On Ethics of Technology after the Emergence of Being Hybrid
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GIRL: Where are you? Ah, here. Listen, we need to start preparing for the *Terra Critica* Workshop 'Ethics of Critique' at Penn State University. Why is it always me chasing you up to make sure our work is done on time, and never the other way around?

CHEERFUL DESTRUCTIVE CHARACTER: I am asking myself the same question. Why do you always need to function? You should start questioning this bourgeois side of you.

G: The revolution will not be started by you twirling your hipster beard, will it? Honestly, we need to start working. Now is the time. I am leaving for Prague tomorrow to study the margins of capitalism.

CDC: Okay. I think we should focus on Wynter's dense text. It is smart and did not bore me—she has a good eye for crossroads. I am not sure though I support the idea of a third emergence for your species. Your other two were not too successful, and I have no hope for you to ever reach a paradisical state. But happy to discuss your mess.

G (rolls her eyes): Stop deviating. Focus. Regarding Wynter's text, I am intrigued by one thing: the role the human language has for the emergence of our species. She addresses us as *homo narrans* and discusses a gravity of language (2015: 184, 245) and its role for perceiving our world. But we are not the only ones processing human language anymore. Computer systems, which so far struggled to grasp the ambiguities of our language, can now analyse meaning correctly. Machine learning has further advanced natural language processing and artificial intelligence. The effects this has on the role of the human species – or the human narrans – needs to be thought through.

CDC: So you think that there is artificial intelligence, just because machines such as Amazon's Alexa read the Wikipedia article out loud you asked for? Interesting. Indeed, technology has entered a sphere formerly reserved just for your species. I have noticed that this worries you; you seem to fear that it could evolve further to become your master. Hal 9000, Terminator and now a babbling superintelligence. Again you are projecting your own awful qualities, including your stupid urge for power, on technology, still searching for a god you can fear. But nothing new will be thought if you imagine technology in the image of a god who is currently, as Wynter points out, the Western man eager to reign and rule to his own advantage.

G: Stop underestimating me! Or at least approach the problem through a more intelligent angle – why not discuss this end of man as the thinking of being? I guess you read only one of our workshop readings, didn't you? Lucky you, I planned to go somewhere else. I actually found the task pointed out in the workshop invitation quite promising. So my aim was to link technology and our contemporary setting to Wynter's text and Derrida's question 'But who, we?', in order to explore routes for (post)human(ist) ethics. In the twenty-first century, technology has come to play a new and different role for the human

being. That computer systems can now process meaning is a symptom. A symptomatology (Kaiser 2017) is necessary.

CDC: Of course, the bourgeois in you is set to fulfil your workshop task. Quelle surprise! But this might end up somewhere interesting. I can see new ways.

G: Exactly. Wynter points out that the truth in Western civilization has been shaped according to different paradigms following Yaganisako and Delaney (1995). Of those, she describes religion and science in some detail. Both are organized around the notion of truth, she writes in footnote nine, although truth swaps the place from the divine to empirical reality and with it becomes a different form of truth, to be scientifically measurable by each and every human subject. This emancipatory process, however, is tied to one that is excluding and subjugating what is addressed as an anomaly – the negro. And this is where technology comes in. If technology means the arrival of a new paradigm, will this suspend this exclusion? Or will it simply transform the colonial system and integrate it in new and opaque ways?

CDC: Interesting point. Much like Walter I see 'technical revolutions 'as 'fracture points,' fractures that 'bring different political tendencies to the surface' (1927, 17). And indeed, your species does live more and more in technically assisted realities. But as usual you don't make good use of the fractures.

G: I disagree! Technology has been claimed as an important tool by the black struggle, for example the Black Panthers. Remember the 'The Technology Question' (1972) by Huey P. Newton? To him, 'the crucial issue of our time is the control of technology.' (256) This is, he writes, well understood by the U.S., a power that creates 'a reservoir of information' by financing research at universities and experimental labs – that then create an 'information explosion.' And correctly, fifty-five years later, Stanford and Silicon Valley have made sure that it is the 'Californian Ideology' (1996) that rules the world.

CDC: It is indeed very interesting that for Newton the scene of black struggle is technology and not politics. Or as he writes, the American presidency 'is relatively unimportant' (263). I wish that would be even more the case.

G: That is a point he argues well: Discussing the Vietnam war, he explains that Vietnam will not be freed by reclaiming the land. In a globalized world, this land needs to come with the ability to make strong coalitions and develop resources and technology; a technology that is *open* and *shared*. This has not been done by the other superpower of his time, the Russians, who 'damaged the ability of the Third World to resist. They could have given the Third World every technique available to them long ago' (1972: 260).

CDC: Much like Benjamin, Newton understood very well the role technology plays for the *collective* human being. But embracing the technology you love so much, White Girl, will not be a solution anymore. Capitalism has caught up, and hybrids have become the new norm. As Wynter writes, the Western man 'is now itself a no less cosmogonically chartered and encoded and, thereby, fictively constructed and performatively enacted *genre of*

being hybridly human.' (196) But instead that this brought the Western man on an equal level with the rest of the world, he embraced a form of hybridity in which he finds himself again at the top – mastering technology, mastering 'others'. Take Ray Kurzweil's technological singularity movement, which proposes an eternal life for atheists thanks to technology. The movement pretends to be colour-blind, but its subtext is white, naturally.

Girl: We need to move! This is where ethics come in. There are politics within our technically assisted realities. Take Kurzweil or the racism of algorithms. Trained on white faces as their standard, technology fails black people: cameras fail to recognize their faces and an image recognition system insufficiently trained categorized a black women as a gorilla. Whose hybrid reality gets technically assisted and who is being ignored, is political. Linked with this political aspect, there is an ethical question: the question after the relationship of the human species and technology. Critique of technology gains quite a different force, when we understand the ethical dimension technology has. One could argue that the state of technology has lead all Western humans to become hybrids. But what kind of hybrid being they have become can be answered differently depending on the type of relationship between the human and technology. We need to study critically ways of being a hybrid.

CDC: Are you pointing to the fact that the homo narrans of your species has started to address technology as a means of 'human transcendence'? If I understand you correctly, you are worried we enter a new emergence of man(3) but everything stays as it is.

Girl: Exactly. Technology (itself a hybrid) has started to play a new and different role in our human world. It processes meaning. It makes decisions that were made by humans before. And as technology enters our world, we are becoming different human beings. Still, that does not mean this automatically makes a difference (Thiele 2017:44). We know now that everything can look different but stays as wrong as it always has been; to further ignore or exploit the already exploited. Regarding technology, our ethical work is urgent. If we understand ourselves as hybrids, technology is part of who we are. And this means, we need to stop *using* and start *working* with technology, instead of subjugating it. If we understand technology as a system that is linked to and entangled with us and our collective being, or if we understand it as a tool that enables us to prolong individual survival, makes a difference. Each time, technology and humans get located in different roles. So where should it be? Its role has an ethical effect on our planetary condition – this is what we can learn from Newton.

CDC: Intersting if this time, in which your species knows about your repressive tendencies from the start, you will be doing things differently as Wynter hopes. I don't have a lot of …

G: I really don't want to hear your cheerful pessimism, my dear. Let me share our discussion with the group at Penn State and then get back to you. And then we continue. Okay?

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