

Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan
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Editorial

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In Djibril Diop Mambéty's 1992 dark comedy *Hyènes*, an extravagantly wealthy woman returns to her poor village seeking revenge. Her target is the man who humiliated her in her youth by getting her pregnant and abandoning her. It is not only death that she wants, but also justice. She will not murder the man by her own hand, as Charles Tonderai Mudede explains in this issue, but instead asks the village to mete out capital punishment, to murder him for his wrongdoing. In exchange, she will make the town wealthy. As the village reflects upon its principles, the people of the village begin buying things on credit. The wealthy woman will have her way not through the mechanism of justice, but through the mechanism of debt. If the film appears bleak for its conflation of money and justice, it is also a comedy about dividing them in the first place.

The paradoxical phrase "The King is dead, long live The King" originates in medieval Europe, where two divided bodies of the ruler reigned. One was eternal, embodying the principles and responsibilities of the role of ruler, and the other mortal – the human figure inhabiting the role. For Natasha Ginwala, there is a third body in this scheme, and it goes by the name corruption. Corruption is also a passageway between the responsibilities of the sovereign and the corporeal desires of human beings who come into contact with power. It sees an entire world inside the pious division and it goes to work at extracting a benefit from all that passes through this opening, undermining the sanctity of authority as well as the people who are subject to it. It is through this third body of the king that the informal sector or "back room" transforms from a dumping ground of undesirable elements and exchanges into an integral part of a society's basic structure.

In both physics and information theory, the term entropy describes a quantity of heat and energy loss that cannot be converted into mechanical work. For Ana Teixeira Pinto, the second law of thermodynamics is also a social idea that describes the waste or dissipation of labor integral to the supposed equilibrium of any thermodynamic system. As a social idea, entropy directs the poor or unemployed to perform those necessary tasks that do not reflect the ordering principles of society, but are nonetheless crucial to its functioning. In information theory, entropy denotes the element of noise in any signal, or chaos in any orderly system. If allowed to overtake the system, these elements would lead to catastrophe or death. Were they to be eliminated completely, the system would also die. Thermodynamic equilibrium is maintained by managing the constant presence of death within life and waste

within work. This holds true for information ecologies, markets, and national bodies alike.

Thirty years ago, the “Neue Slowenische Kunst” (NSK) collective formed in Yugoslavia and gained a reputation for appropriating constructivist avant-garde signs and repressed Nazi and totalitarian iconography into their own form of hypermodernist Slovene national art. At its three decade anniversary, Boris Groys considers how the collective’s often hilarious mix of highly charged official and subversive ideological signs in Yugoslavia not only precisely targeted the contradictions of the official ideology at the time, but also advocated a universalist message within communism, as well as within and in spite of the era of modernity. Interestingly, for Groys, the universal message of their avant-garde ultra-nationalism at the end of the communist era extended almost seamlessly into the period of global capitalism with the formation of the NSK State, a passport-issuing entity “in time” with citizens but without a territory – a universal state.

The enormous challenge to universalist thinking today is often attributed to its capture by globalization’s market ideology, where the planetary or human scale is only accessible by way of free flowing heteronymous signs. For Reza Negarestani, philosophy can break this stranglehold of heteronymy through its programmatic and functionalist deployment of thought and thinking as an already autonomous enterprise. By establishing and structuring realizable commitments towards their own ends and demands, philosophy still has the capacity to release a full-blown project of emancipation via the extreme rationality of thought’s computability and capacity for abstraction. For Negarestani, thought itself is an ancient artificial intelligence whose resilience stems from its artificial capacity to reinvent itself.

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