indigenous groups indicate that the unilinear history initiated by rationalism is not the only possible mode of living. These "premodern" anarchist groupings exhibited communally ensured individual autonomy or positive freedom while the modern colonisers, 'squabbling for advantage', preached zero-sum or negative freedom based on the scarcity paradigm. If the governing principle of rationalism was negative dogmatism – the stripping away of embodied reality to remake it in rational terms, negative dogmatism manifests politically as negative freedom – Isaiah Berlin's term for the propensity to seek freedom *from* people and things as opposed to freedom *to* participate in relational contexts. To arrive at negative freedom, one asks 'What is the area within which the subject – a person or groups of persons – is or should be left to do … without interference by other persons?'. Contrariwise, positive freedom corresponds to

the question 'What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone

to do, or be, this rather than that' (Berlin 2002, 169), and to what extent can this source of control

be 'somebody or something which I can represent as "my own"' (Berlin 2002, 206).

Hypermobile globalisation, built on entrepreneurial growth perpetuating capitalism, necessitates

the proliferation of negative freedom or the existence of the individual 'with no bonds' (Bauman

2021, vii). Thus, negative freedom precipitates the social phenomenon of negative relationships,

or 'unloving', particular to neoliberal liquid modernity, as observed by Eva Illouz, referring to

the preoccupation with unmaking and avoiding bonds, maintaining a constant state of optimised

relationality for personal growth (Illouz 2021, 4).

Since efficiency has entered the realm of relationships, I examine negative relationships

in connection to Mario Tronti's theory of the social factory – the notion where capitalism escapes

the factory space to engulf the whole of society such that all social processes uphold the sanctity

of the working relationship. Negative relationships, in prioritising the unmaking of bonds for the

productive self, implies a miniaturisation of social processes. I am describing productive

sociality using the image of "miniaturisation" instead of "attenuation", "narrowing" or

"condensation" because social processes in the presence of negative relationships are literally

made smaller in duration while miniaturisation also happens in the scope of alliances as bonds, in

their overt pragmatism, are potentially devoid of what Badiou calls 'existential poetry' which

results from the role of chance (Badiou and Truong 2012). Miniaturisation is confirmed in the

social factory. Tronti posits that the advancement of capitalism in the social factory rests on the

creation of relative surplus value. I will elaborate surplus value later. By way of an overview, one

might understand surplus value as what translates into profit at the end of the production process.

There are two components to work time – necessary labour-time required by workers to earn

back the value of the production process (Marx 1887, 1:221). During surplus labour-time, workers create value resulting in profit or value that is surplus to cost of production. The creation of surplus value safeguards the existence of capitalism. As capitalism leaves the confines of traditional factory production to seek for opportunities for financialisation, it depends on relative surplus value – the shortening of the time taken in the production process so that there would be more production cycles of more things, creating more surplus value in total than was possible by lengthening work time to the limits of the working day or what is called surplus value. For Marx, the shortening of the working time is, in fact, a curtailment of necessary labour-time such that what is left is time for creating surplus value (Marx 1887, 1:221). Relative surplus value operates on 24/7 time where as many production cycles as possible could be completed. Since the whole of society is absorbed by factory efficiency, the principle of relative surplus value applies to social processes resulting in the short-term social experiences that participants tend to leave to remain without bonds. I use relative surplus value both literally as well as metaphorically. It is literal because online dating sites, remove embodied time between participants, attracting more users with the promise of risk-free love who are potentially able finish the production cycle of an encounter quickly, thereby, enabling more cycles on platforms. It is used as a metaphor because, in the social factory, the entrepreneurial participant would internalise the production process and, upon seeing others as resources in a working relationship for self-development, would keep encounters optimised. The consequence is a miniaturisation of sociality following swift cycles of involvement and departure. This miniaturisation applies to both virtual socialisation as well as the creation of ethnic enclaves revealing pro-work immigration with decreased possibilities of new societies and civilisations gradually resulting from the meeting of diverse people. Online dating apps remove necessary labour-time – the embodied time to foster a relationship, to let

participants use platforms to create as much surplus value as possible. Since the line between factory and society is blurred, the capitalist logic seeps into the end user who, while creating surplus value for the platform, views the experience as a means to garner surplus value for himself or herself. By removing necessary labour-time, platforms apparently reward users with the promise of pure risk-free surplus or the excess pleasure resulting out of a gradual relationship without having to endure its graduality, trials and tribulations. Upon completing the cycle, the user can begin anew and continue partaking in surplus reward. This is how negative relationships relate to the Marxian idea of relative surplus value resulting in a miniaturisation of social processes. I am using these two lenses to examine liquid modern sociality. I propose a theory of small talk to refer to this miniaturisation of sociality, curated to keep social experiences optimised such that negative relationships and the social factory reinforce each other.

It seems the most apt to refer to this specific form of miniaturisation of social processes as small talk. First, it describes a literal truncation of sociality with capitalist incentives such that such truncation will probably gain more stability with the further evolution of capitalism. Thus, habits promoting 'unloving' – Eva Illouz's term for the preoccupation with unmaking and avoiding bonds (Illouz 2021, 4) – constitute the journey of financialised self-actualisation. Second, there is a pre-emptive element to the miniaturisation. Online dating carries with it assumptions of safety, convenience and also the possibility of finding the best possible match as per algocratic rationality. Further, negative freedom, with remote sociality, mimics the dynamic of curfew – historically used by authority and law enforcement against women and children for the sake of safety. The miniaturisation necessitates an adoption of curfew as a normative state since avoidance and unmaking become paramount in the process. Third, related to the previous point, the waning of spontaneous public life prevents true radical change as vulnerable groups

conceal themselves, using virtual means. Further, the immigrant experience based on ethnic enclaves possibly diminishes the chances of a post-racial society in multicultural regions as pro-work immigration allows many countries to let cheap labour ghettoise themselves in ethnic enclaves. The pre-emptive nature includes that of capitalism. By pivoting towards the principle of relative surplus value, capitalism is deriving more surplus value than would have been possible under the scope of absolute surplus value involving embodied necessary work and a longer, slower production cycle of social processes. I will return to the problem of pre-emption in the section on the precog.

The working relationship recalls Nietzsche's ontology of humans encountering each other essentially as buyers and sellers before anything else, explored in Chapter 2. This Nietzschean notion of humanity's commercial essence is confirmed by Mario Tronti's position of the social factory where the distinction between the space of factory production and that of society has collapsed. For Tronti, society is now an extension of the production process such that there is no need for a separate factory space (Tronti 2019, 27–28). In fact, the inconsequentiality of space has been the objective of negative dogmatism and *cogito*-centric reality, verifiable not in terms of embodied presence but rational measurability. The *cogito* enforced a state of deficiency, which had its religious roots, upon which a reliably measurable world could be built. A basic principle was the rational mind ordering the causal body. The embodied world can be absorbed into the rational sphere if social processes involving bodies can also be financialised. This chapter examines the financialisation of relationships where the faux-sociality of the working family leaves the confines of the workplace – as predicted by Tronti – and pervades the social realm including interpersonal relationships and intimacy. Social encounters, as a result, are meant to be fleeting – liquid – to invoke Bauman (Bauman 2021), and optimised to have the best possible

purchase for the self-actualising participant's growth journey the financialisation of social processes entails.

MINIATURISATION – HOW THE FACTORY REACHES THE SOCIAL REALM

Countering the conventional idea of a factory as a specific location with tools, workers and supervisors, Tronti highlights that, for Marx, the factory is, in fact, a stage in advanced capitalism that has reached the point of large-scale machinery and mass production (Tronti 2019, 26). This view is consistent with my position that the factory is a historical era and part of the material manifestation of the rationalism project, creating a set of bodily practices that have been passed down to the post-factory achievement subject. Thus, the factory – as a consequence of the rationalisation of society – was supposed to reorder the entire social realm such that people would become resources to each other. Tronti concludes – 'when the factory extends its control over the whole of society – all of social production is turned into industrial production – the specific traits of the factory are lost amid the generic traits of society. When the whole society is reduced to the factory, the factory, as such, seems to disappear' (Tronti 2019, 27–28).

For Tronti, the progress of capitalist development depends on the creation of what Marx calls relative surplus value – surplus value derived through optimised shortening of necessary work time. I will elaborate on the two kinds of surplus value – absolute and relative surplus value – shortly. Put briefly, absolute surplus value results from more work hours while relative surplus value is created from forcing workers to produce the same output in a decreased amount of time.

Relative surplus value could be viewed as the natural successor of absolute surplus value. Absolute surplus value is created by stretching work hours to their limits. Since there are twenty-four hours in a day, absolute surplus value results from making the most of the time that exists in physical reality. One comes back to the question of the unreliability of the body in the *cogito-*

centric world since absolute surplus value has its limits due to the limits of embodied time. Therefore, the logical solution to the limits of absolute surplus value creation is relative surplus value since it depends on rationally managing bodily requirements, including removal through automation, in order to create surplus value that supersedes absolute surplus value. The matter of removing embodied time is best explained in Marx's technical analysis of work time and its two components necessary labour and surplus labour time.

A preliminary understanding of surplus value is the difference between the value of the final commodity to be sold and the value of raw materials, tools, and labour in the production process. Surplus value, created in the production stage, translates into profit during sales. From the mere presence of profit, Marx holds that all work which results in profitable sales is inherently carrying surplus value (Marx 1887). This surplus value is not accounted for in the wage paid to the worker. Thus, the wage is not for the labouring human being but for the mechanised cog which the worker becomes amidst other productive tools, performing a predetermined set of tasks.

Absolute surplus value refers to the creation of more surplus value simply by increasing the duration of work (Marx 1887, 1:221). Even as the present time prioritises a post-factory society, the legacy of absolute surplus value has been internalised by entrepreneurial individuals in their obsession with productivity and restlessness during non-work hours. The curtailment of work as well as leisure time, favouring efficient leisure in the form of addictive, repetitive quick fixes instead of long immersion indicates relative surplus value seeping into 24/7 absolute surplus value.

Job intensification occurs differently, Marx notes, when the time for necessary labour is curtailed with the resultant increase in surplus labour-time to create relative surplus value (Marx

1887, 1:221). While absolute surplus value is created by making the employee work longer for

necessary work, due to the limits of physical time, the time for necessary work is shortened to

create relative surplus value. Marx's summary of the two kinds of surplus value is as follows –

'The surplus-value produced by prolongation of the working day, I call absolute surplus value.

On the other hand, the surplus value arising from the curtailment of the necessary labour-time,

and from the corresponding alteration in the respective lengths of the two components of the

working day, I call relative surplus value' (Marx 1887, 1:221). The two components Marx refers

to are necessary work, which pays off the cost of the means of production, and surplus work,

which adds more quality to the product, making it profitable at the time of its sale. In the

capitalist paradigm of reality, any example of good work will inherently have surplus value or, in

Tronti's words, 'the realisation of surplus value not only hides the specific conditions of its

production; the realisation of surplus-value also appears as its effective creation'(Tronti 2019,

17). Necessary work is not enough to validate the existence of an object within capitalism

because it simply matches the costs of the means of production. Surplus work enables the object

to realise itself. Necessary work, within the confines of capitalism, is worthless and time

consuming.

Absolute surplus value and relative surplus value correspond to two different forms of

capitalist absorption of labour power. These two forms are referred to as subjection since free

labour is subjected or subsumed to create capitalist value. The two forms are formal subjection of

labour and the real subjection of labour. The formal subjection of labour entailed capitalising

labour or any social process as it had been existing predating capitalism. Real subjection of

labour refers to redesigning the captured social process, rendering it more efficient to be suitable

for capitalism. Real subjection of labour is linked to the production of relative surplus value

(Marx 1887, 1:358). In the context of contemporary work, mandating waged work with the threat of destitution represents formal subjection. Gamifying work, making it appear as fulfilling, replete with personal goals and challenges such that the hustling post-industrial worker is inspired to view work as an object of financialised self-development is real subjection. The apparent shift from biopolitics to psychopolitics could be identified in terms of formal subjection turned into real subjection of labour.

Discussing sociality, one could argue that sociality was, to some extent, already financialised. This would be the formal subjection of labour. Examples would be social rituals like marriages involving financial considerations as well as public places for socialisation requiring payment to access such retail space as bars, restaurants, and schools. Real subjection would be to tweak human behaviour to the point of generating as much relative surplus value as possible. To this end, negative relationships, aided by the digital revolution and the advice industry, would amount to real subjection.

Tronti notes – 'Capitalist development is organically linked to the production of *relative surplus-value*. And relative surplus-value is organically linked to all the vicissitudes internal to the process of capitalist production, to that distinct and ever more complex unity between the labour process and the valorisation process' (Tronti 2019, 26) The drive for relative surplus value reveals why the Keynesian prophecy of a fully automated utopian society of luxury did not come to pass. Automation was never meant to relieve the worker. It was meant to curtail necessary work time.

Relative surplus value attacks materiality by denying the component of necessary time or the part of the labour time that the body requires to bring the production process to the point where creating surplus value becomes possible. Necessary work is meant to be unaccounted for

because it is the creation of surplus value that makes a commodity valuable and ready for the market and not just necessary work.

For Tronti, capitalism would take more advanced forms because of the primacy of relative surplus value. Absolute surplus value was dependent on how the working day was used. Since relative surplus value entails the slashing of necessary time, it results in a quicker production life cycle. This, in turn, means that there could be more commodities for sale. The working relationship, including online sociality, promises a perpetually optimised scenario. If the two components – necessary labour-time and surplus labour-time – is applied to the realm of social relationships, the working relationship ensures that participants can do away with necessary time required to partake in embodied active public life, meet people, building long-term trust with someone over a period of time to gradually construct a shared reality. In online sociality, the algorithm replaces necessary time and users are promised just the surplus. This follows the basic assumptions of workplace sociality where a group of individuals would congregate out of self-interest and would swiftly part ways after objectives are met from the *team* or the working *family*. As sociality has been absorbed by the economic realm, online dating companies reward users with the possibility of only having to navigate the surplus labour-time of a relationship since a significant portion of necessary labour-time is taken care of by the algorithm.

In sociality, as per Žižek and Badiou's diagnosis, relative surplus value, in negating materially necessary work, leaving users with just the surplus value, parallels the promise of love without the fall (Big Think 2015). Online dating rids participants of the necessary time creating absolute surplus value – meeting people, having repeated, unplanned exposure to persons of interest, flirting and so on, constituting the gradual construction of complex social life, for the

expectation of relative surplus value – a truncated experience of love where the application has assumedly relieved the user from time and effort in fostering inefficient familiarity and closeness. Following real subjection of labour, users recalibrate themselves to the prescriptions of app-based love, allowing their socio-erotic identity to be shaped by taps, swipes, texting skills and remote, purportedly risk-free scopophilia constituting what Eva Illouz calls scopic capitalism (Illouz 2021). The reality being produced is one where hostile strangers avoid glances and public places like cafes are extensions of the workspace.

Marginalisation of necessary time is consistent with the prominent theme of negative dogmatism in Cartesian rationalism moving towards disembodiment, resulting in negative freedom and Illouz's negative relationships or 'unloving' (Illouz 2021, 4). Removing necessary time towards disembodiment and away from relationality is also a move towards rational efficiency. Necessary time involved inefficient embodiment. In Chapter 2, I related the problem of inefficiency in the causal body's inability to be rational vis-à-vis Original Sin. With increasing entrepreneurial atomisation and the waning of the public space, the encounter with the stranger is abridged not only to foster the optimised working relationship but also to avoid any physical harm that the stranger might represent. Thus, the optimised working relationship – the time-sensitive commodity – also leverages considerations of safety, promising risk-free cooperation (Badiou and Truong 2012, 7), highlighting the pre-emptive aspect of negative freedom.

RELATIVE SURPLUS VALUE AND THE PRECOG

Guilt, from the point of view of criminality, is an ever-present concern in the public space. Measures towards the virtualisation of sociality, for the sake of creating relative surplus value by removing necessary time is in keeping with observing ontological guilt as a fait

accompli which must be corrected. The assumption is that technology would be more efficient at the component of necessary labour. Thus, there is also the possible pre-emptive element associated with virtual sociality since vulnerable bodies are out of harm's way. This is certainly a concern in groups who have been repeat victims of violent crimes like women and homosexual people. Thus, in certain cases, there seems to be a social utility in virtual sociality and the negation of embodied necessary labour. Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report* (Spielberg 2002) features individuals, with pathological conditions that inadvertently made them expert guessers, known as precogs who could predict a crime before it happened. Using the predictions of precogs, the near-future society would apprehend citizens based on the crimes they were meant to commit. The conflict arises when Tom Cruise's commanding officer of the Precrime division finds that his name is up. In the world of precogs, individuals were criminals in absentia, yet to meet their destiny. In geopolitics, recent drone, cloud and satellite technologies in America have enabled pre-emptive strikes and digital surveillance as revealed by Edward Snowden.

In the case of groups vulnerable to violence, virtual sociality might have use value. However, virtualisation goes against the history of civil rights such as women's suffrage, legalisation of gay weddings, political events like the Stonewall rebellion of 1969. The objective of these events was the granting of complete political freedom to participate in active public life without fear of persecution. An example in women's politics specifically aimed at claiming the public space away from the fear of perpetration was the 'Reclaim the Night' (alternatively referred to as 'Take Back the Night') marches originating in Leeds, England, 1977, spreading to America, and evolving into a global event over the years involving demonstrations in Belgium, Argentina, Vietnam (Valk 2019), and India (Bhalla 2017), among many other regions. Protests had the common theme of a politics against sexual violence – the Leeds march organised in

response to the "Yorkshire Ripper" Peter Sutcliffe's crimes – but specifically against the pre-emptive prescriptions of curfew and victim-blaming historically practised by authorities and law enforcements (Benton 2022). The movement, broadly, is intended to realise a world where women can claim full ownership of the public space instead of their perpetrators.

The dream for social justice was, and still should be, to found a society that is post-racial and post-gender to the extent possible to engender a robust, diverse public space.The normative individual is transformed into Spielberg's precog. This form of risk aversion is misplaced as evidenced in online dating. Individuals avoid strangers in their bodily vicinity only to proceed to meet a complete stranger coughed up by the algorithm, in the hopes of the perfect tryst or in Bauman's words – 'love experience' (Bauman 2021, 7). Interactions in the virtualised phase are not guaranteed safety either. The verdict of a Pew Research study from 2019 on the pros and cons of online dating said – 'A majority of online daters say their overall experience was positive, but many users – particularly younger – report being harassed or sent explicit messages on these platforms' (Anderson, Vogels, and Turner 2020). Not only has the doctrine of the precog affected the justice movement to claim the public space, the promise of post-racial, multicultural utopianism has coincided with ethnic enclaves which I write about later and community-based online dating for immigrants – Dil Mil (for Indians and South Asians), Shalom (for Jews), Eshq (for Muslims), and Dua (for all immigrants) (Pham 2018; "Dating App for Ethnic-Based Relationships - Dua.Com" 2023;Bandler 2017). These phenomena are all expedited non-resolutions of potential difference and conflict, preventing possibilities of gradual pluralistic living. Online dating and reformulation of ethnicity and reracialisation in purported melting pots follow the logic of negative freedom and relative surplus value, creating time-sensitive commodities like Bauman's love experience. Mary Harrington refers to the current monetisation

of libido and the human need for companionship as Big Romance, following the naming conventions of Big Tech, Big Pharma and so on (Harrington 2021). Just as the love experience refers to a short-term, consumable product, the immigrant experience offers the truncated consumption of culture from the safety of one's personal ethnic and racial space.

An economy of negative freedom is responsible for a set of predictable problems experienced in the 21st century world of techno-romance such as the swift breakup, perpetual uncertainty about one's partner's capabilities and the dangers of "settling", and quackery in the form of relationship coaching (Illouz 2021, 4). All the events are consistent with the notion of the precog looking to optimise relative surplus value, established earlier. Further, these events are experienced in more volume since each production cycle is brief. The emphasis is on precarious novelty.

NEGATIVE FREEDOM AND THE LIQUIFICATION OF CERTAINTIES

Building on Isaiah Berlin's conceptualisation of 'negative freedom', Eva Illouz explicates the sociological designs of negative relationships and negative choice (Illouz 2021, 13). Illouz calls for a re-examination of the notion of freedom as it is perceived at any given point of time. Conventionally, freedom would refer to the kind which slaves and colonised regions coveted and what is cherished in the history of civil rights – the right to participate in one's surrounding environment, including access to people and things, and living with dignity. However, the neoliberal economy which, by definition, is built around the individual self, prioritises negative freedom – 'defined as the freedom of actors to do what they please without hindrance from the external world, as long as they do not hurt others or obstruct their freedom … It is the "emptiness" of negative freedom that has created a space (the space of "non-hindrance") that could be easily colonized by the values of the capitalist market' (Illouz 2021, 12, 13). The

Cartesian thinking thing and market forces encouraging the self to embark on a journey of self-exploration courtesy of and possibly at the cost of others, banking on self-directed, emotional cues have transpired in the formation of experiences which Illouz calls unloving. Echoing Bauman's idea of liquid modernity, Illouz suggests that the destabilisation of social norms not only results in social uncertainty, but the new economy of control also depends on the proliferation of such uncertainties –

> … *the unmaking of* bonds that are close and intimate (in potentiality or in reality) seems to be deeply connected to the increase of social networks, real or virtual, to technology, and to a formidable economic machinery of advice-giving or help-giving. Psychologists … talk-show hosts, pornography and sex toy industries, the self-help industry, shopping and consumer venues … cater to the perpetual process of making and unmaking social bonds. (Illouz 2021, 3, 4)

Illouz concludes, '"Unloving" is the privileged terrain to understand how the intersection between capitalism, sexuality, gender relations, and technology generates a new form of (non) sociality' (Illouz 2021, 4).

According to a Pew Research study conducted in 2019, 48% of 18 to 29 year-olds have used dating apps with the numbers decreasing with older generations (Vogels 2020). Traumatic events of separation which have conventionally been feared or avoided to keep pain at bay are now experienced routinely because of the quick turnaround in relationships at the hands of algocracy (Mould 2020). This is in keeping with the priority of creating relative surplus value such that a sustained experience of love and intimate companionship is miniaturised into nuggets of Bauman's love experience. In her peculiar love song "Thank You Next", Gen-Z music icon Ariana Grande reflects on the flames of her evidently recent past, expressing gratefulness for the

supposed lessons each seemingly brief experience has taught her. Unlike traditional love songs, the song has very little information about the object(s) of love but how the episodes have made the speaker optimise her journey of self-growth. This is symptomatic of the digital experience compelling users to be on an inward-looking trajectory even in relational situations (Grande 2018). It is, perhaps, the first song in recent memory to come closest to Illouz's 'unloving' which is different from traditional notions of relationship breakdown over a long period of time accompanied by sadness, longing and even destructive feelings of jealousy and vengeance which have been the focus of love songs. Badiou diagnoses this as the waning of the 'Two scene' – his term for romantic love.

Put simply, negative freedom, as Illouz reads it, translates into the right to be left alone which is an increasingly assumed norm in public spaces and transit as hunched individuals hide themselves behind their smartphones and show off conspicuously worn air-pods and earpieces. Such techno-fashion statements, previously limited to working professionals, police officials and emergency workers even a decade ago, now function as do-not-disturb signs, transforming into social contraceptives. I am referring to such forms of technology as social contraceptives that are not aimed at letting the user become more proficient at a skill but is primarily used in public places to avoid interaction with other people. Social contraceptives exemplified by air-pods, also reveal the absence of genuine interest in technology and its related field. If commuters had been so interested in sound as they suddenly appear to be, everyone would be owning similarly priced studio monitor headphones which have similar ease of mobility as air-pods. While public transit is largely devoid of conversations, strangers outsource their need to communicate to podcasters – the growing provider of chatter to kill silence for anxious air-pod users who prepare themselves to be lonely and available to themselves for self-discovery.

Illouz describes the current age in terms of she calls 'emotional modernity' – a development where it is possible to think one's way to happiness by following the pangs of one's interiority (Illouz 2021, 8). However, emotional modernity has been made possible by the changing socio-legal landscape such as women's emancipation, arrival of the birth control pill and increased bodily autonomy from their guardians and husbands, and the decreased power of the Church (Illouz 2021, 7). However, the libertarian assumption that one can choose in a disciplinary vacuum is tenuous because institutions were replaced by their new counterparts – 'Emotional modernity … became fully realised after the 1960s in the cultural legitimation of sexual choice based on purely subjective emotional and hedonistic grounds and has observed yet a new development with the advent of internet sexual and romantic dating apps' (Illouz 2021, 8). In *Cold Intimacies*, Illouz observes how the presumably impersonal economic realm and the personal space of emotional interiority reinforce each other (Illouz 2007, 11). The workplace, through managerial studies, becomes a site of emotional self-revelation and empathy with the rise of the working family, influenced by burgeoning psychoanalysis and advice literatures of early 20th century like self-help and lifestyle magazines that encouraged self-direction led by one's interiority (Illouz 2007, 21). Conversely, psychologisation introduced efficiency in the family space – 'If in the corporation, psychologists made productivity an emotional affair, in the realm of intimacy they predicated pleasure and sexuality on the implementation of fair procedures … intimacy … became haunted … by the problem of reconciling spontaneous emotionality with instrumental assertions of the self' (Illouz 2007, 34). New discourses of interiority like psychology and self-help were valued for their potential emancipatory capabilities. Illouz's claims are in line with my own position that capitalism, in its individualisation towards neoliberalism, gave rise to rationalised humanism where one's growth

journey would navigate various rational pathways of measurability and financialised self-development. The continuity between the economic realm and emotional interiority is also consistent with Tronti's basic premise of the social factory – 'When the whole society is reduced to the factory, the factory, as such, seems to disappear' (Tronti 2019, 27–28).

Early forms of emotional modernity lay in the romcom trope of lovers abandoning family conservatism and choosing their secret loves. With the advent of the emphasis on individual sovereignty typifying the development of modernity, it was possible to find answers to life's challenges by heeding individual emotions. In simple terms, it was about the figurative following of one's heart. Illouz traces emotional modernity taking shape from the 1700s. Illouz notes that emotional modernity is rooted in the larger ambit of social libertarianism encapsulated in the concept of self-ownership. It is reasonable to see how self-ownership fits into the private journeys of individuals looking for intimacy as well as the economic policies advocated by Thatcher and Reagan that have fuelled the wilful conflation of the public and the private, positing love as primarily entrepreneurial as well. In addition to normalising aspirational atomisation in the ways housing and social spaces are designed, one finds libertarian principles driving emotional modernity in increased awareness of bodily autonomy and anti-vax movements. Illouz explains, 'self-ownership includes the conduct of one's emotional and sexual life from within the space of one's interiority, without hindrance from the external world, thus letting emotions, desires, or subjectively defined goals determine one's choices and experiences' (Illouz 2021, 8). Hindrance from the external world would possibly include socio-cultural institutions which perpetuated biopolitical inequalities. Hence, the supposed prescription for liberation was the liquification of modernity and established institutions. The evident contradiction between the need to eschew external hindrance and letting emotions and

subjectivity define choices and experience is telling. With the supposed removal of the external

world and its accompanying hindrance, one needs to ask what it is that one's subjective

interiority is choosing and experiencing if not the very people and things from the external

world. The difference is that, instead of using the external world to ground selfhood and form

bonds, it is fuel for more self-growth and the exploration of an ever more robust interiority which

needs to absorb the external world. However, interiority, itself, is that of the market subject,

resulting in the rationalisation of both the individual and embodied surroundings. The ascension

of emotional modernity coincides with the erosion of public space as explored by Richard

Sennett.

For the 21st century entrepreneurial self, the public space, including people, is identified

as a resource to access and discard at will. Before liquid modernity, clearly defined private and

public roles for individuals resulted in the pleasure of several forms of certainties postulated by

Illouz that ensured consistency, interconnection, and exchange between one's subjectivity and

the external, objective, social world. Certainties were especially a result of relationality

dependent on codes of conduct and social practices. Working on Niklas Luhmann's conception

of certainty, Illouz lists several forms of certainties which, above all, enabled individuals to be

active members of their social spaces leveraging the predictability provided by social rituals

which kept one's world in orbit over time (Illouz 2021, 35). Among them are normative,

existential, ontological, evaluative, procedural, and emotional certainties. Normative certainty

involves the practical understanding of social norms among individuals in a given region at a

particular point in time. This could be as fundamental as who needs to pay for dinner or if the

daters are splitting the bill. Illouz gives the example of the premium on women's virginity and

the reward of social approval received by men for good sexual conduct and fidelity from the early modern period onwards (Illouz 2021, 36).

Normative certainty would result in existential certainty which is what an actor would feel while participating in a given social situation, having a clear idea of his or her sense of self in relation to others and how to contribute to the social experience of oneself and others. Referencing Jane Austen, Illouz talks about the norms of Georgian courtship – 'Once a man selected an object of courtship, it was incumbent on the woman to accept or refuse, and the courtship then proceeded according to a path that structured the exchange, the experience, and the communication of emotions' (Illouz 2021, 38). For such an exchange to occur between two individuals, participants need basic social skills to communicate which is antithetical to contemporary self-conscious behaviour.

The third form of certainty, for Illouz, is ontological certainty which involves physicalising feelings in the form of gift-giving, keeping pieces of the same object, inscriptions as well as declarations with the aid of witnesses in public to materialise a relationship as a social fact (Illouz 2021, 39, 40). The latter has now, to a great extent, become Instagram content, performing shadow work for host companies. The purported immateriality of digital material invites more surveillance across time as well as presenting low stakes in how easy digital rituals are to perform. Furthermore, social media is premised upon individual use and private physiological responses to likes and reposts. The addiction paradigm in limbic capitalism necessitates atomised use. Digital displays are, by default, entrepreneurial and an exhibition of personal achievement.

Related to the materiality of intimacy where it must be present in the outside world, freed from interiority, Illouz frames evaluative certainty as playing a crucial role in the socialisation of

the reality of the relationships. Evaluative certainty comes from the ability to assess a potential mate due to shared contexts including common universities, neighbourhoods, residence, religious and social groups. Hence, there are limits to being a stranger. Since a person of interest is participating at the same socio-cultural space as the interested person, it stands to reason that they would have some similar traits in how they navigate social, economic resources and also share some commonalities in their world view. This is largely obliterated by algorithmic dating which churns out dozens of strange faces with strange vocations and backgrounds. At the same time, individuals, in their display of solipsistic grandeur, accentuate strangeness in potentially familiar spaces like cafes, town squares and universities. Sennett's remarks on this will be analysed later.

Next, Illouz mentions procedural certainty. This is similar to normative certainty but is focused on the sequence in which events play out. Illouz cites the elaborate rules and phases of courtship in the 1800s (Illouz 2021, 41). Procedural certainty prioritises the human need to narrativise social experiences, from the first meeting, marriage, and "till death do us part". Even at the level of the individual, people have required storytelling to ground their life which formed the basis of Bauman's distinction between solid and liquid modernity, solid modernity being the era of clearly defined social, cultural and economic roles for individuals, giving way to fashionable precarity.

Finally, Illouz lists emotional certainty. Unlike the significance given to the sophisticated capriciousness of the unique individual who luxuriates in the inability to ascertain what he or she wants, emotions were embodied during pre-modern courtship – 'Emotional certainty is tightly connected to the capacity to translate emotions into sequences, narratives, goals, and objectified signs, which express and performatively induce emotions' (Illouz 2021, 43). Illouz highlights

that emotions were deeply socialised and were experienced relationally. Emotions were not necessarily quirky blobs bubbling inside an individual but, rather, performed – 'actors acted as if they knew the nature and intensity of their own emotions, and could easily ascertain those of others' (Illouz 2021, 42, 43). The declaration of love was a speech-act which removed uncertainty at the beginning of a courtship (Illouz 2021, 44). This is in direct contrast to the concerns represented by quotidian phrases like "what are we?" or the need to talk about "us" which reveal the fallout of the dilution of definitions. Illouz notes that emotions did not exist from within but from without in relation to others as individuals participated in shared rituals and norms. Emotions were tied to the perceived rewards, anxiety or failure experienced while participating in clearly defined rituals. Norms and rituals provided 'cultural pathways for emotions to be organized teleologically and narratively' (Illouz 2021, 45).

Social rituals and the role they played in pre-modern courtship is analogous to what Mark Kingwell refers to as the interface in *Wish I Were Here*. Interfaces, in both digital and analogue forms, are in-between spaces a user must pass through in order to eventually begin the activity of consequence. However, interfaces have a pernicious tendency to become pleasurable and goals in and of themselves. Kingwell calls this the "Hotel California" effect (Kingwell 2019, xiii), referencing the Eagles' lyrics 'You can check out anytime you like but you can never leave', implying the addictive design of interfaces. Such an interface is found in Homer's *Odyssey* in the episode featuring the Lotus Eaters. The land of the Lotus Eaters is an interface Odysseus and his men had to pass through as they were making their way home. On the island, the local inhabitants would consume the lotus plant and be in a constant state of bliss. Odysseus's crew consumed the lotus plant and lost any will to go home (Prisker 2023). Similar in-between spaces are hotel rooms which could afford the customer a mini-adventure and airports which, through

their security measures and waiting periods, offer state-of-the-art ways to expend large amounts of time in between locations.

Social rituals, as explored by Illouz, were interfaces with a purpose. Participants would access them to get what they desired in the form of alliances and intimacy. However, interfaces, in the age of limbic capitalism, have become more akin to the island of the Lotus Eaters and Hotel California where the draining feeling of time wasted has the trappings of comfort which all drugs provide. This is also exactly what Illouz diagnosed as the phenomenon of unloving – miniaturised experiences accounting for personal growth, not really leading anywhere – 'thank u, next'. Relationship-as-interface in a world of precarious hypermobility is exemplified by the so-called situationship – a temporary union of convenience formed as a result of precarious living by both parties who happen to serve each other's emotional needs at a given point in space and time.

Solid modernity – the stage before liquid modernity in Bauman's framework (Bauman 2006) – had dependable interfaces with reasonably predictable outcomes including housing, employment, socialisation and intimacy – the latter two being the focus of this discussion. Admittedly, solid modernity was a very brief period of post-World War 2 bloom that later generations are nostalgic about including candidates for governmental positions who try to recreate postwar developmental aspirations by running on job creation and growthist platforms. The period of welfare or solid modernity did provide some markers for social cohesion that are worth preserving in the face of resurfaced precarity and neoliberal cynicism. Interfaces would be churches, school and university classrooms, hobby groups and other opportunities for localised congregation and mingling. Such spaces would also carry implicit codes of decency and trust as institutions could vouch for the character of individuals. For instance, it is reasonable to assume

that a group of students attending a specific university would have some common beliefs in their worldview which played a part in having them end up there. Inward-looking personalities and enforced narcissism make light of the potency of relational experiences or the possibility of certainties which these interfaces could provide. Interfaces, now, in the 21st century, dominated by the embodied rhetoric of work, are increasingly spaces where one visits to impose one's individuality which Richard Sennett had identified in the last decades of the 20th century in the sterilisation of the public space. Illouz observes this as the birth of negative relationships manifested in the phenomenon of unloving. Badiou notices this in his lament of the death of the Two scene. The Two scene enables certainty where two people build one world. I discuss the Two scene further on.

With capitalism invading the private sphere, there does not seem to be a public role for private individuals to be enticed by. Common examples of ennui and anomie include the disinterest in voting among young people in peaceful countries and rootlessness with regard to one's relational identity. It is clear that individuals crave certainties to stabilise their private life. As a result, experience of privacy is being outsourced to matchmaking companies, psychotherapy, horoscope reading, manifestation – the belief of turning desires into reality through intentional reflection, law of attraction – the supposed creation of positive vibrations to attract desirable results (Sethmini 2023), and other forms of success-hunting which provide monetised appropriations of certainties. Just as trust is replaced by consent, bonds are usurped by addictions.

PARADED INCLUSIVITY

Illouz's account clarifies the undeniable link between the public space and one's developing private life, specifically, that one's private needs are out there in the public world to

be met. Individuals need robust interfaces to become relational. The trivialisation of religious congregation was not accompanied by suitable replacements besides the occasional, fledgling sports and social clubs which do not have the same institutional gravity of a church or a university. It is peculiar that atomisation and the rhetoric of inclusivity peaked simultaneously in the current century.

Inclusivity is a term of relevance especially in regions that are the flagbearers of globalisation, collecting migrants who are happy to put their heads down and get to work. The rhetoric of inclusion is ubiquitous in political speeches in campaigns and conferences in the Global North. North America is particularly interesting since it wears multiculturalism on its sleeve. Inclusivity claims to cater to the marginalised. This obviously seems well-intentioned. However, it is unclear what space it is that people are being included into. Canada, Australia and USA have the practice of land acknowledgements. The Indigenous Affairs Office of Toronto defines a land acknowledgement as 'a statement recognizing the traditional territory of the Indigenous people(s) who called the land home before the arrival of settlers, and in many cases still do call it home' ("Land Acknowledgement" 2023). Land Acknowledgements are made usually at the beginning of a cultural event where the speaker declares that land which was the erstwhile home of indigenous groups is being used after which the attendees would just proceed with the event. Since these statements do not affect live situations of indigenous groups, they might as well be analogous to a prayer. Just as it is worth asking where inclusivity is sending marginalised people to, one should enquire, with respect, whom a land acknowledgement is for. In compliance with inward-directed entrepreneurial thinking, land acknowledgements seem to address self-perceived guilt of those making the declaration. Land acknowledgements follow the

logic of "keeping the conversation going" but amount to change-proof activism which capitalism facilitates.

Inclusivity features similar well-intentioned but ill-defined buzzwords such as equality and multiculturalism. Capitalism in the psychopolitical era has clear patterns because notions of tolerance and inclusion are mirrored at the individual level as gratefulness, morning routines and journaling – self-help and therapy tropes where one lists things that make one's life happy, inadvertently revealing the number of ways in which he or she benefits from the status quo. Gratefulness, land acknowledgements, "thank you for your service" and "we are in this together" are ways to appraise the current state of globalised capitalism with its entrepreneurial bent where collective guilt is fetishised and individualised. This also features tired instances of appreciating the contributions and skills of immigrants and migrants and encouraging them to showcase their culture. Again, one should ask who the showcase is for.

Many of the major cities in North America like to identify as exemplars of multiculturalism. However, it is not unreasonable to be sceptical of multiculturalism as the perfect gambit to optimise employment. Under normal circumstances of immigration not for humanitarian reasons, migrants go through exhaustive vetting. Countries leading globalisation, like Canada, host migrants from several countries based on professional skills. There are 195 countries in the world. This means that there are potentially almost as many national representatives – as individuals or in groups – coexisting in the Global North. Such a demographic would reasonably entail myriad social norms, behaviour and expectations which each hypermobile individual would possess. For instance, some regions encourage talky strangers while people from other places practise reserve. There are different preferences in personal space. Finland had a novel reaction to WHO guidelines during the pandemic, 'Finns

love personal space to a comical degree … when the World Health Organisation advised keeping one metre of distance from others to decrease the risk of contracting COVID-19 in 2020, many Finns worried about a new world of cramped conditions and forced socialising' ("7 Foolproof Ways to Show Your Need for Personal Space" 2020). On the other hand, excessively crowded trains and buses are commonplace in India. These preliminary differences in social interface could only hint at the differences in sociality that migrants are bringing with them in terms of having parties, making friends or flirting. Crammed diversity would run the risk of participants facing challenges to be sufficiently socialised courtesy cultural and linguistic local colours, failing to gain Illouz's normative certainty. This is especially true for countries which pitch themselves as a cultural mosaic like Canada as opposed to France which does not practise hyphenated identities. The obvious directive for the worldly-wise individual is to be a Roman when in Rome. However, this involves walking on eggshells when Canada does not really provide a Rome to act as a guide.

This is, in fact, the point. In a recent CIBC promo played during the Qatar World Cup broadcasts, the video claims, 'here you're not an outsider for being proud of your heritage, you're at home' (CIBC 2022). A country like Canada needs to make clear why it is so important for it that I be proud of my heritage whilst living there. There are better spaces for migrants to indulge in their background in a tactile manner – their home countries, for example. This recalls Žižek's suspicion that white liberals are obsessed with multiculturalism because they could assign themselves a universal position (The Radical Revolution 2020; CIBC 2022).

The relationship between inclusivity advocates and migrants enacting their migration evokes the analyst-analysand dynamic. The migrant is encouraged to engage in pathological longing and overdetermine his or her dual identity. Migrants must set the stage for a smooth

transition and look to sever physical ties to their home countries so that the romantic regret of lost innocence is guaranteed. This translates into diaspora studies, so called liminal spaces, and large numbers of non-resident Indians funding Modi's Hindu supremacist project in India ("NRI Indians Are BJP's Biggest Donor" 2014). On the other hand, the host population engages in the proverbial learning from other cultures although it is unclear what it is that they learn and why it is assumed that other cultures contain elements that fit neatly into the hosts' journey of personal growth. In the general ambience of a shopping mall, migrants, who potentially are unreliable representatives of their region, are meant to sell a version of their perceived culture. The proliferation of cultural clubs and community centres testifies to the fact that expats move to purported melting pots to simply create more kitschified iterations of their cultural identities in absentia. On paper, this reads as diversity which makes ostentatious but truncated displays of their festivals over a weekend, political and historical affiliations with the odd vigil. Enter the ethnic enclave.

Lim et al. define an ethnic enclave as 'a geographical area where a particular ethnic group is spatially clustered and socially and economically distinct from the majority group. Living in an ethnic enclave has been hypothesized to protect immigrants from potential health hazards owing to increased family ties, familiar culture and help in finding (S. Lim et al. 2017). This reveals the pretensions of utopian thinking in liberal thought and globalisation champions. Better work and economic prospects encourage different social groups to form self-serving communities who voluntarily ghettoise themselves after being inclusive during work hours. Ethnic enclaves exemplify the communalisation of negative relationships which prove capable to work beyond the individual level to influence group dynamics. It is the perfect solution for homesick professionals who would hit the ground running in their new work environment and

return to a counterfeit iteration of their home to unwind. Ethnic enclaves constitute segregation with politeness as long as there is for-profit, multicultural cooperation during the day.

Toronto is an example of a major city practising pro-work multiculturalism masked as post-racial inclusivity. The city of Toronto is surrounded by smaller cities constituting what is called the Greater Toronto Area. Markham houses a large number of Chinese immigrants. Brampton's nickname 'browntown', results from its visible minorities being from India and Pakistan. Woodbridge in the city of Vaughan is known for Italians (McAllister 2012). Journalist and resident Noreen Ahmed-Ullah reveals her classist bias and tendency towards insulation expected of such spaces built on certain requirements of ability and affluence which host countries look for – 'It's like being in India, but with free healthcare, good schools and clean streets' (Ahmed-Ullah 2016). McAllister hopes that 'some of that nostalgia and character isn't lost over time and everyone throughout the GTA will have the chance to enjoy the different areas for what they are. Each offers a glimpse into a variety of cultures from across the world'. Ethnic enclaves have received a contradictory reception as noted by Qadeer and Kumar – 'Those steeped in the Chicago sociological tradition and the "melting pot" perspective tend to view enclaves as cultural ghettos, obstructing the assimilation of ethnics; whereas others inspired by European theoretical traditions and multicultural perspectives regard enclaves as expressions of cultural pluralism and sites of social capital formation' (Qadeer and Kumar 2006, 2). Townships based on voluntary segregation compel one to ask what qualifies as cultural pluralism – if pluralism is meant to be people from disparate backgrounds forming new societies and civilisations over time or if it is an arrangement entailing temporary assembly for work and a display of multiculturalism and inclusion. The latter seems to be the case in Toronto where

thousands of workers from different backgrounds commute from GTA to downtown Toronto to be multicultural at work.

DO NOT DISTURB: LOOKING BUSY IN PUBLIC AND NORMALISED ATOMISATION

The question of long commutes to and from work gained relevance with urbanisation and is now awaiting a reappraisal in a post-Covid-19 world with past and anticipated lockdowns. In *The Fall of Public Man*, Richard Sennett writes about the radical transformation of public spaces that begin in the latter half of the 20th century which designed the perfectly sterile world of the inward-looking neoliberal individual engaged in unloving. Sennett traces voluntary atomisation to the declining Roman society after the death of Augustus. Sennett discusses a wilful confusion between public and private selves which sounds an awful lot like Illouz's emotional modernity – 'As the Roman's public life became bloodless, he sought in private a new focus for his emotional energies, a new principle of commitment and belief. This private commitment was mystic, concerned with escaping the world at large and the formalities of the res publica as part of that world' (Sennett 2017, 3). Sennett is using masculine pronouns here to perhaps highlight that active public life was the domain of men in Ancient Rome. I am using Sennett and Illouz to examine everyone in contemporary society and to say that negative freedom and performative self-actualisation is applicable to every neoliberal individual. Sennett highlights the fallout of peacetime living where bloodless society lacks a struggle in the external world and seeks inwardness. He seems to suggest that what Byung-Chul Han diagnosed as psychopolitics came from latter-day, peacetime Rome – 'under the neoliberal regime of auto-exploitation, people are turning their aggression against themselves. This auto-aggressivity means that the exploited are not inclined to revolution so much as depression' (Han 2017, 7).

Before the time of emotional modernity, people had active investments in the functioning of the public space, directly in charge of their rights as a people of a state which determined how they would conduct themselves in relation to others. This mirrors the case of participation in social rituals regulating emotions as studied by Illouz. Put simply, the individual derived selfhood by being alongside others. As with Romans after the end of Augustus's reign, public life in the 20th century has become 'a matter of formal obligation' (Sennett 2017, 3). Sennett identifies the treatment meted to strangers: 'Manners and ritual interchanges with strangers are looked on as at best formal and dry, at worst as phony. The stranger himself is a threatening figure, and few people can take great pleasure in that world of strangers, the cosmopolitan city' (Sennett 2017, 3) – while such a place is the potential antidote to the city of ethnic neighbourhoods and enclaves. Canadians are known for their politeness. In quotidian life, this usually plays out as exchanges of thank you-s and please-s in public spaces when people are on their way in and out of spaces. There seems to be a concern to get out of the way of others. In the sleepy Canadian town of London, Ontario, there is a practice in public buses of passengers blurting out "thank you" on their way out from the backdoor of the bus. This greeting is evidently addressed to the bus driver. However, a majority of passengers, on their way into the bus, from the front door closer to the bus driver, do not offer any greeting, usually avoid eye contact to proceed to a seat to usually bury their heads behind a smartphone and arm their ears with air-pods to inoculate themselves against the opportunity to converse with other passengers. Hence, at the outset and during the journey, there does not seem to be any sense of public community. It is only when passengers reach the backdoor that a disembodied "thank you" supposedly travels over the heads of a crowd of standing passengers to reach the driver. The impersonality of this interaction in guaranteed as the passenger is never seen again. It is unclear

who benefits from this interaction, if it could even be called such, unless it is the passenger who possibly feels mildly vindicated from the robotic utterance, fulfilling an unwritten public obligation.

Sennett reveals a distinction between Romans journeying inward and modern individuals withdrawing into their privacy. For the Romans, the private world would offer religious transcendence, a deliverance towards a higher realm. This has had a more generalised presence in modern images of the artist or the solitary genius as well as the popularity of Marcus Aurelius and Roman Stoics in the self-help industry. The inner world must be protected from degenerate public life, making the self manifest despite the public world, not because of it:

> Few people would claim that their psychic life arises by spontaneous generation, independent of social conditions … Nevertheless, the psyche is treated as though it has an inner life of its own … seen as so precious and so delicate that it will wither if exposed to the harsh realities of the social world, and will flower only to the extent that it is protected and isolated. (Sennett 2017, 4)

Sennett's overarching diagnosis is that, with the advent of psychoanalysis and the concurrent psychologisation of the individual, it has caused the detriment of both public and private spaces. This is because, post-psychoanalysis, individuals examine public spaces from the lens of their private personhood. In such a situation, emotions and feelings exist in a vacuum as an inherent part of the thinking thing. Illouz has pointed out that activities that involved emotions and the supposedly less rational faculties of the self were, in fact, relational. In Marxian terms, in her study of certainties, Illouz proved that emotions were material, experienced in relation to others whilst participating in normative social rituals. Sennett notes that the construction of the public self would aid in creating a functioning society and would enable the private self to thrive

as well. To bring Illouz and Sennett together, flirting is a social and public act. Of course, there are personal stakes involved, but the ritual, itself, carries impersonality.

The personalisation of the whole of society has harmed individual experience because life is viewed in terms of unending self-revelation and growth. Coffeeshops and parks have become home to countless laptops, smartphones, air-pods and digital headgear shielding customers from the interference of the relational world. Such technology could be classified as social contraceptives, used in public spaces for the purposes of insulation from others. Unlike technology like musical instruments, cameras, the paintbrush, rocket ships and airplanes which involve focused use, making the user embark on a journey from a dilletante to an expert, as well as gaining the social capital that comes with sharable expertise, social contraceptives are digital distraction devices for looking busy. Unlike guitar-playing, for instance, the notion of being a proficient iPad or air-pod user seems daft. Besides using junk technology as social contraceptives, there is also the question of overworking where the social environment, functioning as the unofficial workspace, becomes an effective coping device. Either way, the practice emphasises the exhibition of individualism. Sennett's description of the transformed public space predating the digital revolution entailed the dominion of 'isolation in the midst of visibility' (Sennett 2017, 13). There are legitimate reasons for working in public, used by artists looking for inspiration – screenwriters sampling realistic dialogue, sound artists capturing ambience. However, the creative air of seeking inspiration in public places has been coopted. As mentioned before, neoliberalism appropriates art. The passive consumption of the self revealing itself is viewed as a creative process.

The personalisation of the public space leads to its professionalisation. Public spaces are meant to be interfaces to begin or resume one's socialisation within a local region. This involves

the development of socialisation skills much of which become intuitive for a large number of people. Professionalisation of social interfaces gradually leads to the assumption that an unaccompanied stranger is always busy. The de-socialisation of selfhood leads to Sennett's conclusion – 'in the midst of self-absorption no one can say what is inside' (Sennett 2017, 5). The preoccupation with discovering selfhood becomes a performance, an end in itself aided by social contraceptives such that it need not matter what role of consequence the person's selfhood plays in relation to others. Strangers can visit public spaces, engage in Pavlovian activities with smart devices and vacate without making any headway towards building a shared reality. Practised avoidance among strangers fortifies negative freedom as opposed to communally guaranteed freedom which allows individuals to present themselves as social participants using predictable rituals.

Sennett's account also illustrates the rise of cult leaders in politics where voters support a candidate based on perceived individual characteristics as found in the popularity of JFK, Bill Clinton, Trump and Modi. This reveals a failure of the Reason project since an elaborate system of bureaucracy, pleasurable for those designing it, does not entice individuals to perform public roles sincerely. Hence, revelations play a bigger role in influencing voters – Monica Lewinsky revealing Clinton's wandering eye or Modi leaving his wife in ascetic service of the nation. These revelations create a public iteration of private trust – 'The obsession with persons at the expense of more impersonal social relations is like a filter which discolors our rational understanding of society … it leads us to believe community is an act of mutual self-disclosure and to undervalue the community relations of strangers' (Sennett 2017, 4). Strangers benefit from predictable rituals because normed sociality allows strangers to enjoy each other's public selves to begin with. Illouz's account of certainties suggests that individuals can work towards more

intimate forms of certainties, revealing themselves to one another gradually instead of banking on immediate, expository October surprises and smoking guns. The certainty is initially derived from the embodied social ritual because it provisionally vouches for the participants' character in most cases unless there are extremely good actors hiding smoking guns. Relationality can never be risk-free.

Reading Illouz and Sennett, it is clear that desiring love and being in an intimate, romantic relationship constitute a social want and one's erotic desires are social desires. This is simply due to the fact that these individual needs are met by partaking in the public world. This is in opposition to online dating and mental health discourses which encourage self-identification of character traits, exaggeration of preferences in potential mates, and a diffuse sense of compassion and vulnerability.

Illouz and Sennett highlight that the answer to individual needs lies in the world of people. Alain Badiou has a more poetic illustration of this inference in *In Praise of Love*. The title, more than anything else, refers to being in praise of chance – the possibility of magic from chance encounters. Badiou references the dilution of the potency of social interfaces due to the primacy of online dating. Badiou cites several slogans of a French dating site which mirror the definition of relative surplus value – 'Get love without chance!', 'Be in love without falling in love!', 'Get perfect love without suffering' (Badiou and Truong 2012, 6). All the slogans follow the logic of curtailing necessary time and work which would lead to a goal or the surplus reward. The apps sell the idea of customers availing the dizzying experience of love through an overly rationalised process which makes it impossible. Algorithmic dating has a poor approximation of normative certainty because the stranger it offers as a product is also disembodied to begin with. It is the prime example of the interface or the in-between space becoming too pleasurable for its

own sake. Users consume the tactile pleasures of compulsive swiping, the rush of a match or the likes received by a profile. Badiou reflects that online dating is bad news because the promise of risk-free love mirrors the equally impossible zero-death wars and smart bombs found in American military propaganda advertisements (Badiou and Truong 2012, 7). In other words, post-industrial society and the military-industrial complex which is a part of it share the design principles of the bunker or insulation. The question of risk-free love arises precisely because of the erosion of certainties provided by relational contexts outside insulation where participants would contend with calculated risks with many precedents. The proliferation of the bunker, exhaustively examined by Paul Virilio in *The Original Accident* (Virilio 2007), is in compliance with the ubiquity of the precog or pre-emptive strikes facilitated by social contraceptives. To reiterate, I am defining social contraceptives as technology, usually digital, used in public spaces to look busy and facilitate insulation.

The antithesis to unloving which Badiou provides is the Two scene (Badiou and Truong 2012, 29). For Badiou, love begins with the meeting of two subjectivities. This recalls Graeber and Wengrow's insight that fundamental political subjectivity requires the copresence of at least two people. This encounter is characterised by separation and disruption because it is the meeting of difference. Badiou's explanation of love is as a process of worldbuilding. The encounter presents a preliminary obstacle to it – an in-between space or an interface, to recall Kingwell. The interface or the disruptive encounter features 'two interpretive stances … set in opposition … love contains an initial element that separates, dislocates and differentiates. You have *Two*. Love involves Two' (Badiou and Truong 2012, 27, 28). Badiou elaborates that the two-ness of love is the cause for risk and contingency. Love is not part of material reality but a possibility – 'I would give this encounter the quasi-metaphysical status of an *event*, namely of something that

doesn't enter into the immediate order of things' (Badiou and Truong 2012, 28). It is the desire to avoid this painful contingency that is weaponised by matchmaking practices which aim to do away with this stage of social friction and frame an altogether self-serving substitute in its place where individuals detail their fetishistic preferences like height, skin tone, age range, race and so on. Instead of seeking an earthly iteration of eternity, swipers are wired towards novelty-hunting.

For Badiou, the new adventure of world-building is a possibility from the encounter between two – 'Love isn't simply about two people meeting and their inward-looking relationship: it is a construction, a life that is being made, no longer from the perspective of One but from the perspective of Two. And that is what I have called a "Two scene"' (Badiou and Truong 2012, 29). In opposition to this, the One scene is more popular as found in quotidian notions of "looking for the one" or having a "type" – a predetermined conception of the perfect partner based on set criteria whose significance is exaggerated to infantile extents. The contingent stage of the encounter is deeply profitable and is the site for the new economy based on negative relationships as noticed by Illouz in the popularity of therapists, relationship coaches, and self-help in tandem with faux empowerment techniques like self-love and self-care. This new economy ensures that the in-between space can be prolonged and pathologised to the point where the entrepreneurial lover can gravitate towards a new in-between space as a self-identified, evolved individual to display his or her figurative vulnerability to an ongoing revolving door of strangers. Resentment from these encounters, destined to disappoint, results in the stylisation of Sennett's 'isolation in the midst of visibility' in the form of pro-work pop archetypes such as "lone wolves", "sigma males" (Hadford 2023), and "girl-bosses" which men and women can identify as and perform in solitude (Cavallo and Collins 2023).

The Two scene does not treat the other as the final piece of the jigsaw in one's self-development journey. Such a version of love as a One scene is referred to as 'the meltdown concept' where different subjectivities melt into one such that love is a journey away from the world, mirroring the entrepreneur's inward journey to greatness. Badiou wishes to challenge this solipsistic vision of love where it is impossible to stay on earth after falling in love (Badiou and Truong 2012, 31). Such an account presents love as a destructive force exemplified by the myth of star-crossed lovers. Love takes place in the world for Badiou. It is not part of quotidian events but material – 'Nothing enables one to pre-arrange the encounter … and all those long preparatory chats! In the end, the moment you see each other in the flesh, you see each other, and that's that, and it's out of control' (Badiou and Truong 2012, 32). Badiou's reflections challenge the curtailment of time for the sake of relative surplus value which the productivity interpretation of love has adopted as matchmaking promises swift results – 'That everyone's existence, when tested by love, confronts a new way of experiencing time' (Badiou and Truong 2012, 33). This is evidently a call to move past the monetisable in-between space which is the purview of the purportedly practical attitude to love. Social interfaces in the era of dwindling social spaces have become more specialised in the form of networking events, digital-to-analogue interfaces like online dating and self-help, pickup artistry and inebriated mingling. The unavoidable relationship between space and time was noted earlier to reveal that relative surplus value creation negates time as well as bodies.

Badiou's mission for love accounts for both space and time. He highlights the possibility to materialise the abstract elements of love similar to the manner in which, for Illouz, emotions are not disembodied phantoms within one's soul but exist materially in relationality. For Badiou, the project of constructing a world in the Two scene involves inscribing eternity within time

which is rendered material by the speech act of declarations of love (Badiou and Truong 2012, 47).

Supposedly immaterial needs that have been overly psychologised can be met in the external world. Badiou warns against the colonising impulse of the self to treat the external world as existing for fueling and being absorbed by the self. The self cannot be Hegel's Lord. In Sennett's intervention, this involves cultivating a public self and treating individual needs as social needs. The need for love and intimacy need not be understood as the compulsion to enrich one's interiority. The self needs to become relational. A challenge to this is the erosion of the public spaces, expedited by the use of social contraceptives.

Just as Oli Mould delineated the ruin of local cultural practices due to the phenomenon of placemaking – the gentrification of areas to attract a creative class who would create profitable renditions of diversity and multiculturalism, Sennett highlights the creation of inert public spaces devoid of social meaning. Sennett describes the design of a skyscraper built after World War II which was Gordon Bunshaft's Lever House on Park Avenue, New York, revealing the true purpose of innovative architecture in post-industrial public space:

> The ground floor … is an open square, a courtyard with a tower rising on the north side, and, one story above the ground, a low structure surrounding the other three sides. But, one passes from the street underneath this low horseshoe to penetrate to the courtyard; the street level itself is dead space. No diversity of activity takes place on the ground floor; it is only a means of passage to the interior. (Sennett 2017, 12)

Lever House is a prominent representative of the International Style of architecture, characterised by 'an emphasis on volume over mass, the use of lightweight, mass-produced, industrial materials, rejection of all ornament and color, repetitive modular forms, and the use of

flat surfaces, typically alternating with areas of glass' ("International Style (Modern European Architecture Style)" n.d.). Sennett notes that the prominence of glass played a crucial role in normalising permeable walls which isolate activities in the building from the outside world. This is how 'the aesthetics of visibility and social isolation merge' (Sennett 2017, 13). This phenomenon is also a potential forerunner of the tendency to not disturb or offend and to assume that anyone displaying busyness in public is in the middle of grave business. Glass barriers had become all too common even before Covid-19, often placed in the middle of seats in subway trains and in front of bank tellers and receptionists.

The public space, in the form of vast highways, streets and walkways, Sennett notes, is now primarily meant for commuting (Sennett 2017, 14). This makes public spaces part of the work schedule due to which it is crowded by sincere workers who populate it with silence, holding back any need for relationality. Communication is primarily made through aforementioned social contraceptives to connect and network with existing relations and work colleagues and clients unless the devices are used to simply avoid interaction possibly by people keeping up appearances while in between jobs as well as grand exhibitions of self-reliance and empowerment.

CONCLUSION

This chapter continued unpacking the material consequences of rationalist negative dogmatism in the advent of negative freedom which is further socialised in the form of negative relationships, which is the predilection with unmaking and avoiding relational bonds, for Illouz, reinforcing Bauman's liquid modern individual. The cost of unmaking bonds causes a miniaturisation of social processes. This miniaturisation has financial incentives. Hence, I related Illouz's negative relationships to Tronti's social factory that entailed an expansion of capital

beyond the physical factory space, depending on relative surplus value which is derived from the curtailment of worktime. The financial incentive of negative relationships is the curtailment of necessary embodied time such that participants can create relative surplus value for online dating platforms and, by extension, view truncated sociality as a risk-free surplus reward without the effort. Recalling basic principles of Cartesian rationalism, the negation of necessary time undermines the causal body bringing processes to the point of surplus value creation. I proposed to call this phenomenon of miniaturisation 'small talk'. Small talk has three features – the truncation of social processes through the removal of necessary time, pre-emptive measures encouraging more negative freedom and stifling the possibility of radical change such as empowerment of vulnerable groups in the form of public freedom as well as opportunities to dream of new societies and civilisations in current pro-work multicultural regions. In the next chapter, I will relate negative dogmatism to the ecological body by highlighting the ecomodernist concern to rationally order the environment. Specifically, I will use the Cartesian trajectory, introduced in Chapter 1, to reinterpret the base/superstructure continuum, building on thinkers like Althusser and Žižek who have written on the materiality of the superstructure. My reinterpretation will involve treating the superstructure as a bunker of capitalist globalisation, referencing Peter Sloterdijk's conception of globalisation as an insulated bunker or a world interior.

Chapter 4 – The Problem of Climate Change as a Post-Material Conception

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I attempted to reveal how the rationalist principle of negative dogmatism encouraged two major phenomena. First, it informed atomised self-actualisation in the form of the competitive achievement subject. Second, the compulsive self-absorption of negative dogmatism follows through to the social sphere, as negative freedom – the right to be left alone – which facilitates negative relationships, the tendency to avoid or have temporary, transactional bonds, especially in intimate sociality. Thus, it is not just the individual who "manufactures" a second-nature body as an embodied rhetoric; embodied social processes must also be rendered productive, sacralising the working relationship as all-pervasive. Negative freedom follows the tenet of severance from relational contexts, which are to be treated as potential obstacles to productive self-development and sacrificed. That is, sacrificial embodiment is where rationalist philosophy and religion meet. Relationships must also be formed such that the encounter can be entrepreneurially handled by individual participants, remaining secluded in their respective profit-driven One scenes, to recall Badiou (Badiou and Truong 2012). Negative dogmatism – severance from relational embodiment – conceives autonomous selfhood as a "bunker" where the rational self can insulate itself from the perceived deficiencies of embodied surroundings. Negative relationships continue this insulation as people unmake bonds to fortify their bunkered autonomy. The "body" of the environment, in the developed world, is often viewed in opposition to the rationalised space of civilised modernity where humans live such that environmentalism, particularly in the West and other urbanised regions, is seen as a set of solutions that must be devised *within* the bunker to "fix" the ecological body that lies at a distance from productive post-industrial modernity. Broadly speaking, this constitutes a post-

materialist view (Guha 2010, 2). Post-materialism informs ecomodernism which primarily looks

to accentuate the opposition between human-occupied space and sensitive *wilderness* – what

ecomodernists call 'decoupling' (Dawson 2018, 182). Decoupling recalls rationalist dualism and

severance from embodied relationality in that ecomodernism posits it is possible to decouple the

space of productive humanity completely from sensitive nature. Post-materialism entails

securing material necessities for human life and activity – even if it is achieved at the cost of

climate stability – after which environmentalism can be pursued as affair not integral to human

sustenance (Guha 2010). 'Post-materialism' directly mirrors the rationalist objective of achieving

a stage of free will where the body's causality is subject to rational ordering principles of

productivity. Using the post-materialism lens, I will attempt a reinterpretation of the Marxian

base/superstructure continuum following Althusser and Žižek, who belong to the camp of

thinkers theorising the materiality of ideology. The reinterpretation involves seeing the post-

materialist, gentrified space as the superstructure which creates disposable bodies like the

migrant workers and destabilised ecosystems that can be pathologised through philanthropy and

capitalist techno-solutions. In other words, the superstructure discursively creates the base from

within. The establishment of the post-material space would lead to the conception of capitalism

as a bunker where embodiment exists but is inconsequential – as reflected in Peter Sloterdijk's

world interior (Sloterdijk 2013a). The bunker signifies capitalism as a literal spatial system that

hails bodies to make them productive and measurable in their second nature. The bunker also

serves as a metaphor of capitalist organisation which, even so, manifests materially – such things

as smart cities, air purifiers, lockdowns are associated with a specific class of people who could

afford to be shut in. The Svalbard Seed Vault provides an additional example. Such abunker

renders the materiality and spatiality of ideology more stark since it looks to absorb as many

bodies as possible to make them rationally productive, until capitalism produces debilitated bodies which it could fix or pathologise on its own terms – for instance, precarious jobs for unhoused people and de-extinction for endangered ecology. Whatever remains outside the bunker is simply unrealised value. Further, the bunker operates in terms of how the climate crisis is intellectualised through often excessively future-oriented visions to maintain the status quo. This involves repackaging the climate crisis as something potentially insulating people from localised direct action that could save nearby ecosystems and draw attention to local pollution levels. In what follows, I elaborate on these ideas by first discussing how ideology could be seen spatially. Then, I will develop the motif of the bunker as it materially manifests within capitalism. I conclude this chapter with a speculation of deep history as a means to exit the bunker and re-embody existence.

SPATIALISED IDEOLOGY OR POST-MATERIALISM

Inside the post-material bunker or the superstructure, environmental decline is represented with the politely noncommittal term "climate change" which followed the equally docile and literally temperate "global warming". The spirit of Cartesian scepticism is the solution to physical realities of melting permafrost, and Delhi, housing over 30 million people, perpetually engulfed in smog ("Delhi Population" 2023). The cognitive experts comprise alarmists and denialists who sell indignation in equal measure, and profitable ecomodernist projects promoting messianic technological fixes. The notion of spatialised ideology needs unpacking because this is where climate change as essentially a cognitive exercise operates. Running the risk of oversimplification, ideology can be understood as fabricated reality which is seemingly a neat translation of the Marxian term 'false consciousness'. Ideology appears spatialised because it is the ethic which runs modernity such that modernity, itself, is exemplified

by the physical post-industrial urban space created to be away from or at the cost of natural spaces like forests, mountains and hills which constitute nature as well as non-urban dwellings.

The Cartesian mind-body split is transformed into the space of post-industrial modernity and everything that lies outside it, dragged into modernity when convenient. The fabricated reality caused by Bauman's 'order-building' features modernity presumably headquartered in the post-industrial urban space experienced as a success class and the end goal of those who are yet to "make it" (Bauman 2004). What is outside is not only nature but also other regions like non-professional classes of developing countries, places which, after turning into war zones, start affecting the post-industrial class and its fabricated reality through a global economy. Greenwashing, inclusivity, antinatalism and self-hatred, corporate social responsibility, SpaceX and Tesla, and the exaggerated significance of carbon footprint exist within the space of fabrication. Outside of this, the bodies of humans and nature, which do not necessarily have a vote in modernity, exist until they are brought inside to be measurably ordered in the form of migrant workers, reforestation and seed vaults, Earth Days, and environment summits.

A reinterpretation of ideology is warranted in the present historical moment where the growth model persists during a potentially post-growth and post-manufacturing society. I am provisionally arguing that it is the superstructure that is creating the base in an era of purportedly immaterial work, where manufacturing is no longer central to capitalism. This is not to say that the base/superstructure dynamic as traditionally understood, comprising a 'determining base' and a 'determined' superstructure does not exist (Williams 1973). Regions with wealth inequality still have an underclass that is in charge of producing and maintaining the superstructure. Raymond Williams critiques the often static definitions of the base in terms of it being the 'real social existence of man', 'the real relations of production' or 'a mode of production at a particular stage

of development'. Instead, the base, for Williams, is an ongoing process continually functioning as the foundation of all other activities (Williams 1973). This chapter focuses on gated communities and regions looking to insulate themselves to protect the productive space of capital – what Sloterdijk is calling 'the world interior' – from embodied obstacles such as ecological bodies as well as human bodies outside modernity who are forest dwellers or in agricultural and fishing communities that are not embedded in the fabric of growthist modernity. Slobodian's work on the formation of special economic zones suggests an intensification of the bunker such that the world interior is reordered further by anarcho-capitalists (Slobodian 2023). This is in line with an ever-increasing wealth gap and the attempt of gated communities to construct bunkered spaces with inconsequential embodiment such as artificial greenery as well as absorbing bodies from outside modernity to make them productive towards exhaustion. Examples include erstwhile fishing communities who have been displaced and now part of the new precarious underclass at the mercy of residents of the Rajarhat New Town area in Kolkata (Dey, Samaddar, and Sen 2013), India, as well as regions damaged from land subsidence which could be profitably pathologised (Explained Desk 2023). Whenever reordering takes place in a region, human and ecological bodies react to the bunker in their debilitated form after being made productive. The base as a process is useful when considering human and ecological bodies in tandem where communities based on local resources like agricultural land or water conducive for fishing work to perpetuate natural ecosystems as well as contributing to the superstructure. Gentrification and the formation of bunkers disrupt these systems to, first, absorb them into the bunker until they take on a new productive and pathologisable form.

An analysis of ideology as it works today would reveal the world in dualistic terms through post-materialism – the capitalist and, pertinently, Accelerationist-Marxist argument that

people can care for the environment after accumulating riches and meeting material necessities for survival (Guha 2010, 2). The dualism consists of a superstructural space of realised value or second nature and the space outside the bunker with unrealised value.

The superstructure and base continuum, which can be considered as the Marxian equivalent of the mind-body split, was introduced in the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. The base refers to the material reality of human labourers and natural resources required for production – 'men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will … The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness'. The superstructure is the reality experienced as a consequence of material production (Marx 1999). For instance, the base consists of unglamorous labourers in sweatshops while the superstructure is the shopping mall where a consumer can shop, eat and socialise. The superstructure, in the traditional sense, is a cultural manifestation of the material base – including the legal-juridical organisation of society, the state, and dominant cultural ideas. In other words, it is a cognitive endeavour which the individual engages in, not necessarily voluntarily – 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness' (Marx 1999). The relationship between base and superstructure, seen as inextricably linked where the superstructure is in charge at the cost of the base could be understood as Marx's interpretation of ideology. The materiality of reality is accessible in the form of things and people who constitute the base which manifests an illusion called superstructure.

For Althusser, ideology is created in terms of language, following the structuralist and poststructuralist tenet that all meaning is dependent on language or is logocentric (Felluga 2011).

This makes ideology material in that it is impossible to function in society without opting into it. In Althusser's reading, ideology is not a veil duping people from seeing the material base but it, itself, is reality. Similar to Foucault's discourse, Althusser uses the term 'apparatus' – institutions which control subjects. As opposed to Repressive State Apparatuses like law enforcement, Ideological State Apparatuses are institutions premised on compassion and love like schools, parenting and religion which indoctrinate individuals into the reality of ideology – the process Althusser calls interpellation (Althusser 2014, 190). A counter to Althusser is that individualistic societies in North America harbour anti-state sentiment and are entrepreneurial. A YouTuber could identify as self-employed but is working for Google. Meta, Google and Match perform the state function in regions known for privatisation. It is ironic that Google's parent company is Alphabet – the perfect metaphor for meaning created through language – 'We liked the name Alphabet because it means a collection of letters that represent language, one of humanity's most important innovations, and is the core of how we index with Google search'. Further, Larry Page's explication defines the purpose of ideology as a reality to preserve the status quo through the reproduction of capitalism – 'We also like that it means alpha-bet (Alpha is investment return above benchmark), which we strive for!' (Page 2015).

The dominance of language prevails in the climate change debate where exploring possibilities like banning the clearing of forests is overwhelmed by showboating the marvel of human reasoning and intellectual faculties in the form of individualised carbon footprint. Further, environmental decline is coded as climate change. Human-caused environmental changes are assimilated in the scope of climate change such that an emphasis on natural changes to the climate could be used to dismiss human-caused change as negligible ("6 Claims Made by Climate Change Skeptics – and How to Respond," 2021). Althusser's own words simply

rephrase Larry Page – '… the knotting together of superstructure and base … is accomplished above all by the Ideological State Apparatuses, which figure in the superstructure only to the extent that most of their "activity" is accomplished in the interplay of the relations of production themselves in order to ensure the reproduction of the relations of production' (Althusser 2014, 203-204). Althusser provides examples of how ideological state apparatuses provide the language with which subjects define their reality. Following the language of legality, a worker would admit 'of course I have to work in exchange for my wage'. Similarly, a capitalist would moralise his position whilst also taking the reality of capitalism as an undisputable fact – 'I invest my money, do I not? I risk it, do I not? Surely I must have something *in return*: profit. What's more, there has to be a boss to tell workers what to do. And what would they live on if it weren't for me' (Althusser 2014, 204, 205). Through the ideological state apparatuses, the machinations of capitalism become embedded in the fabric of commonplace reality through language. Larry Page's second definition boils down to use of language for profit. Althusser's critique of a language-based reality is Page's celebration.

Žižek makes the connection between psychoanalysis and Althusser's intervention on ideology as a language-based reality more pronounced. In his magnum opus *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Žižek claims that the process of the production of commodities and the ways in which humans dream are homologous. Psychoanalysts have tried to analyse dreams of analysands, assuming that probing the dream imagery would lead to a latent content – the source of the patient's troubles (Žižek 2008, 5). The latent content in psychoanalysis is the base for Marx – the concealed workers and resources which the consumer does not see, the body Descartes identifies by a special right but decides he could live on without. What Marx calls the superstructure, Althusser calls ideology – all prerogatives of the thinking thing – itself a product

of Descartes' linguistic exercise in *Meditations*, constituting the *cogito*-centric reality

necessitated by negative dogmatism.

Following Althusser's focus on the superstructure, Žižek argues that conventional

emphasis by psychoanalysts on the need to discover a latent content which is triggering the

dream world is misplaced. For Žižek, the creation of the dream world in its intricate form

harbours a secret desire, not the latent content. To recall Bauman, Žižek queries what inspires

this unique form of order-building. The chief concern is not to uncover the latent content – some

form of physical trauma or sexual preoccupation, but why the mind creates the symbols that it

does. In the context of Marx, the pressing need is to 'explain why work assumed the form of the

value of a commodity, why it can affirm its social character only in the commodity-form of its

product' (Žižek 2008, 4). In the case of environmentalism, a similar approach is found in the

form of ecomodernist rescue acts that transform sensitive regions into sanctuaries as well as

viewing environmentalism as a morally righteous pursuit one must undertake from a rationalised,

ordering principle to fix nature by turning it into the commodity-form. Without this, interaction

with the environment does not make sense to the troubleshooter. For both Althusser and Žižek,

the constituents of reality must be arranged in very particular ways for it to be visible to the

individual who has been absorbed by the fabrication and who, in turn, feeds it. Ideology renders

creating reality a cognitive exercise. Although Marx's position was that there is a distinct base, it

is clear that the base and the superstructure 'knot' into one, resulting in the prevalence of the

superstructure – the fabricated reality that is validated by the mind after continually passing the

test of doubt. In its increasing acuteness, the nature-culture divide becomes more evident where

one needs to be disposed of to feed the other.

A clear example of the nature-culture or mind-body split, or what I am referring to as spatialisation of ideology is found in science fiction dystopian films like *The Hunger Games* (Ross 2012) and *In Time* (Niccol 2011). The protagonist lives in seeming deprivation in a small district, making ends meet as a hunter-gatherer or part of the proletariat and having food lacking nourishment. The characters in these villages or districts travel and discover an obscenely opulent city where everyone is equal in their affluence, whose leaders have been feeding of the resources in the outer districts the main characters come from. To the audience, the discovery of the city is delineated as a momentous revelation of the characters' exploitation with the expectation of an ensuing conflict between the two classes. However, the segregation of the classes actually highlights that the knowledge and coveting of the fabricated reality of the affluent city where ideology is headquartered constitute true awakening. Discovering the city was part of the plan – the journey, itself, signifies interpellation or Althusser's 'hailing'. Dystopian narratives purportedly critique climate collapse. However, the discovery of the hidden, post-industrial city reinforces the accepted notion of historical progress that Marx has endorsed in his theory of history where modernity transitions from self-governing communities to feudalism, on to capitalism running its course to arrive at socialism (Paxton 2021).

A neater approach to investigate spatialised ideology is what Ramachandra Guha calls post-materialism (Guha 2010, 2). Post-materialism could further be understood in terms of Žižek's cupola or Sloterdijk's world interior of capital – the hidden city or reality of futuristic narratives. Post-materialism defends the claim of ethical capitalism – that individuals could care about the environment once their material needs to live with dignity are met. It is the argument of economic traditionalists sacralising growthism and free market advocates that capitalism is, in fact, making the poor richer. American economist Edward Lazear posits – 'A country's lowest

earners fare best when markets are allowed to work, when the means of production are privately owned, and when government's role in economic activity is limited'. Lazear cites data on standard of living and economic freedom from 161 countries showing that both rich and poor benefit from free market capitalism (Lazear 2020). Similarly, in the much-touted debate between Žižek and Jordan Peterson held in Toronto, 2019, on which economic model generates more happiness, Peterson spoke along the same lines at the end of his opening statement, citing free market benefits for the poor (Peterson 2019). This argument leaps over the fact that poverty is created when people are included in modernity and tasked with being aggrieved subjects. It extols capitalism for charitably providing opportunities for poor people to create wealth. However, it does not ask where this poor subject even comes from, how the subject is created or what comes first, capitalism or poverty, given that growthist development generally depends on a rigid form of urbanisation including destroying agriculture, forest dwellings and alternative societies.

In *How Much Should a Person Consume*, Guha states that post-materialism is how environmentalism became a part of urban moral conscience in the West. Concerns began through media such as accounts of melting glaciers and global warming on Discovery Channel in the latter half of the 20th century. Post-materialism follows Althusser and Žižek by highlighting the material necessity of the superstructure from where the base would be discursively formed in the form of sensitive green spaces in a cordoned-off nature, unhousing real human bodies outside post-industrial modernity whereby people are brought into the urban space to perform precarious jobs as migrant workers. This care for what lies outside the post-industrial space can be suspended at any point as evidenced by the abandonment of the Indian migrant workers during the 2020 lockdown. The strategic knotting of the base and superstructure is just so that the knot

could be untangled at will to expel disposable bodies. Covid-19 was a violent return of the doubtful body. The superstructural space suspended Althusser's knot and identified precarious migrant workers in relation to the body of the virus.

During peacetime, the superstructural space uses the base to its exhaustion after which beneficiaries of the superstructure can practice compassionate philanthropy and "give back". Post-materialism, Guha writes, insinuates that 'a cultivated interest in the protection of nature was thought possible only when the necessities of life could be taken for granted. As for the poor, their waking hours were spent foraging for food, water, housing, energy: how could they be concerned with something as elevated as the environment?' (Guha 2010, 2). Individuals must work their way out of deprivation, partaking in the promise of relief from bodily toil and becoming a part of the post-industrial class. Consequently, they can become conscious environmentalists with the benefit of adequate distance from nature. Members of post-industrial modernity constitute the superstructure who leave nature in the hopes to rediscover it in the form of latent content as ecomodernist clinicians and philanthropists.

Guha makes a distinction between nature viewed from the class of clinician-modernists trying to preserve distant nature as dispassionate technocrats – primarily ecomodernists discussed later – and experienced by those who fight to protect themselves from being unhoused due to creeping industry – 'Environmental movements in North America have … been convincingly related to the emergence of a post-materialist or post-industrial society … in a curious paradox, the car, the most "modern creation of industry", becomes the vehicle of anti-industrial impulses, taking one to distant adventures … "far from stale routine, functional ugliness or the dictates of the clock"'. Guha is referring to the ubiquitous access to personal vehicles in the North American West which facilitate good-hearted nature lovers to create a

politics around saving the wilderness (Guha 2010, 80). I will return to the question of the clock

while discussing degrowth. From the view of people indigenous to threatened areas, Guha

highlights the role of the Chipko Movement in the 1970s in Indian forest regions. Of course,

clinician environmentalism exists in affluent India with tree-planting and cleaning drives.

However, the mobilisation in Uttarakhand forests counters post-material activism by

exemplifying direct action – 'the upsurge of environmental conflicts in India is related more

directly to livelihood and survival. These conflicts are, in the main, protests against the

encroachment on the natural resources of the community by the urban-industrial complex. There

is here an *immediacy* to environmental protest' (Guha 2010, 80). Post-material activism relies on

primarily rational, dispassionate displays of moral uprightness – 'such as the Sierra Club or the

Friends of the Earth – with its own cadre, leadership, and source of funds properly audited …

methods of redressal available … such as the court case, the lobbying of legislators and

ministers, and the exposé on television or in the newspaper' (Guha 2010, 80–81). Direct action is

provoked from forest dwellers and obviously marginalised groups.

The post-material outlook held sway in urban India for a major part of its history after

1947. Guha uses Biblical imagery by describing this period as the age of India's 'ecological

innocence' – 'Decolonisation had now opened up the possibility of a previously

"underdeveloped" India "developing" along the same lines as the West' (Guha 2010, 68). This

recalls Žižek's view that decolonisation, despite pretentions of severance from imperialism,

borrows the conceptual apparatus of freedom and sovereignty entrenched in European political

thought (Žižek 2018, xx). In other words, decolonisation is the expected update in the civilising

objective of colonialism. If Indian environmentalism becomes completely post-material, then

Indian classrooms would end up reading land acknowledgements after the complete displacement of forest communities and the ruin of ecological systems.

The inference drawn from indigenous direct action is that collective, radical politics can be incentivised leveraging a key constituent of human nature which capitalism proudly claims monopoly of – self-interest. It is the self-interest of the tree-hugging demonstrators which inspired direct action to save the means of their livelihood. The demonstrators, a majority of whom were women, were autonomist in the strictest sense. They owned the means of production, were communally self-reliant and wanted nothing to do with encroaching capitalism. The politics from the forest did not need a textual reality based on manifestoes or scientific innovations for the future. The protestors emphasised the physical reality of what they were protecting because of their obvious, embodied relationship to the forests. The movement did not require moral indignation or a debate. It was outright refusal to surrender autonomy.

Members of post-material society are at risk of turning social justice concerns into subjects for individual intellectualisation and pleasurable self-flagellation. It is possible to personalise climate activism in the form of nihilism or prematurely deciding not wanting to have children. Deciding against procreation for the sake of climate preservation recalls the pursuit of bodily guilt and confession. There are legitimate reasons to not wish to procreate. However, climate change should not be one of them. Individuals must remember that if they do not procreate hoping it would save the planet, Elon Musk will, and he is trying to leave it with SpaceX. Those swearing off procreation specifically for climate change are practicing, in Han's terms, auto-exploitation, ceding finite space to people who do not have the same concerns about the climate crisis to begin with. Not having children in this case is simply an extension, with greater magnitude, of greenwashing such as not using plastic straws. It also has undertones of the

bunker doctrine symbolised by the Svalbard Seed Vault in that the avoidance of child birth, itself, is a bunker insulating the child from the future. Environmentalism needs to be in consonance with creating an abundance of all forms of life. Abundance, as of now, is primarily tied to that found in the drive for profit. This is where degrowth proponents have stepped in, stating that green capitalism will not work because the need for pathological consumption, mandated by capitalism, is not abated because, under the growth model, 'it will never be enough' (Pollin 2018). Instead, addressing the climate crisis needs a politics which is hopeful, life-affirming – both human life and the embodied life of the earth – that the Chipko participants exemplified, in keeping with work as anthropotechnic immunisation against entropy.

Self-interest could guide people to identify what in nature is objectively nourishing, beautiful and worthy of protection vis-à-vis all humans. This shift could aid in resolving the problem of climate crisis as a debate. For the passively concerned, climate change is a source of self-loathing and frugality as well as green capitalism. For the sceptics, the climate crisis is solved by doubt. In both cases, bodily denigration starts with the human and extends to environmental decline. American commentator Charles Eisenstein suggests that environmentalism needs to come from a love of life, one of which is human life. Without entering the spiritualist trap, it is possible to appeal to the senses and recognise what is beautiful. Philosophers have already done this such as Kant in his intervention on the sublime and the beautiful, much of which is found in nature (Kant 2002, 129). Eisenstein says 'I want the earth to be beautiful … In the 60s, it wasn't "save the whales" because if we don't bad things are going to happen to us. It was "save the whales" because they are magnificent beings' (Williamson 2021). This is not to discount the possibilities of sabotage that Andreas Malm suggests in *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*. However, such sabotage needs to come from the stance of refusing to

surrender the body, not moral indignation to save areas which modernity has distanced itself from. Self-interest, here, is redefined and detached from competitive self-interest for profit. Self-interest needs to be the enabling of healthy life for oneself and other humans in one's vicinity which can only be possible by being in intercourse with a healthy ecological body. The issue of distance from nature created by a post-material outlook can be easily challenged. For the city-dweller, environmentalism could have immediacy as well such as the need to feel the visceral pleasure of breathing and being nourished by clean air as well as local ecological areas like forests and lakes. Beauty does not lie in the subjective eyes of the beholder. Beauty lies in a warm summer's day in Toronto and a rain-drenched evening in Kolkata. Accumulation would be of bodily health, something passengers from Delhi notice when they land in a city with lower PM2.5 (particulate matter 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter concentration) ("Particulate Matter (PM10 and PM2.5)" 2022), and witness their allergies disappear (Express News Service 2021b).

POST-MATERIALISM: THE BUNKERS OF SLOTERDIJK AND ŽIŽEK

Post-materialism is more starkly apprehended in terms used by Peter Sloterdijk's *In the World Interior of Capital* where post-materialism literally creates a world interior – a bunker of globalisation. Everything outside the world interior constitutes standing reserve including humans who are brought into the world interior to be employed as gig workers. Inside the world interior, good Samaritans practise recycling and multiculturalism, for example, in the Qatar World Cup 2022, hosted on the blood and sweat of dead stadium construction workers (Pattisson and McIntyre 2021). In relation to this discussion, hosting the World Cup in Qatar does not make sense, environmentally. The daytime temperatures averaging at 41.2 degrees Celsius do not allow for intense contact sport in the Middle East without artificial cooling. Hence, not only were the matches played in air-conditioned outdoor stadiums, coming with obvious emission and energy

pitfalls, but the tournament was moved to winter (Gunia 2022). This interrupted the regular

league seasons of all participating countries including the crucial communal engagement fans

have with their local clubs. Club matches were interrupted given the relatively short winter break

of most leagues besides the Premier League in England which will, in fact, begin a winter break

from 2024 (Jones 2023). The interruptions gave way to the football experience of the moneyed

few who flew down to Qatar. The World Cup is meant to be a summer carnival. There was a

wholesale curtailment of communal joy associated with world football in 2022.

In *In the World Interior of Capital*, Sloterdijk reminds readers that globalisation is a gloss

over colonialism and the beneficiaries are members of all communities who made it out alive. He

chooses an apt metaphor to delineate the workings of the world interior – the Crystal Palace

Exhibition of 1851 in London. The exhibition was a display of industrial and cultural marvels

from around the world. Crystal Palace contained the best of the world as adjudicated by

industrial modernity. The outside did not matter. The structure is the perfect exemplification of

the problem with multiculturalism in the form of socio-economically convenient ethnic enclaves

increasing representation of diversity discussed in the previous chapter – '… after the expiry of

combatant history, social life could only take place in an expanded interior, a domestically

organised and artificially climatised inner space' (Sloterdijk 2013a, 170–71). Capitalism's

fostering of a functional, productive global "community" recalls its 24/7 temporality – an

ongoing problem with history, bearing an imprint on commercial globalisation as well as the

climate crisis. Capitalism disregards the vast amount of time taken by nature to create its

complex ecosystems as well as time taken for humans to form communities and civilisations.

Coincidentally, climate activists thought it worthwhile to throw soup at a Van Gogh painting in

2022 (Gayle 2022). The incident should highlight a collective inability to view social history –

the evolution of life towards complexity including artistic capacities that Van Gogh possessed –

in relation to ecological history – the time taken for various environmental systems to develop.

Turbocapitalism has twinned with an acceleration in nihilism – 'If historical struggles are to lead

to eternal peace, however, social life in its entirety would have to be integrated into a protective

shell' (Sloterdijk 2013a, 171). Colonialism reconfigured the physics of the world in the journeys

of Columbus culminating in globalisation under turbocapitalism, leaving the body behind –

'Virtual shells have replaced the imagined ethereal sky; thanks to radio-electronic systems, the

meaning of distances has effectively been negated in the centres of power and consumption'.

Civilisational projects remapped the world, forming an aspirational Global North with allies in

the Global South, constituting a coveted world interior. The world interior is intrinsically

exclusionary. Hence, it puts a premium on North American inclusivity. Žižek, commenting on

Sloterdijk, uses the metaphor of the cupola – domelike structures forming the boundaries of

futuristic cities in sci-fi films, a real-life equivalent of which is found in the South Korean smart

city Song-do. Žižek comments – 'This new form of a city is … neo-liberal ideology embodied,

an impossible combination of market economy exempted from the state control with the usual

"progressive" ecological, educational and health concerns, the result being a "green"

environment built on a ravaged natural habitat' (Žižek 2018, 8). Space exploration as an escape

plan advocated by the likes of Elon Musk, anticipated by 20th century films like *Silent Running*

(Trumbull 1972), aligns with the desire to build the perfect dollhouse society that is chicly

egalitarian and green, built in response to accelerated destruction of the earth. Moving forward, I

am using 'cupola' and 'world interior' interchangeably, both referring to an exclusive, bunkered

space of capitalist globalisation.

The pursuit of clean air in exceedingly ravaged ecosystems as a consequence of gentrification results in its appropriate monetisation following the bunker doctrine symbolic of the world interior. Priyanka Sharma reports 'India's air purifier market is expected to grow about 35% annually to reach about $597 million by 2027'. Acer India marketing head Sooraj Balakrishnan said, in 2022, 'Air purifiers are no longer considered a luxury … The rise in pollution has made us realise the importance of air purifiers. We are seeing more uptake in metro cities where air pollution and other respiratory illnesses are comparatively more' (Sharma 2022). The statement reveals good intentions within the cupola in the form of monetised compassion. It also has the assumption that the rise in air pollution is an objective fact outside the realm of human intervention while the purchase of air purifiers is. Air purifiers reveal emerging Crystal Palace class divisions beyond the housed rich and the destitute poor as access to this technology results from the difference among high-income, middle-income, and low-income urban groups – 'The air purifier reduces the risk of health issues brought on by indoor pollutants, which can worsen asthma symptoms and cause respiratory infections' ("Consumer Goods and Retail" 2022). A report by the non-profit Health Effects Institute, lists Delhi and Kolkata as two of the worst polluted cities in the world with Mumbai at 14th (Express Web Desk 2022). The new class division among members of urbanisation who could claim socio-economic success to varying degrees entails bunkers within bunkers as being housed is not adequate.

The oncoming time is that of mandated luxury where the only way to live well is expensively, paralleling the fitness industry. Similarly, social justice has also found a version compatible with the world interior of capital with corporate feminism's preoccupation with CEO parity. Sarah Taaffe-Maguire of Sky News headlines 'glacially slow progress on gender equality as 96% of CEOs Britain's largest public companies are men' (Taaffe-Maguire 2022). If the

question of equality immediately leads to the realm of CEOs, such equality is suspect since it is concerned with the upper echelons of capitalist society. This form of equality espouses a form of bargainer-activism as it negotiates with the status quo instead of wanting to change it. It also assumes that aspirations for a race to the top are natural desires for everyone. CEOs are not an accurate representation of men in general. The world interior tries to curate a semblance of equality, consensus and green politics in a segregated space of affluence where embodied stress is concealed or outsourced. Like inconsequentially green spaces on top of ravaged areas, showcased as exemplars of smart environmentalism resulting from capitalism, corporate social justice similarly curates a *smart* iteration of egalitarianism of a bunkered few, ignoring the needs of the precarious majority of women and men, including those displaced by habitat destruction.

Nancy Fraser relates bourgeois feminism's complicity in neoliberalism to what she dubs as 'the crisis of care'. For Fraser, care work rests on social reproduction. Social reproduction derives from the creation and maintenance of vertical or generational ties such as care for the elderly and childrearing. Social reproduction also includes pursuing the formation of horizontal ties in the form of friends, partners and similar well-wishers. Industrialisation in the 1800s separated social reproduction from economic reproduction – factory and office spaces to be occupied by men. Social reproduction was perceived as bereft of value because it was not financialised. This system was replaced by the welfare paradigm where a couple would be allowed a family wage through the man by the state in the 20th century. While this form of social reproduction is still sexist, it provides a safety net for families. In the next era to the present day of neoliberalism, the decrease in wages has compelled the normalisation of the two-earner family. The other reason is the triumph of a specific form of feminism. Social reproduction is monetised in the form of assisted living facilities and Tinder. The two-earner alliance unsexed

social reproduction such that social reproduction was absorbed by the realm of economic reproduction, as explored in the previous chapter, exemplified by Tronti's theory of the social factory. The dominion of economic reproduction is passed off as equality and empowerment. Fraser notes, 'Like the family wage ideal … this too is an obfuscation. It mystifies the steep rise in the number of hours of paid work now required to support a household, and if the household includes children or elderly relatives or people who are sick or disabled and cannot function as full-time wage earners, then so much the worse'. Fraser reflects that feminists were not aiming for a struggling two-earner household in their efforts against gendered work. Feminist struggles coincided with the outsourcing of manufacturing decreasing the importance of the family wage. Fraser notes that feminism and industry shifts reinforced each other. She asserts, 'let's not forget, meanwhile, that there really are neoliberal feminists who are completely on board with this agenda, who represent the 1 percent … But in that strand of feminism we see feminist ideas simplified, truncated, and reinterpreted in market friendly terms'. This enables individuals to opt into the 'hierarchical corporate imaginary' en masse (Fraser 2016). Fraser concludes thus: 'The result is a "crisis of care" that is every bit as serious and systemic as the current ecological crisis, with which it is, in any case, intertwined'.

With Fraser's thesis of the takeover of the economic realm, it is easy to see the intensification of the world interior in ecological terms. Childrearing is not only monetised, children are groomed for the industry and entrepreneurial success. The quotidian cynicism towards the usefulness of university experience cannot be a coincidence, fuelled by the success stories of self-made dropouts-turned-CEOs. This substantially reduces the state of embodied social play which could enable more enriching social relationships including relating to nature. Britain saw excessive snowfall in 2018. Multiple schools banned children from having snowball

fights. But, an East London head teacher went the extra mile by banning children from touching the snow, stating that it is a care measure where the prevention of touching snow would prevent snowball fights and potential accidents (Ritschel 2018). This approach shuns possibilities of relating to or forming alliances with nature organically and promotes a cold, risk-free, scientific outlook to fix nature. This is tantamount to bringing the aspect of post-material legislative permission in order to access a distanced or "othered" nature even if done so out of sensuous curiosity and joy. The possibility of immunity is replaced by cold insulation in keeping with the workings of the world interior.

The segregationist strategy of post-materialism to create the world interior or cupola brings to mind the specious ecomodernist promise of decoupling nature from post-industrial modernity. Not only does the world interior indulge in a pretence that the body is inconsequential, the boundaries of the cupola are fluid as per convenience. One recalls post-Vietnam humour that whenever America is facing an economic crisis, a country with natural resources is in need of some democracy (The Andrew Schulz 2022).

Žižek relates the dystopian city or the cupola to neoliberalism. A counter to this is that sci-fi cities often depict strong state control. However, neoliberalism does not desire a weak state. It requires the state to be a strong facilitator of neoliberalism (Harvey 2007, 2). Neoliberalism requires a few players to hoard resources, whether that is the state or Amazon – the company – while individuals gamify their precarity towards innovative solutions to problems. This explains why ecomodernist techno-fixes constitute the preferred avenue towards tackling climate collapse instead of degrowth or slowing down. The fruits of the latter were evident during the Covid-19 lockdown when denizens of historically polluted regions had the

pleasure of breathing clean air (Ellis-Petersen 2020). To exemplify the bunkered smart city as a cupula, Žižek has South Korea's Songdo in mind.

Songdo epitomises the ahistorical utopianism practised by capitalism including relating progress to narrow sitcom and reality TV iterations of urbanity. Designed as a Western city in the East, Songdo is built on reclaimed land. As in the world of *Blade Runner*, where society is run by a corporation, the real-life city of Songdo is designed by American architecture firm Kohn Pedersen Fox. In "Song-do, the Global City Without Soul", Francesco Martone notes, as cited by Žižek, that Songdo, built on the promise of sustainable living displaced a 'delicate ecosystem where as many as 11 species of migratory birds … Supergreen zero-emission powerplants turn sea tides into energy, destroying fragile coastal habitats'. The city has nearly empty high-rise buildings and active construction sites, 'semi-deserted roads waiting to be filled with cars … A sort of 'city-state' where investors enjoy all sorts of exemptions, from tax breaks and beyond' (Žižek 2018, 6–7).

Songdo is a parodic rendition of the superstructure or the dream form. It is a mental model of a city, akin to Plato's Republic, idealised by private, material interests. The latent content is retroactively integrated as environmentalism – 'fake stones and trees plucked on flat sand, battered by gusts of wind, icy cold in winter, steaming hot in summertime' (Žižek 2018, 6–7). Songdo is a recreation of the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851 which showcased supposedly the best things in the world. Greg Lindsay eulogises:

> It's to basically borrow elements of cities that work and try to transpose them here. So, there is a Central Park from Manhattan … They built a Manhattan-style street grid, a Savannah style pocket-park system. There is a canal here which is supposed to be like Venice's canal, there is a performing arts complex … which is supposed to be sort of like

the Sydney Opera House … For a Westerner, it produces this sort of familiar feeling … it

felt like some place I've seen before. (Real Life Cinema 2018)

The experience is tailored towards the hypermobile individual from a country with a powerful

passport, undermining the possibility of gradual formation of material identity or local colour.

Lindsay's book, *Aerotropolis: The Way We'll Live Next*, co-authored with John Kasarda, as the

name suggests, focuses on city design with the airport at its centre instead of at the city's

periphery (Lindsay and Kasarda 2011). While the polis was about stability and imagining vibrant

local societies, the point of the aerotropolis – the city of the future such as Songdo – will be to

enable people to arrive at and leave it easily. These speculations are neo-Platonic, attempting to

find a universal cognitive model of a city – the perfect Form – disregarding the existing

ecological history of different regions. The realities of the environment do not matter inside the

cupola as manufacturing is outsourced to poorer countries as well as financially powerful

countries purchasing carbon credits (Dawson 2018, 181). Thus, environmentalism is rendered a

Platonic, immaterial project within the continually changing confines of the world interior, which

was the basis of the post-materialism thesis.

MORE SONGDOS – URBANISATION AS NEOLIBERAL EXHIBITIONISM

Songdo could be an exceptional example of futuristic cities. However, the development

model, based on American architecture, has become ubiquitous, as evidenced in new real estate

projects in major cities of the Global South. Cities in newly developed and developing countries

have restrictive notions of development, attempting poor approximations of Western cities

instead of adhering to the local geological design rationale of a place. Smart townships end up

becoming geomorphological parodies of New York and London with increasing number of high

rises at odds with the tropical climate. The Rajarhat New Town area in Kolkata, an extension of

the city near its airport is quite like the secret city of dystopias. A drive down to Rajarhat results in the sudden appearance of frequent high rises and artificial greenery completely alien to the rest of the city. In fact, the trope of the secret city is not even that exaggerated since real estate properties in the region are marketed to non-resident Indian investors, retirees coming back to India and high-income professionals, many of whom commute to nearby IT hubs like Sector-V and Baantala (Chandan n.d.). "Rajarhat" could be translated from the Bengali original as the "royals' convention". People outside a specific income bracket do not even consider investing in Rajarhat properties.

The concept of a smart city is in tune with the immaterial bent of neoliberal capitalism premised on computing and cloud capabilities. Post-material environmentalism and social justice require abstractions of real problems in the form of catch-all terms like carbon footprint, greening, and sustainability to design uniform challenges which could be safely experienced including pretentions of activism within the cupola or the world interior. The post-material or ideological approach to solving deforestation is, perhaps, studying the carbon footprint of the organisation who sanctioned forest-felling instead of banning forest-felling. Carbon footprint, especially the neoliberal, individualised kind, was conceptualised and promoted by British Petroleum lobbyists in 2000s – 'British Petroleum, the second largest non-state owned oil company in the world, with 18,700 gas and service stations worldwide, unveiled its "carbon footprint calculator" in 2004 so one could assess how their normal daily life – going to work, buying food, and (gasp) traveling – is largely responsible for heating the globe' (Kaufman 2020). British Petroleum's advertisements closely mirror Althusser's example of hailing or how interpellation into ideology creates reality, featuring a police official calling out to a pedestrian who self-identifies as the recipient of the call – 'What on earth is a carbon footprint?', 'What size

is your carbon footprint?' (Kaufman 2020). This is a conspicuous case of Foucauldian discursive formation. British Petroleum takes its audience away from the embodied source of environmental decline and invents a problem which is then studied on the terms set by the confines of that problem, relegating social change solely to a linguistic exercise. Individualised climate actions work in the same way as entrepreneurially attempting to accumulate wealth – making speculative investments and assuming the foundations designing investment opportunities are stable. One has little knowledge of how the stock market works. The same could be said about impacts of recycling and biodegradable straws. In fact, studies by Beyond Plastics, Last Beach Cleanup and The Department of Energy show that the US actually recycles 5% of its plastics (Gammon 2022).

The acceptance of carbon footprint as something individuals innately possess recalls the idea of ontological guilt. The universalisation of guilt and internalisation of carbon footprint transform individuals within the cupola into Kafka's K who never questions his guilt assigned to him with no known charges. The obsessive consideration of carbon footprint is, to recall Han, autoexploitative, turning climate action into a personal activity. Just as oral poetry and theatre gave way to the silent reader with the arrival of the novel, climate change is a private concern inside the world interior. Besides oppressive secret cities in science fiction, stories often have the secret, technologically advanced civilisation as found in the worlds of DC's *Wonder Woman* and Marvel's *Black Panther*. This is a tacit approval of lack of direct action and the profitable hope that technological acceleration would lead humanity to the right side of the climate crisis. Meanwhile, individuals can indulge in entrepreneurial guilt and nihilism. Original Sin finds its way in the universalisation of the climate crisis.

In "Biocapitalism and De-Extinction", Ashley Dawson calls out Elizabeth Kolbert, author of *The Sixth Extinction*, for holding humanity as a whole to a diffused responsibility for climate change when evident inequities in the consumption of resources and emissions exist between the developed world and the Global South. Developed countries have not only outsourced material production to countries like India, China and Bangladesh, countries can also buy carbon credits from other regions which allows them more emissions using the United Nations and World Bank initiated Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation scheme (Dawson 2018, 181). Dawson identifies a 'sweeping universalism' of Kolbert's account of humanly-created climate change leading to the sixth extinction. Dawson notes, 'Kolbert argues that extinction happens because the world's flora and fauna cannot adapt to the accelerated rate of change human beings are imposing on the world. "As soon as humans started using signs and symbols to represent the world," she writes, "they pushed beyond the limits of that world". Kolbert's remarks reinforce the Cartesian mind's control of the body – 'The very qualities that make us human – our creativity, our communicative and collaborative abilities – have … allowed us to transform the world in ways that empower us but also endanger the natural world on which we ultimately depend' (Dawson 2018, 174). Perhaps, Kolbert's universalisation makes more sense in the context of the world interior which intends to absorb physical and geological reality as much as possible. Therefore, the supposedly developed countries might be where the workings of the world interior are concentrated or headquartered. However, the developing countries do not lie outside the world interior since they have opted into the realism of the cupola and, together with the developed countries, are producing the shared reality of post-materialism. To recall Althusser, they, like the discoverer in sci-fi dystopian stories, have been hailed to join such that everyone within the bunker can be guilty together.

The diffusion of responsibility is consistent with Original Sin. It recalls Nietzschean indebtedness which attributes glory to Godly ancestors and all ills upon the self, which, in Nietzsche's speculative anthropology, culminated in the debtor transforming into a transgressor (Nietzsche 1989, 88–90). This dynamic is played out in India as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has put his own image on vaccine certificates instead of any of the scientists and doctors in charge of vaccine production (Pandey 2021). At the same time civilians are being fined for not wearing a mask (Express News Service 2021a).

Such forms of collective guilt, as propounded by Kolbert, universalising responsibility, conform to the needs of capitalist progress. Universalisation from the particular ensures inaction since universalisation of a claim places it as part of humanity's ontological identity. Tangible change is impossible because 'everyone and no one may be held accountable' (Dawson 2018, 174). One's crime does not amount to much significance because everyone is a sinner.

Dawson's analysis reveals a Cartesian bias in the way Kolbert's frames her article positioning the guilty body as responsible for ecological destruction. The article begins with 'the image of an African poacher and a logger in the Amazon, who presumably are the true perpetrators of habitat destruction. No mention is made of the transnational logging companies, agribusiness interests, or mineral-extraction conglomerates at whose behest these figures usually work' (Dawson 2018, 174–75). The bodily reality of labour power is identified with the depletion of the environment. The source of the decisions to initiate habitat loss is tucked away in the rationalised sphere of bureaucratic work. Following Steve Jobs, a CEO is most notably seen on stage speaking at sold-out venues. Courtesy Jobs, the CEO positions himself or herself as an artist purportedly possessing the creativity and mystique associated with artists. While the logger is photographed at the scene of the crime, CEOs are marvelled inside auditoriums for their

intellectual prowess as they hook audiences with what are, essentially, glorified boardroom presentations. Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk provide a performance of the mind while Amazon – the company – flouts workers' rights (Sainato 2020), and society aspires towards space colonisation in spite of reports of increasing floating debris from space missions ("The Current Issue of Space Debris" 2020). SpaceX's recent launch of its next-generation Starship atop its new Super Heavy rocket exploded in the sky after reaching an altitude of 32 kilometres (Reuters 2023).

The question of sustainability appears especially in gentrification projects attracting the affluent as with Kolkata's Rajarhat and similar smart cities and townships. Its relevance is directly proportional to the intensification of capitalist production with pretensions of green politics. Rajarhat is in the eastern side of the city. East Kolkata has been home to the East Kolkata Wetlands whose conservation activism has been led by now-deceased environmentalist Dhrubajyoti Ghosh. The East Kolkata Wetlands area is recognised as a site of global importance due to it being the world's largest organic sewage management system (Bhattacharya 2018). Chowhan et al. reveal the by-the-numbers neoliberal urban aspirations of Rajarhat – 'Apart from providing habitation, the aim of the project was to build an environmentally-friendly city with green industries, open green land, water bodies, a network of bicycle lanes, advanced solid waste management systems' (Chowhan, Sen, and Mukherjee 2022, S904). During development, the initial plan of having 47.6% area for open spaces ended up being 24%. The allocation of residential space jumped from 30.5% to 38%. The total land use was at 3779 ha instead of the previously planned 2750 ha. As is characteristic of inclusivity and representation in the cupola, formerly farmers had to take up rickshaw driving catering to the transport needs of the new residents (Chowhan, Sen, and Mukherjee 2022, S904). Further, street vendors and hawkers, integral to India's unstructured economy were made to vacate public space as they did not jive

visually with the idea of a planned city (Chowhan, Sen, and Mukherjee 2022, S905). This is hardly uncommon. In preparation of the G20 Summit, Maharashtra's Nagpur banned begging from March 9 to April 30 (FPJ Web Desk 2023). In *Beyond Kolkata: Rajarhat and the Dystopia of Urban Imagination*, Ishita Dey et al. write that agriculture, fisheries, pisciculture, and farm-laborers were thriving means of livelihood before urbanisation of the area (Dey, Samaddar, and Sen 2013, 7). Construction projects came with the usual promise of creating new water bodies after filling existing wetlands.

The destruction of complex ecological systems incorporates nature into post-material ideology as well as the dogma of ahistorical productive work as calling. If one distinguishes between work as calling and work as oeuvre, then the work of nature, as framed by Coriolis, has a history wherein it has completed timebound projects capable of self-regulation, and have moved on to other processes. By destroying or disrupting existing natural systems such as the drainage and sewage systems of the East Kolkata Wetlands, and by hailing the land into the world interior, capitalism wants nature to follow a daily routine and work alongside human workers once sustainability is introduced and nature is to function with forced human aid in a crippled form.

Rajarhat is one of the many developmental projects in the tropics that have increased the number of high-rises. Jairaj and Malaviya note in their 2019 paper that more than 6100 Indians have died due to extreme heat since 2010 (Jairaj and Malaviya 2019). This study as well as a study in Bandung, Indonesia, by Nugruho et al. speak of the presence of urban heat islands caused by the concentration of human activities and construction (Nugroho, Triyadi, and Wonorahardjo 2022). Architect Benny Kuriakose recalls his father building the first house in their Kerala village with a concrete roof in 1968. It not only resembled the new buildings of

Indian cities but had the social status associated with the Western urban imaginary – 'But inside, the house was sweltering. The solid concrete absorbed heat throughout the day and radiated it inside at night. Meanwhile, neighboring thatch-roofed houses stayed cool: the air trapped between gaps was a poor conductor of heat'. Construction following the international style of straight lines and boxed apartments of high-rises became the norm after India's economic liberalisation in the 1990s (Nugent 2022). Air-conditioning units cool people inside but emit heat into the streets potentially increasing the outside temperature by 2 degrees Fahrenheit. Further, glass facades reflect heat from the sun on to sidewalks.

Gentrification has also reached India's hilly regions to cater to the tourism industry. Around the beginning of 2023, cracks appeared on the roads and houses in Joshimath, Uttarakhand due to land subsistence – 'the sinking of the ground because of underground material movement' according to USA's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. 68 families were evacuated to temporary relief facilities. The potential causes for land subsistence were unplanned construction, over-population, obstruction of the natural flow of water and hydel power activities. Additionally, Joshimath is in a seismic zone (Explained Desk 2023). Initial cracks and tremors have been appearing in Joshimath for years. Historically, Joshimath has come up on loose soil, deposits by landslides caused by earthquakes as well as material left behind by retreating glaciers (Sinha 2023). The solution to these problems would be research in vernacular architecture which would be under the purview of care or a maintenance society.

Gentrification and urbanisation projects have pretentions of triumphant rationality. However, these projects mark a sharp divide between the artificial land re-ordering and the component of nature which it initially disregards, only to later pathologise with promises of fixing nature. The quest to fix nature is where post-materialism translates into ecomodernism.

ECOMODERNISM AND THE INDIAN COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

During order-building, the existence of the base is inconsequential. As per

ecomodernism, the project of modernity must thrive and, in its acceleration, climate change

would be fixed. The solution could range from technological interventions to humanity leaving

earth, fulfilling the Cartesian desire of living on without the body. Tying ecomodernism to stated

ideas on ideology, ecomodernism is interested in creating the post-material reality following the

capitalist growth model, severing the post-industrial class from nature as evidenced by the

gentrification projects discussed above. The embodied history of nature is practically obliterated.

The relationship between the superstructural class in the world interior and the exploited material

base is akin to that between the analyst and the analysand. Once post-materiality is achieved,

ecomodernists rediscover a new iteration of nature as Žižek's latent content to engage in a

classist environmentalism following the exhibitionist tendencies of the Crystal Palace-inspired

world interior.

Ecomodernists are in favour of rampant capitalist technocracy which would lead to the

other side of environmental decline courtesy cognitive brilliance tied to the Enlightenment

progress project. Planned environmental decline advocated by ecomodernism supports the

masochistic project of wilful bodily ruin as a reenactment of the Fall and achievement of a

disposition of sin as evidenced in the locations analysed earlier – 'Plans for a massive

regionwide development scheme in the Amazon provide the most palpable and alarming possible

example of the willingness of contemporary capitalist culture to engage in a fresh bout of what

Joseph Schumpeter called "creative destruction" in the face of the sixth extinction' (Dawson

2018, 177). The sixth extinction would justify and realise a mental image like the Fall. It is the

extinction that is directly tied to the Anthropocene in that humans have been the prime players in the sixth extinction taking place (Dawson 2018, 175–76).

Post-sixth extinction, the remains of humanity would strictly be a society of, by and for the world interior. In fact, this is the class of people Modi was addressing when he announced the Covid-19 lockdown in March, 2020. Given that India, to a great extent, runs on the informal economy, performing necessary tasks to keep the economy running while the relatively new post-industrial class looks away, the lockdown was rendered a bunker for a specific class of Indians who could shut out nature – Covid-19 as well as the gig workers of the unstructured economy who were away from their hometowns and villages. To be frank, the division between unstructured economy and the formal economy is relatively recent and the affluent urban class is also a story of India's version of neoliberalism as documented by Gurcharan Das in *India Grows at Night*, published in 2012. The title references a native joke describing post-Independence aspirations under normative governmental incompetence – 'India grows at night … while the government sleeps' (Das 2012, 11). Das's thesis is that India's entry into global capitalism, following the development model of post-World War II economic acceleration has been the country's inadvertent offering of its own entrepreneurial neoliberalism not facilitated by a Thatcherite state, at least until 1991, but despite state control. Das prescribed the role of a strong state in facilitating free-market growth. His middle-class dreams, shared by the recently burgeoning urban India, did not quite come to pass. Modi, promising economic growth in his 2014 campaign, had been practising RSS's authoritarian politics by 2019, recalling his 2002 persona of a riot-monger, an image he had successfully shelved after being unbanned from major countries and further mainstreamed by Barack Obama's endorsement at the outset of Modi's first term (Sammon 2020).

Das's position is not incorrect, though. He pithily observes that the story of independent India is one of private success and public failure – 'The private home is neat, clean and energetic. The government office is slothful, suffocating with controls and filled with mind-bending red tape' (Das 2012, 11). As with bourgeois readings of history then, it is the aspirational middle-class which grew at night. The ecological consequences of growing at night, following an unimaginative Western model, complete with literally copying New York's buildings, were presented earlier in India's urban planning. Das's optimism has been dashed as, today, India does not boast of its credentials of a miracle democracy in a region of authoritarianism. After the RSS-BJP government had its way with the country, India was identified as a 'partly free democracy' by US non-profit Freedom House and designated as an 'electoral autocracy' by Sweden's V-Dem Institute (Biswas 2021). The visitors at the Crystal Palace were displeased as India's portion of the world interior had lost its moral integrity. However, this development could be traced back to Das's observation of private success. Indian private resourcefulness was not socialised. Traditionally, urban Indians, in their privately entrepreneurial spirit, would follow a work ethic towards success and shun political life as immoral. Modi did not provide the strong state Das had hoped for. Modi leveraged the private wounds of India's precarious secularism, sporadically challenged by riots against minorities in 1984, 2002 and 2020 besides sporadic incidents of religious violence. Significant sections of the aspirational urban class have gradually bought into Modi's mythic vision of a pre-modern undivided India ruled by supposed ancient Hindu values. This is especially true for Non-Resident Indian Hindus who support the RSS project since they get to be Indians in their Hinduness without having to partake in the physical history of India in person as RSS wants to immaterialise India and turn it into a religious haven like Mecca and Israel. The anti-CAA protests of 2019 and 2020 were the first image of the new aspirational class

built from 1990s liberalisation, socialising their private better angels. As entropy would have it, Covid-19 enabled Modi to consolidate his authoritarianism as it forced the protests to stop. The Hindu principles are reductionist versions from modern thinkers V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar who preached extremist Hinduism or Hindutva. Inspired by Mussolini and Hitler, Hindutva has been looking up to historical Western authoritarian regimes (Guha 2022). Modi's supporters, many of whom are from urban polite society, seem to accept Hindutva as aspirational, tenuously reconstructing India's history vis-à-vis European fascism and mythic Hindu purity as well as conflating Indian Muslims with the international fear of Islamic fundamentalism (Madampat 2022).

The radicalisation of the urban class, politely averse to politics, was aided by the pliant English speaking media rallying behind Modi besides India's oldest television studio New Delhi Television Studio (NDTV). Towards the end of 2022, the majority of NDTV's shares were bought by Modi's ally Adani through his Adani Group (Laghate 2022). Adani Group has been in prominence in Australia since the growing Stop Adani Movement against Adani's coalmining project at Carmichael which could affect the Great Barrier Reef besides increasing carbon emissions (Gulliver 2022).

The rise of Modi, weaponising private nostalgia for retroactively created Hindu mythic history against minorities, and crony capitalism affecting farmers, local footballers and clubs by the new NBA-style Indian Super League featuring a small number of teams, away from the nation-spanning older I-League which had an open system with competitive promotion and relegation rules (Mergulhao 2023), and urbanisation projects, constitute private success gone rogue. Modi's shock announcement of a nationwide lockdown in 2020 was his mobilisation of Das's thesis of private success and public failure. Modi positioned himself as siding with private

success, not least because of his own history of self-made tea seller-to-politician journey. The country's institutions as well as Modi's related organisations became subservient to the private personality cult. Declaring a nationwide lockdown was an address to his fellow private achievers who could afford to be shut in while the sections of the urban underclass who worked *at night* for India's growth were stranded. It instantiated the fluidity of the boundaries of the world interior which strategically adds and disavows fringe classes and the environment. The migrant workers, recalling Althusser, could not unknot from the superstructure. While migrant workers were left to die on highways, the world interior was at work – 'special flights were arranged to bring back students and tourists stuck in China and Europe. The prime minister appeared on television from time to time to invite people to stand on their balconies and applaud the health workers or light lamps to scare away the monster virus: those who have balconies to their houses … excitedly followed their leader', notes Partha Chatterjee (Chatterjee 2021, 200). Not only is Modi referencing a class but also using the religion most associated with the affluent urban demographic – who grew despite the state as per Das. Modi virtually admits that they still do not require the state. The people who do have done their time inside the world interior and are exiled along with the body of nature and the virus.

The rushed lockdown exemplifies ecomodernism. The world interior relies on the metaphor of the dome or the bunker which is why Žižek reads the world interior as a cupola. Entering modernity entails depending on a bunker and insulating oneself from the relational environment. During Modi's announcements, he encouraged his television audience to not cross the "laxman-rekha" – a protective spell cast by Laxman to protect Ram's wife Sita on their journey through the forest by sealing a temporary resting place in the ancient Indian epic *Ramayana* (Mathew and Ghosh 2020). This parallels the Garden of Eden. Instead of a serpent,

the tempter was a deer. The bunker could only do so much. The pandemic, lab-leaked or not, refurbishes the continuity between the human body and surrounding nature, which is also advocated by degrowth projects like transitional towns and village republics, traditional environmental activists, primitivists as well as vernacular architecture especially required in tropical housing. Ecomodernism is strictly against such monism and aims to make the nature/human split starker. The split is purportedly present since the world interior is strategically spatialised such that it is headquartered in the affluent urban space as discussed earlier in the section on ideology. Therefore, agency in the superstructure is concentrated in a specific class. This explains why the pandemic was inclusive but the carriers of the virus were people who could afford bunkers in the form of international flights. In "An Ecomodernist Manifesto", leading players released the following declaration: 'we affirm one long-standing environmental ideal, that humanity must shrink its impacts on the environment to make more room for nature, while we reject another, that human societies must harmonize with nature to avoid economic and ecological collapse' (Sterling 2015). The end of the declaration is curiously phrased, couching economy, specifically the neoliberal economy of financialised capitalism, and ecology.

The lockdown draws attention to the embodied world. As the globalised class with balconies shut out the losers of modernity, one questions if what is left outside the home during lockdown is exterior to the globalised world interior. This does not seem to be the case. The migrant workers along with the body of the environment were meant to be sacrificed by being subject to capitalism's entropy by design. Nick Dyer-Witheford also seems to dispense with the distinction between human bodies and the body of nature. Dyer-Witheford references capitalism's 'tap and sink' approach to resources found in eco-socialist critiques which amounts to treating nature as a 'source of both free resources and free waste disposal'. To elaborate, Dyer-

Witheford builds on Tronti's 'social factory' to propose a 'planet factory'. The social factory delineated the whole of society subsumed by work and profit-driven productivity such that the walls of the factory space would be immaterial. The planet factory refers to the added circuit of the environment and geomorphological changes made to nature for profit such that nature becomes a part of the workers. Dyer-Witheford writes, 'The issue of the Anthropocene is then how far, and in what ways capital, subsumes nature within its circuit of valorisation, and by both calculated design and catastrophic accident, creates its own ecology, a "second nature", more or less habitable for humanity' (Dyer-Witheford 2018, 77).

The Indian lockdown was the planet factory in practice. The discarded factory space of the stranded workers involved the whole of the external environment. Nature was also unceremoniously ordered to leave work such that Indians experienced cleaner air and a sighting of the Himalayas from a Punjab village not known, at least in living memory, to have a view of the mountains. However, this situation was not a reprieve from capitalist work but an acute representation of what the 'second nature' looks like. The second nature did make Covid-19-struck urbanisation 'more or less habitable' for humans – specifically the balconied humans addressed by Modi to clap for gladiatorial essential workers. The balconied class went inside their bunkers, but the exhibitionist feature of the world interior remained. Some workers were applauded. Workers deemed less essential with abrupt convenience died on highways, nearly 200 of them (Banerji 2020).

The beneficiaries of the world interior were the ones retreating to their balconied bunkers as instructed by the Indian Prime Minister who, leveraging his Hindu sage-like persona, appealed to the private, religious imaginary of prayer and hope. Like Trump, Modi pitches himself as someone separate from the government, emphasising his individuality. Likewise, members of

India's formal economy were able to shield themselves from the pestilence. Participants in the formal economy constitute, in Matthew Huber's words, the new professional class who, unlike the working class, 'occupy more advantaged segments of the labor market doing what Marxists often call "mental labor", "knowledge work", or "cognitive labor". Yet from an ecological perspective, the knowledge economy is a specific "postindustrial" form of work defined by its temporal and spatial distance from industrial mass production' (Huber 2022, 5). Gentrification targets and caters to the aspiring professional class where the climate crisis, as noted by Huber, is viewed from their narrow perspective of individualised carbon footprint and consumption habits. For these members, the safety of the lockdown was the reward for individually 'growing at night'. The government did not intervene until the migrant deaths reached global news. The government assumed its historical role of, in Das's words, going to sleep. The protection of the formal economy at the cost of the informal economy whose work leading to death during the lockdown further instantiates Dyer-Witheford's observation that 'the planet factory arises from, and in turn transforms, global cycles of class struggle' (Dyer-Witheford 2018, 77). The emergence of new classes is related to the dominant ecological and geological arrangement of post-industrial society or, in Bauman's terms, 'order-building'.

The informal economy is an integral part of the Indian section of the global world interior. The migrant workers do not assume the role of the base. Like natural resources like Kolkata's wetlands and Joshimath's gentrification on loose soil, the migrant workers are meant to be tapped and sunk, quite literally in Joshimath's case. The base constitutes people and places that are yet to be absorbed or tapped by the world interior. In capitalist terms, the base is not yet realised as commodity-form, exemplified by undiscovered land and resources or communities living outside modernity. Once the base is internal to the capitalist bunker, 'second nature' would

be achieved upon which the body of the human workers and nature would be diagnosed as latent

content in the form of philanthropy and last-minute transport arrangements as was done for the

migrant workers. The Foucauldian equivalent to Žižek's criticism of diagnosing latent content of

dreams is the discursive creation of the body as evidenced in his dismantlement of the repressive

hypothesis (Foucault 1978). What links the informal economy, the professional class and nature

is the singular purpose of bodily denigration, experienced differentially.

The planet factory resulting in a second nature is the objective of ecomodernism and its

patronising desire to 'make room for nature' as found in the manifesto. This room would be

created only after sections of nature would be bought by gentrification projects which would then

create an apparent distance between industry, its consequent ecological pitfalls, and areas of

nature diagnosed as sensitive, used for monetised preservation. The room for nature is negotiable

as exemplified by the increased hectares of land use in the Rajarhat project as well as the room

forced upon the migrant workers. A similar fate usually awaits dwellers who live in areas marked

for conservation – '… indigenous people who lived among the animals once massacred by

colonial hunters were not only ignored in the process of conservation, rendered invisible in the

campaign to preserve valuable game animals, but were regarded as a threat to land and wildlife

conservation … often labelled with what Rosaleen Duffy calls "nature crime"'. Dawson cites

Mark Dowie's term 'conservation refugees' (Dawson 2018, 175). The ubiquitous experience of

displacement as a consequence of gentrification creates a parallel between unhoused indigenous

people and gig workers in India's informal economy. Often, the former would become the latter.

Their nature crime would be followed by punishment by law enforcement. Covid-19 turned

entire urban spaces into conservation areas by temporarily making room for nature or preserving

Dyer-Witheford's 'second nature'. This was possible for the housed class of people primarily in

the formal economy. Flouting lockdown measures in developing, populated countries resulted in

sadistic retribution for those without the luxury of bunkers – 'In India, baton-wielding police

have beaten those who flout the curfew-like restrictions or fail to maintain physical distancing …

Police in South Africa also forced people to roll along the road … using water canons on

civilians and firing rubber bullets in the city's poorest neighborhoods'. Wanton arrests, hefty

fines, and civil rights abuse were reported in the Philippines, Mexico and Singapore (Heijmans,

Pradhan, and Bax 2020).

Ecomodernism claims to decouple humanity at large including its capitalist showcase

from fragile nature. Conservation events highlight the notion that the members of humanity

would be from the bunkered class who are distanced from material production. Mary Harrington

uses terms like the 'Zoom class' and 'laptop class' to refer to the professionals in bunkers

(Harrington 2022). Naomi Klein describes the post-Covid-19 techno-utopianism of Silicon

Valley CEOs in collaboration with elected government officials, promoting smart, home

delivered 'no-touch futures' as the 'Screen New Deal' which prioritises building a better society

based on remoteness. Klein notes that measures introducing smart technology and computers

predated the pandemic, that promises of frictionlessness and efficiency have been rebranded as

safety measures (Klein 2020). The aggressive promotion of smart technology which had

aggravated atomisation is consistent with the celebration of negative freedom or the pursuit of

seeking isolation in service of untethered self-development. Of course, this concerns the

bunkered class and conceals toiling bodies of humans and the environment.

Dawson notes that, for ecomodernists, 'industrialisation, technological innovation, and

economic development are not only compatible with ecological sustainability but key drivers of

environmental reform … ecomodernists believe that unfettered capitalism will save the planet'

(Dawson 2018, 182). The rationale behind gentrification projects is what is known as decoupling wherein the space of capitalist modernity would be separated from a sensitive nature which would be cordoned off. By decoupling, ecomodernists mean to place their trust in specific forms of capitalist modernisation and technological innovation which would decrease human impact on the environment – 'urbanisation, agricultural intensification, nuclear power, aquaculture and desalinisation'. The solution to climate change would entail a section of nature being brought into the ambit of capitalist value in the form of forestry, energy extraction, gentrification and tourism. As per the Manifesto, intensifying these activities would result in the world of modern capitalism using less land and interfering less with the natural world. This involves including enough of the environment for the planet factory while leaving some land and people outside the world interior as unrealised value. The environment within the world interior, whether preserved through monetised conservation or mined for resources, would be productive. The remainder of nature outside would be left to its own devices, at least, for the time being. Increasing urbanisation and modern agricultural activities hint at the overall increase in wealth of all humans for ecomodernists. This recalls the fundamental tenet of post-materialism that all humans must have their material needs met before a hobbyist form of environmentalism could be pursued. In their formulation of decoupling, ecomodernists are really referring to the winners of the world interior and that living inside the cupola is the only option for humans for the progress project to continue resulting in a never-ending capitalist utopia. Decoupling appears to facilitate capitalism's entropy wrought on the environment. Intensification of capitalism would ensure the "tap and sink" feature of using nature since natural resources are finite. Hence, the boundaries of decoupled nature would shift to previously unused land. The result would be the gradual

disembodiment of the environment as the whole of earth would become Anthropocenic second nature.

What is concerning about decoupling is that it still does not provide a completion date for growth, at least, in the capitalist sense. In fact, ecomodernism operates precisely to avert such possibilities. Hence, decoupling is further distinguished between relative decoupling and absolute decoupling. In relative decoupling, environmental impact would remain related to economic growth but would occur at a slower rate in proportion to economic growth, Absolute decoupling involves a peak and consequent decline in environmental impact while economic growth remains steady (Dawson 2018, 182). There is no guarantee that such a decline would be in place within the same economic paradigm which caused the body's entropy. Unending growth parallels the Cartesian thinking thing's transcendence – the first instance of tapping and sinking the body. This recalls the form of social justice activism that is essentially pro-work, as criticised by Fraser, an inability to imagine a world without profit as a pathological growth-driver. Ecomodernism also presents 'ideas simplified, truncated, and reinterpreted in market friendly terms' (Fraser 2016).

Ecomodernism is a constituent of the wider scope of biocapitalism which seeks technocratic solutions to monetisable nature. Dawson mentions de-extinction as biocapitalism's answer to the sixth extinction as scientists would try to bring back extinct animals in a laboratory. Embodied nature would join the scope of cognitive work – 'Key to this process is the conceptualization of animal species as bundles of genetic information, sequences of letters that can be stored on a computer' (Dawson 2018, 178). Synthetic biology simply needs the genome or fossil remains from where a genome could be reconstructed to spark the second coming of extinct animals. Synthetic biology enables people to become mobile through prosthetic body

parts as well as is on its way to finding new methods to fight cancer. Boon Lim et al. write that scientific advances in enable the reprogramming of bacteria to target tumours and locally release anti-cancer drugs in a highly controlled manner (B. Lim et al. 2022). Synthetic biology, however, also harbours more crackpot possibilities like manufacturing sex robots which would just be an extension of pornography where the digital device is performing the prosthetic role. Scientist George Church says that de-extinction technology would enable humans to play God as it would 'permit us to play scenes from our evolutionary past and to take evolution to places it has never gone' (Dawson 2018, 178).

There are several points of concern. Critics ask if it would be sensible to, instead, protect the live species of flora and fauna that the earth still houses. Further, bringing back extinct species while maintaining the predatory economic conditions facilitating habitat disappearance would not be a feasible long-term solution (Dawson 2018, 179). However, when comparing the ramifications of de-extinction with the socio-economic class divisions of the human world, the appeal of de-extinction is not surprising and is consistent with post-materiality. De-extinction would enable a conveyor belt of flora and fauna killed off and re-introduced. It is the culmination of second nature. This is nothing radical when viewed from the question of class. After genocide of indigenous peoples, globalised countries are repopulating and reinventing the underclass by inviting immigrants who take up gig-work. Similarly, housing projects taking land away from locals offer poor forms of compensation and living. Recalling Kolkata, former fisherfolk took up precarious jobs with the decrease in wetlands and agriculture (Dey, Samaddar, and Sen 2013, 221). The post-material promise that capitalism would eradicate poverty is not actually tenable. Nobody asks when or how poverty is introduced. Capitalism will always create an underclass which would be inconsequential and replaceable or even be asked to die as was the case with

migrant workers. Industrial capitalism had factory workers. Post-industrial, neoliberal capitalism has the gig economy fueled by immigration which is further fortified by refugee crises in several regions. Just as North America creates multiculturalism for show where globalisation is rendered a glorified employment drive, de-extinction would carry similar Crystal Palace aspirations of an ecology all-stars exhibition.

De-extinction would enable the world interior to pivot away from concerns of conservation and use the capacity of replacing artificial likenesses with upgrades to reinforce turbocapitalism. The earth would be a showcase of the thinking thing practising scientific charity. Ahistoricity would be achieved as the growth model would thrive in the consummate second nature. Local concerns unique to specific ecosystems would become immaterial since preserving any trace of embodied nature would no longer be necessary. The body would be successfully doubted away. In its place, de-extinction would create approximations, rediscovering essences of extinct species through biotechnology. The materiality of bodies would become inconsequential with de-extinction.

DEGROWTH: DEEP TIME AS THE COMMONS

In Rian Johnson's *Glass Onion* (2022), a sequel to the superb murder mystery *Knives Out* (2019), Helen, the twin of a black, female entrepreneur, played by Janelle Monae, avenges her sister's murder by Edward Norton's bumbling billionaire by destroying his island house but, crucially, also burning the original *Mona Lisa* which was in his home exhibition (Johnson 2022). The plot ties in with many Hollywood projects against the proverbial top 1% marking all the checkboxes of run-of-the-mill liberal social justice – A black woman triumphing over a white man who had become rich from a stolen business idea and also built an environmentally untenable palace. What is interesting is the destruction of the *Mona Lisa*. The moment did not

seem earned unlike Kubrick's nuclear annihilation in *Dr. Strangelove* (Kubrick 1964) where the

end of the world was even hinted in the subtitle. What is disturbing is that the destruction of the

iconic painting was a necessary part of bringing down Norton's antagonist. The scene is played

off as a celebratory purge – the evil, white, entitled fraud facing just comeuppance through a fire

of his own making, owing to his home being powered by a flammable gas, with spurious "green"

credentials, he had been trying to monetise. However, the *Mona Lisa* is presented as a part of

socio-economically predatory white history and the history of capitalism. The self-critical,

decolonising white individual assumes the immaterial, universal position, as Žižek had opined,

while the so-called people of colour assume the particular (The Radical Revolution 2020),

responsible for spreading exhibitionist multiculturalism and participating in decolonisation in

major socio-economic centres of the Global North. By tying the *Mona Lisa* to Norton's character

and having Helen destroy it, the film suggests that the black woman need not, should not or is

incapable of caring for the *Mona Lisa*. The scene suggests that the cultural commons which

includes Da Vinci should be seen as monopolised by white history. However, art and sport

constitute world historical events containing the greatest achievements of all of humanity. Da

Vinci, Roger Federer, Rosa Parks, the Aztecs, and the Bhagavad Gita constitute deep time – a

testament to humanity's shared past and evidence of progress, not capitalist progress, but the

passage of time through which humans have struggled and have lived on along with evolution in

ecology. Humans across races and other identities survived the Ice Age. Da Vinci embodies that

history. The *Mona Lisa* is the evidence of the deep passage of time: days witnessed, and wisdom

attained by common ancestors. A world without the *Mona Lisa* is a lesser world – for whites,

blacks as well as for nature which produces supreme pieces of art captured as the sublime like

volcanic eruptions and ocean storms, as well as geological processes resulting in the formation of

mountain ranges and complex lifeforms over a near-inconceivable period of time. It is this form

of time concerning the geological body, housing lifeforms including humans, that constitutes

deep history or deep time. 'Prehistory' is a buffer zone, of sorts, that historians use to obfuscate a

continuity between hominids and the advent of 'civilisation' – 'A deep history of humankind is

any history that straddles this buffer zone, bundling the Paleolithic and the Neolithic together

with the Postlithic … The result is a full chronology of the human past' (Smail 2008, 2–3).

Deep history (used interchangeably with "deep time" in this project) possibly offers an

alternative to decontextualised cogito-centric reality which prioritised abstract measurability,

leading to impersonal rationalisation and modern capitalism based on abstract value. Against the

forever productive atemporal 24/7 time of capitalism, deep history recontextualises reality. In the

purview of deep history, the past is not something humanity has left behind, on their progress

towards industrial and post-industrial modernity. Deep history is materially present such as the

kitchen middens preserved in the permafrost of the Arctic, as documented by James Bridle

(Bridle 2018, 56), as well as the mammalian capacities for sleep, hunger and reproduction in

their current forms. This is why Smail traces deep history in the development of the human body

and the central nervous system. I have related Cartesian rationality to the Judeo-Christian

tradition in this project, especially in Chapter 2. Likewise, Smail writes that the mind-body

distinction works in 20th century accounts of history – that the body might be old but the mind is

young, finding its true expression in the history of rational modernity. This dovetails with

Toulmin's historicisation as well that Enlightenment rationalists created a new human ontology

of *cogito*-centric reality that began around 1600s onwards. However, the human brain evolved

over the last 1.7 million years for humans to adapt to increasingly complex forms of social

living. Furthermore, there are the features not related to intellect or advanced thinking but

embodied states like 'behavioural predispositions, moods, emotions, and feelings that have a deep evolutionary history. These bodily states are not ghostly things flitting mysteriously through consciousness … they are physiological entities, characteristically located in specific parts of the brain and put there by natural selection'. Smail write that the legacy of the Cartesian distinction influences cultures inflected by the Judeo-Christian tradition starting their history around 4000 B.C. could dispense with humanity's deep history (Smail 2008, 112, 113).

Smail's main argument as regards deep history makes the same plea as Graeber and Wengrow, who provide an alternate account of humanity in opposition to the Edenic state-of-nature narrative (Graeber and Wengrow 2022). Smail offers a version of deep history in place of 'sacred history' (Smail 2008, 1). To counter post-materialism in growthist modernity, deep history provides a way out of the bunker, identifying evolutionary growth in all species and ecological bodies in interconnected ecosystems. Thus, one could wonder if social history of humanity could be reattached to deep history to allow for 'the grandeur that the deep time of human history shares with the walls of the Grand Canyon, where the sheer immensity of time is laid out for the wonder of all' (Smail 2008, 202). The anthropological tradition based on documented evidence does this to an extent, recording the lifestyles of diverse groups and opening the possibilities to fashion new ways of living outside the rigidity of unilinear growthist modernity. A care society requires addressing the problem of historicisation which, influenced by both rationalism and the Judeo-Christian tradition, not only creates the atomised individual as the solipsistic thinking entrepreneur, but views humanity in opposition to the ecological body, informing the ecomodernism view.

As discussed in Chapter 2, capitalism's time begins with a lack, following Original Sin and the ensuing history is tasked with paying off the lack through accumulation. The burning of

the *Mona Lisa* is related to climate collapse as both embody lived time. Capitalism fervently desires to destroy embodiments of deep time like Da Vinci and the Amazon forests so that the historical object is disappeared. What is left is the 24/7 history of production exemplified by "time-loop" sci-fi movies. Tom Cruise's 2014 thriller *The Edge of Tomorrow* (2014) had the alternate title 'Live. Die. Repeat' (Collis 2022). The alternate title is reminiscent of the "tap and sink" method. The attack on deep history is a sign that capitalism is running out of physical ecological space to expand itself. Hence, destroying deep time would enable capitalism to do it all over again which is the incentive for de-extinction. The trivialisation of world historical events was mentioned earlier. Soup was thrown at Van Gogh (Gayle 2022). Van Gogh potentially represents gradual evolution of creativity capable of the human body, which matured along with natural ecosystems. James Bridle reports that permafrost underneath the Siberian tundra is melting (Bridle 2018, 47). Further, permafrost has served as permanent historical record for archeologists to study ancient civilisations and infer ancestral lifestyles, mobility and climate events. This is enabled by kitchen middens – remains of ancient human activity, bones, waste, tools as well as DNA traces – that were frozen in the permafrost. Records in the form of middens melt away with permafrost (Bridle 2018, 56).

The attempted removal of deep history is to bring about a more compliant second nature and barely any room for healthy living for humans and other animals. The evolution of humans happened in deep history along with the evolution of other life forms. Deep history cannot be accelerated by capitalism although it could try through the above avenues. The destruction of deep history, socially experienced, is Nancy Fraser's crisis of care – the growing inability to create and maintain lasting bonds through the pursuit of generational and horizontal or social ties, creating Bauman's liquid modern individual, fashionably without bonds.

Any politics of degrowth would need to have, in its conceptual framework, a kinship to deep history and humanity's ongoing participation in it. The kinship would entail a care for the past which could result in modern society based on care and maintenance as prescribed by David Graeber. The inheritance of debt would be replaced by Universal Basic Income. UBI would be a different form of inheritance – an acknowledgment of what has come before. UBI would symbolise the inheritance of the commons, including the *Mona Lisa*. It would be a permission to do what you will and to do no harm, invoking Kathi Weeks and Hippocrates respectively.

The question of ecology and time has been explored by Dipesh Chakrabarty. Chakrabarty notes that the threat of climate change, especially in the notion of an Anthropocene, disturbs the distinction between natural history and human history (Chakrabarty 2009, 201), elsewhere referred to as earth history and world history (Chakrabarty 2018, 6). He notes that in conventional philosophy and the craft of historicising, history is the record of human agents causing exponential change upon the social world. Nature, itself, is an inert background. History is that which concerns the world of humans separate from nature. Therefore, the Cartesian position would be that history begins with the primacy of the thinking thing on its way to immaterial transcendence while the earth is doubted away. In the Hegelian-Marxist tradition, history has an end or is teleological. There is a final form of the social world that history is trying to achieve. Human history became robust enough, for scientists like Paul Crutzen, that it spilled into geological time resulting in the conceptualisation of the Anthropocene (Chakrabarty 2018, 8). Chakrabarty cites R. G. Collingwood who stated that historians were not interested in recording humans 'eat and sleep and make love and thus satisfy their natural appetites'. Chakrabarty concludes from Collingwood's words that 'only the history of the social construction of the body, not the history of the body as such, can be studied' (Chakrabarty 2009,

203). Chakrabarty, in this declaration, recreates Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis and his theory of knowledge as discourse.

Post-materialism has enabled perceiving geological reality discursively as climate change, as an imperfect object to be fixed. The notion of history as strictly human history is traced back to Giambattista Vico, an Italian philosopher of the 17th and 18th centuries, who was one of the first theorists of history. Chakrabarty writes that there are numerous modern counters to the separatist stance of human history. He cites Fernand Braudel who, in 1949, reacted thus – 'the flowers did not come back every spring, the flocks of sheep migrate every year, or the ships sail on a real sea that changes with the season'. Braudel pointed out that human actions depended on cyclical time which had made the passing of seasons so culturally significant (Chakrabarty 2009, 204–9). The Viconian point of nature as backdrop, adopted by Hegel, Marx and, notably, Stalin posited that natural changes are so slow in relation to social changes to the point of being irrelevant to the functioning of society and the writing of history. Genocide was dignified by the pleasures of the management of bodies in bureaucratic recordkeeping while both human and environmental bodies were incarcerated constituting such events as the construction of the White Sea-Baltic Canal using gulag inmates (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2016). For Chakrabarty, the consensus around an Anthropocene displacing the more sedate Holocene changes this. The Anthropocene is characterised by speed in the manner in which human interference has been changing the environment (Chakrabarty 2009, 205).

In any case, the distinction between geological history and social or human history seems like a contrivance trumped up in the immaterialist tradition. One asks if pandemics fall under the scope of geological or social history. A pandemic has geological truth because of the material existence of the virus in whichever manner it mutated. However, pandemics constitute social

history due to international travel and broader socio-economic organisation such as designing hyper-speed urbanity and supply chains. Without a mobile society, it is unlikely for pandemics to even exist as part of geological history in that several geological factors culminate in the potential of a virus.

It would be fruitful to shelve this dualism and focus on deep history or deep time as ancestral time. Considering the onset of human history strictly from the advent of societies is also against Darwinian evolution which involves stages where ancestors of humans and several land creatures were underwater. Therefore, there does not seem to be any value in the very yardsticks used to document human or world history as opposed to earth history. The focus should be on deep time to break away from the growth model which depends on the Judeo-Christian framework of time, which has served to enforce the growth model based on the economic doctrine of scarcity, typifying the Anthropocene which is fittingly also called the Capitalocene (Chakrabarty 2018, 6). Traditional Marxist counters, specifically adhering to the socialist modernisation strand described by Kathi Weeks, to capitalist time do not seem to be tenable since it does not intend to move away from production intensification but fixate on the matter of ownership of the means of production. Ramachandra Guha recounts conversations with student activists at his progressive Indian alma mater where Marxist students dismissed environmentalism as a bourgeois fad and argued that prevention of the use of wood would prevent the working class from strengthening themselves with raw materials to make way for the revolution (Guha 2010, 27). Hence, Guha identified with the sentiment of his friend Juan Martínez Allier of being a 'lapsed Marxist' (Guha 2010, 37).

What Marxist philosophy does help in is evincing the problem of ideology or a fabricated reality – the world interior for Sloterdijk, the symbolic order for Lacan, history for a majority of

philosophy of history theorists. Most significantly, Marx's writings reveal that exploitation is not natural, something Guha, in his lapsed Marxism, appreciates (Guha 2010). The current theme of past time, itself, is a concern found in Walter Benjamin whose theory of history prioritised the urgent objective to rescue the history of the vanquished. Geological time seems to be one such prey to history of cognitive experience. Of course, like pop social justice, pop Marxism is the Leninist, socialist-modernization strand which constituted the Soviet Union which critics use as a shorthand to defend capitalism – the subject of Steve Paxton's book *Unlearning Marx* (Paxton 2021). The Cold War-influenced truncation of Marxism in cultural imagination conceals less explored Marxist thought such as autonomism and work refusal, tied to eco-socialist movements discussed earlier as well as recent eco-readings like Kohei Saito's *Marx in the Anthropocene* and Huber's *Climate Change as Class War*.

Don Kalb writes in memory of David Graeber that Graeber did not like the language of Marxism and described his politics as that of a Maussian anarchist (Kalb 2020). The reference to Mauss indicates that Graeber's work is based on hopeful readings of history surrounding gift exchange as a way to look after one another. In other words, Graeber wanted to design an economy of care. As stated earlier, this requires a respect for and identification with the past, not casual dismissals of it because Hitler, gulags, and slavery were in it. The past is evidence of the present made possible despite entropy. Human ancestors survived the Ice Age. Non-Jewish Germans risked their lives to hide Jews from being captured. Indian millennials and Gen-Zs used Instagram to gather and distribute food and access to blood donation volunteers to ailing compatriots during Covid-19 (Saluja 2021). Christopher Nolan and Tarantino are among artists preserving photochemical film and movie theatres against the rampaging siege of digital technology and OTT. Care, it seems, arises quite spontaneously with crack efficiency whenever

there is a need. Care will be found by remembering deep time, moving away from atomising immaterialism.

Daniel Smail writes of such a reunion in *On Deep History and the Brain*. For Smail, there is no reason to sever the history of biological evolution from geological history or deep time. Even with the birth of reason, sacred history or scriptural time was rationalised and integrated into the understanding of modernity. Hence, rational modernity is perceived in eschatological terms in keeping with the religious temporality it was purportedly leaving behind. Thus, popular imagination entertains a *birth* of civilisation as akin to a religious rupture in which life appeared where there was nothing due to a prime mover. The advent of the cognitive human is treated as an event instead of a progression from simple to complex lifeforms. This restrictive form of history as strictly being social history fails to acknowledge that the creation of the *Mona Lisa* is a result of patient biological evolution linked to artistry.

Smail asserts – 'We can acknowledge that humanity's natural history persisted after the rise of civilisation. The archaeologists, anthropologists, molecular biologists, and neuroscientists who study the deep past are also historians, regardless of the archives they consult' (Smail 2008, 11). Smail notes that prehistory is treated by Western civilisation as comprising 'what we are no longer' (Smail 2008, 4). The obsession with language to create reality returns. Smail's critique could easily be considered in relation to the poststructuralist-psychoanalytic tradition. If prehistory is that which humanity is no longer, then prehistory is like the Real which could only be understood in negative terms where all meaning disappears. YouTuber PlasticPills brilliantly likens Lacan's Real to a black hole eating up matter (PlasticPills 2020). Following Judeo-Christian temporality, historiography is interested in a very short story of humans beginning with a momentous event like metal technology, writing or cities before which there was no movement

in history and, therefore, nothing worth recording (Smail 2008, 3). This parallels the Original Sin narrative which began with a static Garden. As mentioned earlier, similar speculations have been undertaken by the social contract thinkers like Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke in the theorisation of a so-called state of nature – a supposed time of creative innocence, which was either peaceful or hellish, depending on the philosopher, which triggered the history of strife and innovation with increased complexity of social organisation. David Graeber and David Wengrow's book *The Dawn of Everything* is directed at these Eden-like thought problems philosophers used to compensate for unknown periods of the past.

The constricted temporality of an originary state exemplifying lack continues to provide enough ammunition for the growth model predicated on scarcity. Severing humanity from deep time and framing history within the narrow confines of capitalism force second nature upon ecology – a symbolic order thrust upon nature. The capitalocene provides a temporality which is fundamentally work-centred. The growth model justifies the creation of bunkers in the form of never-ending innovation for profit to the extent of creating value out of thin air like financial instruments which caused the 2008 housing crisis and supplements to existing systems – the stock market as a bunker to the economy (Frankel 2018, 197), for instance. Instead of trying to innovate humanity towards further financialised and disembodied realities, recording prehistory could provide radical possibilities to imagine time outside productivity. Prehistory is like free time. It has eluded historical archiving because it is not productive enough for the very brief era of the capitalocene or post-material time. A society based on care and maintenance would require the temporal context of deep time, not as a distant past, but a history of care, both human and natural, that has made the geological present possible.

CONCLUSION

This chapter was a re-examination of the Marxian base and superstructure continuum from the perspective of post-materialism. Post-materialism – as the term suggests – comforms to the rationalist project of creating a *cogito*-centric reality – a perpetually productive space of capitalism where embodiment is deemed inconsequential. While negative dogmatism founded the atomised thinking thing in charge of entrepreneurial self-actualisation, the bunkered autonomy has construed capitalist modernity as an insulated world interior. In my reading of the base-superstructure continuum, the superstructure is the material capitalist bunker which, in its inconsequential, ahistorical embodiment, discovers disposable and pathologisable bodies in the form of ecological areas and migrant workers requiring philanthropic assistance. The superstructural bunker 'hails' bodies that are unrealised value outside the bunker in order to make them productive. Once bodies are tapped and sunk, they are discovered in their debilitated form, needing rescue. Bunkers with an inconsequential form of embodiment proffer real estate projects and smart cities that do not consider the indigenous design rationale of the given area. Once the bunkers are in place, the pathologisable base is discovered in the form of land subsidence, migrant workers and heat islands – bodily deficiencies needing technocratic solutions. I chose to focus on ecomodernism not only because it prioritises techno-fixes to preserve the status quo; its principle of decoupling is faithful to the dualism of Cartesian rationality. I concluded this discussion with speculation on deep history as a way out of the bunker, as well as an alternative to 24/7 productive time, where deep history could become the temporality of care work – inheriting an embodied past instead of a rationalist-religious lack. Universal Basic Income represents this inheritance of the past supplanting debt.

Conclusion

CLOSING THOUGHTS ON THE MAIN IDEAS

Towards the end of the fourth and final chapter, I speculated on the possibility of having the notion of deep time or deep history as an existential foundation for a politics affirming abundant embodied life – bodies of the individual, the relational self and that of the environment intertwined. Deep time, I argued, offers up a potential temporality of care, countering the 24/7 time of growthist modernity and capitalism looking to make the body perpetually productive. Disembodiment as a theme relates to the question of immaterial or cognitive labour. While it dates back to Plato as well as similarly immaterialist ideas of other cultures, disembodiment, in my project, is rooted in the rationalism of the 1600s onwards. My aim was to relate neoliberalism – an economy based on financialised self-actualisation – to the history of rationalism – an outlook aiming at the solipsistic recreation of reality based on innately present rational faculties. The turn towards the thinking thing by Cartesian rationalism to create reality based on the *cogito* as a universal human essence was intended to provide a context-free definition of what it means to be human. However, Toulmin's account informs us that the search for an abstract consensus was a response to religio-political upheaval that preceded the 1600s, when the end of Renaissance humanism was marked by the Thirty Years War between the Catholics and the Protestants. While rationalism attempted a timeless description of human essence, the historical background of religious turmoil cannot be ignored, particularly as regards the primacy of the sacrificial body in need of reordering, both in rationalist thought and in the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is this penchant for rational reordering that has haunted the body throughout modernity, from rationalism to the rise in factory work and industrial cities, reaching the self-

regulating achievement subject of neoliberal capitalism. This also reflects Bauman's insight in *Wasted Lives* that the two key traits of modernity are progress and order-building.

The philosophical justification for the upholding of order-building or reordering as a primary facet of modernity is clarified by Toulmin's historicisation of modernity. Renaissance humanism was interested in diversity and different accounts of the human condition using various disciplines to understand reality. The emphasis was on plurality of perspectives, seen as a testament to the complexity of human lived experience. But, in some quarters, this diversity was viewed as a potential cause of warring factions that led to the end of humanism, needing a rationalist intervention. The basic principle used for creating reality under rationalism was negative dogmatism, in opposition to humanism. Whereas humanism recognised unique perspectives on humanity, favouring the recognition of more accounts of existence that even potentially challenged each other, rationalism wished to construct reality in negative terms. Negative dogmatism involved the proverbial quest for certainty – the stripping away of embodied contexts and contingent accounts of reality to arrive at an irrefutable essence that could define existence in rational terms – a reality that is marked by abstract measurability. This is evident in Descartes' *Meditations*. Descartes begins with his own reflections of sensory experience to prove that the body is unreliable and that the only thing he could know for certain is his ability to doubt. Although the body was cast to doubt based on the unreliability of sensory experience, Descartes brings the body back by a 'special right' after establishing the rational realm of the mind which could then order the body, leading to its eventual exhaustion.

I have referred to the journey of the body in *Meditations* as the Cartesian trajectory where the body is doubted and then brought back into the disciplinary space of the rational mind. Since the body is perceived as unreliable, needing reordering, negative dogmatism provides a new

universal ontology of humanity that informs modernity. Since the origin of modernity is apprehended as a lack, or the need for the mind to transcend a deficient body, modernity required a growth model, the state of embodied deficiency. This translated into the scarcity paradigm in capitalism, thus justifying the logic of ceaseless growth to rise above deprivation.

The discovery of the thinking thing as essence by Descartes mirrors Marxian second nature, through the retroactive rediscovery of essence. In the Cartesian trajectory, the body is doubted to *arrive* at the thinking thing which is declared as a universal human essence outside of embodied history. Similarly, first-nature bodies achieve their financialised second nature, which is retroactively declared as essence or what the commodity was always meant to be. Second nature relates to commodity fetishism which is the Marxian idea that the final commodity-form is regarded as inherently valuable, mystifying the production process, including the use of raw materials, workers and tools that came before it. Second nature is what the state of deficiency needs to reach to constitute measurable reality, enabling bodies to be forever productive and a part of growthist modernity. The value of bodies and objects is not obtained from their first-nature sensuous characteristics, but from the abstract value of money, which enables all bodies to be included in the uniform realm of abstract measurability.

Here, essence is arrived at in the Cartesian trajectory, as well as in the production process of the second nature commodity-form,. Thus, it constitutes its retroactive rediscovery. The retroactive rediscovery of essence implies a lost past or wholeness, which, in terms of the body, is falling short. This is where the Biblical Fall narrative comes into play and relates to the originary state of deficiency that modernity begins with for the rationalists in their negative dogmatism. The state of deficiency recalls Original Sin. Deficiency is transformed into a state of indebtedness that necessitates financialised redemption through the restoration of oneness.

The causal body in rationalism translates into the guilty body in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The lost essence, discovered through retroactive rationality, implies that the body is already the site of alienation in need of corrective sacrifice for the self to find immaterial redemption. From the ontology of modernity constructed by negative dogmatism. The embodied self, from a theological point of view, is already starting from a state of alienation because it is severed from its true rational essence. Disembodiment has been a feature of the evolution of modernity, including impersonal bureaucracy in the 1800s. The latter featured strict job roles that had its iteration in the organisation of factories by Fordism and Taylorism – disembodied, rational systems to be populated by sacrificial, causal bodies. At the present time, Original Sin has been incorporated into the economy in the form of financial instruments, such as student loans and housing mortgages, serving as initiatory mechanisms of sin that are to be paid off over the years to end precarity. Indebtedness is sold as empowerment as the achievement subject looks towards financialised self-discovery as a measure against indebted destitution. Quotidian notions of auo-exploitative success-hunting like "you *owe* it to yourself to succeed" shows that indebtedness is spiritualised but in financialised form, where all loans must be paid off to be absolved of existential guilt.

However, anthropological accounts show that this form of indebtedness is only the type unique to the ontology of modernity, where the void created by negative dogmatism needs to be filled by the rediscovery of measurable essence. Negative dogmatism resulted in a monolithic version of human history where history was, in fact, replaced by decontextualised ontology. Therefore, many Enlightenment thinkers like Locke, Hobbes, and even Nietzsche, created speculative origin stories of humanity that never existed, through retroactive rediscovery. Locke and Hobbes each theorised a state of nature where humans lived in deprivation, and in Hobbes'

case, a state of war as well. These speculations reveal that major stories that justify a unilinear modernity and the scarcity paradigm calling for growthist economics are pure fiction or historical representation of an ontology of deficiency. Nietzsche wrote that the roles of buyer and seller were innately present in human nature resulting in indebtedness and retributive justice for loan defaulters. Through such speculations, Nietzsche provides a theory of how debtors transformed into transgressors, eventually resulting in Adam and Eve. What is insightful about Nietzsche's account, according to David Graeber, is that indebtedness has indeed played a part in fostering human interaction, but not necessarily in the punitive way understood in modernity and advanced capitalism. That is, debt has also been used to create interpersonal trust through reciprocity in gift economies. As spontaneous organisation of food delivery and blood donation resources among Indians during Covid-19 shows us, this form of reciprocal indebtedness is observable and could be used by people to be autonomous from capitalism, as well as the exchange of abstract monetary measurability.

The two kinds of indebtedness result in two ways of experiencing freedom. Isaiah Berlin's conception of positive and negative freedom tie in well with punitive and reciprocal indebtedness. As anthropological accounts of James Suzman and David Graeber with David Wengrow reveal, scarcity-based social organisation did not make sense to tribes living outside modernity. "Premodern" tribes communally ensured individual autonomy through reciprocal, everyday acts of care constituting prototypes of anarchist groupings and consensual democracy. They displayed positive freedom by seeking out bonds with people and places and creating stable, tangible communities. On the other hand, punitive indebtedness found in the Fall narrative, where debt is a curse, as well in modern capitalist societies encourage negative

freedom because, after debts are paid, it is a sign that persons want nothing more to do with one another.

People not wanting anything to do with others manifests as the negative relationships explored by the likes of Eva Illouz, where participants want to unmake or avoid intimate bonds. Further, short-term encounters allow individuals to treat others as resources for self-growth, in keeping with negative dogmatism where embodied contexts are done away with. Negative relationships are a natural offshoot of negative dogmatism as it is the material manifestation of the quest for certainty through perpetual unmaking of bonds. The waning of relationality and the prominence of inert public spaces exemplify disembodiment experienced socially. Negative relationships also relate to the topic of environmental decline, as the conventional approach to the environment is to view modern civilisation as opposed to it or what could be described as the post-material view of the environment to be kept at a distance from civilisation.

Toulmin had identified two strands of modernity – humanism and rationalism – that have been in constant conflict with each other. After the rationalist turn, the desire for abstract measurability away from individual agency informed much of the Marxian notion of self-estrangement. The factory era has been avowedly rationalist while the post-factory neoliberal era, through its premium on entrepreneurial freedom and the dignity of the achievement subject, has been capitalism's offering of humanism as a response to the critique of alienation. My project contributes to the critique of immaterial labour by highlighting the presence of the factory in the post-factory era. My proposition of an embodied rhetoric of cognitive labour acknowledges the presence of the factory by treating the factory as a period that produced a factory efficiency that was passed down to the achievement subject for self-actualisation. Through factory efficiency, the self can regulate the body and keep it optimised for growth opportunities. The embodied

rhetoric refers to the productive body taking the form that capitalism requires it to take for the achievement subject to financialise himself or herself, so as to adhere to market demands. Thus, the growth of capital coincides with individual growth mediated by market forces – what I referred to as rationalised humanism.

Optimisation occurs in negative relationships through the curtailment of social processes. Using Tronti's conceptualisation of the social factory, I have argued that the curtailment of social processes is a result of the primacy of relative surplus value – the shortening of work time to increase surplus reward. Here, relative surplus value is both literal where online dating platforms remove embodied time promising more users the 'love experience' as well as metaphorical. It is metaphorical in the social factory because, upon adopting factory efficiency, the entrepreneurial self would also internalise aspects of the production process. There is not necessarily any immediate monetary reward, but the self is kept optimised as each social encounter is treated as a part of self-growth.

Using post-materialism, I presented a reinterpretation of the superstructure as a bunker that produces productive bodies within it as the base that it could then pathologise through techno-fixes like ecomodernism and philanthropy. In my reinterpretation, I was arriving at the metaphor of the bunker insulated from embodied obstacles, as suggested by negative dogmatism. Sloterdijk's world interior describes the exhibitionist tendencies of global capitalism. Since reordering cannot stop in the growth model, Slobodian's examination of zone formation puncturing the legitimacy of the state is an intensification of insulation. Although these zones of exception are anarcho-capitalist, these zones are still potentially connected to each other since they are united by abstract measurability. Thus, zones would look to tunnel their way towards each other. Slobodian mentioned that zones begin at home through private schools and high-

income colonies in India (CITE). It is easy to see how private schools procured by high-income groups would potentially lead to access to more powerful passports in the West that would enable further access to zones. While zone formation cracks up the state through a parody of anarchism, as shown in the dissertation, anarchism is a potentially potent way of opting out and creating new social organisations based on care, yet to be imagined.

LOOKING AHEAD – TOWARDS CARE WORK AND DEEP TIME

I have been discussing three bodies that need to be viewed in their interconnectedness. The three bodies – the individual, the social and the ecological – can be brought together under the philosophical premise of deep time – time beyond recorded history in which mountains and rivers were formed, mammals learned to mate, human bodies learned to sleep, eat, write symphonies, fight diseases, split the atom, paint the *Mona Lisa*, commit crimes, dribble a football, and invent vaccines. Graeber and Wengrow note that prototypical anarchist groups were not utopian vice-free societies. Contradictory strands of humanity have always existed, and people have always been both good and evil. What made these societies unique is the principle of communally ensured autonomy amplified by what Graeber refers to as baseline communism upholding the doctrine of care work. They valued individual autonomy and freedom instead of narrow aspirations towards equality in the zero-sum idea of market freedom. As discussed in Chapter 2, Graeber and Wengrow note that the question of equality was manufactured after thinkers like Turgot posited that inequality is the normal consequence of economic progress under commercial capitalism.

My discussion has been congruent with Marxism insofar as it is a tool to critically analyse capitalism. I have used the Marxian second nature to examine Cartesian essence – that it is the retroactive rediscovery of things that reveals their essence. Marx's examination of surplus

value contributes to the critique of productive 24/7 time. I also used the base-superstructure continuum to move towards the superstructure as a bunker through Sloterdijk. However, I intend to pivot towards anarchism when looking for alternatives to capitalism, particularly due to the embodied nature of direct action found in anthropological accounts of playful social organisation. Neoliberalism perverts direct action by putting a premium on personal responsibility and promoting entrepreneurial problem-solving within punitive market forces. To recall Oli Mould, there is nothing radical about creativity under capitalism. The psychopolitical entrepreneur is in charge of his or her destiny, motivated by self-interest. Advocates of capitalism monopolise human nature, claiming that it is the only form of socio-economic arrangement that accounts for self-interest. On the other hand, Puritanism demonises self-interest. In Chapter 4, I had cited the Indian forest dwellers, mostly women, who began the Chipko Movement to save their forests not out of self-sacrificing moral compunction but because the forests were the source of their livelihood over a sustained period of time. The cross-cultural presence of anarchist mobilisation could potentially imply a biological basis for care societies. Darwinian evolution of the body itself could be seen as built-in care on top of which socialised care, direct action and mutual aid add more immunity, replenishing existential certainty.

Graeber's insight in *Bullshit Jobs* was that people who actually derived existential meaning out of their work, primarily care workers, were punished for it through poor pay and bureaucratic oversight which would keep them from their actual work. Graeber noted that care work has increasingly been poorly compensated for such that nurses, schoolteachers and other caring professionals were a significant group in support of the Occupy Movement (Graeber 2019, 208). The more one's job is gratifying in how much the worker is able to improve others' lives, the less she or he is to be remunerated for the work. The Puritanism behind wanton job

creation, especially needless bureaucratic posts, insists that people engage in work that keeps

them unhappy as well as the work of caring professionals be made more difficult with

administrative oversight, paperwork and underpay – penalisation for secretly deriving pleasure

from service to others. This form of work organisation upholds the sacrificial function of the

working body. Further, this phenomenon is related to capitalism getting in the way of social

reproduction where family members are unable to spend time with one another. The problem,

itself, is presented as a personal failing in the form of the absent-father trope or women either

glorified or shamed for juggling careers and family. Ideally, both women and men should be

having free time when not caring for others.

I had mentioned in Chapter 4 that deep time or deep history is the acknowledgement of

what had come before. Living creatures and the mountains witnessed each other evolve.

Common wisdom, adhering to growthism prescribes that one must make something of oneself,

usually from an indebted state involving either loans or physical privation compelling a

supposedly empowering path towards financialised self-actualisation in the future. Deep time is

antithetical to this notion of initiatory exile. Loans and UBI, thus, represent distinct ways of

looking at the past. Loans symbolise Original Sin which needs to be worked away while UBI

stands for ancestral achievement, socio-economic and biological evolution. The body in the

present is a result of all the immunitary events it underwent in the past. Life on earth, including

human life, must be characterised by pleasurable abundance where bodies are adequately

nourished. Viewing life in the narrative of deep time necessitates the presence of care work as an

evolutionary and socio-biological component resulting in humans being alive today. The

perpetual expansion of capital indicates the failure to acknowledge historical growth including

anthropological and evolutionary progress. The future could do better with maintenance and

care, away from 24/7 time which is uninterested in making things that last but in repetitive embodiment of factory efficiency. Graeber notes:

> … most work can't be said to "create" anything; most of it is a matter of maintaining and rearranging things. Consider a coffee cup. We "produce" it once. We wash it a thousand times. Even work we think of as "productive" – growing potatoes, forging a shovel, assembling a computer – could just as easily be seen as tending, transforming, reshaping, and rearranging materials and elements that already exist. (Graeber 2019, 221)

The undervaluation of care work, including the accompanying moral censure of care workers potentially feeling spiritually rewarded could have anarchist possibilities. Recent years have seen a flurry of strikes and walkouts signifying the potential for what Graeber calls 'the revolt of the caring classes' (Graeber 2019, 208). America has witnessed thirteen care workers' strikes in 2023 (Gooch 2023). Meanwhile, Kaiser Permanente, the apparently non-profit American health and coverage provider concluded at a bargaining session in 2023 that its workers are overpaid while the Kaiser CEO is paid $16 million a year and forty-nine Kaiser executives are paid in excess of a million dollars annually ("Kaiser's Post-Pandemic Message to Healthcare Workers: 'You're Overpaid!'" 2023). In June 2023, Romanian care workers protested in Bucharest demanding better pay and increase in staff members (Associated Press 2023). NHS workers demonstrated in February 2023 (Sriram and Brophy 2023). Contractual health workers protested in October and November of 2022 over unpaid bonuses in Nagpur, India ("Health Workers in India Held Successive Protests to Demand Unpaid Bonuses" 2022).

As Graeber notes, when care workers go on strike, it is usually noticed as it undeniably affects biological life (Graeber 2019, xxi). The anarchist speculations surrounding care work are made possible when it is evident that care work really runs as a parallel economy often

compensating for bureaucratic oversight and government failures during emergencies. Care work, here, not only involves professionals but civilians who constitute a significant cohort of the voluntariat. Urban Indians not only distributed blood bank and critical care details on social media, several individuals, groups, and professional chefs began informal food delivery services where people cooked food at home to be delivered to patients at nearby locations (Sankari 2021). This has been possible because of India's social practices promoting access to food such as the Sikh langar, the *dabba* or lunchbox delivery network in Mumbai inherited from the days of the Raj (Sengar 2018), and reasonably priced working-class shack-cafes known as *dhabas* – the last two belonging to India's informal economy. While the informal economy is often precarious and exploitative, it is evident that basic care work, for the most part, can be performed by anyone. Informal cooperation during the pandemic bolstered anarchist possibilities towards a society built around direct action-care.

Systems built around care work and biology should be viewed in tandem. To suggest that care is rooted in biology is not mere philosophical optimism. Scientists have observed the phenomenon called 'helper's high' – a feeling 'of elation, exhilaration and increased energy, then a period of calm and serenity' which followed service to others. Scientists studied American volunteers since the 1980s who reported euphoric sensations from helping people that lasted several weeks. Researchers conducted biochemical analysis revealing that helping fortifies immunity and lowers stress. Neuroscientist Jorge Moll observed that donating money activates the mesolimbic system in the brain. The mesolimbic system enables individuals to adapt to stimuli like sex, food and drugs, releasing mood-regulating neurotransmitters like oxytocin and vasopressin (Dossey 2018). Thus, it is in one's self-interest to help others for what it does to the body. One comes back to Graeber and Wengrow's accounts of communally ensured freedom. At

the same time, one could notice that zero sum freedom of atomised neoliberalism, in a world emphasising efficiency, is quite inefficient. Curbing opportunities to be socially useful, unless within an exploitative dynamic, along with being socially intimate in place of self-care fads, McMindfulness and therapy seems to be sacrificial lunacy.

There should be room for self-interest and vanity for immunitary anarchism to be effective. Asking people to be caring while also ensuring that the care work engaged in has no effect on one's pride and sense of self is itself an unreasonable, even inefficient, and Puritanical demand. Thus, care work should also be expanded to save the arts as well as sports. The connection is not as arbitrary as it sounds. Physical cultures and the arts play a significant communal role in the local lives of people. The entertainment industry has background actors and contractual workers. Similarly, sports have overlooked tiers such as youth leagues, women's leagues and neighbourhood clubs.

An anthropological advantage is that sports and the arts, like care work in general, have been part of human history and, hence, in their universal practice, could be considered in terms of deep time. To prevent capitalism from invading this space by opportunistically performing the tap-and-sink function, one has to clearly define the boundaries of care work if it were to be expanded. Deep time is a good guiding principle to test if a profession can exist in a care society. One could ask if the concerned profession existed in ancient times or if the activity could have existed in some form throughout the history of early humans moving towards complex social organisation. It is reasonable to assume that Graeber's examples of care workers – teachers, garbage disposal workers, medics – whose absence we would notice were they to disappear, definitely existed in early civilisations (Graeber 2019). Even during the time of early humans, one could logically speculate that curiosity, alleviation of suffering and hygiene factored in daily

considerations in some form. Similarly, there is enough archeological evidence of robust artistic and physical cultures in ancestral groups. Work, instead of being created by the demands of a disembodied market, should be justified by how it addresses individual, social and ecological bodies.

A fundamental anarchist principle holds that authority or an institution must continually justify its existence such that hierarchy does not become a static, unquestioned fact of organisation (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 46). Following this logic, what comprises essential work would be that which withstands the test of deep time, proving that it is efficiently contributing to embodied reality instead of interrupting or curtailing social processes in the name of productivity, seeking Marx's relative surplus value from efficiently managing 24/7 time. In the Covid-19 era, a challenge to anarchism would be universal access to vaccines and new, useful interventions that alleviate suffering. Vaccines, in themselves, answer to deep time by changing evolutionary history where a disease is completely eradicated or experienced in milder forms by humans. The challenge is in distribution which the state, including corporations, has been responsible for. I have speculative answers. If people live in anarchist assemblies, then human mobility would not adhere to the norms of globalisation. The decrease in hypermobility itself would be a new layer of immunity. That said, people would still need something approximating global cooperation on humanitarian or care grounds that would allow universal access. This world would have increased presence of groups with similar visions as Doctors Without Borders, comprising experts and paramedical volunteers. Universities, coming under care work, would still exist as regulatory bodies and for clinical trials. Formulas can be freely shared. Social value celebrating the inventor would replace medical patents. The state, or whatever is in place of it, in keeping with anarchist principles, would need to justify its existence. Something resembling a

state could be set up only during emergencies comprising smaller organisations mentioned above for mass production and humanitarian cooperation with other regions to address epidemiological concerns, natural disasters and refugees. An anthropological precedent is in Levi-Strauss's report in 1944 of the Brazilian Nambikwara, revealing that they have switched between farming and foraging depending on the season (Graeber and Wengrow 2022, 99). Nations can exist for their cultural and historical legacies, but political organisation would be done by smaller groups.

The other question concerns travel. Pro-work travel should be phased out. I have mentioned in earlier chapters, referencing Matthew Huber and David Goldberg that air travel is dehumanising anyway from clearing security, fitting into seats sized to carry as many purchasers as possible, and clearing immigration. One should ask how much air travel involves actual travelling that is meaningfully experiential. Much of flying does not even account for the thousands of miles of countries traversed over a matter of hours. With the decrease in work hours, it could be possible to bring back wandering or slow (inefficient) travel where the wanderer could experience every nook and corner of the earth. It is difficult to speculate too much about travel since it is probable that a post-work society would come up with answers concerning how people address wanderlust.

A post-work future would primarily be run by today's parallel and informal economies that comprise concealed bodies and, often, spontaneous help. This is not a Marxian call for workers to unite towards singular historical progress but a politics of opting out of growth in favour of different forms of societies. Care work should free individuals from coerced, debt-ridden self-development. Deep time, in this respect, reinstates continuity with the past, encouraging a hopeful future for all three bodies. Without profit, life can run on the demands of biological rhythms as well as ecological limits. Capitalism has been around for a very brief

period of deep time and even human history. It is possible, thus, to get out of one's head and

conceptualise the embodied self in relation to other bodies, free of guilt, keeping entropy at bay.

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<u>Curriculum Vitae</u>

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Current Academic Status:
- PhD Candidate at the Theory Centre (CSTC), Western University (UWO), Canada, Cohort 2019 – 2023 (Degree Awaited).

Scholarship:
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Academic History: (in India)
- Completed Graduate Studies (M.A.) in English from University of Delhi, India. 2018.
- Graduated in English Honours, (B.A.) St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, India. 2014.

Teaching and Teaching Assistantship Experience in Canada and India:

1. Worked as a Teaching Assistant from Fall 2019 to Winter 2023.
2. Taught as Guest Lecturer, St. Paul's Cathedral Mission College, Kolkata, India. Summer 2019.

Related Conference Presentation:

1. Presented a paper titled "Environmental Decline or the Triumph of the Transcendent Mind" at the Environment and Sustainability Conference 2022 on Zoom titled "ENVIROCON: Inspiring Change, Education, and Awareness Conference", Western University. 25th March 2022.