

V E C T O R

The vector is viral. Burroughs: "The word is now a virus. [313]
The flu virus may once have been a healthy lung cell. It is now a parasitic organism that invades and damages the lungs. The word may once have been a healthy neural cell. It is now a parasitic organism that invades and damages the central nervous system."* And the means by which the word, or the virus, moves from host to host is the vector. The vector is the way and means by which a given pathogen travels from one population to another. Water is a vector for cholera, bodily fluids for HIV. By extension, a vector may be any means by which anything moves. Vectors of transport move objects and subjects. Vectors of communication move information.

Telegraph, telephone, television, telecommunications: [314]
these terms name not just particular vectors, but a general abstract capacity that they bring into the world and expand. All are forms of telesthesia, or perception at a distance. Starting with the telegraph, the vector of telesthesia accelerates the speed at which information moves relative to all other things. Telesthesia produces the abstract speed by which all other speeds are measured and monitored.

[315] The development of the vector creates the space within which the abstraction of property brings more and more of nature under the reign of the commodity. Marx: “Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange—the means of communication and transport—the annihilation of space by time—becomes an extraordinary necessity for it.”* Only it is not capital, but the vector, that provides the material means for this annihilation of particular traditions and envelopes. Capital, as a stage of the abstraction of property, enters the world only through the material development of the vector which carries it, and all forms of property, further and further into the world.

[316] The extraordinary necessity of the vector for capital leads to the capture of capital and its interests by a new ruling class that exploits capital’s dependence on the vector—the vectoralist class. The vectoralist class emerges out of capital just as capital emerged out of the pastoralist class, as a specialized interest that gravitates towards the most abstract aspect of property, and discovers the leverage that control over abstraction can bring in relation to the rest of its former class. As the vectors of telesthesia differentiate communication from the vectors of transport, information emerges as an abstraction ripe for commodification in all of its aspects—as a stock, as a flow, as a vector.

[317] Even more than the pastoralist and capitalist classes before it, the vectoralist class depends on the advances hackers produce in order to maintain their competitive advantage and

the profitability of their enterprises. Where owners of land and capital may dominate through the sheer level of investment required, the vectoral class relies on a form of property subject to constant hacks that create qualitatively new forms of production and devalue the old means of production. The vectoral class invests the surplus it appropriates into hacking to an unprecedented degree, and bases the fortunes of its enterprises on intellectual property. Its investment in hacking is hardly disinterested. Its search is for ever-new ways to vectoralize information in the form of a commodity.

Once information has become the object of a regime of property, a vectoral class emerges who extract its margin from the ownership of information. This class competes among itself for the most lucrative ways to commodify information as a resource. With the commodification of information comes its vectoralization. Extracting a surplus from information requires technologies capable of transporting information through space, but also through time. The storage of information may be as valuable as its transmission, and the archive is a vector through time just as telesthesia is a vector through space. The whole potential of space and time becomes the object of the vectoral class. [318]

The vectoral class comes into its own once it is in possession of powerful technologies for vectoralizing information. Information becomes something separate from the material conditions of its production and circulation. It is extracted from particular localities, cultures, forms, and distributed in [319]

ever widening circles, under the sign of property. The abstraction of information from the world becomes, in turn, the means of abstracting the world from itself.

[320] The vectoral class may commodify information stocks or flows as well as communication vectors. A stock of information is an archive, a body of information maintained through time that has enduring value. A flow of information is the capacity to extract information of temporary value out of events and to distribute it widely and quickly. A vector is the means of achieving either the temporal distribution of a stock, or the spatial distribution of a flow of information. Vectoral power as a class power arises from the ownership and control of all three aspects.

[321] The vector not only abstracts information from the particular conditions of its production, it abstracts every other relation with which it comes into contact. The expansion of the reach of markets, states, armies, cultures, from local to national to supranational forms, is conditioned by the development of the vectors along which information travels to thread them together. The vector traverses any envelope, expanding it, exploding it, or provoking it to lick and seal itself tight.

[322] The irreversible abstraction of information comes at the point where vectors of telesthesia are hacked into being that free information from the velocity of movement of objects and subjects. Once information can move faster than people or things, it becomes the means by which people and things are to be meshed together in the interests of productive ac-

tivity in ever expanding envelopes. Once the vectors of telesthesia, with their superior speed, seize control of vectors of movement, a third nature arises with the power to direct and shape second nature. But like any everyday experience—it seems “natural.” The vector becomes natural as third nature becomes historical.

The vectors of movement abstract from the geography of nature, and provide the axes along which collective human labor transforms nature into second nature. Second nature offers a new home in the world, in which freedom is wrested from necessity, but where class rule imposes yet new necessities on the producing classes. The vectors of telesthesia further abstract second nature from itself, producing a third nature in which new freedoms are wrested from necessity—and new necessities produced by class domination. But as the vector brings more and more abstraction into the world, it also opens more and toward the virtual. The geography of third nature becomes a virtual geography. [323]

Just as second nature extracts itself from nature yet depends on it, so too does third nature extract itself from nature and depend on it. Third nature is not transcendence or escape from nature, but merely the release of the virtuality of nature into the world, as the production of collective human labor. [324]

With the coming of telesthesia, the communication vector becomes a power over and above both nature as well as second nature. The vector intensifies the exploitation of nature, [325]

by providing an ever-present third nature, within which nature is grasped as an object, as a quantifiable resource, to be commodified and exploited by the ruling classes. The world itself becomes objectified.

[326] Each ruling class of the vectoral era appropriates the world as it finds it, and transforms it into a world ripe for appropriation by its successor, deploying ever more abstract means. The pastoralist class appropriates nature as its property, and extracts a surplus from it. The capitalist class transforms it toward a second nature, a built environment in which the resistance of nature to objectification is mitigated, if not overcome. The vectoralist class appropriates second nature as the material conditions for the reign of a third nature, in which resources both natural and social in origin may be represented as things.

[327] The vector intensifies the setting to work of the producing classes, but in the form of commodity production. Not just nature is objectified and quantified, but so too is second nature. The producing classes find themselves transformed into objects of quantification and calculation. Third nature becomes the environment within which the production of second nature accelerates and intensifies, becoming global in its apprehension of itself. Second nature, in the grip of a third nature, is at the same time the workshop within which nature itself is appropriated in an objectified form. Nature appears as the world, and the world appears as nature, precisely at the moment that an objectifying power seizes it in its totality as a resource.

Telesthesia allows the quantification of all things, their comparison, and the direction of resources according to the apprehension of the world simultaneously as a field of objects that can be brought into productive relation. Nature and second nature, objectified as resources, are simultaneously available for calculation and mobilization. Space becomes subject to instantaneous command. But what is rational as a particular appropriation of the world combines with every other equally rational appropriation, in an irrational whole. Or, what amounts to the same thing: considered as a static equilibrium, the vectoral order is indeed an order, considered as a dynamic unfolding of an event, it drives logically to the exhaustion of its resources. [328]

The vectoral class ascend to the illusion of an instantaneous and global plane of calculation and control. But as the productive classes of the world come to know only too well, it is not the vectoralist class that really holds subjective power over the objective world. The vector itself usurps the commanding role, becoming the sole repository of will toward a world that can be apprehended only in its commodified form. This emerging global plane is at once totalizing and emphatically partial. A totality emerges under the sign of a mere aspect. [329]

The vectoral class unleashes this third nature upon the world, and profits from it, either directly or indirectly. It profits from the producing classes, and also from the other ruling classes, to whom it sells the vectoral capacity to grasp the world in its objectified form—the capacity of telesthesia. [330]

Sometimes the vectoral class competes with the capitalist and pastoralist classes; sometimes it colludes and collaborates. The state-form adjusts itself accordingly. The index of the relationship of the vectoral class to state power is the transformation of the laws governing vectors, such as the airwaves and networks, and regulating patents, copyrights and trademarks. When thought itself and the air itself have been subordinated to their representation as property, the vectoral class is in charge.

[331] The becoming-vectoral of this world is the release of the productive potential of all its resources, and at the same time, the creation of a category of resource for any and every thing in it. The vectoral is not only the potential to conceive of everything as a resource, but also the potential to bring that resource into productive relation to any other resource whatsoever. The vector turns particular geographies into virtual geography, offering its specific qualities as exchangeable quantities.

[332] The reign of the vector is one in which any and every thing can be apprehended as a commodity. Everything that appears is something distinct, something of value, and which may be transformed at will into any other thing, which may be brought together with any other thing of value in the creation of a new value. The reign of the vector is the reign of value.

[333] Having set third nature in motion, the vectoral class finds itself increasingly unable to control its creation. Subjectivity resides not in the vectoral class, but in the cumulative prod-

uct of its activity, the third nature that arises out of the proliferation of the vector. This third nature comes moreover to represent to itself its own limitations. These limitations do not escape the attention of the productive classes, who must daily live with them. Third nature fails to allocate natural resources in such a way that second nature could ever be sustained.

There may be cold comfort for the productive classes in this. They may not control the means by which information is extracted from their lives and returned to them in form of the commodity. They may not control the allocation of resources based on the instantaneous quantification of all things in the world, but the point may be reached where no class does. The vectoral class produces a means of domination over the world that comes to dominate even its own exertions and extortions. [334]

The vector is a power the world over, but a power that is not evenly distributed. Nothing in the nature of the vector determines that it must be deployed here rather than there, between these persons rather than those, between these cities rather than these hinterlands, these empires rather than these peripheries. Nothing about the vector in the abstract says what flows along it must only flow one way, from boss to hand, from metropolis to province, from empire to colony, from the overdeveloped to the underdeveloped world. And yet this is the vectoral as we find it. This open potential yet limited application is the very condition of the vectoral. As a figure in geometry, a vector is a line of fixed length, but of no fixed position. As a figure in technology, a vector is a [335]

means of movement that has fixed qualities of speed and capacity, but no predetermined application. A vector is partly determined, but also partly open. A vector is partly actual, partly virtual. All that is determined by the technology is the form in which information is objectified, not the where and the how. That vectoral development is uneven development calls for analysis that looks beyond the fetish of the technical, to the form of class power that seizes upon its virtual openness and renders it as actual inequality.

[336] The whole of life in the most overdeveloped parts of the world presents itself as a vast accumulation of vectors. It is the proliferation and intensification of the vector that constitutes the “development” of the overdeveloped world. Whether this be an advance toward the furthest regions of hell or not remains to be seen.

[337] In the underdeveloped world, the vector becomes the means by which the transformation of nature into second nature is effected. But where, in the overdeveloped world, this process at least affords the productive classes the opportunity of struggling against their local ruling classes, in the underdeveloped world the productive classes must struggle against a global and abstract third nature. The resources, natural and social, that are detected and appropriated there become the means for the further development of overdevelopment elsewhere.

[338] Such is perhaps how it always was in the colonial dimension of vectoral development. But where once the underdeveloped world struggled directly against a forcible appro-

priation and commodification, now it struggles against an abstract and vectoral power, everywhere and nowhere. Once upon a time, the colonies were ruled by battalions of soldiers; now—by a phalanx of bankers. The underdeveloped world has little choice but to acquire vectoral power for the defence of its envelopes against the vectoral power emanating from the overdeveloped world.

The vector perfected would be the relation that holds in that world which is, in every one of its aspects and moments, potentially becoming every other world. That this world has not come to pass, yet is indeed the virtual aspect of the actual world as we find it, leads to a questioning of the powers that limit this potential. Constraint is what must be accounted for, the constraint imposed by the direction of the development of the vector by its commodified form and its subordination to the rule of the vectoral class. [339]

The hacker class seeks the liberation of the vector from the reign of the commodity, but not to set it indiscriminately free. Rather, to subject it to collective and democratic development. The hacker class can release the virtuality of the vector only in principle. It is up to an alliance of all the productive classes to turn that potential to actuality. Once the productive classes have actual control over the vector, then its virtual powers can be realized as a process of collective becoming. [340]

Under the control of the vectoral class, the vector proceeds by means of objectification, and produces a corresponding subjectivity. Just as the object becomes an abstract value, so [341]

too does the subject. A vectoral subjectivity arises which is not the universal enlightened subject long dreamt of in the overdeveloped world. Vectoral subjectivity is abstract, but not universal. It acquires its specificity as the internalizing of the differentiation of values that appear on the abstract plane of the vector. This subjectivity is as partial as vectoral objectivity—the difference being that an object does not know it has been appropriated as a resource by the vector, while a subject potentially does. The subject experiences its partiality as loss or lack, which it may seek to fulfil through the very same field of values—the field of the vector—that produces the lack in the first place. Or, it may hack the vector, opening it to the production of qualities excluded from the dominant form of communication under class rule.

[342] The vectoral class struggles at every turn to maintain its subjective power over the vector, but as it continues to profit by the proliferation of the vector, some capacity over it always escapes control. In order to market and profit by the information it peddles over the vector, it must in some degree address the vast majority of the producing classes in terms of their real desires. The vectoral class finds itself always opening the vector towards the producing classes and then struggling to shut or reappropriate the very desires it has called forth. The veritable riot of representations produces inevitable riots against representation.

[343] It remains only for the producing classes, addressed as if they were productive agents of desire, to really produce themselves as and for themselves, and use the available vec-

tors for a collective becoming. This struggle for class power on the part of the producing classes is a struggle for collective becoming. It joins with the planetary struggle for survival, in which the whole of nature, in all its dimensions, must appear as a multitude of living, collective forces.

The great challenge to the hacker class is not just to create the abstractions by which the vector may develop, but the forms of collective expression that may overcome the limits not just of commodification, but of objectification in general, of which commodification is just the most pernicious and one-sided development. But the hacker class cannot change the world on its own. It can offer itself out for hire to the vectoralist class for the maintenance of the reign of the commodity; or it can express itself as a gift to the producing classes, pushing abstraction beyond the bounds of the commodity form. The hacker class virtualizes, the producing classes actualize.

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The interest of the hacker class in the production of production, in the abstraction of the world, the expression of the virtuality of nature, can be brought into accord with the needs and interests of nature itself. But this too is only a step toward another history. A history where nature expresses itself as itself, as neither object nor subject, but as its infinite virtuality. A history in which the production of a fourth, or fifth nature, nature to infinity, affirms the nature of nature itself.

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- [293] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone Press, 1984), p. 116. This exemplary crypto-Marxist work attempts to invent and apply tools of analysis across the economic, political and cultural realm by identifying planes of abstraction and the vectors of movement. It is a work very much of its time, crawling out of the ashes of May 68, and pointing toward the various errors that would infest radical thought from the 70s onwards.

SURPLUS

- [300] Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1 (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p. 33. Bataille is an exemplary crypto-Marxist author, who in this work does more than anyone to undermine the iron grip of necessity on history. Where the dismal science of economics concerns itself merely with maximizing the size of the surplus, Bataille inquires into what can actually be done with it—other than reinvesting it in production—to make yet more surplus.
- [308] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* (New York: Norton, 1990), p. 67. This is a text that calls for a re-examination, in the light of the abstract form the gift may take in the vectoral era. Mauss's socialism may yet find its medium. Telesthesia opens up new possibilities not just for the commodity economy, but for the gift as well. It makes possible the abstract gift, in which the giver and receiver do not directly confront one another. It makes possible the information gift, which enriches the recipient but does not deprive the giver. Various peer-to-peer networks spring up spontaneously as soon as the information vector makes it possible, and call down upon themselves the full technical, legal and political wrath of the vectoral class and its agents.

VECTOR

- [313] William S. Burroughs, *The Ticket That Exploded* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), pp. 49–50. Along the line that extends from

the lone beacon that is Lautréamont to Dada, the Surrealists, Fluxus, the Situationists, Art & Language, to contemporary groups such as Critical Art Ensemble, one can include also that aspect of the Beats—Burroughs, Alexander Trocchi, Brion Gysin—that experiments with forms of collective creation that might exist outside of property. Indeed what might form the basis of a kind of counter-canonic succession, from Lautréamont to Kathy Acker, Luther Blissett, and Stewart Home, a literature for the hacker class, would be precisely the attempt to invent, outside of the property form and vectoral form of its time, a free yet not merely random productivity.

- [315] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 524. The material means by which the exchange relation is extended across the surface of the world is the vector of telethesis. The vector is at once material and yet also abstract. It has no necessary spatial coordinates. It is an abstract form of relationality that can occupy any coordinates whatsoever. While Marx discovers, in the margins of the *Grundrisse*, the significance of communication, he does not integrate it into the heart of his theory. When he speaks of the general equivalent, for example, when he holds up coats and cotton, and explains that it is the general equivalent, money, that creates their abstract relation, he does ask where exactly this abstract relation finds its material form, which is precisely, the vector.

WORLD

- [354] Konrad Becker, *Tactical Reality Dictionary* (Vienna: Edition Selene, 2002), p. 130. Becker's text works by turning the language of communications research against itself. He turns up the volume of its pseudo-scientific rhetoric so one can hear the static of power. This text does not pretend to "speak truth to power." It dispenses with the ideology of debunking ideology. The struggle in Becker's terms is rather one of discovering who or what controls the mechanisms of defining truth and illusion.