

Fiction and
Technology:
steps towards
reclaiming the
words

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Turbulent waters

When I step out of bed, I live no longer, but through me lives Christ, the Christ of Capitalism.

I am fused and partaking, as all that my body does in its awoken state is participate in the passage of power. I own myself not, but my body belongs to the world. Everything flowing, flowing into each other, and yet I feel how the dams of reason try to separate the ebbs of the irrational, or that which is deemed and labeled such. Dream, that sift into waking. To be part of such a body of water, to be human, I try to find the borders, to delineate the edges. But the lake has no borders, there is an infinite system of veins that interface with the porous surroundings, the waters underneath, the air, the atmosphere.

But there is a strong heritage I wake up with. I stand up, on firm ground, and with a scalpel knife I cut thin slices on my plate. With my tongue (language) I push the piece against my palate. Savoring tiny pieces of the world, I own this moment, I feel to know to touch the world.

Turbulent waters, and the dam bursts. There is a loud minority of dominant world narration, and it is surrounded by a non-dominant majority, waiting. Sifting through whispered stories, bear with me while I recall a few of these tensions floating around. Why? As self-fulfilling prophecies, the future to come is dependent on the breadth of imagination of possible futures. The inclusion of a plurality of modes of world narration, each with their own conditions of felicity and usefulness, is the necessary condition of an optimal future that caters to diverse requirements in a world full of multi-level existences. According to Meillassoux [1] we need more Extro-science fiction, stories that allow inaccessible segments of the world to concurrent and future scientific investigation, precisely to address ones waiting long in the shadows of the enlightenment.



Human!

Do not confuse what you say with what you actually do.

Humans pursue diverse goals, some of them deemed noble, but little is so prevalent as the pursuit of power. One of the side-threads I wish to weave in here is the narrative of current modes of governance, and to challenge the independence of modes of knowing from modes of governing, ways of conditioning joy and content and self-actualization.

Rivers of gold

A neoclassical, and for brevity's sake, dumbed down narrative follows a discontent group of merchants, artisans and craftspeople, who in pursuit of freedom and progress leave the Middle Ages, torches blazing, throwing out the theo-aristocracy, and trading their wares at the market(place). With the pursuit of freedom comes a pursuit of truth and old dogmas are proven experimentally wrong, Newton constructs a map to the world. It allows more accurate world representations. The center of the world is not the Earth, but the Sun. And yet the Sun is placed inside the human mind, into the centered center, from within to shine on all things. All things measurable. Supply and demand in concert, burn the planet, an infinite resource, with miracles, machines of a mechanistic universe, infinite progress.



It all trickles down, a democratic shower. A shared joy. I mean, what world are we talking about?

Marx talks about the shadows. The surplus of production is reaped by the owners of the means of production, the capitalists. Thus, even as progress is maintained, the machines evolve and wealth is distributed disproportionately. The owners, in order to maintain profit, exploit the labor class. So then, politics is a counterbalance, a counter current? Dam busters bomb palaces, to open floodgates of the wealthy. A redistribution by political means to counter economic strongholds. All in order to lift off limiting caps of industrialization. The spirit of progress can soar free, burning more of the planet, exploitation moved further down the rank, to the disabled, the animal, the plant, the mineral. The meek.

Nitzan and Bichler [2] propose a revelatory approach in the description of the inner workings of capital. They describe through evidence in data that neither the neoclassical utility, nor the Marxian labor value describe correctly the relationship between price and value. Price and value are distinct and are forced into marriage. Capitalization is a mode of power where certainty of future income is translated into a narrative of relative rank. The power is not about the currently owned but the vision of future income. The ones who produce the most believable narrative of their future success are the owners of the world. Politics is neither just a disruptive force for the market, nor a balanced organization. Politics and economy are not separate but a joint venture of distributing futures. A narrative machine that enables power to those who wield it.



What forces are available to counter the power to deliver a dissolution on concentrated power?

Power needs to be confronted as power. Predictability can be capitalized. A rational experimental science allows predictable futures. Dreams pour in from every crack. Dominant narratives strengthen power. Non-predictable outcomes are harder to capitalize. Knowledge is generated from the measurable. As soon as an artist is predictable enough, the market can bet against it, the investor gains power. As Nitzan and Bichler remark, the University of Chicago was founded by John D. Rockefeller, who called the University “the best investment I ever made.” The University remains a strong academic force behind revival of neoclassicist economy, that divorces politics and economy.

It is important which words word worlds, as Donna Haraway puts it. Tolkien and Latour talk about the histories of worlds that rise from different world representations. Christ, son of God. There needs to be streams of stories that allow the contestation of dominant power. These voices need institutions, agents, and while all the same time subjugated to the power of capitalizations, its politics, its academics, its technology, the power needs to be contested vis-à-vis. A partial contention is doomed to be that: only partial, as the conservative right questions the state and academia, or the classical left questions economic goals and technology. Fiction is not in contrast with reality. Reality is only the dominant mode of fiction, a dominance that is established with power.

Fiction is the first term to be reclaimed.




Amniotic Fluid

In our quest for detangling dominant power and the power of fiction, let us conjure a few cases. Case studies they cannot be called, perhaps thought experiments, based around established experience. Let us look at moments where reality seems to be one thing, and yet behind the smokescreen of beliefs, sides and honest endeavor, the threads of power can be discovered. A conspiracy? Absolutely not. But infrastructure, that is stronger, all the less visible.

The question of abortion and population control, seems to be a question that is delineated between the scientific definition of the birth of consciousness, and religious instantly inherited humanity. Every form of being is more than non-being. A life full of pain and torment is an experience incomparably richer to non-existence, says the ultimate religious maxim. And it is hard to argue that there is indeed a mandate in existence, after Teilhard de Chardin[3] even in Catholicism there are examples of a continuous consciousness right down to the lower orders. The history of anti-abortion religious stance is indeed old. But when looking at one part of the democratic legislature, when seen within the framing of politics, or eventually the cogs of power, one does have to suspect that the Christian views in conservative politics are only the useful faux ideology for nationwide population control. A family with two children, under normal working conditions retains can perhaps adds to the inherited wealth from the previous generation.

A single child of a family, at the point of establishing its own family can join two heritages. Multiple single child generations can result in a generational wealth ascension, class transgression. Something similar can be seen in China, after the one child policy the middle class gained a lot more power, there is more movement up in the class hierarchy. On the other hand, a 3+ child family, especially for the lower classes, means a generational poverty and crumbling of wealth that even at peak labor output generally means the retaining of class status. Hardly ascension. With a wealthier middle class, since the 18th century, the ruling



be available if it were modelled on the societies of certain Native Americans, hunter gatherers, or groups that view agriculture as exploitation. One may only dream of the kind of economic theories that could have been the inspiration for theories of frozen evolution or the punctuated equilibrium of Eldredge and Gould. Gould describes an evolution that is not gradual but happens in large jumps succeeded by long eras of relative balance. The changes and competition happen only in crises, where a new model is to be found. [5] The goal of such evolution can be thought of as equilibrium, and competition is the only necessary means of getting there. Other current evolutionary theories talk about the possibility of nature not selecting the best single trait, and thus genetics not being the only factor, but interdependent societies of creatures. Total cooperation would be the aim of such evolution, and again let us think what kind of power narratives can be derived from that. It is natural to compete, all animals do that. Except, perhaps what is natural is modelled after what is competition, in which case, it is just plain tautology.

Perturbance (Order out of Chaos)

Referring to the world via the reference model given to us through the natural sciences remains an extremely effective tool. Yet, its connection to the single reality which is one and undividable is rather problematic. The reality wars in niche (as in unimportant for power) philosophic circles (Harman, Zizek, Brassier, Meillassoux, the Speculative Turn) were preceded by the Science wars of Feyerabend, Polanyi, Stengers, Law against Poppers, then Sokals and their ilk. But this power confrontation about the dominant narrative in the world reference peaked first already at the beginning of the last century. The great Bergson and Einstein debate already addressed the possibility of relative irrelevance of philosophic referral. Einsteinian time is complex, unintuitive, but measurable. And from those debates it still echoes from walls of chambers of enlightenment.

There is no real challenge against the effectiveness of referring to the world through the academic sciences, yet this power is to be confronted with the cultural power mechanisms that allow its construction of/as? a common reality. And when the question of engineering the planet comes up, we necessarily need to ask the question if the only face of Earth that we can possibly construct is the Engineered one. The Gates foundation is voting with capitalization, and the project professor David Keith from Harvard is getting due attention and funding. But if we hear other voices and make ourselves sensitive to not only the dominant sound of world referral, even with the help of researchers as Holly Jean Buck [6], we can say, Yes, surely letting out freons into the atmosphere is a possibility, and sure, large scale industrial carbon capture should be a thing - what other way to incentivize big business? But political imagination should not stop there. If the industrial solutions are not enough, new power structures must be imagined, differential power must be met with equilibristic power, algae and AI all have a role.



People in the ocean

Now is the time to redeem the other word. What is technology? Is it a tool? Industrial mechanisms that lessen the workload? While in the service of power, the practical use of dominant world referral (the natural sciences) might sound as the enabler of the future, we would propose to widen the scope. Parallel technologies must exist that help different references to the world to function. The technologies of the scared can overlap with technologies of love, geoengineering, or travel, it all depends on the conditions of these fictions themselves. On the one hand, technologies of the dominant power enable certain visions of the future, solar panels, draught, and water-wars; we should not simply give up on these tools available and join technologies of steam and petrol engines with technologies of power redistribution that undermine dominance. This injects balance into the great competition and enables a possible balance, and equilibrium that can be held. Held at least until the next crisis. Interdependency should be named, analyzed and included in referrals to the world. Technologies of the future should be an open platform of economies, of machines, of cognitants, possibilities that account for the loss that is apparent in every kind of world referral. That accounts for values passing through the cracks. Solarpunk, where technology is the way, the story is being told. Technology is the inner structure of fictitious worlds. In the end the best story always wins. Power needs to be met with better stories. And this is the role of technology. To help tell better stories.

We can use solar farms and AI to generate the cities of the future, but these technologies cannot remain a smokescreen for power capitalizing on future instability, betting against its own kind. Death must be present. The distance to death cannot remain a bargaining space. End must be a value. The only future that is possible is the eternity that is already now. Indigenous Protocols, a Māori initiative talks about the ways of reimagining the training of AI through inclusion of protocols that have been used to relate to others, and other others, human, animal, or things. There needs to be



stories that reconcile the need to build astronomical observatories on Māori holy grounds. Earthly sciences have no primacy, but nor do romantic nationalistic shortcuts to primal worlds and rituals. We need stories that count these techniques to the same order. For a planetary, not just global balance sheet we need to assemble everybody.

But how to capitalize the future with methods that include OTHER in the balance sheet? Protocols of looking after, working with matter, irrespective of their visibility, distance, or relative consciousness. In whatever form the messiah might come. The entanglement of the world should find ways of talking about it.



Waters above and waters below.

We surely need technology for carbon capture. Yes, there needs to be power plants that drive the CO2 underground and guard them for centuries to come. At the same time, no narrative should be able to escape; future speculation is just bargaining time. The end of all things, of systems, of societies, of technologies, of religions should be accounted for all times. Power should be confronted, but we do not look in the direction of power because behind, there in the shadows, shadows of enlightenment, somewhere there, hardly clearly, beyond the gates of the city, in the cemetery, under the ground, there is death. Human carbon capture. Everything is flowing, bubbling waves, and in constant motion, A pandemic and extinction angst are only neck pain, of the head turned away. Afraid of all water under and above ground. How do I join them, those who have the courage to look into those dark googly eyes?

*For that we need new fiction,
and all the technology
available in the world. We
need to tell that story.*

