

SUMMER SCHOOL

JULY 1-12, 2014

HAUS DER KULTUREN DER WELT, BERLIN

EMANCIPATION AS NAVIGATION: FROM THE SPACE OF REASONS TO THE SPACE OF FREEDOMS

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EVENT CONCEPT

If there is but one thread running between the intellectual, political, and artistic dimensions of modernity, it is undoubtedly the theme of emancipation: from dogmatic frameworks (enlightenment), inherited authorities (egalitarianism), and stagnant expressive forms (modernism). If there is but one legacy of modernity that plays itself out in post-modernity, it is still undoubtedly the demand for emancipation: from all overarching frameworks (relativism), constituted authorities (activism), and expressive constraints (postmodernism).

However, not only does this post-modern inflection of emancipation sever its negative moment (freedom *from*) from its positive moment (freedom *to*), it jettisons the theoretical resources needed to make sense of this distinction. Afraid of reactivating the worst aspects of enlightenment universalism (colonialism), it systematically refuses any unified concept of freedom, preferring to map disparate if intersecting forms of oppression (postcolonial-ism). There is nothing wrong with this cartography of injustice, but the 'lived experience' of oppression that it refuses to rise above provides us with no practical orientation within the space of possibilities and constraints it describes: there is no corresponding concept of justice, and thus no emancipatory vector.

Though this antipathy *to* (and perhaps fear *of*) the positive content of modernity is principally political, it has colonised the intellectual and artistic domains, coalescing into a pervasive cultural negativity that more often obstructs

than enacts emancipation. This consists in an effective suppression of value judgements (no justice! no truth!) that is ultimately complicit with the dominant strains of liberalism to which it is often explicitly opposed. Far from being the culmination of enlightenment egalitarianism, these liberalisms are defined by the same perverse refusal to conceptualise liberty as their erstwhile opponents. That the debate between these two trends is the mainstream discourse on the legacy of modernity is perhaps the most prominent symptom of post-modern malaise.

Nevertheless, the relentless commitment to tracing the *local* conditions of thought and action that this antipathy represents must be respected, analysed, and ultimately incorporated by any attempt to revive the emancipatory themes of modernity (post-colonialism). The reactivation of enlightenment universalism can no longer safely ignore the *particular* by turning toward the *universal*, but must aim to trace trajectories that pass from the *local* to the *global*. It is on this basis that we must reconceive emancipation in *navigational* terms, supplementing the parochial cartography of injustice not only with our most abstract resources for analysing space, but with a willingness to treat these resources as constituting their own abstract spaces. This is to say that the resurrection of universalism as an emancipatory vector is oriented by a renewed commitment to rationalism, and that the relationship between local and global is elaborated by means of a movement from *abstract* to *concrete* spaces: from the space of reasons to the space of freedoms.

METHOD

The overall trajectory of this series of seminars follows this path from the abstract to the concrete, aiming to work out the significance of the relationship between the local and the global within five successive domains: mathematics, language, history, politics, and literature/art. This will result in a progressively more concrete picture of 'emancipation as navigation', moving between different complementary disciplinary viewpoints. By emphasizing the link between cognitive and practical technologies, hypothetical construction, abductive conceptualization and freedom, the series addresses both the history of reason and the future of an emancipatory rationalist project in terms of the construction of new prospects of cognitive and practical procedures. It will examine how the space of human possibility is continually reorganized through the invention of new operators that detach thought and action from their local conditions.

The seminars are organized in a way that they re-enact the systematic game of navigation.

Specific problems are broken down into different sets of parameters which are then analyzed under disciplinary constraints before they are re-structured as points of entry into other domains. The transversal mobilization of knowledge-bases requires development of new intermediating perspectives and modes of knowledge transport — in short, technologies for the liberation of thought and practice from their immediate conceptual resources and applicational contexts. In this fashion, the ramifications of making theoretical or practical commitments in one field are unfolded and explored in another disciplinary domain. Problems and challenges arising from these transports across domains are subsequently used to inform and reorient original problems or alternatively, serve as new hypotheses for exploring the problem and its ramifications further. In practice, this navigational ideal will be realised by a collaborative process of conceptual mapping, wherein the crucial concepts and their connections are traced both within and between seminars with the help of all participants.

EVENT FORMAT

PARTICIPANTS:

10 Seminar Leaders and 30 Others.

KEY TOPICS:

Freedom, Reason/Logic,
Mathematics/Abstraction,
Navigation/Representation,
Semiotics/Linguistics, Modernity/Colonialism,
Politics, Intersectionality, Feminism,
Technology/Design, Art, Accelerationism,
Cosmism.

SCHEDULE:

Two weeks beginning on July 1st and finishing on July 12th, with a day off on Sunday July 6th. Each day will consist of two three-hour sessions (9am to 12pm / 2pm to 5pm). The first part of each session will be taken up by a presentation by that day's seminar leader, before being given over to responses and general discussion.

APPLICATION:

People interested in participating in the seminar series must submit an application for involvement, including a short bio and statement of interests, no more than 300 words, no later than the **30th May**, to **pete.wolfendale@gmail.com**. Participants will be informed within one week from the deadline.

PREPARATION:

Participants will be expected to read a certain amount of compulsory material for each seminar (around 30 pages), which will be made available in the form of a compiled reader a month in advance. Additional reading suggestions will also be provided.

ORGANIZERS:

Armen Avnessian (Philosopher/Editor: Poetics, Literary Theory, Art), Berlin

Reza Negarestani (Philosopher: Rationality, Navigation, Functionalism), New York

Pete Wolfendale (Philosopher: Rationality, Language, Freedom), Sunderland

SEMINAR LEADERS:

Anke Hennig (Literary Theorist: Linguistics, Media Theory), Berlin

Benedict Singleton (Philosopher of Design/Strategist: Technology, Cuning, Platforms), London

Deneb Kozikoski (Literary Theorist: Science, Modernity, Anti-Eurocentrism), New York

Lucca Fraser (Philosopher/Logician: Mathematics, Desire, Gender), Halifax

Helen Hester (Cultural Theorist: Sex and Gender, Media, Feminism), London

Nick Srnicek (Political Theorist: Technology, Economics, Post-Capitalism), London

James Trafford (Philosopher/Art Theorist: Rationality, Logic, Aesthetics), London

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

DAY	PRINCIPAL SPEAKERS	FIRST SESSION	SECOND SESSION
Tuesday, July 1st	Reza Negarestani	The Matheme of Navigation	Engineering through Navigation
Wednesday, July 2nd	Pete Wolfendale	Freedom and Reason	Navigation and Representation
1 st Evening Event	<i>Panel:</i> Avanesian, Negarestani, et. al.	Escape Velocity: Navigating Speculative Realism	
Thursday, July 3rd	Armen Avanesian and Anke Hennig	Signs and Language	Poesis and Linguistics
Friday, July 4th	Deneb Kozikoski	Modernity at the Frontier	Navigability and Metamorphoses
Saturday, July 5th	Nick Srnicek	The Critique of Folk-Politics	The Future of the Left
Monday, July 7th	Lucca Fraser	Universality as Intersectionality	Intersectionality as Genericity
Tuesday, July 8th	Helen Hester	Feminism and Technology After Firestone	Re-Engineering Embodiment
Wednesday, July 9th	Benedict Singleton	Design as Metic Reason	Cosmism as Generalised Escapology
Thursday, July 10th	James Trafford	Aesthetic Abstraction	Conceptual Abstraction
Friday, July 11th	<i>General Discussion</i>	Creativity, Innovation, and Emancipation	Expression, Conception, and Navigation
2 nd Evening Event	<i>Panel:</i> Avanesian, Negarestani, et. al.	Emancipating the Concept of Freedom	
Saturday, July 12th	<i>General Discussion</i>	Navigating the Space of Reasons	Navigating the Space of Freedoms

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