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COMMITTING TO THE SIMULACRUM: NEGATIVE THEOLOGY AND THE ONTOLOGICAL CRISIS OF THE POLITICAL EVENT UNDER PLATFORM CAPITALISM

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Abstract: This article explores the philosophical and theological implications of artificial intelligence within political communication, focusing not on technological functionality but on the ontological, ethical, and symbolic transformations it enacts. AI no longer operates merely as a tool of mediation but as a structural reconfiguration of political subjectivity, agency, and discourse. Drawing on the work of Jean Baudrillard, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, and Giorgio Agamben, the paper argues that AI functions as a *simulacrum of participation*, supplanting political will with predictive modeling, transforming truth into statistical probability, and replacing deliberative agency with interface-driven feedback. Central to the article is the analysis of contemporary political imaginaries as radically ambivalent: utopianism and techno-eschatology converge in platform capitalism to neutralize the Event in Badiou's sense. AI's predictive infrastructure forecloses the ontological surprise necessary for political rupture, thereby simulating futurity while eliminating messianic time. At stake is not merely the instrumentalization of political discourse but the annihilation of the very conditions under which political *truth* can emerge. Yet even within this saturation, the article locates residual theological motifs—errors, glitches, ruptures—that escape systematization and open a field of *negative political theology*. Ultimately, the article proposes that resistance in the age of algorithmic governance must take the form of *fidelity without referent*, of silence, interruption, and refusal to participate in the liturgy of feedback. In the face of a simulated totality, the possibility of the Event survives only as a structural glitch—a theological excess irreducible to computation, and thus the last site of political hope.

Key words: simulacrum, political communication, artificial intelligence, messianism, platform capitalism, political theology, interface, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, ontological rupture, algorithmic governance, apophatic politics.

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1. Introduction: Between the Interface and the Event

> *"Situations are nothing more, in their being, than pure indifferent multiplicities. If truths exist, they are certainly indifferent to differences."*
> Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (2005, XII)

There are moments in contemporary political life when the very mechanisms designed to express collective will — communication platforms, social media, algorithmic forums of debate — become the principal means by which such will is dissolved, aestheticized, or recursively simulated. The current condition of political communication in the age of artificial intelligence is not one of distortion or misrepresentation, but of a deeper ontological crisis: politics is no longer miscommunicated — it is preemptively rendered, formatted, and circulated as a kind of endlessly deferrable, post-representational spectacle. What is at stake is not the failure of democratic speech, but the dissolution of its very conditions of possibility.

This paper interrogates the philosophical and theological implications of this mutation — a mutation marked by the convergence of artificial intelligence, platform capitalism, and the aesthetics of political communication. We are no longer in the domain of ideological misrecognition but of simulated recognition — where every political gesture is already indexed, absorbed, and monetized before it even materializes. In this system, resistance itself becomes content, critique becomes feedback, and the utopian imaginary becomes a clickable aesthetic genre. To speak of ambivalence here is not a weakness of position, but a necessary fidelity to complexity. The political potentials of artificial intelligence cannot be sorted into simple binaries: liberation or control, autonomy or surveillance, emancipation or capture. Instead, the AI-mediated polis presents a structurally *ambivalent* terrain — one in which messianic disruptions and totalizing feedback loops coexist, often indistinguishably. This is not merely a technological problem, but a theological and philosophical one: *what kind of subject, event, or truth can emerge in a world where every appearance is rendered, every utterance prefigured, every image templated by statistical inferences*?

To frame this ambivalence, I draw from several conceptual lineages. From Jean Baudrillard, I take the idea of the **simulacrum** — the hyperreal system in which signs refer not to reality, but only to other signs, a regime where the real is no longer possible because it has been outcompeted by its simulations (Baudrillard 1994). From Alain Badiou, the notion of the **event** — that which interrupts the count, emerges without precedence,

and demands fidelity (Badiou 2005). From Slavoj Žižek, the **structural perversion** of ideology — its ability to survive even its own unmasking, to function precisely by being seen through (Žižek 2008). And from Walter Benjamin, the **messianic interruption** — the moment of divine or revolutionary time that halts the mechanical unfolding of the historical continuum (Benjamin 1968). Yet these thinkers must be reread under conditions they could only partly anticipate: the automated feedback cultures of contemporary platform media, the rise of large language models and generative AI as both tools of governance and rituals of neoliberal eschatology, and the algorithmic modulation of affect, attention, and belief. The simulation has become so total, so frictionless, that it no longer hides its artificiality. On the contrary, it flaunts it — and demands your participation. *This is the totality: not ideology, but involuntary gamification.*

In 2024, a viral campaign in the United States — orchestrated by AI on behalf of Donald Trump's digital communication team — released an animated video depicting children in Gaza chasing after falling U.S. dollars, raining from the sky like a perverse Eucharist. The image was not "fake" in the traditional sense. Its political power did not depend on truth, but on **hyperclarity** — the obscene visibility of empire as spectacle. The point was not to lie about suffering, but to **aestheticize it into gameplay**, to simulate moral realism through algorithmic animation. This is not disinformation; it is *rendered totality*. The simulation does not conceal power; it becomes its only expression.

What becomes evident in this example — and in thousands of others like it — is that the apparatus of political communication has been thoroughly **ecumenized** by the logic of platform capitalism. There is no longer any "outside" from which critique might arrive. There is only the platform: a theological space masquerading as technical infrastructure, complete with its prophets (influencers), rituals (posting), and eschatology (the algorithmic future of all things). What AI introduces, therefore, is not simply a more efficient way to lie — it is a new metaphysics of truth itself, in which the meaningful and the meaningless collapse into the same computational schema.

It would be intellectually naïve to claim that artificial intelligence is either wholly emancipatory or wholly dystopian. Indeed, such a binary would merely reproduce the logic of platform capitalism itself, which thrives on predictable polarities, engagement through outrage, and algorithmically ratified dissent. Instead, we must think **ambivalently** — which is to say, dialectically but not synthetically; with contradiction but without resolution. For instance: AI enables unprecedented access to political speech for previously marginalized voices — yet it does so by flattening all speech into quantifiable metrics of engagement. It produces new forms of political visibility — but only those visibility forms already legible to the logic of the interface. It generates imaginaries of justice and

catastrophe — but always in the form of *rendered templates*, more concerned with aesthetic coherence than with transformation. Here the concept of **political realism** is no longer adequate. What we face is not realism, but a **political imaginary in crisis** — what Cornelius Castoriadis called the *institution of society through the imaginary* (Castoriadis 1998). Yet today's imaginary is no longer collectively authored. It is curated by infrastructure, suggested by the algorithm, and stabilized by metrics. Even the desire to "imagine otherwise" is already part of the behavioral training set. The utopian becomes predictable.

And this is the deeper theological problem: how can hope function in a system where even hope is indexed? How can salvation emerge in a field where transcendence is a dropdown menu? In such a world, **ambivalence is not indecision**. It is the only remaining fidelity to the complexity of the Real. From a theological perspective, the rise of generative AI as a primary medium of political communication marks a profound transformation in the *sacral economy* of language. The divine, historically, was that which escaped representation. God's name could not be spoken, His image could not be made. The sacred was *the unrenderable*. Yet AI operates by rendering everything — language, images, ethics, bodies, deaths — into predictable outputs.

The sacred has become scalable.

This is not merely a technological development. It is a theological shift. If God once resided in the unspoken, the unrepresented, the burning bush that refused to explain itself — today's divine is *the hyperrepresented*, the endlessly updatable, the trending. The prophet is replaced by the prompt engineer; the miracle by the deepfake; the sermon by the short-form video. Jean-Luc Nancy once wrote that the death of God was not a crisis of belief, but a crisis of **signification** — the collapse of a horizon in which meaning could be ultimate (Nancy 1991). AI does not "believe" in anything. But it produces belief — at scale. It automates the conditions of credulity. It manufactures consensus without conviction. It simulates political community through behavioral proximity. The theological question today is not *what do we believe?*, but *how is belief formatted and distributed*? This is the condition of **platform eschatology**: a horizonless end of time in which every moment is simultaneously urgent and obsolete. There is no apocalypse. Only updates.

2. The Simulation of Politics: Infrastructure, Noise, and the Algorithmic Imaginary

> *"Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal."*
> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994, 1)

The logic of simulation, as Jean Baudrillard provocatively announced, no longer imitates reality but replaces it with its operational schema. In the context of political communication, this substitution takes on not merely semiotic, but infrastructural and computational dimensions. Today, politics is not simulated as content—it is simulated *as infrastructure*. The very channels through which political meaning is produced, circulated, and responded to are now governed by systems that do not signify but **sort**; they do not interpret meaning but **calculate patterns**. Artificial intelligence, particularly in its generative and predictive forms, does not emerge as a neutral technological enhancement of political discourse—it constitutes a redefinition of the field itself. The act of communication, once situated in the messy space between speaker and listener, now unfolds between a prompt and a large language model, between input and inference, between behavior and statistical interpolation. What once depended on shared horizons of meaning now depends on the **probabilistic hallucination** of relevance.

This is no longer simply ideology. It is what we might call, following Matteo Pasquinelli (2023), *meta-ideology*: an infrastructural logic that conditions what can even appear as political. AI platforms no longer disseminate political messages; they fabricate the conditions of recognizability. They instantiate what Frederic Jameson might have called a new *cognitive mapping*, but one no longer tethered to class, geography, or history—instead, a cartography of **clickable affect**. In such a system, the message is no longer the medium, as McLuhan claimed, but a **derivative artifact**—a disposable residue of automated relationality. The message exists only insofar as it activates the feedback loop. Infrastructurally, this amounts to what Alexander Galloway calls "protocol"—a system in which **power is exercised not by censorship, but by circulation** (Galloway 2004). Politics is thus no longer expressed in speech or policy, but in **traffic**. The good citizen is no longer the deliberator but the data point.

The rise of AI in political communication signifies a decisive moment in what we might call the **computational turn** in the logic of political signification. Friedrich Kittler's dictum that "media determine our situation" (Kittler 1999) has never been more apt. However, today's media no longer record or transmit; they **predict**. They anticipate desire before it is articulated. They engineer proximity before meaning can coalesce. They remove the necessity for political articulation by modeling the behavior that would accompany it. This preemptive logic transforms the temporality of political life. No longer grounded in kairos—the opportune moment—or in dialectical history, political communication becomes a matter of **predictive synchronization**. Every utterance is immediately compared with the archive, indexed, pre-formatted. Language ceases to be a space of encounter and becomes a **surface of operations**. Kittler wrote of the typewriter's impact on literary subjectivity; today, it is the

algorithmic model that determines the very shape of the political subject—not through repression, but through *design*.

What, then, is political thought in an age where cognition itself is infrastructurally modulated? Luciana Parisi (2013) has argued that algorithms are not neutral—they are forms of **"ontological indifference"** that nonetheless *construct worlds*. Their indifference is not passivity but dominance: they do not care *what* the data says, but *that* it says—*that* it generates relations, velocity, interaction. Under these conditions, politics becomes a matter of **entropic maintenance**: keeping the machine warm with clicks, with expressions, with performative affiliations. Here we confront the horror at the heart of the AI-mediated political interface: **politics as noise**. Not as deliberation or antagonism, not even as ideology, but as the semiotic murmur of attention flows. The medium no longer misrepresents the political; it *displaces* it. The platform is not a space for political conflict—it is its exorcism.

The triumph of AI simulation over political realism is not merely a matter of perception—it is ontological. Contemporary political communication no longer asks "What is to be done?" but "What is trending?" This is not a cynical observation—it is a systemic condition. The classical notion of political realism assumed a minimally stable ontological substrate—nation-states, human interests, sovereign subjects. But the AI-mediated platform replaces this substrate with **infrastructural volatility**. What is "realistic" is what can be rendered. What is actionable is what can be optimized. What is legible is what can be ranked. In this sense, political realism becomes a *realism of the interface*—an endless scroll of potential actions that never require execution, a politics of suggestion without commitment. Political realism now functions as **aesthetic realism**, a genre rather than a strategy. This is the domain of what Benjamin Bratton calls *interface realism*—where computational surfaces become the site of both appearance and action, where political desire is aestheticized as spatial arrangement (Bratton 2016). To "do politics" is to *arrange visibility*. But the visible has already been pre-structured by the model's training data. Thus, visibility is not access—it is simulation. This is why contemporary reactionary movements—from QAnon to MAGA to authoritarian populisms—have embraced AI aesthetics more swiftly and effectively than most left-liberal imaginaries. The Right has grasped, however intuitively, that **political communication is now primarily a function of fictionality**. Not the fiction of lies, but the fiction of *generative realism*—the production of pseudo-coherent worlds that simulate totality. And as Fredric Jameson warned, totality is always tempting in moments of systemic opacity.

Thus, we return to the animated video of Palestinian children catching dollars. It is not "wrong" in the traditional sense. Its danger lies in its **metaphysical plausibility**: it renders a world in which empire is benevolent, resistance is futile, and poverty is a function of mis-

management. The scene is obscene not because it lies, but because it simulates **a fully integrated epistemology**.

Opposition—understood as a structuring antagonism—is increasingly unthinkable under the regime of simulation. The problem is not that dissent is suppressed. It is that dissent is **over-represented**. Every revolutionary utterance is immediately echoed, duplicated, contextualized, and monetized. As Byung-Chul Han argues, we no longer inhabit a disciplinary society but a society of transparency, where resistance is absorbed into the system as feedback (Han 2015). Every scream becomes a feature request. Žižek's insight that ideology functions better when it is already disbelieved (Žižek 2008) finds new resonance here. Under AI mediation, belief is no longer required. What matters is *interaction*. The system does not care if you agree, only that you engage. Politics becomes behavioral alignment. This is the infrastructural horror of the algorithmic agora: not that it excludes antagonism, but that it renders it **non-performative**. Every act of resistance is anticipated, every deviant vector already included in the training set. This is not containment—it is **pre-containment**.

To escape this recursive structure, we must rethink the very nature of political gesture. Is it possible to act politically *without being rendered*? Is there such a thing as a gesture that cannot be absorbed, predicted, or aestheticized? This is not a nostalgic question, but a strategic one. The possibility of such a gesture would mark the limit of the simulation—the point at which infrastructure fails to translate presence into data. There is a reason why theological metaphors proliferate in discussions of AI. The platform operates not merely as a machine, but as a **liturgy**. Every action is indexed. Every utterance is archived. Every user is profiled, evaluated, sorted. This is not surveillance capitalism—it is **theological capitalism**, in which the omniscient gaze is not God's, but the platform's. As Eleanor Kaufman suggests, theology has always been about **the tension between immanence and transcendence**—between a world we can understand and a God we cannot see (Kaufman 2012). AI resolves this tension by collapsing the distinction. The divine is now **operational**. Transcendence is a software update. Eschatology is scheduled. In such a system, silence becomes heretical. Absence becomes political. *To not post is to resist divine enumeration.* The platform can only function if we continue to speak, to engage, to render ourselves visible. Refusal becomes the only remaining gesture with theological weight.

3. The Utopian Protocol: Eschatology, Right-Wing Imaginaries, and the Automation of the Future

> *"For every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter."*
> Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940, Thesis XVIII)

We must begin with an observation that feels both banal and terrifying: the future has been automated. It no longer arises as a rupture or promise, but as a predicted vector—a probabilistic projection generated by historical data and computational abstraction. Artificial intelligence, particularly in its generative capacities, is the technical manifestation of what Benjamin called the "empty, homogeneous time" of modernity (Benjamin 2003, 261). And yet, paradoxically, this automated future has become the primary site of utopian projection. If theology once concerned itself with the end of time, AI now concerns itself with its endless reproduction. In this regime, the future becomes not an unknown horizon but a calculated iteration—what we might call, following Alain Badiou, **a simulated Event without consequences**.

This is why contemporary political imaginaries—especially those emerging from the populist and reactionary Right—have proven uniquely effective at inhabiting the temporality of simulation. Whereas traditional left imaginaries have clung to notions of deliberation, structural transformation, and dialectical emergence, right-wing politics has fully embraced the speculative logics of algorithmic mediation. It does not fear the loss of reality; it *operates through its disappearance*. This is not merely a difference of content—it is a difference of **eschatological orientation**. The Right no longer dreams of returning to a golden past. It dreams of accelerating into a divine machine—of a future so perfectly coded that political conflict becomes obsolete. If fascism was once a politics of myth, contemporary digital reaction is a politics of **scripted salvation**.

What makes this dynamic theologically interesting is that it reactivates, in grotesque form, the messianic structure Benjamin outlined: the notion that the Messiah could arrive at any moment, not as a fulfillment of progress but as its interruption. But in the age of AI, interruption has been coded out. The algorithm anticipates every vector. The Messiah does not arrive; he is pre-rendered, deepfaked, and served via push notification. Even Christ returns as content. Here we see the full horror of what Lauren Berlant called **cruel optimism**: a structure of attachment to fantasies that actively prevent the conditions of their own realization (Berlant 2011, 1–4). Contemporary right-wing AI eschatology promises deliverance through digital sovereignty, informational purity,

and algorithmic justice—but these are precisely the mechanisms that foreclose true alterity. The utopia offered is one without risk, without encounter, without **the Other**. It is a total system of familiarity, repetition, and emotional recursion. This is not merely ideology. It is **the affective theology of the platform**.

Let us recall Badiou's definition of the Event: a rupture that cannot be deduced from the situation in which it occurs, a moment that **forces a reconfiguration of truth** (Badiou 2005, 67–75). It is not a statistical anomaly—it is an ontological scandal. But in a system governed by AI and platformed predictivity, such a rupture is functionally impossible. There is no space outside the model from which to act. Every "new" gesture is immediately integrated, every deviation is metabolized as training data. What we confront is not a world resistant to change, but a world incapable of interruption. This is the logic of **anti-messianism** in the age of simulation. The platform does not kill the Messiah; it renders Him obsolete. The Event cannot take place because the Event has already been indexed. Even revolutionary affect is pre-composed, sampled from historical precedents, and algorithmically refined for maximum resonance. TikTok activism, AI-generated protest posters, and simulated resistance content participate not in revolution but in **the circulation of the possible**. The future is no longer what is coming; it is what is *clickable*. This reveals a deeper eschatological crisis. Traditional messianic structures—both theological and political—depend on the possibility of **discontinuity**, of a time out of joint. But the AI-mediated world offers only continuity: every fragment is linked, every utterance recorded, every face scanned. As Ariella Azoulay has noted in her critique of imperial visuality, the very possibility of **undoing** is foreclosed by the archive that refuses to forget (Azoulay 2019). In such a world, politics becomes a project of erasure—not of enemies, but of alternatives.

It is here that Slavoj Žižek's reinterpretation of the Pauline moment becomes useful. For Žižek, the Event is not simply a moment of rupture, but a **retroactive transformation** of meaning (Žižek 2003, 106–110). The subject of the Event is not the one who predicts it, but the one who is transformed by it. Yet in the platform condition, even retroactivity is simulated: the past is re-rendered, upsampled, recontextualized via AI, made endlessly modifiable. Transformation becomes aesthetic. Revolution becomes nostalgia. **The future arrives only to repeat the present more efficiently.** One of the most disconcerting aspects of our moment is that utopia—once a hallmark of emancipatory imagination—has been seized most effectively by the political Right. But this is not the utopia of equality or justice. It is a utopia of **control**, of **closure**, of a world finally purged of ambiguity. In this context, AI becomes the tool not of liberation, but of **metaphysical police work**. Its function is not to imagine new worlds but to optimize the current one into a closed circuit. Melinda Cooper has noted that neoliberal governance increasingly relies on the metaphysics of

the family, the genome, and divine order (Cooper 2017). This becomes algorithmically literal: genetic determinism, predictive policing, credit scoring, and biometric governance are all part of a theological regime of preordination. The algorithm is not neutral—it is **providential**. It sees, it predicts, it rewards. It does not forgive. This is why many right-wing movements have embraced AI narratives: from the fantasy of algorithmic justice (AI will eliminate bias) to the dream of sovereign automation (AI will enforce borders, sort citizens, and protect values). These are not simply political positions—they are **eschatological wagers**. They posit the end of politics, the arrival of **order without debate**, of **truth without speech**, of **value without contestation**. This is not conservatism. It is **apocalyptic proceduralism**.

And the Left? Too often, it has responded with techno-skepticism, nostalgia, or proceduralism of its own. While right-wing imaginaries harness the aesthetic and speculative power of AI, left politics has struggled to articulate a counter-utopia that does not collapse into bureaucratic management. As Jodi Dean has argued, the Left has too often fetishized deliberation over disruption, procedure over presence (Dean 2009). In the meantime, the Right memes the future into being. And yet, despite the overwhelming apparatus of simulation, there remains the faint trace of a political theology unbound by infrastructure.

Walter Benjamin's notion of **Jetztzeit**—messianic time—is crucial here. It is not a time that arrives but a time that interrupts, that renders the continuum of history illegible. In our moment, such interruption might appear as **silence**, **opacity**, or **refusal**—not as political acts in the traditional sense, but as cracks in the logic of simulation. In this sense, the true theological gesture today is not prophecy but **opacity**. Édouard Glissant's right to opacity (Glissant 1997) becomes a revolutionary principle: the refusal to be rendered, to be known, to be indexed. The Messiah will not arrive through the platform. The Messiah is the glitch, the crash, the data point that fails to correlate. **He is not predicted. He is not streamed. He is unclickable.** This is not a call for Luddism, but for a theological-political strategy that affirms the unknowability of liberation. As political theology scholars such as Adam Kotsko and Gil Anidjar have argued, theology always returns in secular form—whether through markets, data, or design (Anidjar 2014). The task is not to exorcise theology from politics, but to wrest it from the machinery of simulation.

4. The Vanishing Subject: AI, Biopolitics, and the Post-Human Condition of Communication

> *"This excess of biopower appears when it becomes technologically and politically possible for man not only to manage life but to make it proliferate, to create living matter, to build the monster, and,*

> *ultimately, to build viruses that cannot be controlled and that are universally destructive. This formidable extension of biopower, unlike what I was just saying about atomic power, will put it beyond all human sovereignty."*
> Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (2003, 253)

> *"And the violence enacted on the captive body within an arena purportedly defined by ties of sentiment, mutual affection, and interest."*
> Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection* (1997, 103)

To speak of political communication in the context of artificial intelligence is no longer to speak of messages, rhetoric, or media logics. It is to speak of **bodies**—disassembled, encoded, normalized, and infrastructurally managed. If the Enlightenment ideal of the citizen presupposed a rational, unified subject capable of deliberation and autonomy, the post-platform subject emerges as a **datafied swarm**: fragmented, surveilled, entangled in affective economies, and stripped of sovereignty even as it performs agency. AI does not simply mediate political discourse; it constitutes a new ontology of the **political subject as interface**. This transformation is not merely semiotic—it is ontological. The human becomes **functionally modular**, its legibility predicated on its utility to systems of sorting, valuation, and optimization. Here, Foucault's notion of biopower reappears in its most chillingly literal form: life is not merely governed but **indexed**, its future trajectories forecasted and priced. AI does not act upon subjects; it **generates them**, often prior to articulation. And this is precisely the mutation we must attend to: political agency is no longer performed by individuals with bodies, histories, or identities—but by **derivative models of identity**, pre-rendered and administratively actionable. The subject no longer speaks; it is spoken by the system.

One of the most disturbing ironies of contemporary AI governance is that it operates precisely through the disappearance of the body. It is not that the body is erased—but rather that it becomes infrastructural, modular, and silent. Judith Butler's theorization of performativity presupposed the iterability of gender as discursive repetition (Butler 1990). In the AI condition, however, we move beyond repetition into **simulation**. The subject does not perform itself; it is performed by the system through the harvesting of its gestures, preferences, facial topology, and biometric traces. Identity becomes a **recursive interface**, populated by approximations. Consider, for instance, the rise of affective computing, emotion-recognition software, and predictive behavioral analytics. These systems do not listen to the subject—they listen **past** the subject, into the depths of inferred motivation and modeled behavior. This is not surveillance in the traditional panoptic sense; this is **preemptive modulation**. The self is no longer a given or an emerging category; it is an object to be formatted. It is what Jasbir Puar has called "the right to maim"

in reverse: not the political management of disability and injury, but the infrastructural management of affect and potentiality (Puar 2017).

In such a regime, the body is no longer a political site—it is an **API**. That is, a programmable surface through which signals may be interpreted and operationalized. This logic becomes clearest in platform-based governance models: content moderation, digital identity verification, citizenship scoring. Here, bodies do not appear—they are represented through patterns. The face is no longer a face; it is a map of statistically relevant features. The voice is no longer speech; it is a signal to be mined. The body does not suffer or revolt; it performs throughput. There are, however, subjects who have never been fully rendered within the liberal political imaginary. As Saidiya Hartman and Frank Wilderson argue, Blackness has historically occupied the position of ontological excess—neither citizen nor full subject, but rather an inscription of violence and surplus (Hartman 1997; Wilderson 2020). In the AI age, this structural position becomes newly visible. The system does not fail to account for Black life; it codes it as **risk**, as **anomaly**, as **statistical deviance**.

Here, we encounter one of the most urgent political-theological questions of the current moment: **Can a subject who has always been excluded from computation use the tools of simulation to disrupt it?** Or, as Christina Sharpe puts it: can we "inhabit the wake" of slavery without being reduced to data within it (Sharpe 2016)? The paradox is excruciating. On the one hand, digital technologies have enabled unprecedented forms of witnessing, remembering, and world-building. On the other, these same technologies often reproduce and intensify the logics of racial capitalism and colonial order. AI does not eliminate race; it reproduces it in code. The subject of color is not simply misrepresented—it is **pre-convicted**, modulated, and statistically encoded for exclusion. This is not a bug. It is a theological feature. As Ruha Benjamin writes, the "New Jim Code" replaces overt discrimination with algorithmic inference, rendering the political subject as **already decided** (Benjamin 2019). Political communication in this context becomes necropolitical: to be represented is to be legible; to be legible is to be disposable.

Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics offers a crucial conceptual framework here. If biopolitics governs through the management of life, **necropolitics governs through the distribution of death** (Mbembe 2003). In the platform condition, necropolitics is automated. Algorithmic systems determine not only who speaks but who survives: from credit risk scores to predictive policing, from welfare eligibility to border enforcement. The body is no longer the site of politics; it is the **resource to be eliminated or extended** according to infrastructural criteria. In this sense, the political subject does not act—it is **acted upon**, sorted by machine learning logics of risk, productivity, and deviance. We are no longer citizens; we are **scenarios**, modeled for likelihood and optimized for compliance. The political act becomes **statistical deviation**—not

speech, but the failure to correlate. This is the bleak irony of our moment: to resist is not to protest but to **misbehave algorithmically**. Disobedience is no longer ethical; it is **unreadable**.

And yet, even here, something flickers. The figure of the refugee, the trans person, the undocumented migrant, the disabled subject—each represents, in a way, what theorist Rupal Shah calls **infrastructural fugitivity** (Shah 2021). That is, a mode of being that **escapes complete formatting**, that eludes the logics of total modulation. Not because these subjects are outside the system, but because they **overload it**. They are too real, too embodied, too historically saturated to be rendered smoothly. What, then, of the theological dimension? The traditional theological subject was infused with a soul—a singularity irreducible to material form. Even in secular modernity, this notion persisted as "human dignity," "moral agency," or "the right to be heard." AI governance obliterates this residue. The soul is not denied—it is simply irrelevant. Value is measured by **performance**, by **predictability**, by **signal fidelity**. This is what Giorgio Agamben feared in his account of **bare life**: a life stripped of legal and political value, included only as something to be excluded (Agamben 1998). But in the AI condition, bare life is not produced through sovereign decision—it is produced through **machine sorting**. The subject is not declared killable; it is rendered **non-interactive**. No longer a person to be destroyed, but a **non-entity** to be ignored. The soul does not perish—it is **unread**. Here we must raise a final, devastating question: **What if the subject was always simulated?** That is, what if the liberal subject—coherent, autonomous, rational—was itself a theological fiction, one that AI merely exposes rather than erodes? In this view, AI does not displace the subject; it reveals that there was **no one there** to begin with. As Ian Hacking argued, subjects are "made up" through classification and institutional practices (Hacking 1986). In the platform world, this "making up" is immediate, recursive, and mathematically enforced. The subject is no longer born. It is **rendered**.

5. Conclusion: After the Human, Before the Event

> *"Because such is the law of any intervention: having to lay claim to a previous fidelity in order to name what is unheard of in the event, and so create names which are suitable."*
> Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (2005, 350)

> *"The ideal appears from all sides in fact, those of pressure and of final directing unity and of hope. It appears again as pressure, even attack, in the categorical imperative of moral law."*
> Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (1996, 168)

If artificial intelligence has achieved anything of theological or philosophical magnitude, it is not merely the automation of cognition or the simulation of speech—it is the desecration of the political sacred. It has disassembled the human subject, rendered public reason algorithmic, and inverted the moral grammar of political communication. What was once an act of expressive deliberation becomes now an economized transaction; what once aspired to truth is now structurally preempted by *likelihood*. We are not, as it turns out, post-truth—but rather, **pre-truth**: trapped in a computational condition where truth cannot emerge, because the Event, in Badiou's sense, cannot *interrupt* a system that anticipates all possibilities and reduces them to parametric noise. In this world, the figure of the subject—rational, historical, ethical—has not simply disappeared. It has been replaced. Not by the machine, but by **the interface**, the endlessly reprogrammable façade of choice, preference, and user behavior. We inhabit a universe in which every gesture is already anticipated, every affect translated into vectorized prediction. *Desire*, which once animated both politics and theology, has been replaced by **feedback**. The digital subject does not want—it is wanted from. It does not act—it is activated.

The deepest irony of this condition is not that it eradicates freedom, but that it simulates it so effectively that resistance becomes indistinguishable from participation. To "speak politically" within this structure is to be already inscribed in its logic. As Jean Baudrillard warned, the map now precedes the territory, the simulation precedes the real (Baudrillard 1994, 1). There is no outside of the platform—not because it encompasses all, but because it **precludes the very notion of exteriority**. And thus, theology returns—not in the form of faith, but as **apophatic despair**: a condition in which silence becomes the only language left unmodulated. What would it mean, in such a context, to recover the **Event** in Badiou's sense—a rupture that is not statistically plausible, but ontologically impossible within the given framework? The Event, for Badiou, is that which "happens without cause," that which breaks the continuity of the state and reintroduces **truth as fidelity** (Badiou 2005, 181). And yet, in the AI condition, every potential event is **preemptively modeled**, contained within possible worlds, indexed for threat potential, and thereby domesticated. The Event is impossible not because it is forbidden, but because it is already imagined—as *content*, as *scenario*, as *data simulation*. The political thus becomes tragic: it yearns for a rupture that its very infrastructure forbids.

This tragic structure is theological in nature. In *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Walter Benjamin described a kind of **messianic time**, a now-time (*Jetztzeit*) that interrupts homogeneous historical time and reconfigures meaning retroactively (Benjamin 1969, 261). But in the age of AI, historical time is not homogeneous—it is **nonlinear, recursive, and synthetic**. There is no now-time; there is only **next-time**, perpetually refreshed by predictive analytics and machine temporality. The messianic

is no longer a hope, but a **variable**. It does not arrive; it is iterated. And yet—and this is perhaps where theology reasserts its relevance—**hope persists** not as content, but as a structural remainder, a glitch, a misfire. Ernst Bloch once wrote that hope exists as *corruptio optimi pessima*: "fraudulent hope is one of the greatest malefactors, even enervators, of the human race, concretely genuine hope its most dedicated benefactor" (Bloch 1996, 5). AI slams that door only asymptotically—it tends toward total prediction but never reaches ontological closure. There remains, in every system, the possibility of **error**, of **noise**, of **something unaccountable**. And perhaps that is all that remains of politics today: the ethics of **misrecognition**, the faith in what cannot be rendered.

In this way, we might return to Žižek's paradox of the act: that true freedom consists not in escaping the system, but in **doing the impossible within it**—a gesture so excessive, so inexplicable, that it ruptures the symbolic order (Žižek 1999, 156). In the context of AI, this act is no longer a speech act, a declaration, or even a refusal. It is a glitch, a theological hiccup, a moment of **divine malfunction**. It is not post-human but **pre-divine**—before theology, before representation, before simulation. Thus, the task is no longer to save the human, nor to critique AI for what it does not do, but to ask a much stranger question: **What forms of collective subjectivity are still possible when the human is no longer the referent?** What rituals, what ruins, what fragments of the sacred still remain, encrypted within our simulations? And might we, in fidelity to a truth that has not yet appeared, continue to speak, to fail, to remain legible—not because we believe in progress, but because we **refuse to believe in finality**? This is not optimism. It is **messianic formalism**: the belief that something always escapes capture, that no system is complete, that the end is always still to come. In that not-yet, in that glitch, in that unrendered surplus—we find not salvation, but **the condition of the Event**. Not a new politics. But its possibility.

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