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#### Topicality should rejoin the AFF. The aff isn’t topical:

#### ‘Resolved’ entails legal action.

Words and Phrases 64. Permanent Edition.

Definition of the word “resolve,” given by Webster is “to express an opinion or determination by resolution or vote; as ‘it was resolved by the legislature;” It is of similar force to the word “enact,” which is defined by Bouvier as meaning “to establish by law”.

#### ‘United States federal government’ requires the three branches.

OECD 87. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Council [*The Control and Management of Government Expenditure*, p. 179

1. Political and organisational structure of government

of The United States America is a federal republic consisting of 50 states. States have their own constitutions and within each State there are at least two additional levels of government, generally designated as counties and cities, towns or villages. The relationships between different levels of government are complex and varied (see Section B for more information). The Federal Government is composed of three branches: the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch. Budgetary decisionmaking is shared primarily by the legislative and executive branches. The general structure of these two branches relative to budget formulation and execution is as follows.

#### ‘Should’ requires mandatory action.

Court of Appeals of Arizona, Division 1, Department D. 02. IN RE: the Marriage of Vanessa A. McNUTT, Petitioner-Appellee, v. Shane M. McNUTT, Respondent-Appellant. No. 1 CA-CV 01-0255. Decided: June 27, 2002 https://caselaw.findlaw.com/az-court-of-appeals/1315322.html

¶ 26 The word “should” is most commonly used to express obligation or duty.   See The American Heritage Dictionary 1670 (3d ed.1992).   We conclude that, based on the intent of the Guidelines and the interest of parents in the allocation of the federal tax exemption, the word “should” as used in § 25 of the Guidelines is mandatory rather than discretionary.   See Lincoln v. Lincoln, 155 Ariz. 272, 276, 746 P.2d 13, 17 (App.1987) (holding that the trial court abused its discretion by refusing to allocate the dependency exemption).   Thus, the trial court abused its discretion by failing to allocate the federal tax exemption, and we direct the trial court to allocate the exemption on remand.

#### ‘Substantially’ entails a legal obligation.

Justia 19. Dictionary. “Substantial.” https://dictionary.justia.com/substantial#:~:text=Definitions%20of%20%22substantial%22,a%20legal%20issue%20or%20decision

Definitions of "substantial"

Refers to the essence or core of a matter in legal situations

Not false or imaginary, but based on valid and tangible facts or evidence in a legal context

Having a relevant impact or bearing on a legal issue or decision

#### ‘Strengthening’ must increase regulatory effectiveness.

Cambridge 24. Cambridge Dictionary; 2024; “strengthen,” https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/strengthen

strengthen | BUSINESS ENGLISH

strengthen

verb

[ T ]

to make something more effective or powerful:

A discussion paper aiming to strengthen the EU's competition regime has been circulated amongst commissioners.

Research and development expenses amounted to €76m in the first six months, reflecting the company's desire to further strengthen its technological leadership.

Recent efforts have been made to strengthen the role of outside directors.

strengthen your position/performance/control Mobile operators need to strengthen their control over revenue and profit.

strengthen laws/regulations/mechanisms The Oil Conservation Division is in the process of trying to strengthen regulations over oil waste pits.

#### In the context of ‘bargaining rights’, that entails legal enforcement.

US **Code 20**. Cornell Law School is a renounced Ivy-League institution. “collective bargaining.” Legal Information Institute. 2024. https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/collective\_bargaining.

Collective bargaining is the negotiation process between an employer and a union comprised of workers to create an agreement that will govern the terms and conditions of the workers' employment.

The result of collective bargaining procedures is a collective agreement. Collective bargaining is governed by federal and state statutory laws, administrative agency regulations, and judicial decisions.

The main body of law governing collective bargaining is the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). It is also referred to as the Wagner Act, and explicitly grants employees the right to collectively bargain and join trade unions. The NLRA was originally enacted by Congress in 1935 under its power to regulate interstate commerce under the Commerce Clause in Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution. It applies to most private non-agricultural employees and employers engaged in some aspect of interstate commerce. Decisions and regulations of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which was established by the NLRA, greatly supplement and define the provisions of the act.

The NLRA establishes procedures for the selection of a labor organization to represent a unit of employees in collective bargaining. The act prohibits employers from interfering with this selection. The NLRA requires the employer to bargain with the appointed representative of its employees. It does not require either side to agree to a proposal or make concessions but does establish procedural guidelines on good faith bargaining. Proposals which would violate the NLRA or other laws may not be subject to collective bargaining. The NLRA also establishes regulations on what tactics (e.g. strikes, lock-outs, picketing) each side may employ to further their bargaining objectives.

State laws further regulate collective bargaining and make collective agreements enforceable under state law. They may also provide guidelines for those employers and employees not covered by the NLRA, such as agricultural laborers.

#### “Worker” requires an employment relationship.

US District Court 07. United States District Court, W.D. Washington, at Tacoma. Cook v. Ocean Gold Seafoods, Inc., No. C06-5562FDB, 2007 WL 4190410, at \*1 (W.D. Wash. Nov. 21, 2007), rev'd and remanded, 334 F. App'x 812 (9th Cir. 2009). WestLaw

The IIA defines “employer” and “worker” and includes standards for determining whether independent contractors should be treated as “employers” or “workers.” RCW 51.08.070 and RCW 51.08.180. A “worker” is defined as follows in pertinent part at 51.08.180:

1. “Worker” means every person in this state who is engaged in the employment of an employer under this title, whether by way of manual labor or otherwise in the course of his or her employment; also every person in this state who is engaged in the employment of or who is working under an independent contract, the essence of which is his or her personal labor for an employer under this title, whether by way of manual labor or otherwise,....

#### 1. Clash: a predictable topic motivates in depth negation and argument refinement. Their interp explodes limits, allows affirmative conditionality, and makes debate a one-sided monologue which turns the case and creates false positives---presumption.

#### 2. Fairness: the NEG should win on average 50% of the time. Expecting fair evaluation in a competitive activity proves their arguments are shaped by a drive to win, and fairness as an axiom possesses intrinsic moral value. Voting neg countervails the insurmountable AFF advantage generated under their vision of debate regardless of the value of the 1AC itself.

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#### Cap K.

#### The affirmative’s reliance on historical analogues to characterize contemporary politics forecloses the opportunity to pursue a concrete, pragmatic agenda of redistribution.

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Rufo’s brazenness in spelling out his motives has, as Reed points out, been matched not merely by the ineptitude but also the complicity of antiracists whose insistence on delineating the racist dimension of these attacks continually downplays the extent to which the failure of progressive movements to embrace an agenda of downward redistribution, and even going “to the extent of denouncing calls for expanding the sphere of universal public goods as irresponsible and castigating appeals to working-class interests as racist,” has fertilized the ground in which this rightwing politics has taken root and bloomed.12

To be sure, what we are describing as a failure here might also be described, from the standpoint of others, as a success, if by success one means, as we’ve noted above, understanding the black studies field as an expression of race group interest—an understanding that produces as its corollary the idea that intramural institutional practices count substantially as responses to the collective interest of black Americans. What this identification has done is enable various cadres and individuals to present themselves, and to be taken, as representative voices and agents for black Americans generally. Our work in various essays over the past 25 years or so—which we seek to sharpen and amplify with the essays in this volume—is to delineate and critique the ways in which what are now the grounding assumptions of the field are little more than expressions of the interests of black political and professional elites.

A defining intellectual feature of the field’s reduction to a pure instrument of black elites’ class program has been an ever more tortured flight from concreteness. As we observe in Chapter 3 of this volume in our discussion of what we categorize as the literature of race relations,

A worldview constructed around the idea that humanity’s most enduring injustices derive from what are presumed to be deeply seated racial and cultural differences is necessarily challenged by evidence that the inequalities it rightly denounces appear to be driven primarily by exploitation rather than attitudes about difference.

Race-reductionist antiracism is a class politics camouflaged as a race politics. Its objective is not to pursue popular action to change policy but to ensure that any inequalities affecting black people negatively be understood as the result of racism. It depends for its case not on argument based on analysis of discrete conditions that generate current inequalities but on historical analogy and allegory. It cannot examine social relations in the present on their own terms. Most of all, it cannot bear scrutiny of the manifestly absurd contention that race/ racism limits black Americans’ lives in the same ways and to the same degrees as it did under the southern Jim Crow order and before the victories of the civil rights movement. That contention’s absurdity is what prompted political scientist Willie Legette’s wonderful observation that “the only thing that hasn’t changed about black politics since 1965 is how we think about it.”13

This is the context in which intellectual pathologies like Afropessimism— which posits an ahistorical ontology as the deeper truth of a generically yet distinctively black existence, and Afrofuturism, which trades on explicit rejection of historicity and willful flouting of the integrity of past and present, and even temporality itself in black racial experience—have taken root. The “cultural turn” in black studies in the late 1980s/early 1990s accelerated the flight from concreteness by means of several mutually reinforcing propellants. Critique of prevailing disciplinary standards of evidence, argument, and archive as racially inadequate, if not actively racist, sometimes accompanied by claims to a separate black studies methodology or black epistemology, justified retreat from concern with conventional interpretive strictures, including engagement with competing interpretations or potentially disconfirming evidence. For example, some scholars have maintained that it is important to write about the Middle Passage from the captives’ point of view precisely because there is scant evidence available. Titles such as The Black Imagination and the Middle Passage and Imagining Home: Class, Culture, and Nationalism in the African Diaspora are illustrative. In these works, the challenge presented by the diaspora is a challenge to historical method itself. Thomas Holt, for example, has observed, “as air abhors a vacuum, diaspora seems to abhor stasis or fixity. Conceptually or methodologically, fixities will never capture its deeper meanings and significance.”14 And Joan Dayan has written, “Facing what remains to a large extent an unreconstructable past—the responses of slaves to the terrors of slavery, to colonists, to the New World—I try to imagine what cannot be verified.”15 Earl Lewis, in turn, insists that if we are to “define and refine the practice of writing people into a history of overlapping diasporas” we must recognize that the “challenge is more than theoretical; it goes to the limits of one’s historical imagination.”16 Exhortations such as these express an interpretivist objective of stipulating an entirely made-up, trauma porn narrative in service to an ideological program: reading race reductionism into the past as an instrument of efforts to legitimize it as interpretation of the present.

#### Their transhistorical reading of race is wrong. It relies on the presumption that nothing has changed while obscuring the particular efficacy of labor reform. That ignores the potential for further political change that dismantles the structures of capital that they critique.

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Another feature of the cultural turn in black studies has been denial of the significance of that political sphere for black Americans. Thus Peniel Joseph’s “narrative history” of the Black Power movement and its legacy leaps from the last gasps of the Black Panthers’ performative militancy in the early 1970s to hip-hop culture in the late 1980s—with no discussion of the impact of the great civil rights legislative victories of the mid-1960s or the emergence and consolidation of the stratum of black elected officials and functionaries who, along with the investor class, have defined the content of the “black political agenda” ever since.23

In the claim to find politics everywhere, the cultural turn has eventuated in disregarding it where it is most explicit; in the name of voicing black Americans’ otherwise inscrutable beliefs and desires, it disparages as racially inauthentic the domain where they speak openly and directly. In fact, the argumentative trajectory of black cultural studies and the race-reductionist politics with which it is aligned has been to ignore or deny the significance of the specificities of black American historical and political development. Antiracist political criticism and the scholarship that supports it insist that “nothing has changed” regarding the circumstances of black Americans since the segregation era or even slavery, even though the “most superficial knowledge of the past and observation of the present should establish that black Americans do not live under the same restricted and perilous conditions now as in 1865, or for that matter 1965.”24 And the claims are ever more outlandish. Afropessimist literary scholar Saidiya Hartman dismisses emancipation as a “nonevent,” and fellow Afropessimist professor Frank Wilderson asserts that slavery never ended and that enslavement is the permanent condition of black people. (Indeed, the contention in the early 1990s that black people can express their authentic feelings only surreptitiously already in effect presumed that slavery and oppression are black Americans’ natural condition.) Basic historical facts no longer constrain these fanciful accounts at all. Journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, abetted and promoted heavily by the New York Times, charges that the point of the American Revolution was to preserve slavery; and filmmaker Ava DuVernay—in an Afrofuturist style of irrationalist narrative—alleges that the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, contained a poison pill in its exception permitting involuntary servitude as “punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted,” added by its framers, inexplicably, with intent to reinstate slavery in the form of twentieth- and twenty-first century mass incarceration.25

The class-skewed mystifications we had first identified in black studies— the “racecraft” on which the field rests—have failed ever more spectacularly as either interpretation or political practice. As our essays in this volume and our previous collection show, these failures become glaring in the light shed by analyses that locate the politics and thought of black Americans in the main currents of American political, social, and intellectual life. “To understand black history,” our late colleague Judith Stein, has written,

one must examine the principal social forces affecting black people concretely and in historical time. Because blacks interacted with other workers and other social classes, the historian must analyze specific social and class relationships and not be satisfied with general statements about broad social changes as backdrops for Afro-American history.26

Yet, against sage admonitions like Stein’s, adherents have responded by persistently doubling down on the effort to salvage ahistorical, race-reductionist explanations of current and past inequalities. Hannah-Jones and DuVernay, as well as Ibram X. Kendi and Ta-Nehisi Coates, and only to a lesser extent Wilderson and Hartman, have brands to protect and products to sell, which can help explain their myopic commitment to race reductionism in the face of a mounting political threat.

More than the possible cupidity or existential commitments of prominent ideologues sustains race-reductionist interpretation in its ever more frenzied flight from concreteness to avoid confrontation with its inadequacies. The cultural turn in African American studies, in its shift to seeking extramural legitimations of its intellectual practice, was an alignment with an increasingly self-conscious class politics, the black neoliberal politics consolidating programmatically and ideologically in society writ large. This politics traded on and benefited from the successes and limitations of the development of New Deal industrial democracy in which black Americans played a pivotal role. As historian Touré F. Reed has shown, “New Deal labor law had a profound impact on the scope of African American Activism during the 1930s and 1940s.” For example, in this context Reed states, “the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) became the first African American labor union to successfully negotiate a contract with a major employer.” Crucially, the union’s success was largely the result of the ability of its leadership to finesse “stiff opposition from a black elite dogmatically committed to clientage/petition politics.” Reed continues, by framing “the porters’ quest for recognition as a matter of African American Civil Rights,” the BSCP’s effort helped “legitimate African American protest politics” as a crossclass politics. And for a time, the “wide appeal of labor activism among African Americans during the 1930s and 1940s” did shift liberal advocacy organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League to the left. In the postwar period, however, the rise of “McCarthyism and the related assault on organized labor” across the board “lessened the sway of working-class militancy over African American civil rights.” And with labor militancy increasingly sidelined, the protest politics that had helped reinvigorate liberal racial advocacy organizations refocused its attention on discrimination, which it began to arraign on psychological terms for which culturalist remedies could be prescribed as precisely what the doctor had ordered. Although the civil rights movement benefited from the legal framework created by the New Deal which had “legitimated citizens’ demands on government for a more equitable and democratic society,”27 with labor militancy effectively out of the picture, organized race-group leaders who had accommodated themselves to the protest model were able to deploy it in service of their normative clientage/petition projects now largely unchecked by working-class opposition.

By the end of the 1980s, as the cultural turn was gaining steam in the academy, a largely symbolic racial trickle-down in which representation substitutes for egalitarian redistribution had become normalized as the black political agenda. Underclass ideology, which posits a general black population mired in cultural pathologies that stymie individuals’ abilities to take advantage of such opportunities for upward mobility as do exist, was—and remains, though now thoroughly embedded as tacit, commonsense presumption—a crucial component of the ideological glue around which that politics cohered. Thus, black elites’ mission vis-à-vis the black Volk reduces to providing inspirational role models and tough-love scolding, from a unique foundation of insider-group understanding, and propagating inspirational stories that offer occasion to bask in vicarious identification with real or imagined black heroism/success and thereby help overcome self-defeating pathology and demoralization.

Race Reductionism and Neoliberalism

If in general “neoliberalism is best summarized as capitalism that has effectively eliminated working-class opposition,”28 a black politics appropriate to the neoliberal order should be expected to eschew downwardly redistributive social, labor, and economic policies and to concentrate instead on strictly racial redistribution within the regressive policy regime. That is what happened. The synecdochic racecraft that rejects the significance of class differentiation among blacks obscures the flimflam involved in characterizing a narrow class agenda as a generic racial one. This is the period when reduction of racial disparity displaced pursuit of economic equality as an egalitarian ideal in black politics,29 and when challenging a supposed “racial wealth gap” supplanted demands for full employment, a living wage, and decommodified healthcare and other public goods.30 Race-reductionist formulations asserting that all black people suffer equally and primarily from racism and that nothing has changed for black people since slavery and Jim Crow conveniently obscure the class character of the practical agendas of neoliberal black politics: for example, the fact that roughly three-quarters of so-called black wealth is held by the richest 10 percent of black people, and roughly the same proportion of so-called white wealth is held by the richest 10 percent of white people; and that, therefore, the “racial wealth gap” is a disparity almost entirely between rich blacks and rich whites.

The currently dominant tendencies in African American studies, that is, function to undercut possible support for social-democratic initiatives that would disproportionately benefit black and Hispanic working people. It is telling in this regard that the performatively “progressive” antiracist commentariat lined up with black neoliberal Democrats without hesitation to denounce Bernie Sanders’s program, even to the point of leveling accusations of his or his supporters’ racism. It is worth noting as well that the McKinsey Institute for Black Economic Mobility found that between May 2020 (following the murder of George Floyd) and October 2022, 1,369 Fortune 1000 companies pledged about $340 billion to organizations and initiatives purporting to fight racial injustice or “driv[e] equity.”31 And we can be certain also that race-reductionist antiracists notice funders’ priorities. Law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, known for originating the intersectionality notion at the end of the 1980s, goaded the left during the flood of post-Floyd corporate money, declaring that “every corporation worth its salt” had done more to support antiracist causes than the Democrats or the left.32

#### It’s a depoliticizing tactic that mystifies the structures of anti-blackness rather than dismantling them.

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As that literature demonstrates, the trajectory of black political history has been driven by pragmatic dynamics, co-evolving within matrices of institutions and interests shaped by, and partly shaping, a system of asymmetrical power. That trajectory, albeit constrained or path-dependent, has been and is open-ended within broad parameters; it has not unfolded toward some teleological end. That is, there has been no overarching, transhistorical “black liberation struggle” or “black freedom movement” in effect decreeing or guiding strategic priorities, political directions, issue-selection, or patterns of alliance. Such notions, to the extent that they imply the existence of something like a Racial Oversoul that guides a collective yearning, are literally and quintessentially racist, in the sense that racism is at bottom the belief that “races” are natural populations. The premise that “race” confers distinct sensibilities and aspirations—in the lexicon of Victorian race theory, “racial group ideals”—on such populations only compounds that problem.

Notions like “liberation” and “freedom,” moreover, have no specific content, and assertion that they constitute the telos of black political activity amounts to a demand that we abstract away from historical specificity to affirm an ostensibly deeper truth, which, to make bad matters worse, may as well have come out of a fortune cookie. They are platitudes; anyone and everyone can represent, and understand, their political agendas as consistent with pursuit of those banal ideals. Interpretations based on such platitudes elevate purported continuity over change and assert unitary objectives over time and circumstances, diminishing the significance of concrete distinctions. Because they divest black Americans’ politics of its historicity, they obscure the differences between past and present, and therefore cannot help us make sense of how we got from there to here, from then to now. For that reason, they cannot helpfully inform our understanding of contemporary politics and are worse than useless analytically. The teleological perspective, for instance, produces such fatuities as claims that individuals and tendencies whose programs were sharply antagonistic in their own historical moments—e.g., Booker T. Washington, Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr.—were all nevertheless pursuing the same goal. Rather than examining or explaining distinctions and change, the substantive intent of this approach is more to deny they exist or explain them away.

The black liberation struggle/freedom movement framework originated in a naïve interpretive whiggishness, as a rhetorically more assertive revision of the approach that grounded the academic study of black political thought at its beginnings in the postwar decades. The field took shape in the heyday of consensualism in the study of American political thought and in a context in which dominant race relations discourse posited black Americans as a singular entity. Unsurprisingly, early accounts of black political history commonly proceeded from orienting conceptual categories such as the Negro’s struggle for freedom or equality, which assumed that the object of study was, consistent with the race relations framework, the efforts of putatively representative black “leaders” to define and advance agendas for the race.149 In that perspective, “blacks and whites—or ‘black America’ and ‘white America’—are basic, indivisible units of political interest.”150 And, as Michael Rudolph West points out, black people disappear as citizens. He notes that under the race relations rubric

interests and aspirations of politicians and ministers, workers and businessmen, parents and teachers would no longer be expressed by way of the normal, if messy, institutional channels through which Americans settled their conflicts and competition. Instead they would be mediated through the good offices of “Negro leaders.”151

That is a perspective on black politics that excludes the possibility of politics among black people.

The revisionist construct—liberation struggle and freedom movement are interchangeable—marked a shift in nomenclature and affect that did not alter the interpretive premises that underlay the race relations approach, in particular the notion of the black “community” as a singular political subject. The black liberation struggle/freedom movement framework gained traction in the insurgent mood associated with the Black Power movement and the radical political tendencies it spawned, which also were invested in racial teleology and in theorizing black Americans as a singular political entity. Pro forma rehearsal of the notion that black politics and thought have been impelled by a definitive racial telos was validated as a commonsense trope, a shibboleth, from the 1970s forward in black studies, which, as an academic field, is itself institutionally and intellectually biased toward racial exceptionalism.152

The complex political dynamics that have ensued from the 1965 Voting Rights Act should have exposed the inadequacy of both teleological accounts of black political history and the presumption of a unitary black political aspiration or metaaspiration. Instead, ideological mystification has triumphed over actual experience in both academic and popular discussion of black politics. Trends in black studies elaborated a domain of ersatz politics that enabled turning away from complexities of contemporary life that do not fit easily with the field’s race-reductionist orientation. As African American studies became institutionalized in elite universities during the 1970s and 1980s, the field became a site for contestation over the extent to which familiar political or, in Kenneth Warren’s characterization, “community service” legitimations should continue to ground claims for institutional recognition.153

By the end of the 1980s a turn to a discourse of cultural studies inflected with postmodernist theoretical sensibility promised to harmonize intellectual and political concerns and solidify academic standing.154 This turn appealed in part because its grounding in high theory betokened academic legitimacy. It also came with the aura of an intellectual avant-garde that comported well with the field’s history of extramural legitimations and its association with populist stances within the academy. Of greater political significance, though, was that cultural studies discourse at the same time encouraged promiscuous expansion of the universe of the political, to the extent of defining even scholarly practice in itself as a political intervention.

Insofar as it is rooted in cultural production rather than the realm of public, institutional action, this idea of politics, Warren points out, “tends to get reduced to a matter of meaningful aesthetic expression and the correct exegesis of that expression rather than concerted action directed toward definable goals.” Thus, for example, Peniel Joseph’s history of Black Power leaps from discussion of the Black Panther Party in the early 1970s to a characterization of hip-hop cultural expression as bearer of Black Power’s true legacy—as though the emergence and consolidation of a new, institutionally grounded black political class based on elected officials and functionaries were somehow beside the point in considering Black Power’s practical impact.155 And because it assigns definitive political agency to suppressed populations held to express themselves through indirect, ostensibly apolitical and ultimately Aesopian means, this politics conveniently requires the mediation of expert interpreters to render its “hidden transcripts” publicly recognizable as political expression.156

#### Embodiment of the Underground Railroad specifically occludes the necessary and pragmatic work of making particular demands on the state to achieve more progressive ends.

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If nothing else, The Underground Railroad reflects the commonsense of much of contemporary black studies, which moves through complications, qualifications, and semi-disavowals but remains committed in a variety of ways to rediscovering, restating, and reaffirming race as the primary vector of producing and redressing inequality. The novel never reunites Cora with her mother, Mabel, and never allows Cora to discover her mother’s fate; but it does let the reader know that Mabel did not simply abandon her daughter. We learn in a brief chapter that Mabel, after realizing her freedom would be incomplete without Cora, had turned back in the swamp through which she had been fleeing, hoping to rejoin her daughter, only to be bitten and killed by a water moccasin. Cora does not and will not know this, but in the broader history provided by race, we are enjoined to take comfort in the idea that no one is truly forgotten or simply left behind.

In focusing his fiction on the Underground Railroad, and the experiences of his imagined fugitives, Whitehead sidelines the event that was most consequential in shaping the fortunes of African Americans, namely, the Civil War that brought slavery to an end. In doing so, Whitehead sounds a dissonant note from that played by Frederick Douglass, who had also, in the many actions he took against slavery, been a part of the historical Underground Railroad. In Life and Times, Douglass recalled his involvement with the network as the most “congenial, attractive, fascinating, and satisfactory work” of his life. But, ever focused on the pragmatic goal of achieving true political liberation, he distinguished its emotional rewards from its practical efficacy, saying: “True, as a means of destroying slavery, it was like an attempt to bail out the ocean with a teaspoon, but the thought that there was one less slave, and a fugitive slave—brought to my heart unspeakable joy.”135 Douglass’s point was that what had ended slavery was not black fugitivity or black solidarity, whatever their contributions might have been, but a collective political movement of black and white Americans to marshal the power and the resources of the state for the purposes of achieving and maintaining liberation, justice, and equality.

#### Capitalism causes extinction through climate change, endless militarism, and pandemics.

Dr. Charles Derber & Suren Moodliar 23. Ph.D. in Sociology; Professor of Sociology. Activist & Founder, Encuentro5; Editor, Socialism and Democracy. “The Extinction Triangle: Capitalism, Environmental Destruction, and Militarism.” Dying for Capitalism: How Big Money Fuels Extinction and What We Can Do About It, Chapter 1.

The idea of a global extinction triangle linking capitalism, environmental destruction (including climate change, pandemics, and biodiversity collapse), and militarism (especially nuclear war) will be viewed in many nations, and especially the United States, as itself madness. It is so taboo that most analysts of climate crisis, pandemics such as COVID-19, and nuclear war – and indeed much of the climate and peace movements – avoid the subject of the capitalist system and the need for systemic transformation like the plague.

To take just climate, the notion that the capitalist system drives climate change is highlighted by only a few leading analysts, mainly on the Left. One is Naomi Klein, who argues that extinction arises from “the collision between capitalism and the planet” and that:

We have not done the things that are necessary to lower emissions because those things fundamentally conflict with deregulated capitalism, the reigning ideology for the entire period we have been struggling to find a way out of this crisis. We are stuck because the actions that would give us the best chance of averting catastrophe – and would benefit the vast majority – are extremely threatening to an elite minority that has a stranglehold over our economy, our political process, and most of our major media outlets.2

Klein acknowledges that “autocratic industrial socialism” can also cause climate change, but argues that the ruling capitalist model is the major risk and we need to pursue a democratic “eco-socialism” to save the planet.

Joining Klein in the laser-like but lonely focus on the capitalist DNA driving extinction is the journalist, George Monbiot. He writes that:

Ecologically, economically and politically, capitalism is failing as catastrophically as communism failed. Like state communism, it is beset by unacknowledged but fatal contradictions. It is inherently corrupt and corrupting. But its mesmerising power, and the vast infrastructure of thought that seeks to justify it, makes any challenge to the model almost impossible to contemplate. Even to acknowledge the emergencies it causes, let alone to act on them, feels like electoral suicide. As the famous saying goes: “It is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism.” Our urgent task is to turn this the other way round.3

Monbiot is not joking when he says our most important task is to “turn this the other way round.” While this sounds daunting, imagining systemic change in the global capitalist economy has become essential to human survival. In a period when there is a new awakening about “systemic racism,” we need now to expand our consciousness about our economy, recognizing that we are now living in a new stage of “extinction capitalism.” Only systemic change in our political economy can save us.

Klein is Canadian and Monbiot is British. These are both societies where it has long been possible to offer critiques of capitalism without sounding like a crackpot. Both Britain and Canada have labor or socialist parties, and mainstreamed the idea that large parts of the society should be separated from profitmaking and organized for the provision of public goods. These societies are less complicit than the United States in climate and military policies fueling extinction.

In the United States, mainstream socialist political parties do not exist, and “big government” and universal welfare programs are seen as enemies of liberty, with the exception of an enormous military. Klein and Monbiot have an audience in the United States, but their views that to survive means moving beyond capitalism and especially neoliberalism capitalism runs into huge hurdles, especially in American political discourse, even among liberals. However, we shall see that it is not an impossible dream, and that even a President as moderate as Joe Biden, pushed by people of color, young people, and social movements, has begun to break with neoliberalism and shift toward a public goods economy that could help save the planet.

Crossing the Threshold: Humanity Confronts Its Final Stage

Beginning in the mid-1940s, when the United States attacked Japan with nuclear weapons, we saw the emergence of the first period in human history – now known as the Anthropocene – in which capitalism began to threaten both nuclear and climate extinction. As Noam Chomsky writes: Review of the record reveals clearly that escape from catastrophe for seventy years has been a near miracle and such miracles cannot be trusted to perpetuate.

On that grim day in August 1945, humanity entered into a new era, the nuclear age. It’s one that’s unlikely to last long, either we will bring it to an end or it’s likely to bring us to an end. It was evident at once that any hope of containing the demon would require international corporation ….

It was not understood at the time but a second and no less critical new era was beginning at the same time. A new geological epoch, by now, called the Anthropocene–an epoch defined by extreme human impact on the environment.

The Anthropocene and the nuclear age coincide, a dual threat to the perpetuation of organized human life. Both threats are severe and imminent. It’s widely recognized that we have entered the period of the sixth mass extinction.4

Extinction denialism has limited public awareness of the new stage that arose in the late 1940s but is rooted in the foundations of our economic system. Indeed, capitalism, even as it historically helped build new economic growth and innovation and pulled millions out of poverty, has always created war and environmental destruction. Its historical progress fueled “development” that catapulted the European and American world toward prosperity and material well-being for two centuries. But that huge leap forward also froze into society an unsustainable quest for unfettered growth threatening military and environmental catastrophe and externalized multiple costs onto the peoples of the Global South. The history of capitalist successes disguised latent crises now surfacing in the extinction stage. The historical benefits of capitalism have not disappeared, but their relative value has declined compared to the costs and risks – ultimately of extinction.

The Triangle of Extinction: Mad Money

To save humanity and all life on the planet, we need to understand the new extinction stage as rooted in a causal triangle of three intertwined threats. The only way that humanity will survive is if the world – including all states, peoples, and social movements – come together to dismantle the triangle and create a new circle of sustainable life systems.

Capitalism drives the triangle of extinction. Its very nature, as a system, foments militarism and drives environmental destruction. In Chapter 2, we argue that capitalism’s constant need to expand both its resource base and its markets fosters a militarism to pry open markets and “protect” investments. Territorial expansion across national borders has a corollary in the capitalist dynamic to test and break ecological thresholds, producing the third corner of the triangle, environmental destruction.

However, these two corners – militarism and environmental destruction also feed back into, affect, and reinforce the logic of capitalism. Both create the disasters that leave communities and states turning to capitalists for solutions. The soil fertility depletion, for example, that capitalist agriculture produces, leaves us all more dependent on the petrochemical and agro-industrial corporations selling fertilizers and pesticides. Similarly, capitalism’s inherent instability, particularly in the American case, produces a “military Keynesianism,” using state spending to increase production and profits of military companies. This, in turn, compromises democracy, giving weapons contractors privileged access to the state, rendering the latter dependent on the “market” fortunes of these corporations (Figure 1.1).

As we contemplate this triangle, we must recognize that its dynamics play out in social and historical structures that are profoundly intersectional, ones characterized at the global, regional, and national levels by evolving hierarchies including those of race, gender, class, and states. A more complete picture of the triangle therefore looks like this (Figure 1.2).

This second diagram spells out the variety of forms of environmental destruction and militarism that create existential and extinction threats, whether they be, in Bostrom’s terms, forms of bang, crunch, shriek, or whimper risks. In both pictures, we are adhering to the idea that existential threats – and extinction itself – should not be defined exclusively as total annihilation.

The second picture shows that there are several major existential risks; among the risks in the environmental destruction corner are three well-known ones, climate change, pandemics, and biodiversity loss. But these interact with the others listed, as well as with the many other risks that are less well known. Similarly, militarism produces nuclear, biological/chemical, and cyberwar risks. All of these six varieties of existential risk are extremely important, and all are “systemic” in that they are partly caused and fueled by the United States and global capitalist system. All deserve urgent study leading to emergency transformative change because each of them could create devastating mass death from which humanity might not be able to recover. In addition to these six existential risks, the clusters around each corner of the second diagram also name other risks that may escalate into either existential risks or radically re- duce the quality of life and pose civilizational risks.

In this book, mainly to keep the book shorter, we do not analyze biodiversity collapse, cyber war, or biological war, focusing instead on nuclear war, climate change, and pandemics. If we were to write a second volume, we would analyze with the same sense of urgency the other three incredibly dangerous threats; they are growing and increasingly intertwined with the threats we focus on here.

The arrows in the diagrams reflect causation. Capitalism itself creates a threat of extinction, independent of environmental death and war. But it also causes and fuels the environmental threats of climate change, pandemics, and loss of biodiversity, which multiply the extinction threat. And capitalism, especially the militarized hegemonic form modeled by US neoliberal capitalism, causes war, which further multiplies the extinction threat embedded in the possibility of nuclear war. Climate change, pandemics, and extreme war could arise from other systems than capitalism, but capitalism is a leading cause and accelerator of all these threats, which in turn intensify the extinction dangers of each other. Climate change is a major driver of war and war has become a leading cause of climate change. Scholarship on climate change and broader environmental matters typically recognize several major tipping points and environmental thresholds beyond which abrupt and catastrophic outcomes are to be expected. While we do explore these in depth, we consider these important aspects of the three corners of the triangle of extinction.5

#### The alternative is affirmative instrumentality.

Caroline Levine 23. David and Kathleen Ryan Professor of Humanities, Cornell University. “Toward an Affirmative Instrumentality.” *The Activist Humanist: Form and Method in the Climate Crisis*, Chapter 1.

In this context, a resolute anti-instrumentality actually turns our attention away from the basic conditions that sustain collective life, such as water, food, and shelter. So: what is the alternative? What I propose is an affirmative instrumentality for the aesthetic humanities. I turn here to Potawatomi philosopher Kyle Powys Whyte’s concept of “collective continuance,” a framework for justice that does not dispense with use. Whyte defines collective continuance as “a society’s overall adaptive capacity to maintain its members’ cultural integrity, health, economic vitality, and political order into the future and avoid having its members experience preventable harms.”48 The continuity of food systems is one of Whyte’s examples. Different societies will have different ways of finding, harvesting, and distributing food, but all will treat food in part as useful — necessary to the task of keeping bodies alive over time. Food systems will always be subject to external forces and sudden shocks, such as storms and floods. For this reason, some adaptation and some flexibility will always be necessary. Collectives will also have to plan for the future, not to overharvest a food supply, for example, or to store water for a dry spell. For Whyte, this means moving away from an opposition between conservation and innovation, and between traditional and modern societies, and toward the requirement to plan and build conditions for intergenerational flourishing in the face of inevitable change. A society is just if it prevents foreseeable harms to future generations.

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This definition allows Whyte to specify the injustices of settler colonialism. Colonizing forces destroy “the capacities that the societies that were already there — Indigenous societies — rely on for the sake of exercising their own collective self-determination over their cultures, economies, health, and political order.” For example, when European settlers built railroads or cleared land for timber and farms, they advanced their own interests while demolishing the conditions for the planting, hunting, and fishing practices developed by Indigenous communities to support collective health, strength, and political independence over the long term.49 One especially violent settler strategy has involved forcibly moving Indigenous groups off traditional homelands where specific foods thrive and then dispensing and withholding food rations as a means of political control.50 California settlers pushed Karuk people away from the river, a long-standing food source, and then criminalized practices that had sustained harvests over generations, including controlled forest burns. Around the world, working systems of collective continuance are violently disrupted by “dams, intensive agriculture, urban development, pollution from industry and other land-use practices, including recreational activities.” The California Department of Fish and Game has in fact repeatedly favored fishing as a leisure activity over Karuk salmon harvesting.51 I rely on Whyte’s definition of “collective continuance” throughout this book. I find it especially powerful because it points to a kind of means-ends thinking that does not immediately fall back into the trap of instrumental rationality. Collective continuance is a just end that is also an ongoing means. That is, collective continuance is the establishment of political, cultural, environmental, and economic conditions that allow collective life-worlds to flourish over time: it is a set of enabling conditions — an infrastructure. To reject all ends as constraining and oppressive is to miss the ways that some fundamental material conditions — clean water, fertile soil, breathable air — are the preconditions for all other activity. Or to put this another way: collective continuance is a capacitating end, a crucial means of affording a range of other ends.52 Another term for collective continuance might be “sustainability.” This term has long drawn fire from humanists and activists.53 As often embraced by businesses as by environmental activists, sustainability implies the continuation of life as we know it, which for many in business and politics includes expectations of ongoing economic growth, competition, and accumulation. If we work to sustain current systems — like global markets and extractive industries — we become complicit with the most rapacious forces on earth.54 Yet in fact, these dominant systems are dramatically unsustainable: the pace of extraction and emission is making the planet uninhabitable for humans and vast numbers of other species. What I want to suggest here is that sustainability is in fact a kind of neutral term: it refers to the capacity to keep any state of affairs going over time. In this sense, sustainability can refer to just or unjust conditions. What climate change has made suddenly clear is that sustaining must be a goal on the left as well as the right. We are now faced with a struggle to keep collective life going at all. Collective continuance describes a genuine sustainability — the vast and urgent project of sustaining collective life over generations. Amartya Sen’s influential “capabilities approach” allows us to see why understanding ends as means is crucial to the work of global justice. Sen turns away from both abstract rights and the distribution of specific resources because these do not recognize or foster cultural heterogeneity: it does little good to have the right to a job if one cannot leave one’s home, and it is not enabling to be offered food that it violates one’s religion to eat. Justice lies in people’s capacity to shape their lives according to a wide range of values. Most unjust are those constraints on specific groups that prevent them from pursuing the full array of possibilities that are available to others. It is unjust to force women to become dependent on male breadwinners for survival, for example, or to allow movement through the streets to remain unsafe for transgender people. For Sen, the ends must remain various: it is not for one group to decide and enforce a particular set of values for others. Although Sen’s model is deliberately pluralist, there is one set of conditions that he singles out as more fundamental than others. He assumes a broad global consensus around “basic capabilities”: everyone needs minimal standards of health, food, shelter, and education as a precondition for achieving other ends.55 These basic capabilities are what draw my attention in this book. They are not particularly complex or interesting to most philosophers, but climate change is threatening all of them right now, including air to breathe and water to drink. As homelands are made unlivable by droughts and floods, as arable land and safe shelter become scarce, and as violent conflicts over resources favor the armed, the powerful, and the rich, vast numbers of people will be forced to sacrifice other cherished ends — such as keeping families together or pursuing an education — for the sake of sheer survival. Whole populations will have to give up their homes in search of food and water. In Sen’s terms, any acceptance of the onrushing consequences of global warming is therefore intolerably unjust. And so, I want to make the affirmative case here for capabilities, that is, a set of ends that are also a means: just and sustainable conditions that are themselves a means to allow a rich variety of lives to continue into the future.56

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This definition of justice allows us to draw a precise distinction between right and left politics. The right often justifies some amount of starvation and homelessness as a necessary spur to economic productivity and argues that this is ultimately good for everyone,57 while the entire span of the left, from progressives to radicals, argues that it is unjust to deny the most basic necessities of survival to anyone. In other words, the most important difference between left and right in our time lies not in our relationship to norms and constraints but in the ways we understand enabling conditions — the infrastructures of collective life.

Despite many and very substantive arguments among us, then, the whole span of the left could begin from a shared basic version of justice that is both an end and a means: the urgent work of guaranteeing basic capabilities for all. There is a universalism here, yes, but it is specifically a universalism of enabling conditions.58 This is neither a top-down imposition of particular values nor an invitation to neglect racial and cultural difference. As Enzo Rossi and Olúfemi O. Táíwò argue, the temptation to privilege race at the expense of class or class at the expense of race misses the reason why it is crucial to address the two together, which is that anti-Blackness unjustly distributes the most basic capabilities that should be available to everyone — like adequate nutrition and health care — according to race. They make the case for “embedding antiracist policy within a universalist materialist politics.”59

With collective continuance as our horizon, we do not have to choose between race and class. Nor do we have to choose between brutal exploitation and principled withdrawal, or between acquiescence to the status quo and change so radical that it is literally unimaginable. We can start doing the hard work of figuring out how to build durable material infrastructures for multiple life-worlds to flourish over time. It is true that we will need to break with dominant systems in order to get to new political and economic conditions, but it is my argument here that we should treat such ruptures not as goals in themselves but as waystations on the route to another, more just, set of ends. The struggle to build better conditions will be much harder and messier — much more imperfect and laborious — than resistance and negation, but to borrow Winnicottian terms, it will be a “good-enough” general guide for the political action that is urgent to undertake now, before so many of the globally devastating runaway effects of climate change have become irreversible.

Practical Action

Turning to the project of guaranteeing basic capabilities carries with it a new relation to political action. Instead of gesturing to unrepresentable futures, I ask: what materials, what agency, what strategies can build conditions for collective continuance here and now?

“Pragmatism” has often been a term of opprobrium in the aesthetic humanities, charged with confining us ever further within the brutal systems of the present. José Esteban Muñoz argues against “gay pragmatism” because it reentrenches the “corrupt and bankrupt social order,” and Karen Pinkus warns environmentalists against the “tyranny of the practical.”60 Anything short of pulling this whole rotten society up by the roots is the same as quietism and complacency, wishy-washy liberalism, or worse, sinister neoliberalism. Radical thinkers call for “burning it all down,”61 drawing on a long history of revolutionary thought that has opposed piecemeal reforms in favor of the shattering work of revolution.62 At least as far back as Marx and Engels in 1850, leftists have worried that social welfare programs like health care and social security provide just enough in the way of comfort and security to prevent workers from rising up as an angry mass but without changing fundamental economic structures.63 Accelerationists go so far as to argue that we should hasten the worsening of conditions because desperation is the necessary precondition for revolutionary change.64 The more moderate — and more pervasive — version of this logic, which we can see in such different thinkers as Jack Halberstam and Giorgio Agamben, is that we should not work for small changes or half measures because these will prolong our acceptance of a fundamentally violent and exploitative system.

But what if this refusal of pragmatic action is wrong? What if institutional changes, techno-fixes, and legislative reforms do not necessarily get in the way of large-scale structural change and can in fact serve radical ends? A different tradition of revolutionary thinkers has understood organizing for achievable ends as important, even necessary, steps in a larger revolutionary struggle. For Rosa Luxemburg, famously, the opposition between revolution and reform was a false dilemma: “The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution, its aim.” Women’s suffrage was for Luxemburg a crucial example.65 Raymond Williams, too, understood reformist tactics as more effective at mobilizing working-class people than the demand for an immediate smashing of capitalism.66 In our own time, Chantal Mouffe advocates a “radical reformism” as a crucial tool for building a powerful populism of the left.67 Against passionate arguments from fellow radicals, Angela Davis has defended the legal reforms of civil rights and the election of Barack Obama as important pieces of the Black radical struggle, not obstacles to it.68 Similarly, Sherry Wolf, a socialist organizer for LGBTQ rights, has argued for the importance of gay marriage not as a concession to an assimilationist pressure but as part of a larger fight for civil rights for all.69 And here, perhaps surprisingly, is Slavoj Žižek:

In the developed Western societies, calls for a radical revolution have no mobilising power. Only a modest “wrong” choice can create the subjective conditions for an actual communist perspective: whether it fails or succeeds, it sets in motion a series of further demands (“in order to really have universal healthcare, we also need . . .”) which will lead to the right choice. There is no shortcut here, the need for a radical universal chance has to emerge by way of mediation with particular demands. To begin straightaway with the right choice is therefore even worse than making a wrong choice, as it amounts to saying “I am right and the misery of the world which got it wrong just confirms how right I am.”70

The insistence on revolution in wealthy countries actually turns into the opposite — a kind of perfectionism that gets stuck because it does not have sufficient mobilizing power. In this scenario, revolution itself gets in the way of revolution.

Despite many important differences, these thinkers agree that large numbers of people are most inclined to mobilize around immediate causes of suffering and concrete demands. And because revolutions take shape through the collective energy and organization of big groups, practical struggles to transform existing conditions and institutions, such as the fight for labor protections, voting rights, and same-sex marriage, are necessary to the building of the revolutionary left. Or to put this another way: it is a mistake not to recognize the revolutionary potential in any campaign that draws and mobilizes large numbers for expanding or transforming existing institutions, even if these ends are not thoroughgoing transformations of current conditions in their own right, like marriage equality or national health care.

The crucial question here is a strategic one — how social, economic, political, and cultural transformation actually comes about. In place of the fantasy of a spontaneous revolution where, as Bruce Robbins puts it, “Everything Is Suddenly and Utterly Changed,”71 I turn to the revolutionary tradition that invites us all to struggle with imperfect and near-term political ends, to focus on mobilizing, organizing, and planning, and to engage in the unromantic, demanding work of social transformation through all existing channels for political struggle, including elections, battles for legal rights, and institutions like the university and the state. Practical politics is also crucial to building skills, organizations, and collective power on the left, all preconditions for radical structural change.

#### Utopian thinking is a vital political project. Rejecting it reinscribes oppression.

Polina Whitehouse 25. Doctoral student in political theory at Oxford. "The Left Needs Utopian Thinking." Jacobin. 9-17-2025. https://jacobin.com/2025/09/utopia-socialism-marxism-feminism-owen

What Use Is Utopia?

If we acknowledge that Marx and Engels were unfair to the Owenites in particular and to utopians in general, we still face the question of what, if anything, utopian thinking can offer us today.

First, as Mark Fisher pointed out, succumbing to a sense of doom reinforces the status quo. A detailed vision of a bright future can have denaturalizing, uplifting, and mobilizing effects, helping to shake the sense that things can only be as they are (or worse) and to motivate people to collective action. Second, the Right is already doing a good job of painting pictures of alternatives; the Left needs to compete.

A third answer is that we need utopias for feminism. Some even claim that feminism itself is necessarily utopian. In her 1982 article on feminist utopian fiction, Anne Mellor, for instance, called feminist theory “inherently utopian” because “equality between the sexes” had “never existed in the historical past.” If the goal of feminism has not been achieved even according to this fairly narrow 1980s definition, then commitments to emancipation from oppression on the basis of sexuality, gender nonconformity, and transness must render feminism necessarily all the more utopian today.

This is simultaneously a right and a wrong way to look at the question. It is certainly true that the proper aims of feminism have nowhere been realized — not in the Owenite communes that professed equality but still tended to assign the cleaning, cooking, and childcare to women, and not in the ancient matriarchies whose myths 1970s radical feminists sought to write into history. Unquestionably feminism needs utopia because it needs to look to the future for answers.

But this is true not merely in a definitional sense, whereby all that is feminist is already utopian. Instead feminism needs utopia not as a vague orientation toward the future but as a reflective method: to formulate properly feminist aims, we cannot look only to the past or to contradictions in the present — we have to work out what future society we want, and what would make it plausible and desirable.

The commitment shared by Marxists and Owenites to connecting feminist questions with broad social transformation is key. Any good socialist feminist knows that true feminism is incompatible with capitalism. One reason is that women’s liberation involves socializing reproductive labor in ways that can’t be done under capitalism (or at least not in a way where the cure wouldn’t be worse than the disease).

Comparing utopian thought to a one-dimensional Marxist understanding of revolution helps clarify its distinctive usefulness. We have no good reason to think that the transformation of one element of society — through seizure of the means of production by the proletariat, for instance — will inevitably, and without the need for advance design, lead to the desirable transformation of all the other elements.

Utopian thinking can help us imagine a social world to aim for by considering which desirable elements might reinforce one another, which institutions are preconditions for the existence or stability of others, and how we can make coercion obsolete to the fullest extent possible. It is especially valuable, then, to envision in detail an ideal society, from its economic, political, and reproductive institutions to the texture of the psychological experiences and personal relationships it fosters.

The ambivalence about marriage among Owenite women and their female audiences that Taylor identifies may seem like a point against utopia, since rigid blueprints foreclose such contestation. But there is a different and better way to understand the constructive aspect of utopia. Utopianism as a mode of political thought allows radical political theorists and movements to consider and contest what set of institutions and practices they would like to build in place of those to be abolished, and to consider each of these in the context of a social whole.

For example, while abandoning marriage in the nineteenth century might have hurt women by reducing men’s material responsibility for children, a world without the marriage contract would nevertheless be a better one, opening up possibilities not only for women but also for queer people. A precondition for this better world is the socialization of childcare and the abolition of private property, which Owen and many of his followers also advocated, since those changes would obviate the need for assigning financial responsibility to fathers.

Still, isn’t Marx right that a goal that seems radical today might be reactionary in a few years or decades? And how do we know whose utopia to pursue? In a recent paper, the political theorist Titus Stahl follows Leopold in rejecting the foundational objections to utopian design. But Stahl subscribes to a weaker caveat: since the very concepts we use to understand the world and formulate our aims have been formed within the unjust social structures we inhabit, we can’t use them to come up with the ideal society right now.

However, utopian visions needn’t emerge fully formed from one person’s mind. As the Owenite movement shows, even with a leader who tries to entrench his own designs, the utopian vision at the movement’s core can nevertheless explode into variety and disagreement without becoming any less utopian. Collective revision of utopian goals through democratic contestation can square the circle.

Stahl argues that utopia should not be a static end point but a target for us to continually debate and reconceive as experiments yield results and circumstances change. He also contends that we can evaluate utopian proposals based on the success with which they would resolve the problems plaguing existing society. To invent and assess utopian visions in this way requires no impossible leap away from our historical standpoint. Of course, practice is the ultimate test, but we can use theory to make predictions and choose among utopian goals based on those predictions.

Brighter Futures

Taylor’s book offers a somewhat melancholy coda to illustrate the lost radical potential of Owenite feminism. She draws a comparison with Chartism, a contemporary movement that sought to address the concerns of working people through the expansion of parliamentary representation. Among Chartists, the view that women’s proper place was in the home was common, and calls for women’s suffrage remained marginal. The mass base of Chartism dissipated in the 1850s, not long after the decline of Owenism.

British labor organizing during the rest of the nineteenth century took a male-dominated form, with its conservative approach to the “woman question” sometimes rising to the level of committed anti-feminism. As Taylor writes:

The Owenite call for a multi-faceted offensive against all forms of social hierarchy, including sexual hierarchy, disappeared — to be replaced with a dogmatic insistence on the primacy of class-based issues, a demand for sexual unity in the face of a common class enemy, and a vague promise of improved status for women “after the revolution.”

Meanwhile, a reformist outlook gained ground on the terrain of women’s organizing after the fall of Chartism and Owenism weakened the connection between socialist transformation and women’s rights and as more middle-class women concerned about respectability joined the movement. In the 1850s and ’60s, nascent and growing feminist groups took up John Stuart Mills’s call to remove obstacles to women’s entry into free competition on the same playing field with men. This was in contrast with the Owenite aim of abolishing social systems that were oriented toward such competition.

Political options reminiscent of these disappointing alternatives are alive and well today. The danger persists of marginalizing forms of oppression by identifying one fundamental cause of all social ills, whose overcoming will inevitably fix the rest, and modest claims for feminist improvements that are detached from a broader project of social transformation abound. Utopian thinking, on the other hand, can help us reinvigorate the connection between feminism and anti-capitalism.

The Right has caught on. Today’s conservatives do not merely resist change. Project 2025, for instance, is in many ways a textbook example of utopian thought, with an ethical vision that grounds its specific policy proposals and touches on every aspect of society, from family to trade, from gender to taxes. This imagined world is one they want to produce, not preserve, even if it’s wrapped up in traditionalist ideology.

The Left needs its own counterproposals: rich accounts of a transformed society that both help us decide what steps we should take now and keep us motivated for the long haul. I’m not suggesting all leftists should unite around one utopia but rather that debate and experimentation around ambitious aims for social transformation is an urgent political project rather than a matter of merely academic concern. Pace Marx and Engels, utopia’s radical potential has not yet been exhausted.

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USC 25, "Federal Court Management Statistics–Profiles," United States Courts, 03/31/2025, https://www.uscourts.gov/data-news/reports/statistical-reports/federal-court-management-statistics/federal-court-management-statistics-march-2025.

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#### The endpoint of the 1AC clogs the courts.

Ann C. Hodges 11, JD, Professor, Law, University of Richmond, "Avoiding Legal Seduction: Reinvigorating the Labor Movement to Balance Corporate Power," Marquette Law Review, Vol. 94, No. 3, pg. 889-916, March 2011, HeinOnline. [italics in original]

Employment discrimination laws have received similar treatment. In the case of these laws, however, civil rights advocates have been able to secure legislative amendment in many cases. A series of 1989 Supreme Court decisions cutting back on employee rights under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) and Section 1981 of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 led Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1991 and the Older Workers Benefit and Protection Act, reversing most of the Court's decisions." More recently, the *Ledbetter* decision was overturned by Congress." A long series of restrictive decisions under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) led to an abysmal win rate for employee plaintiffs under that statuteW In 2008, Congress amended the ADA to reverse many of these decisions.6' Labor law, however, has not been legislatively changed to reverse unfavorable decisions for either employers or unions. Both unions and employers have maintained sufficient power to block statutory change favorable to the other side, meaning that neither has had sufficient power to push through favorable changes.' The most recent example is the failure of unions to obtain passage of the proposed Employee Free Choice Act.'

As Professor Dau-Schmidt has noted, citing Marc Galanter, the more powerful (employers) will continue to litigate with the less powerful (employees) until their position prevails.64 \*\*\*FOOTNOTE BEGINS\*\*\* Kenneth G. Dau-Schmidt, *Promoting Employee Voice in the American Economy: A Call for Comprehensive Reform*, 94 MARQ. L. REV. 765, 779 & n.67 (2011); see also Gordon, supra note 18, at 644 (discussing the weighting of the legal system toward the interests of the rich and powerful, and the backlash triggered by even limited legal victories of those who challenge powerful interests using the law). \*\*\*FOOTNOTE ENDS\*\*\* And, as discussed above, employers have been quite successful in using litigation to turn employee protective laws to their advantage. Dau-Schmidt also correctly notes that unions can play an important role in developing favorable law through litigation and lobbying for legislative change.65 But without sufficient power, their success in developing favorable law through these means will be limited.

Recent scholarship on the Supreme Court has questioned the conventional wisdom that the Court, unlike the legislative and executive branches, is ruled by law, uninfluenced by the will of the majority." This analysis further suggests that a favorable legal climate for labor unions will come only when unions have widespread community support.

Law is elitist. While the language of the law may be commonly used in the United States, litigation is the province of lawyers. Scholars studying the use of litigation for social change have concluded that when litigation is a primary strategy, the individuals represented are often disempowered and left out of the process.61 Yet a tension exists because the legal expertise that is necessary to use legal tools to initiate change creates the risk that they will dominate the process." Similarly, the essential union leadership required to negotiate and administer contracts may have the paradoxical result of disengaging the rank and file.69 When workers are disconnected, their interest and participation wanes and any campaign for change loses power. As unions institutionalized, their focus became negotiation and enforcement of contracts, along with enforcement of legal rights. Members had little role in that process unless they served as union officials or had a contractual claim. As a result, it is easy for members to lose interest in the union and fail to recognize its value. If the union is unable to mobilize its members to support collective action in their own workplace or the political arena, its power in both arenas is limited. To the extent that legal expertise is required, the distancing effect may be even greater. Extensive litigation can also use resources that could be used for other purposes, including direct action that involves and engages the membership. And legal change is almost always a slow process. Keeping members engaged as cases wind their way through the courts or proposed bills segue through the legislative process can be challenging, especially if the legal issue is a centerpiece of the campaign. Finally, legal victory can seem like the end of the process, leading to membership drift after accomplishment of the major goal.

#### Overload decimates flexible regulation of emerging tech.

Michele B. Neitz 25, JD, Visiting Professor, Law, University of San Francisco School of Law. Founder & Academic Director, Center for Law, Tech, & Social Good, University of San Francisco School of Law, "Ready or Not: How Congressional Dysfunction and Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo Will Shift U.S. Regulation of Emerging Technologies to the Federal Bench," Southern Methodist University Law Review, Vol. 78, pg. 119-156, 2025, HeinOnline. [italics in original]

This Article is the first in legal academic literature to consider how the power shift generated by congressional dysfunction and the Supreme Court's decision in *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo* will affect emerging technology law.8 The shift toward the judicial branch of government-and away from the legislative and executive branches-means that the federal courts will take a leading role in the development of emerging technology law in the United States. Unfortunately, however, the federal judiciary is not prepared for this new era.

As a threshold matter, this Article considers emerging technologies to include five "key attributes" that distinguish them from traditional tech: "(i) radical novelty, (ii) relatively fast growth, (iii) coherence, (iv) prominent impact, and (v) uncertainty and ambiguity."9 A tremendous number of new technologies would fit within this scope, including "artificial intelligence, robotics, synthetic biology, 3D printing, nanotechnology, braincomputer interfaces, genetic sequencing, human gene editing, Internet of Things, RFID chips, mobile health, drones, virtual reality, and blockchain."10 Each of these relatively recent innovations has "real companies, real products, and real lawsuits, with much more to come over the next couple of decades."11

As examples, this Article focuses on two of the most prominent emerging technologies, the decentralized ledger technology known as "blockchain" and artificial intelligence (AI), using the following definitions:

* A blockchain is a technology that provides "a record of transactions that is both distributed and nearly immutable."'2 With no central point of failure, blockchains offer validation of transactions without the need for a trusted third party.13 Blockchain's immutability means that it is computationally impractical to reverse a transaction once it has been written onto the blockchain.14
* Al is a broad term that encompasses autonomous learning, machine learning (including supervised learning, unsupervised learning, and reinforcement learning), deep learning, and other subtopics." This Article will use the most recent explanation from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which defines "artificial intelligence system" as "an engineered or machine-based system that can, for a given set of objectives, generate outputs such as predictions, recommendations, or decisions influencing real or virtual environments."16

Part I of this Article centers on the legislative branch with a review of reasons for congressional inaction in emerging technology. To date, there is no comprehensive federal legislative framework for two of the most innovative technologies in our times: decentralized technology and artificial intelligence.1 7 Increased partisanship is only partly responsible for legislative gridlock. Part I incorporates the information processing theory-a concept from cognitive psychology-to explain how an oversupply of information and an inability to prioritize relevant information are affecting congressional decision-making.

Part II turns the focus to changes occurring in the executive branch of government. The Supreme Court's 2024 decision in *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo* overturned the "*Chevron* doctrine" of judicial deference to executive agencies.'8 This decision effectively shifts power from executive branch agencies to the judicial branch.19 Judges will no longer be required to accept an agency's reasonable interpretation of its regulation.20 Instead, the Supreme Court's decision gives judges the ability to review complicated statutory provisions and evidence, including technical issues related to new innovations, as they evaluate cases.2 1 In the emerging technology space, many of these issues will likely be in cases of first impression.

Consequently, Part III explains how legislative dysfunction, combined with the end of *Chevron* deference and the rise of judicial power, will place a huge weight on the judiciary to develop emerging technology law. This section examines the challenges judges face when confronted with emerging technology issues, particularly when combined with a high number of judicial vacancies on an overworked federal bench. These challenges include disparate and narrow rulings, as well as an increasing cost of compliance that could result in a wealth bias in favor of large companies. In addition, this new era will cause obstacles for the United States' competing public policy goals of protecting consumers while promoting innovation.

With Congress unable to legislate and the power of executive agencies reduced, the answer to this problem lies in the judicial branch. Judges will be tasked with adapting existing statutes to cases involving new innovations, thus creating common law interpretations that will guide a nascent technology industry. Thus, Part IV recommends a unique path forward by proposing the creation of a specialized "Tech Court" for emerging technology cases in the federal judiciary. In support of this proposal, the Article outlines examples of successful specialized courts in both federal and state jurisdictions. Moreover, judges are already leaning toward "opinion specialization" to prioritize cases of interest on their dockets; a Tech Court is simply a more formal way for judges to specialize.22

#### Extinction.

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An emerging technology is one that has radical novelty, rapid growth, coherence, prominent impact, uncertainty and ambiguity (Rotolo et al. 2015). Throughout history the introduction of new and advanced technologies has yielded societal benefits but also a spectrum of concomitant adverse impacts, both anticipated and unforeseen. For example, advances in manufacturing and agricultural technologies during the industrial revolution, the development of nuclear power and nuclear weapons, introduction of the internet and social media and implementation of advanced artificial intelligence (AI) all engendered significant adverse impacts. Whilst some of the risks were anticipated and prepared for, others were not. In the worst cases, adverse impacts included major multi-fatality catastrophes, such as the Chernobyl or Fukishima disasters (Beresford et al. 2016; Funabashi and Kitazawa 2012; Read et al. 2022), detrimental impacts on societal health and wellbeing (eg Choukas-Bradley et al. 2023), discrimination and inequality (Zuiderveen Borgesius 2018; Ferrer et al. 2021) and existential threats (Early and Asal 2018). Forecasting and preparing for the risks associated with emerging technologies is a critical area of Ergonomics and Human Factors (EHF) and safety science research; however, it has received far less attention than other areas such as retrospective incident analysis (Hulme et al. 2019; Patriarca et al. 2020, 2022), theoretical development (eg Dekker 2016; Hollnagel 2012; Leveson 2004), methods development and testing (eg Hulme et al. 2021, 2022, 2024), or prospective risk assessment for existing systems (Dallat, Salmon, and Goode 2019).

A diverse set of emerging technologies are projected to be in widespread use before the end of the 21st century. These include artificial general intelligence (AGI), brain-computer interfaces, genetic engineering, quantum computing, necrobotics, extended reality, sand batteries, xenotransplantation, 3D printed bones, organs and food, clone robotics, highspeed maglev trains, passenger autonomous aerial vehicles and technologies to support space tourism and migration, to name only a few. As technologies become more advanced, complex and difficult to understand and society becomes more dependent on them, the range and severity of adverse impacts is likely to increase. Accordingly, a failure to forecast and prepare for the risks associated with future technologies could have catastrophic consequences, which, in the most extreme cases could result in human extinction (Bostrom 2014; Campbell 2022; Critch and Krueger 2020; Hancock 2022; McLean et al. 2021; Salmon et al. 2023). In addition, a failure to ensure the design, implementation and operation of safe emerging technologies could mean that projected benefits are not realised. This creates an ‘emerging technology paradox’ whereby the same technologies could either save humanity and our planet or trigger human extinction. Prospectively identifying risks and implementing effective controls is a critical step towards achievement of the former and avoidance of the latter.

## Case

### Presumption---1NC

#### 1. Vote neg on presumption.

#### a) Repetition. Their authors deliver presentations and speeches outside of debate. That automatically reduces the significance of individual ballots.

#### b) Proximity. There’s a disconnect between the 1AC’s impacts and what voting aff does to solve.

#### c) Negation turns. Debates are insular; adversarial strategies reinforce factionalism.

Karlberg ’3 [Michael; July 2003; Assistant Professor of Communication at Western Washington University; Peace & Change, vol. 28]

Granted, social activists do "win" occasional “battles” in these adversarial arenas, but the root causes of their concerns largely remain unaddressed and the larger "wars" arguably are not going well. Consider the case of environmental activism. Countless environmental protests, lobbies, and lawsuits mounted in recent generations throughout the Western world. Many small victories have been won. Yet environmental degradation continues to accelerate at a rate that far outpaces the highly circumscribed advances made in these limited battles the most committed environmentalists acknowledge things are not going well. In addition, adversarial strategies of social change embody assumptions that have internal consequences for social movements, such as internal factionalization. For instance, virtually all of the social projects of the "left” throughout the 20th century have suffered from recurrent internal factionalization. The opening decades of the century were marked by political infighting among vanguard communist revolutionaries. The middle decades of the century were marked by theoretical disputes among leftist intellectuals. The century's closing decades have been marked by the fracturing of the a new left\*\* under the centrifugal pressures of identity politics. Underlying this pattern of infighting and factionalization is the tendency to interpret differences—of class, race, gender, perspective, or strategy—as sources of antagonism and conflict. In this regard, the political "left" and "right" both define themselves in terms at a common adversary—the "other"—defined by political differences. Not surprisingly, advocates of both the left and right frequently invoke the need for internal unity in order to prevail over their adversaries on the other side of the alleged political spectrum. However, because the terms left and right axe both artificial and reified categories that do not reflect the complexity of actual social relations, values, or beliefs, there is no way to achieve lasting unity within either camp because there are no actual boundaries between them. In reality, social relations, values, and beliefs are infinitely complex and variable. Yet once an adversarial posture is adopted by assuming that differences are sources at conflict, initial distinctions between the left and the right inevitably are followed by subsequent distinctions within the left and the right. Once this centrifugal process is set in motion, it is difficult, if not impossible, to restrain. For all of these reasons, adversarial strategies have reached a point of diminishing returns even if such strategies were necessary and viable in the past when human populations were less socially and ecologically interdependent those conditions no longer exist. Our reproductive and technological success as a species has led to conditions of unprecedented interdependence, and no group on the planet is isolated any longer. Under these new conditions, new strategies not only are possible but are essential. Humanity has become a single interdependent social body. In order to meet the complex social and environmental challenges now facng us, we must learn to coordinate our collective actions. Yet a body cannot coordinate its actions as long as its "left" and is "right," or its "north" and its "south," or its "east" and its "west" are locked in adversarial relationships.

### Theory of Power---1NC

#### 2. The aff is ahistorical and has zero explanatory power.

Cedric Johnson 25. Professor of Black studies and political science from the University of Illinois-Chicago, Ph.D. in government and politics from the University of Maryland-College Park. "The Wrong Durée: The Politics of Cedric J. Robinson’s Racial Capitalism." Nonsite. 1/29/2025. nonsite.org/the-wrong-duree-the-politics-of-cedric-j-robinsons-racial-capitalism

Robinson provides a sweeping account of world history, which winds its way from the earliest encounters between Mediterranean and Nile Valley civilizations through the Islamic presence and influence in Spain and the emergence of the Genoese bourgeoisie to the modern European conquest and colonization of African nations. That account, however, too often treats anti-black racism as the motive force of history rather than the consequence of centuries-old processes and in a manner that neglects historical contingency and the presence of other discrete interests that cannot be attributed to racist thinking. This historically-versed ahistoricism is a core problem of *Black Marxism*, and yet it may well be the sweetener that has drawn so many to embrace the language of racial capitalism in recent years, even if they are not faithful students of Robinson’s particular interpretation of history.

As Joseph Ramsey writes, Robinson’s account of racial capitalism “ultimately tends to understand capitalism as an expression of a transhistorical European racialism, putting forth a monolithic view of ‘Western civilization’ itself as, from the beginning, essentially and uniquely racist and inclined to violent domination.”46 The core problem with Robinson’s account, Ramsey concludes, “is not that racism is emphasized, but that it is ontologized.”47 Indeed, in Robinson’s work, racialism and race stand in for discrete political motivations and real interests in motion, and historical contingency seems to disappear altogether from his account. His narration of the making of the West obscures so much of that history’s complexity. Racialist metanarrative does not convey the manifold and conflicting motivations of sovereigns, influential individuals, wealthy families, joint stock companies, and the bourgeoisie as a class for itself, and their relative successes and failures in advancing their respective interests. And while racial ideology would eventually serve as a justification for empire building, so many other factors were more decisive in determining the strategies, prerogatives, and decisions of the capitalist classes of Portugal, Spain, England, France, the United States, and other imperial powers: economic cycles of boom and bust; speculation and the power of financiers; the perennial triumph and ruin of individual firms; the formation of opportunistic alliances, feuds, mergers, and hostile takeovers—not to mention the constant weight of the coercive laws of competition; the sectoral and cultural changes provoked by technological development; and the unforeseen impacts of depression, war, labor shortages, plagues, famines, and natural and industrial catastrophes on individual and social fortunes.

Robinson’s prose is, at times, seductive and insightful as he recounts the processes of European expansion, but it is primarily idealistic. Rather than concrete historical interests, he emphasizes the power of ideas in various ways, the distinctive cultural character of African versus European peoples, and the hypocrisy of American colonial elites as much as the material force of history. His prose is written largely in passive voice and too often employs personification, treating institutions as historical actors rather than consistently specifying the embodied human subjects in history themselves. Although he references the American bourgeoisie in the passage quoted above, there are other places where “the accommodation of Western historical consciousness to racial ideologies created …,” “popular thought affected …,” and “This intellectual grounding came to absorb ….” among similar phrasings (BM, 76, emphasis added). And like so many contemporary academics and activists, his narration assumes “white,” “black,” “Western,” or “African” are more than contextual descriptors. Instead, the guiding premise seems to be that corporeal identity, the experience of social exclusion, and even consumer choices all tell us something significant and readily knowable about the values, perspectives, and interests of real people. These literary choices disappear any sense of discrete historical interests and constituted power in Robinson’s account of Western civilization from antiquity to the modern capitalist world.

It is true that some Greeks and Romans remarked on the distinct appearances of Africans they encountered. As Robinson notes, when Herodotus encountered the Colchians, he said, “they are black skinned and have woolly hair” (BM, 83). Such descriptions of physical characteristics are not racism, however, and this is where the construct of racialism, which is never defined by Robinson, makes mischief of history. As Frank Snowden documents in his pioneering work on the African presence in Ancient Europe, Africans were not generally viewed by Greeks or Romans as innately inferior as a group because their social relation to those civilizations was not slave-based.48 Instead, Greeks and Romans were more likely to encounter Africans in the roles of merchants, statesmen, or soldiers. Moreover, like Africans themselves, Greeks and Romans would have appreciated the significance of a range of other social, class, religious, ethnic, and national distinctions more so than phenotype.

Robinson’s account gives the impression that modern racism appeared much earlier and that it was a motive force for conquest when it was not. The following passage is exemplary: “In England, at first gripped by a combative and often hysterical Christianity—complements of the crusades, the ‘reconquests,’ and the rise of Italian capitalism—medieval English devouts recorded dreams in which the devil appeared as ‘a blacke moore,’ ‘an Ethiope,’” writes Robinson. “This was part of the grammar of the church, the almost singular repository of knowledge in Europe.” “Centuries later,” Robinson continues, “the Satanic gave way to the representation of Africans as a different sort of beast: dumb, animal labor, the benighted recipient of the benefits of slavery. Thus the ‘Negro’ was conceived” (BM, 3–4). What is missing from this provisional account of racism’s emergence is any sense of historically grounded meaning and relative amplitude. So, while we can find seeds of racist ideas in medieval Europe, seeds are not fully formed trees, no more in the study of ideology than in botany.

Robinson’s narrative might have us believe that racism and profit-making were twinned motives of equal significance from Cristóbal Colón’s 1492 arrival in the Americas through the first importation of African slaves at the Jamestown settlement in 1619. “The trade in African slaves,” he writes, “coming as it did as an extension of capitalism and racial arrogance, supplied both a powerful motive and a readily received object” (BM, 100). Such conclusions are errant for a few reasons. Race was not the driving force of capitalism’s emergence or the expansion of the trans-Atlantic slave trade but rather the material interests of competing merchants, royals, and joint-stock companies. The enrichment of national coffers and personal fortunes drove and gave urgency to the expeditions, settlements, trade agreements, and imperial wars that ensued. On this subject of the development of race as popular ideology, the work of historian Barbara J. Fields is far more clarifying than Robinson’s. “The rise of slavery itself on the North American mainland was not in essence a racial phenomenon,” Fields writes, “nor was it the inevitable outcome of racial prejudice.”49 Contrary to Robinson’s account, race as we know it would take some time to make its way onto the historical stage and even longer to become a widely understood and legitimate justification for the regimes of chattel bond labor that were central to the establishment and commercial success of the New World colonies. It is easy to become lost in Robinson’s account of pre-modern racial ideas precisely because it is selective and idealistic and one that does not discern between pre-enlightenment forms of prejudice and social conflict and the relative material force of religious doctrines, racist taxonomy, the profit motive, and corporate interests in the historical development of specific slaveholding republics in the Americas.

Robinson’s account of racialism conflates various medieval forms of discrimination, hierarchy, and affinity for modern racism. Racism is a type of prejudice, but not all forms of prejudice are racism. While there were all manner of tribal, ethnic, religious, and sectional prejudices in pre-capitalist Europe, these were not racism. Those forms of difference were not grand metaphysical narratives but were intimately connected to social relations and affinities that existed in concrete time and space, which distinguishes them from the universal racial taxonomy first articulated by Carolus Linnaeus, as well as Johann Blumenbach, Thomas Jefferson, and others who would assign human worth and capacity based on race.50 These figures were not particularly concerned with the situated experiences of particular clans, religious sects, kingdoms, and civilizations and their particular languages, customs, rites, technology, and history; on the contrary, they favored massive generalizations predicated on phenotype and continental divides. Racial taxonomy evolved as imperial shorthand, an ideological mapping that became as central to navigating the emerging commercial world as the stars, shifting winds, and tides.

Even if we concede that there are modes of thinking that prefigure or anticipate modern racism, we should not mistake their appearance for power. Travelogues, biographies, and reports during the periods of exploration and colonization reveal great ambivalence, hypocrisy, honesty, ignorance, humanity, and surprise in the first encounters, treaties, quotidian interactions, collaborations, and betrayals that defined the processes of European incursion, conquest, and imposition of forced labor regimes throughout the Atlantic world.51 “No trader who had to confront and learn to placate the power of an African chief could in practice believe that Africans were docile, childlike, or primitive,” writes Fields. “The practical circumstances in which Europeans confronted Africans in Africa make nonsense of any attempt to encompass Europeans’ reactions to Africans within the literary stereotypes that scholars have traced through the ages as discrete racial attitudes.”52 And this is precisely the problem with the historical account that Robinson provides; social cleavages that predated the emergence of racist ideology are not only presumed to be cognates of race articulated during the age of bourgeois revolution, but these are also assumed to wield similar, even equal, power in widely dissimilar historical contexts.

#### 3. ‘Unions bad’ is an incomplete narrative that forgets labor’s central role in advancing progressivism.

Angela Thompson 24. Administrative appeals judge at the Department of Labor, J.D. from Yale Law School. "The People United: Unions as Racial and Gender Justice Organizations." *Berkeley Journal of Employment & Labor Law*, 45(1), 107-110.

I. THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND LABOR RIGHTS ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED

I won't sugar coat it. The history of unions and nonwhite, nonmale workers is not all hearts and flowers. The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) excludes employees engaged in domestic and agricultural labor.1 At the time of its passage, approximately 85% of Black women were working in domestic or agricultural labor.2 In addition, some unions remained segregated until legally forced to cease the practice. 3 Some unions remain de facto segregated even today because of racist hiring practices.4 Unions have supported racist legislation, like the Chinese Exclusion Act that severely limited the ability of Chinese laborers to gain citizenship. 5 So yes, there are plenty of reasons for women and people of color to rebuke unions. The labor movement has lofty goals, but we have not been, nor are we now, perfect.

But that is only part of the story. Labor rights and labor unions have often been at the center of civil rights struggles. When the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) merged in 1955, they created a Civil Rights Department.6 Organized labor backed the campaigns against discrimination in public facilities, housing, education, and voting by providing financial resources, legal support, publicity, and lobbying efforts in Congress. In 1963, the labor movement mobilized 40,000 union members for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.' The following year, the AFL-CIO provided critical lobbying support and testimony for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.8

There are many examples of cooperation and integration of mission from the leadership of labor and civil rights. A. Phillip Randolph saw the labor movement working for white people and decided that the movement should work for Black people as well, leading to the organization of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925-the first labor organization led by Black people to receive a charter in the American Federation of Labor.9 Bayard Rustin, who helped organize the 1963 March on Washington, was the first executive director of the AFL-CIO's A. Philip Randolph Institute. 10 There he worked closely with the labor movement to ensure that the needs of Black workers became part of labor's agenda. " The iconic "I Am A Man" picket signs used during the Memphis Sanitation Strike are a reminder of the connection between civil rights and labor rights." Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would deliver his last speech on April 3, 1968 in the midst of a labor dispute calling for support for the Black sanitation workers in their struggle. 13 There are countless other labor leaders of color: Ella Baker, Cesar Chivez, Karen Lewis. These leaders realized the potential that labor unions and collective action had for advancing the civil rights and social justice movements of their time.

They were right. The labor movement raises wages for all workers. But for workers who are paid less than their white male counterparts, the union wage premium is even greater. Unions help reduce gender and racial/ethnic wage gaps. Hourly wages for women represented by a union are 4.7% higher on average than for nonunionized women with comparable characteristics.1 4 Black workers represented by a union are paid 13.1% more than their nonunionized Black peers, and Hispanic workers represented by a union are paid 18.8% more than their nonunionized Hispanic peers.15 Black workers are more likely to be union members than white, Asian, or Hispanic workers. 16 Importantly, unions provide protection against termination. This allows workers to raise concerns about subjects that they may not have had the courage to speak on without such protections.

But it's even better than that. A 2020 study found that union membership was associated with reductions in racial resentment among whites.17 White union members in diverse unions are more supportive of policies designed to help Black workers, their families, and communities. 18 The study posits that unions are motivated to recruit workers of color to get majority status in racially diverse labor sectors. Therefore unions have an incentive to mitigate racial resentment among members or potential members. One of the authors of the study referred to labor unions as "one of the largest, if not the largest civil rights organization in the country," encouraging unions to promote, and progressives to acknowledge, that fact. 19

**4. The cosmos is not overdetermined by antiblackness.**

Benedik **Kurdi et al. 25**. Assistant professor of psychology at the University of Illinois, Ph.D. in psychology from Harvard University. Tessa Charlesworth, assistant professor of management and organizations at Northwestern University, Ph.D. in social psychology from Harvard University. Patrick Mair, professor of statistics at Harvard University, Ph.D. in statistics from the University of Vienna. "International Stability and Change in Explicit and Implicit Attitudes: An Investigation Spanning 33 Countries, Five Social Groups, and 11 Years (2009–2019)." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 154.5, 2-3.

Critically, **social attitudes** are not **set in stone**. Both human minds and social environments are complex and **dynamic**, and attitudes thus have the potential to **shift adaptively** in response to new information (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018; Wood, 2000). A primary endeavor in experimental social psychology has therefore been to document why, when, and how social attitudes change versus remain stable. Indeed, accurately characterizing how social attitudes shift in the moment and over longer periods of time is central to understanding how the human mind represents social information (Lewin, 1935). Moreover, social group attitudes help explain and predict social behavior at both the **individual** (Kurdi et al., 2019; Talaska et al., 2008) and the **collective** level (Calanchini et al., 2022). As such, shifting attitudes toward less bias in favor of dominant groups has also been seen as essential to the endeavor of alleviating social group-based inequality (Ferguson et al., 2025; Paluck et al., 2021).

Evidence of Explicit and Implicit Attitude Change: Short-Term, Experimental, and Individual

A key conceptual distinction that has driven much empirical research into processes of attitude malleability and change over the past decades is that between explicit and implicit attitudes. The nature of this distinction and the best way to define it continue to be contested (see, e.g., De Houwer, 2019; Ferguson & Cone, 2021; Gawronski et al., 2022; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). However, for the present purposes, we define explicit attitudes as reflecting relatively controlled (conscious, controllable, and intentional) aspects of retrieving evaluative information—processes that are most often measured via self-report. By contrast, implicit attitudes reflect relatively automatic (unconscious, uncontrollable, and unintentional) aspects of retrieving evaluative information and are usually measured via indirect assays, such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald et al., 1998), sequential priming (Fazio et al., 1986), or the Affect Misattribution Procedure (Payne et al., 2005).

Most critical for the present purposes, explicit and implicit attitudes are also often thought to differ in their potential for, and mechanisms of, change. For instance, dominant dual-process perspectives in social cognition (McConnell & Rydell, 2014; Smith & DeCoster, 2000; Strack & Deutsch, 2004) have converged on the idea that explicit attitudes are updated via quick and flexible propositional processes (e.g., in response to persuasive appeals). In contrast, according to these theories, implicit attitudes are relatively unlikely to change. If they do, change is assumed to require exposure to vast numbers of stimulus pairings in one’s social environment.

Indeed, early experiments (e.g., Olson & Fazio, 2001; Rydell et al., 2006, 2007) seemed to support this dual-process perspective. However, more **recent** evidence, now consisting of **hundreds of studies**, suggests that implicit attitudes, much like their explicit counterparts, can be **updated** rapidly and flexibly (Cone et al., 2017). Moreover, implicit attitudes can reflect relatively complex and sophisticated forms of information and mechanisms of change that go well beyond stimulus pairings experienced in the environment (De Houwer et al., 2020; Kurdi & Dunham, 2020; Mandelbaum, 2016).

Although these studies have been characterized by **tight experimental control** and, as such, **high levels** of internal validity in understanding cognitive mechanisms of change, the external validity of their conclusions has been uncertain (Greenwald et al., 2022; Kurdi et al., 2023). In particular, this line of work has focused on (a) novel targets (e.g., fictitious groups or geometric shapes), (b) short-term change, with measurements immediately following the intervention, and (c) the individual as the sole level of analysis. As such, it is unclear whether the results suggesting malleability in explicit (and especially implicit) social group attitudes would extend to (a) real-world targets imbued with lifelong histories of evaluative learning, (b) enduring, rather than ephemeral, shifts (see, e.g., Lai et al., 2014, 2016; Paluck et al., 2021), and (c) emergent processes at the cultural level, such as those associated with changes in legal contexts (Ofosu et al., 2019), media representations (Ravary et al., 2019), and large-scale social movements (Sawyer & Gampa, 2023). To summarize, most existing research on explicit and implicit attitudes has focused on experimental, short-term, and individual-level processes of change, with questionable generalizability to naturally occurring, long-term processes at the cultural level (Kurdi & Charlesworth, 2023).

Evidence of Explicit and Implicit Attitude Change: Long-Term, Naturalistic, and Cultural

Recently, a complementary line of work has started documenting more naturalistic, long-term changes in explicit and implicit social group attitudes, although with an exclusive focus on the United States (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019, 2021, 2022a). Relying on **publicly available** data collected via the Project Implicit United States (PI:US) educational website (https://implicit.harvard.edu/), this research showed that explicit **attitudes** consistently **dropped toward less bias**: Since 2007, respondents in the United States have been expressing **less** anti-old/pro-young, anti-fat/pro-thin, anti-gay/ pro-straight, anti-dark skin/pro-light skin, and anti-Black/pro-White attitudes. These findings align with similar, well-documented trends obtained in representative U.S. surveys, such as the General Social Survey (Marsden et al., 2020), and likely reflect **changing norms** about the acceptability of expressing **negativity** toward **stigmatized groups** (Payne et al., 2017).

More importantly, the same line of work has shown that some (but not all) implicit social group attitudes also decreased in bias over the same time span in the United States. Specifically, implicit **sexuality attitudes** dropped in bias by **65%** and are now **close to neutrality**. Implicit race and skin tone attitudes have **also decreased**, although at slower but still notable rates of **26%** and 25%, respectively. These findings are theoretically noteworthy, because they provide initial evidence that, contrary to dominant dual-process perspectives, but in line with propositional accounts, implicit attitudes can exhibit **meaningful**, long-term change even in the context of **preexisting**, consequential **social group** target**s**.

However, implicit attitude change did not extend to all social group targets in the United States: Implicit age and body weight attitudes were, and have remained, high in bias. These different trajectories of implicit attitudes across social groups provide an empirical basis for new theorizing about factors that help explain when attitude change does (and does not) occur, as well as whether change will be widespread across people and places (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2021; Charlesworth, Sanjeev, et al., 2023). We return to these ideas in the context of the present project below.

As a final general remark on this line of work, we note that a cultural-level lens on explicit and implicit attitude change bypasses many of the ongoing debates about the validity and reliability of both indirect and direct measures when applied to individual-level cognition and behavior. For instance, whereas direct measures of attitudes have been criticized for their easy fakeability (Fazio et al., 1995), indirect measures, such as the IAT used in the present project, have been in the crosshairs for relatively low predictive validity at the individual level (e.g., Meissner et al., 2019). However, at the **cultural** level, **aggregates** of explicit attitudes can be interpreted as **valid indicators** of widely accepted social norms (Tankard & Paluck, 2016), and aggregates of implicit attitudes have shown moderate-to-strong **correlations** with consequential outcomes (Calanchini et al., 2022; Hehman et al., 2019). As such, these divergent results reinforce the importance of studying change in these constructs at the cultural level of analysis.

### 1NC---Turn---State

#### 5. Anti-statism performs an ethical and existential failure by abandoning the ethical pursuit of revolutionary power through the nation-state.

Dale, 23—Lecturer in English at the Australian National University (Amelia, “Nothing’s More Precious Than a Hole in the Ground,” Australian Humanities Review 71 (May 2023), dml) [language modifications denoted by brackets]

A Western turn away from internationalism and towards critiques of power cannot be traced back to a single point: one cannot place it simply as a result of, say, the New Left insurgencies, Foucault or indeed fractures within or around the Soviet or Sino-Soviet projects. In our time a great contradiction has arisen between ethical minoritarianism, in itself not a bad thing, and any notion of commanding the machinery of state through which some, but not all, of these ethical conundrums can be resolved. To frame the climate crisis through the lens of individual or even generational guilt and argue it should be addressed through an ethics of care risks obscuring both its material and historical foundations and its potential remedies. John Frow, writing on the ‘agents’ that hold some power over the ‘transmission of a world’ laments that they are ‘nation states, political parties, … and only in the last instance a citizenry with a stake in a future world’ (26). Yet it is vital at this juncture that we do not abandon the idea of a nation with a responsibility for its citizenry, or a political party with responsibility for the future. The globe is not solely constituted by multi-party democracies held hostage to fossil capital with a disenfranchised and economically privileged citizenry. In those other nations—marginalised and blacklisted as they might be by Northern centres of capital and imperial power—there are models worth considering.

A hostility to states and nations, while understandable in the specific Australian sub-imperialist context, does not hold up to theoretical scrutiny if our horizon is equality: global, intergenerational and otherwise. Samir Amin, for instance, notes how an ‘“anti-state” strategy’ unites perfectly with the capitalist’s strategy to reduce actions by the state to redistribute wealth and regulate corporations, and instead reduce the state’s role to its policing functions (27). At this late stage of ecological catastrophe, the mass extinctions and depredations of our planet under capitalism demand, as an ethical imperative, large-scale changes that can be only enacted on the level of the state and international blocs with sufficient organisational capacity and drive to bring such changes to fruition. Likewise, a total antagonism to ‘nation’ does not get us anywhere. Expressions of Australian nationalism typically operate along state-sanctioned lines and celebrate invasion, colonisation and genocide. This is because Australia is not Indigenous-led, and because it remains, in real economic and political terms, shackled to an old empire (Britain) and dependent on the new one (the United States). However, to have a wider view, informed by the histories of anti-imperialism and decolonisation in Asia, Africa and Latin America, is to be aware of the crucial role of national liberation movements in successful struggles against colonial rule. Nation can be the only thing that stands between a group of people and their exploitation by imperialist powers. Nations can be revolutionary, such as the national liberation fronts in Southern Africa, nations can be Indigenous, as with First Nations. A discourse without sufficient nuance on the question of nation ignores how, in contemporary geopolitics, it is on the level of nation that military and economic imperialist endeavours are met with the most significant resistance. Being unequivocally against nation, to quote Amin, ‘encourages the acceptance of the role of the United States as military superpower and world policeman’ (27).

Unfortunately, the fall of the USSR and historical mistakes of socialism have encouraged, generally speaking, a drawing inward among Western leftists, towards individual ethics and away from the ethical pursuit of power. The turn of the left away from international solidarity and towards capitalism and compromise can be read sociologically. Radhika Desai notes how the major parties of the left within bourgeois capitalist states are today commandeered by a professional managerial class of neoliberal converts, whereas their counterparts in earlier eras had been socialists and Marxists. The result is a left that mistakenly ‘attributes the prosperity of the major capitalist powers to capitalism’s productive vigour, not their imperialism, and refuses to contemplate how to organise production in socialist societies and how to do so against the inevitable opposition of imperialism’s remaining bastions’ (Desai). Comprehending the textures of imperialism is key here. If we view the world solely through a lens cut by the US imperial core, we will be blind to [ignore] geopolitical material forces and context, we will not see [know] what empire does nor will we comprehend the alternatives outside it. If we actually want transformation within Australia and the centres of imperial capital it subordinates itself to, it is imperative to look and learn from alternative models being practiced in the world. At the very least we can learn what not to do, and recognise the vast difficulties of the challenge ahead. For the sake of the planet and our species we need to ask: what is it that we can learn from countries that in their post-revolutionary phases have not only built barricades of resistance to the US world order, but also made significant achievements at home? Is intergenerational justice possible without geopolitical materialism?

### 1NC---Turn---Time

#### 6. ‘Ripping apart time’ returns to liberal idealism – producing aesthetic rupture for its own sake cannot answer crucial political questions about the distribution of power.

Andrew **HOM** School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh **’18** “Silent Order: the Temporal Turn in Critical International Relations” *Millennium* 46(3) p. 324-330

The Rapture of Rupture

Uninhabitable, defined by its other, conflating novel with better, and unavoidably positional – in spite of these tensions rupture enjoys a prominent place in the critical discourse of time. How, then, does it actually work in that discourse? What explains its theoretical punch? I think the answer is a deeply embedded liberal-idealism. To be clear, this is not the neoliberalism of late modernity or the Kantian triad of democracy, interdependence, and multilateralism.182 Rather, rupture recalls the classic liberal commitment to the value and rights of the individual and the consequent responsibilities of sovereign states.183 Nor is it idealist in an ideational or strictly philosophical sense. Rather, I refer to a tendency to abstract ethical aspirations into theoretical assumptions while ignoring the concrete realities of political power, indeterminacy, and unintended consequences.184 Without substantive content, these notions appear relevant to most situations but offer little practical traction because all the heavy lifting is done by assumptions, abstractions, or productive silences. In the case of critical IR, we might think of this liberal-idealism as the rapture of rupture.

First, the liberalism embedded in rupture. Critical scholars declare a commitment only to the ‘politics … [of] an active process of drawing and experimenting with lines, without having any preestablished lines – of history, society, and the world – to fall back on’.185 This springs from their fear of ‘reinforcing practices of security and violent forms of response’.186 But why should we eschew security practices and violence – two august aspects of politics – unless we build on some preestablished lines authorising the importance of human individuals and viewing the state as a threat rather than a security provider and/or realisation of collective will? Other critical scholars draw these lines from the ‘politically affirmative and progressive nature of deconstructive thought, as revealed through its onto-political character’,187 which acknowledges a commitment to choosing a which among many possible whats. This sort of progressivism wordlessly underwrites claims that in ruptures wake, ‘the only guiding principle is that of multiplicity itself’, which prioritises ‘difference’ and ‘singularity’ but presumably not different violence or singular evil.188 Moreover, it gives proposals to experiment with ‘more productive and creative’ approaches the gloss of self-sufficiency by orienting us toward welcome possibilities rather than novel forms of depredation. In these ways, times of rupture depend on classically liberal sensibilities, where the intrinsic value of human individuals makes it important to speak for the powerless, the marginalised, the non-elite and the ‘professionals of nothing’.189 This is entirely consistent with the earlier point that every temporality reflects particular purposes and works according to specific standards of reference. Critical scholars acknowledge this partway, noting that experimentation ‘can be said to express a particular ethics of the event, an ethics of trying to encounter the ambiguities and uncertainties of the pure event in a more productive and creative way’.190 Yet as an ethics, this involves some aspect of reconstruction, just as any critique implies or begs a substantive vision of an alternate future.191

However, such liberal and ethical impulses create tensions in times of rupture. As one liberal theorist notes, liberalism makes little sense ‘as an arena for the unfettered expression of “difference”’; its distinctiveness ‘lies not in the absence but, rather, in the content of its public purposes’ and how they privilege individuals and diversity.192 This is not multiplicity and possibility as such but rather from ‘a view of the human good that favours certain ways of life and tilts against others’.193 Without that ‘tilt’, experimenting with times of rupture becomes ‘a circular exercise, repeated for itself but with no effect, no life force, and no bite beyond the choir to whom it preaches’.194 Or worse, it opens room for novel forms of harm.

This is where idealism becomes crucial to ruptured times. As various champions insist, rupture concerns only an engagement with possibility, thinking about what another politics might require to open up genuine alternatives. Even though other political agents are busy ‘recompos[ing] and reassert[ing]’ interpretive frameworks in rupture’s wake,195 critical advocates are unwilling to ‘subordinate the mysteries of time to specific notions of historical change’.196 Like other engagements with, say, protest cultures, there is a palpable ‘optimism for change’ here; one ‘rooted squarely in [the] refusal to describe what form a newly imagined politics might take’ and thus ‘defined only by its unconventionality’. 197 Novelty and possibility as such only resonate as preferable if we assume they encourage spontaneous improvement by virtue of their ‘extra-discursive’ or ‘natural state, a kind of protean fecundity that exists in idealised form in isolation from politics as it is usually lived’.198 Moreover, this frames violence and subordination as intrinsically old and positive pluralism as resolutely new. Ironically, then, given critical scholars’ resistance to imagined ‘temporal borders’ and avowed interest in ‘a radical critique of the contingent “ground(ing)”’ of modernity,199 the value of rupture depends upon a thoroughly modern form of temporal delineation.

These silent assumptions and hidden logics help ‘characterize’ and thus ‘control’ times of rupture,200 transforming it from a description of traumatic and unlivable conditions to the foundation of a novel ethics that insists we ‘remain with uncertainty’ and ‘hope that something different’ will emerge.201 They are what take us from difference itself to a future ‘deemed worthy of being aspired towards’.202 They thus obscure the need to make alternatives tangible, which is vital for critique’s sake and for the everyday politics of individuals who do not enjoy the privilege of remaining in sheer contingency and indeterminacy.203 And they inhibit any evaluation of ruptured time as a ‘practical question’ of what it actually ‘does’, its ‘effects’, and how it works.204

To drive this point home, recall an earlier vision of novelty and difference tinged by tragedy. Hannah Arendt embraced ‘natality’ as moments of pure possibility but insisted these be tempered by a political sensitivity to potentially catastrophic unintended consequences. Each birth, in her formulation, is ‘uniquely new’ but includes no guarantees – ‘authentic’ novelty might be ‘all-destructive’.205 Ignoring these implications depoliticises and gentrifies novelty and leaves us poorly prepared to resist depredation when it (re-) emerges.206 Only by ignoring or sublimating the heavy lifting can critical scholars pass over a ‘rainbow bridge’207 of sorts that turns the start of the political problem – radical change – into the self-sufficient conclusion of ‘another politics’**,** which occludes the need to reduce contingency while avoiding catastrophe. So while deeply suspicious of promises to ‘take us from here to there’ or move us from past through present toward a better future,208 the critical discourse of rupture works – like the rapture itself – on the assumption ‘of being carried onward or swept along’ by ‘forces of movement’ that emerge independent of conscious effort.209 The rapture of rupture thus marks a missed opportunity, beginning with a legitimately ‘different perspective on time and politics’210 but producing a concept with ‘little relevance to life’211 because it demurs at precisely the point when it becomes necessary to lean on the scales, to encourage this time (or these times) instead of that and thereby privilege some purposes and politics over others. Ruptures are golden opportunities to develop another, better or less awful politics – as such they require more than hope, nebulous experimentation,212 or the refusal to say any more than ‘what I think it does for me’.213 Unless we think novel harms impossible and better outcomes naturally assured, ruptures mark a moment when it is vital to wilfully construct or at least reflexively delimit political time anew.214

#### 7. Their kritik of linear time is reductionist and their alternative relies on linearity implicity.

Andrew **HOM** School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh **’18** “Silent Order: the Temporal Turn in Critical International Relations” *Millennium* 46(3) p. 311-314

Linear Time

Even more than timelessness, ‘linear time’ is criticized ~~plays the bête noire~~ in critical IR.48 This appellation subsumes a huge variety of temporal phenomena associated with hegemonic logics, including but not limited to state sovereignty,49 national citizenship,50 security,51 capitalism and colonialism,52 history,53 patriarchy,54 western calendars and clocks,55 neopositivism, 56 progress and rationality,57 and narrative.58 How precisely these issues link to or instantiate ‘linear time’ – and how this supports hegemony – typically remains unsaid. Moreover, rare qualifications of ‘linear time’ add little in the way of clarity. Linear time is ‘bounded’, ‘rational’, and ‘homogeneous’.59 It depends on heroic narratives of specific deeds but is also a smooth ‘continuum’ moving us ‘steadily from moment to moment’ or, relatedly, an ‘empty’ container for events.60 These visions of linear time contrast discontinuity.61 Yet elsewhere linear time associates with discontinuity, with discrete parcels of past, present, and future sometimes normatively valuated as progress.62 This distinguishes linear time from continuous, pre-modern, or indigenous temporalities, which are ‘non-linear’ because they co-mingle the past and future in each present and thus admit no temporal borders.63 Occasionally, ‘linear’ indicates both continuity and discontinuity, as when heroic national narratives produce discrete succession and time as ‘continuous and linear’.64

Critical scholars also contrast linear time with cyclical or circular temporalities.65 By this way of thinking, cyclicality problematises the arrow-like trajectory of linear time’s forward thrust, a movement which complements the logics of nationalism, patriarchy, and causation.66 Cyclical alternatives to linearity as such are not especially coherent. In cyclical time the past ‘“directly effects the present and the future”’.67 This is very much a causal statement.68 Moreover, rendered as simplistic binaries, linear/cyclical distinctions are spurious: a cycle refers to an undulating line or sine wave,69 and the further in we zoom, the straighter it appears. Finally, like invocations of ‘timelessness’ a basic sense of linearity facilitates rather than precludes cyclical imputations, providing the serial baseline passage against which recurrence resolves as such.

Other critical alternatives to linear time also depend on linearity inasmuch as they propound a lineal-spatial metaphor and/or assume some sense of past, present, and future (or before and after). For example, duration, chronotopicity, and retroactive and anticipatory meaning-making imply, respectively: the serial connectability of experiential content, a spatialised and gridded shape, a clear sense of backward and forward.70 Or consider time as ‘becoming’, which refutes linearity because it moves ‘in different directions at the same time, into the past and into the future’.71 Nothing about ‘linear’ per se opposes this movement or the sense of continual development evoked by ‘becoming’. As before, becoming only resolves as such against a basic linear comparator.

Non-linear proposals based on time-as-becoming are even more explicitly linear. Aion describes the ‘pure’ and ‘empty form’ of a ‘straight line’,72 which vitiates ontologies of presence by stretching out ‘limitless in either direction’.73 It is the movement by which ‘the line’ frees itself from the punctual present so as to ‘[c]onstantly flee … in different directions’.74 These characterisations depend on a classical notion of linearity: ‘a line that is single, straight and infinite in both directions’.75 Yet aion’s champions pit these very qualities directly against the state’s linear time, in particular its ‘linear timelines and distinctions between before and after’.76 Now it may be that they mean aion to challenge a specifically discontinuous and unitary form of linearity, but as the summary above showed, these qualities do not exhaust the possible meanings of linearity. Similarly, it is difficult to understand how the ‘pure event’ associated with aion refuses distinctions between before and after but depends on notions of the past and future. Something more is going on with the aionic challenge to state and historical time, but most of the grappling remains hidden by a discourse based on a number of silent, shared assumptions about just what ‘linear’ encompasses.

Similar problems stalk critical scholars’ interest in the non-linear ‘countertemporality’ of alternative knowledge genres.77 For instance, where linear state narratives close down political possibility, films are ‘powerful [because they do] not try to bring [experiences] together in order to form a unity’.78 Now alternative cinematic accounts of events may indeed challenge hegemonic interpretations. However, to gloss them as ‘non-linear’ because they possess no ‘clear temporal order that can be used … to determine the sequence of images and sounds in accordance with a homogeneous movement or a narrative that takes us from the past to the present’ forgets the linearity of the artistic medium itself and the sovereign practices involved in the ‘series of cutting and sequencing’ that the auteur uses to ‘disrupt the very notion of a whole’.79 It makes no sense to claim that cinema’s ‘time-image’ produces ‘“images without subordinating them to coherent movements and linear timelines”’80 unless we ignore the series of singular images that compose a film and have in mind a specific and particular understanding of linearity. Just as hegemonic narratives construct coherent unity, films purposefully construct a non-coherent storyline by manipulating an intrinsically linear series. It is this structural quality that led earlier time scholars to attack determinism by charging that it ‘denied time and freedom by rolling up the future in the present the way the end of a film is already determined at the start of the reel’.81 Such tensions would not be so conspicuous if critical scholars did not persist in positioning them against a murky, libertine notion of ‘linear time’.82