

The Ends of Autonomy July colloquium – abstracts in programme order

'La liberté guide nos pas': the dialectic of freedom in a French revolutionary poem Ali Alizadeh (Monash)

This paper aims to present a new and more complex account of the discourse of freedom in the modern world. The French Revolution is one of the foundations of the modern concept of freedom. Yet, the idea of freedom was highly contested during this historical event. This paper aims to shed light on one specific instance of the French Revolutionary articulation of freedom, the poem '*Chant du départ*' (original title '*Hymne de la liberté*') written by Marie-Joseph Chénier. The poem – which, in the form of a military anthem sung by the French armies during the Revolutionary period as well as the First Empire, is often referred to as the brother to the *Marseillaise* – presents a chorus of voices, each personifying a section within French society, united in the national project of defending the First Republic against its belligerent monarchical enemies. But the concept of freedom as vocalised in this poem is anything but simple and unified. There is, in my reading of the poem, a contradiction between the first evocation of liberty in the first verse as an existing presence or a spirit that guides the steps of the Revolutionaries, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the depiction of liberty in the last line of the last verse in which freedom is presented (alongside peace) as what is to come, a promised actuality that the Revolutionaries are yet to deliver. I argue that this contradiction is symptomatic of the conflict between the liberal conception of freedom, which sees freedom existing in the modern world in the form of rights, and the social conception of freedom, which sees freedom – or what Karl Marx called 'the true realm of freedom' – as a hitherto unreached historical destination.

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Karl Marx and the concept of freedom Nick Hewlett (Warwick)

With regard to the notion of freedom, Marx is best known for explaining how capitalism and bourgeois rule prevent individuals and groups from seeking and achieving freedom. Moreover, bourgeois notions of 'free competition' in the market, bourgeois democracy, and the modern proletariat entering 'freely' into a contract with their employer all help *prevent* people achieving their full potential. This approach, associated in particular with Marx's later writings, arguably has similarities with the liberal view that freedom is the absence of interference with what people wish to do; it is freedom *from* oppression and exploitation, which are particularly acute under capitalism. This can be described as negative freedom.

However, Marx (sometimes with Engels) also has a more positive concept of freedom, where freedom is about fulfillment of human potential. This happens via communism, which brings 'the true *appropriation* of the *human* essence through and for man...[and it is] the true resolution of the conflict between existence and being...between freedom and necessity, between individual and species' (*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* [1844], Penguin, 1975, p.348). In *The German Ideology* [1846], Marx (with Engels) similarly describes freedom as the self-determination of human beings, which will be a collective

enterprise, for only 'within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions' (vol I, IV, p.6). Over a decade later, freedom is similarly the 'absolute working-out of [the individual's] creative potentials' (*Grundrisse* [1857], Pelican, 1973, p.488).

This raises two questions. First, can the two approaches to freedom (negative and positive) be reconciled; are they compatible? Second, are we in any case able to explore properly Marx's 'positive' approach to freedom, given that according to him it would only be realised under communism, the nature of which he discusses relatively little?

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A law unto ourselves: autonomy as mass sovereignty Peter Hallward (Kingston), keynote speaker

As its usage in compounds like automation and autocracy also suggests, the 'auto' or 'self' of autonomy is ambiguous, and helps to mark the concept off from related notions of freedom, independence, and so on. What kind of actor can freely lay down a law for itself, a law in the strict, universal and commanding sense of the term? Who is the self of such self-legislation? Or in terse classical terms, whose will is law? Without wanting to delve too deeply into the canonical history of European philosophy here, I think Kant's famous and uncompromising answer to this question helpfully foregrounds its conscious and voluntarist dimensions, but it unhelpfully abstracts the moral actor from all constitutive social relations, investing it in pure practical reason as such. Hegel's proto-communitarian rejoinder to Kant certainly recovers the relational and plural quality of a political actor, but also diminishes its capacity to act, and to legislate, by dispersing it across the general spirit that both animates a legitimate state and 'disposes' its members in a law-abiding hierarchy. Rousseau's emphasis on popular sovereignty and participatory law-making, by contrast, helps clarify what's at stake in the ongoing *struggle* for autonomy, a struggle understood as an essentially collective effort that pits a mass community of equals against any kind of domineering elite. Marx, Gramsci, Fanon and many others subsequently took further steps in this direction, but so long as this struggle continues, genuine autonomy remains an end for which we have yet to devise adequate means.

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Autonomy against authoritarian neoliberalism: the removal of Kurdish mayors in Turkey Serhat Tutkal (National University of Colombia)

The term 'authoritarian neoliberalism' is used to account for the post-2007 political situation in certain countries which derived from the need of neoliberalism for authoritarian governments in order to garner the necessary consent in times of economic crisis (Bruff, 2014, p. 5). The result is the justification of restructuring various societal sites in the name of economic necessity by centralized state powers that prioritize constitutional and legal mechanisms rather than democratic debate and participation (Bruff and Tansel, 2019, p. 2).

The Turkish government is removing elected mayors and appointing trustees in their place without holding new elections. This happened in 94 of 102 municipalities in which the mayors were from pro-Kurdish HDP between September 2016 and March 2019 (Elçi, 2019). HDP won the elections in 65 municipalities after the new elections of March 2019, however, 40 of the mayors are already removed and government-backed trustees are appointed in their place. Even though Turkey was always a highly centralized country which did not leave much room for autonomy, especially in the Kurdish cities, the mass removals of Kurdish mayors that have been occurring since 2016 is unprecedented. This work aims to explore the history of state authoritarianism and neoliberalism in Turkey while focusing on the case of the Kurdish political movement. To this end it examines the Kurdish political movement's participation in local elections in Turkey and the State's responses to the attempts of establishing autonomy starting from the local elections in 1999 which was the first time that a pro-Kurdish political party (HADEP) participated in the local elections and won municipalities. In this way, it presents an example of the ways in which contemporary neoliberalism and authoritarian centralism are intertwined, and argues that advocating for autonomy may be the most effective way to face the wave of authoritarian neoliberalism.

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**Against the economic view of time in the workplace: the claim to free time
Taylor Lau (Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)**

In the discussion of workplace democracy, the subject of free time, negatively defined as time not spent in paid and unpaid employment, has received little attention. Attempts to justify free time often employ egalitarian arguments on the grounds of justice and equality. Say, reasonable shares of free time are an all-purpose means to realize people's effective use of freedoms. Justifications of this kind appeal to a Rawlsian social ontology: a society as a fair system of mutual cooperation where citizens are free and equal in terms of having access to adequate resources or opportunities. Firms and corporations, however, are seemingly under no primary obligation to distribute the benefits of overall social cooperation, where free time is regarded as a more demanding moral entitlement. The hidden difficulty lies in the economic view of time: 1) individual time is reducible to a private property available for market transaction; and 2) the value of time is measured in terms of productivity. Consequently, employers claim to own labour time in employment. It presents one fundamental challenge to the claim to fair shares of free time. The first half of this paper will relate the commodification of time to the structural injustice in the non-ideal workplace and capitalist economy. Not only does it constitute the temporal dimension of coercion, but it also perpetuates injustices and epistemic failures in the labour market. The remaining sections aim to rethink the emancipatory potential of free time and explain our moral agency in the workplace: even the oppressed are held responsible for how they shape the social context such that moral failure is less likely. Since our ability to do good is subject to a wider social environment that prohibits the development of adequate individual agency (the capacity to act intentionally), more free time might lead to considerable transformation in the social setting and epistemic environment. Finally, I will address objections based on the liberal-capitalist conception of market freedom and economic efficiency. Reclaiming free time is taken to be a collective project of emancipation, not merely a concern of distributive justice.

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Crip autonomy and external limitations Kayte Stokoe (Birmingham)

This paper will contend that analysing the UK Government's response to the Coronavirus pandemic can shed light on the way in which disabled, neuro-diverse and chronically ill people are disregarded, undervalued, and policed within neoliberal British society. Using critical disability studies approaches, this paper will analyse the responses of activists, advocacy groups and researchers to the changes imposed by the British Government during the Coronavirus pandemic. The paper will explore alterations to working practices, the potential erosion of the Care Act 2014, and changes to healthcare provision as a result of the pandemic and of the Conservative Government's Coronavirus response. It will question whether, how, and to what extent, the rights and ability of disabled, chronically ill, and neuro-diverse people to autonomy and autonomous decision-making may be being disregarded in the UK at the present time.

This paper recognizes that broad limitations are being placed on public behaviour, and on autonomy, in the wake of this arguably unprecedented health crisis, and will consequently situate the experiences of disabled, chronically ill, and neuro-diverse people in the context of this wider system of restrictions. However, this paper will equally contend that the disregard of the autonomy of disabled, chronically ill, and neuro-diverse people has a particular significance given the ableist positioning of these groups as non-productive, and, in the context of a capitalist society, less valid than able-bodied, healthy, and neurotypical people. In order to demonstrate this significance, this paper will examine the current experience of these groups in light of other manifestations of ableism in the UK prior to the pandemic, focusing particularly on the drastic reformulation disability benefits and the imposition of extensive austerity measures on the National Health Service.

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UK Higher Education in 'A Century for Foxes': or, a case study in the role of privilege and luck in establishing conditions for radical autonomy Alex Corcos (Warwick)

This paper offers a résumé and auto-critique of an ongoing, interdisciplinary research, teaching and learning project which – as part of a diverse and dynamic programme of work – tests the limits of autonomy available to workers in UKHE in the present moment. It will be argued that the concerted programme of surveillance, control and immiseration which has developed over the past decade in UKHE is the necessary condition of possibility for radical autonomy on behalf of certain individuals. The opportunity to 'capitalise' upon such opportunities, however, is restricted to those who already possess a certain level of financial, psychological and/or cultural security. Inevitably, such autonomy is predicated upon a great many circumstances beyond the subject's control.

Entitled “‘A sort of intellectual Heathrow’”: The University of Warwick and HS2 Ltd.’ Dr Alex Corcos/Diamond Fox’s investigation into links between The University of Warwick and the UK government infrastructure project ‘High Speed Two’ has sought to test various notions of border and boundary (land, fence, cartographic, civil, legal, national, class, gender) as well as challenging traditional distinctions between genres of activity. This project has been engaged in soliciting transparency and accountability from institutions contracted to HS2. HS2 ‘enabling’ and construction work continued without pause throughout the Coronavirus pandemic despite protests from campaigners; an extended conception of the ‘police order’ is articulated and evaluated in this unprecedented context. This paper will present self-critical analysis of the project’s progress so far, with specific reference to Gilles Deleuze’s *Postscriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle* and Clark Kerr’s *The Uses of the University*. It will be argued that fortune and chance – in this case, for example, even the presence of wild animals during research activities – play an important role in establishing the conditions necessary for radical experimentation.

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Of autonomies and algorithms Louise Amoore (Durham), keynote speaker

It is the deep neural network’s capacity to learn by extracting features from its data environment that has made it flourish in the algorithmic architectures of drones, autonomous vehicles, surgical and production robotics, and at the biometric border. This capacity to learn something in excess of the rules has also characterised the public concern and ethical debates around autonomous systems. Whether in the algorithms animating surgical robots, or facial recognition systems, or in predictive policing or cloud-based intelligence gathering, what is most commonly thought to be at stake politically and ethically is the degree of autonomy afforded to machines vis-à-vis the human as a locus of decision. In this lecture I propose that the principal ethico-political problem does not arise from machines breaching the imagined limits of human control, but emerges instead from a machine learning that generates new limits and thresholds of what it means to be human.

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The extremist across history: changing relations of liberty, threat and detection Charlotte Heath-Kelly (Warwick)

States portray themselves as the facilitators and protectors of liberation. The state has long surveilled its subjects for signs of extremism, disloyalty and treachery – framing repressive actions targeted towards *some* as necessary measures to secure the freedoms of *others*. This paper explores how the import of algorithmic epistemologies into security work has blurred the line between the repressive and fostering capacities of the state, reimagining security as the pastoral governance of the extremist’s *own* freedoms and desires. In the twentieth century, Soviet security apparatuses first blurred the traditional dichotomy of repression and care. From the time of Brezhnev, dissidents in the Soviet Union and Eastern European states could be detained under proxy diagnoses of ‘sluggish schizophrenia’ – a condition producing criminal deviation from the laws of the people, and

the symptom of ‘philosophical intoxication’ (whereby Marxist political doctrine appeared to have no effect upon them). The subject was a threat to the freedom of others, but also inhibited in their own experience of freedom.

This has been universally condemned as the political abuse of psychiatry, using axes of human rights and global diagnostic manuals. However, the development of algorithmic epistemologies in global health and counterterrorism have opened a new landscape of social control, while introducing ambiguity to traditional distinctions between invasiveness and restraint, between repression and liberation. Pre-crime programs use actuarial and algorithmic methods to detect persons thought ‘susceptible’ to criminal or terrorist recruitment through their personal ‘vulnerabilities’. These persons then receive tailored packages of support from welfare agencies, to reduce their risk/vulnerability, before any offending occurs.

The paper explores how the new regime of algorithmic visibility afforded to local authorities complicate traditional binaries of thought, troubling the dichotomy of repression/liberation in the detection of ‘extremists’.

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Algorithmic governmentality and the modern bureaucratic ideal: species of abstraction and autonomy

Oliver Davis (Warwick)

I will attempt to situate ‘algorithmic governmentality’ (Rouvroy & Berns, 2013) within the wider frame of the modern bureaucratic ideal. Drawing selectively on a long tradition of critical scholarship on bureaucracy and a more recent body of critical work on algorithms and their effects, I will identify a homology between one key ontological property of the algorithm – the distinction between control structures and other operations – and the establishment of structures of ‘double government’ characteristic of the modern bureaucratic institution. Then I will examine some of the various species of abstraction in play in algorithmic governmentality and the bureaucratic ideal and show how these are already interbred with species of abstraction presupposed in classic liberal accounts of autonomy, before ending with a few reflections on what autonomy might mean, in conceptual, technical and political terms, in the era of algorithmic governmentality. In a world in which acts of abstracting administrative ordering are no longer performed slowly and intermittently by human agents but have instead become a ubiquitous background machinic hum, in a world in which a proliferation of algorithmic ordering is constantly reshaping our social environment, affecting us collaterally even when we are not being directly ordered by it, there may be reason to reconsider the significance of ordering, organization and abstraction in political action.

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How liberating is liberation technology?

Simon Angus (Monash)

It has been a decade since Diamond's seminal, and sober work on the possibilities of 'liberation technology' to 'expand political, social and economic freedom' (Diamond, 2010). Since that time, the Arab supernova electrified Twitter's supporters, Russian paws and exquisite Cambridge algorithms lent on the scales of a presidential campaign via social media, and China amassed the data and technology to control its citizenry with cold efficiency. So what of liberation technology? What do we know about its impact on political participation, expression and freedom? In this presentation, we review the reality of liberation technology through the lens of empirical political economy and face some sobering truths concerning political polarisation, election bias, voter turn-out and internet availability. Whilst these results would appear to suggest that oppressive regimes have already snuffed out the promise of technology to support wider freedoms, recent theorising is more optimistic, suggesting that the pathway to freedom and prosperity is opened where both the state and society have equal strength in the technology of accountability, information, and coordination, co-investing in each other's capacity. We conclude by introducing the Monash IP Observatory as an example of a platform whose mission is to support the state-society technology balance by providing internet insights for social good in times of political and environmental turmoil.

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Informed autonomy: conceptualization of freedom in the digital age

Yurii Sheliashenko (KROK)

Seeking a reliable set of principles to understand freedom, we should answer basic questions: what is freedom, how to be free, why it is important, for whom, when, and where. Some answers to these questions can be found intuitively in a feeling of liberty. Other answers are found by reasoning, such as the concept of autonomy, i.e., self-rule, or intrinsic law, connecting individual and universal meanings of freedom. Many answers are practical, as should be the case in the age of science and technologies, which help us to rise above ourselves in many ways, such as progressive welfare policies and procedural justice. Some practical answers turn autonomy into an instrument of structural violence: consider 'consumer autonomy' to make choices suggested by manipulative marketing, or 'labor autonomy' to work more and earn less under cunning management, or 'user autonomy' in filter bubbles of social media. To resist alienation of freedom, people need to know the practical meaning of autonomy and the consequences of their choices. The historical development of autonomy from morality through ethics to the law is similar to the history of social worldviews, which evolves from religion through philosophy to science. The laws of nature repeated by objects of experiments reveal the autonomy of matter, and human laws performed in legal culture reveal the autonomy of will. In a model of law as a self-processing rule, any process and its elements are considered autonomous, like the human right to peace realized in processes of meditation, which brings inner peace, and mediation which ensures interactional peace. Notions of inalienable rights help to preserve autonomy in any system of coordinates: it is self-ownership for capitalism, self-determination for determinism, self-programming for technocracy, etc. True freedom should be informed

autonomy, active and peaceful self-creation, empowered in our digital age by open access to practical knowledge, and driving human evolution in all economic, political, cultural, and other contexts.

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Blockchain owns you: from cypherpunk to a self-sovereign identity **Alesja Serada (Vaasa)**

Private property rights for objects on a public digital platform, often called 'true ownership', is the main selling point of virtual worlds and games built on blockchain platforms. One of the most notable examples is Decentraland, a blockchain-based virtual world currently valued around 900 000 ETH (around 140 million US dollars) (OpenSea 2020). In such decentralized networks, tokens are created by self-regulating algorithmic procedures, so human input is not required. This raises the question whether an individual is an agent in blockchain networks, or is he, she, or they just an attribute. I will argue the latter: decentralized networks based on 'smart contracts' reverse relations of ownership instead of securing them. For instance, in the white paper of Decentraland the identity of players is defined through the land they own: 'credentials are the coordinates of one's land' (Decentraland n.d., 11).

The importance of my claim is grounded in real life identity management projects on blockchain, often heavily funded by governments (Dutch Blockchain Coalition 2020). In one of such hybrid solutions, *Building Blocks*, 'refugees **only** need to **scan their irises** at the point-of-sale **to receive food assistance**' (Wang and De Filippi 2020). My question is about how little this 'only' actually means, and whether sharing surplus food with the most impoverished should be subject to biometric and algorithmic control. In such projects, an account in a decentralized network is not a representation of an individual - it is supposed to replace the individual and perform his, her, or their citizenship instead. Firstly, it leaves no space for personal freedom in a society; secondly, it ignores highly individual, context-dependent and intimate aspects of performing (and especially failing at) citizenship in the real world; and, finally, it makes a person a property of a self-sovereign network.

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Freedom, agency and the hermeneutics of technology **Ken Archer (independent scholar)**

This paper is motivated by two decades of work in technology firms, observing the wide gulf that exists between the normative appeals of technology ethicists and the daily decisions made by the builders of technology. At conferences on technology ethics one hears the normative claims that practitioners should do certain things – they should make algorithms transparent; they should nudge users toward more ethical ways of life through product design. When asked how to account for the fact that engineers do not do these things, even after learning that they should, the response is generally that this is a question for psychology, or for business ethics, or for some other field.

Motivated to answer this question, to account for decisions that engineers make day-to-day, I have found such decisions to be largely mischaracterized in ways that perpetuate the self-interpretation of technical workers as having little agency in their work. The message, sometimes explicit, of projects in technology ethics is that, whereas artifacts may not be morally neutral, those who build them *are* applying instrumental, calculative reasoning to build towards a design, and must be taught the ethical ramifications of their finished designs. The upshot of this framing of technical work is that technology is an applied science, which allows little room for agency, and that the builders of technical products have agency primarily in the decision *whether* to build something. Once that decision is made, however, the agency of the builder is narrowed significantly to the instrumental application of physical and mathematical sciences.

This paper argues that technical rationality is never inherently calculative but is always embedded in interpretive practices with various goods, such that technical decisions are more authentically understood as hermeneutic interpretations of practical predicaments. The critical role of technology ethics, it seems to me, is to unpack and account for the full ethical content of the decisions faced by the designer and engineer, rather than instrumentalize such decisions. Such an account would restore the sense of ethical agency that the notion of technology as applied science espoused by engineering educators conceals from engineers.

This paper is thus situated within the concern for subjectivity, and the freedom and agency of the subject, that originates in Rousseau and Kant and continues through Romantic and then hermeneutic thought, most recently found in Gadamer and Taylor. This is in contrast to postphenomenological approaches to technology ethics that seek to break from what is described as transcendental understandings of technology in favor of empirical research into the ways that artifacts condition our lives. It is argued here that what is critiqued as transcendental understandings of technology, primarily the later Heidegger, is actually part of this longer tradition of concern for the freedom of the subject against the heteronomous demands of empiricist and rationalist epistemologies.

This paper attempts to develop this account of technical decision-making as embedded in interpretive practices, with references to many technical practices, in particularly one of the most technical of activities, the development of statistical models within AI and other fields.

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Emancipating the female body: *pudeur* and Louise Labé's expression of sexual desire in selected poetry

Nupur Patel (Oxford)

First recorded in the 1542 translation of Juan Luis Vives' *Livre de L'Institution de Femme Chrestienne*, the translator, Jean de Changy, notes that *pudeur* or modesty has specific significance as a fundamental quality of the early modern woman's identity. As an oppressive term that is often used by male writers of the time to control women's bodies, Changy notes that *pudeur* is wrapped up in an ideal which categorises women as either modest and virtuous or immodest and licentious. While *pudeur* was a prominent aspect of

women's lives, I argue that it may be reclaimed differently by women writers, notably in sixteenth-century France. Using Louise Labé, *lyonnaise* poet, as a case study, I examine how far women's works accompany and counter meanings of *pudeur* in circulation. In her highly eroticised poetry, Labé expresses a form of female desire which seeks to liberate the female body from the male gaze. She offers herself a level of agency within the literary realm, against the backdrop of an oppressive patriarchal society. In doing so she challenges the value of *pudeur*. The well-known connection made between writing and promiscuity secondly begs the question of how women poets successfully published their works without compromising their modesty. A collaboration, with male printers, editors and intellectual influencers, fosters a new kind of modesty that justifies the impropriety of Labé and her female peers. Dedications written in favour of Labé offer her a public image of virtue while enabling her a private form of authority. By using *pudeur* as a medium of inquiry, we may redefine our understandings of early modern women as more than simply submissive or subversive. Moreover, we can question the role of agency and how far a level of freedom can be sought even within the confines of patriarchal oppression.

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Freedom and autonomy in the post #MeToo world Felicity Chaplin (Monash)

The debates at the heart of the #MeToo movement are centred around a number of critical distinctions: between rape and harassment, between seduction and coercion, between violence and what the French reaction to the movement called 'the awkward attempt to pick up someone', between sex and power, between women as 'victims' and women as 'empowered', between political correctness and free speech, and between due process and 'witch hunts' or 'trial by Twitter'. This list is probably not exhaustive, but it goes some way to demonstrating the complex and multifaceted issues raised by the #MeToo movement, which cut across almost all aspects of Western culture. However, not everyone – and, more importantly, not every woman – agrees with the militancy of the #MeToo movement, particularly when it comes to questions of freedom and autonomy. Is the movement an extension of feminism, part of its ongoing project; or is it a betrayal of its ideals, replacing the image of the 'liberated woman' who can not only control her sexuality but fend for herself whenever this control is threatened, with that of the 'cringing wallflower' terrified of the advances of men?

This paper looks at the way the #MeToo movement has created new limits on freedom and new demands on autonomy or self-government. It will consider, among other things: the tension between autonomy or self-regulation and personal freedom; the 'right to harass'; sexual freedom vs personal autonomy; cancel culture/political correctness; the freedom of artistic expression; and Fourth Wave Feminism.

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The biophilic threads in feminist visions of autonomy

Kirsty Alexander (Strathclyde)

Feminists have been among the foremost critics of the modern ideal of autonomy whilst reclaiming and reimagining what autonomy is and can be. These re-imaginings are informed by direct activist theory and critical theory, and are centrally concerned with historically and geographically situated emancipation. As a contribution to histories of autonomy, including feminist histories, this paper highlights what I name as the biophilic threads in feminist visions of autonomy. These threads are present but remain buried and unacknowledged in autonomy theory. After explaining the meaning(s) of biophilia and its contemporary relevance, and distinguishing biophilia advocacy from ‘sanctity of life’ discourse, two of these ‘life-loving’ threads in feminist visions of autonomy are critically discussed. The first draws from ecofeminist and neo-materialist insights about what autonomy means in land-based cultures and through interspecies companionship and symbiosis. The meaning of autonomy here is a far cry from the modern ideal of the self-made man, and is instead textured by immanence, relationality, compassion and radical responsibility. The second related thread centres on bodily and erotic autonomy in contexts where practices of decolonization are paramount and trauma is recognised. The meaning of autonomy here does not rest on a transparent self fully liberated from power struggles. Instead, autonomy is part of and emerges through non-linear journeys of bodily and erotic awareness, communal empowerment and moments of mutual recognition, even or especially where biopolitical governmentality and necropolitics prevail. The post-colonial feminist writings of M. Jacqui Alexander inspire these reimaginings of autonomy as does feminist literature on trauma and recovery. By highlighting the biophilic threads in feminist visions of autonomy it becomes clear that the broader grounding and communal contexts for enacting autonomy include anti-violence, empowerment and recovery, and ecological praxis. In effect, these are *vitalist* imaginings which resist the destructive logics of the dominant modern ideal of autonomy. As such they not only deserve to be included in the histories of autonomy but they offer valuable insight into the prospects of autonomy in the current era.

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Autonomy and assisted reproductive technologies

Ji-Young Lee (Bristol and Copenhagen)

Reproductive autonomy is, broadly, ‘the power to decide about and control matters associated with contraceptive use, pregnancy, and childbearing.’ (Upadhyaya et al. 2014, 20) Assisted reproductive technologies such as IVF and surrogacy arrangements provide new opportunities for parents to have children. Women are especially implicated by these developments given that women’s bodies are the site of pregnancy and because they bear primary responsibility for the outcome of pregnancy (Upadhyaya et al. 2014, 20). So are these technologies consistent with women’s reproductive autonomy? I argue that the advent of reproductive technologies has rather ambiguous implications for women’s reproductive autonomy; women’s reproductive autonomy may not be straightforwardly *improved* by these technologies.

To get to this stage, I reject the standard, liberal, negative-rights based approach to autonomy which emphasizes women's *rights* to exercise reproductive choices without due consideration of 'the myriad factors that can constrain reproductive decisions' (Johnston et al. 2017, S7). For example, it is consistent with a negative rights-based approach that a woman freely exercise her *right* to be a surrogate in order to obtain reproductive autonomy. Yet this does not provide us with an adequate analysis of her autonomy. This is because the negative-rights based view is unable to capture other considerations that may simultaneously be in tension with her autonomy: the very fact she is named a 'surrogate', for instance, implies that she is a 'temporary custodian' (Stefansdottir 2017, 77), which *instrumentalizes* her pregnancy and disregards the unique relationship she has to the foetus.

Contra the negative-rights based view, it is clear that reproductive technologies potentially *curtail* women's reproductive autonomy, even as they *enhance* women's range of procreative options. Thus, I posit that a more nuanced analysis of women's reproductive autonomy with regard to reproductive technologies will require a more *substantive* approach, which understands reproduction as a 'contextualized process extending before and beyond conception' (Johnston et al. 2017, S10).

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Pastoral power: on finitude and autonomy

Andrea Rossi (Koç)

'The ancient athlete is an athlete of the event. The Christian is an athlete of himself' (M. Foucault)

'Day 2 is stasis. Followed by irrelevance. Followed by excruciating, painful decline. Followed by death. And that is why it is always Day 1.' (J. Bezos)

This paper is concerned with how, today, the care of the self, its promise of autonomy and selfmastery (recall how Foucault linked the theme to Kant's Enlightenment project), has become a central point of governmental interventions: a soft, if pervasive, call to compulsory enhancement, fuelling both strategies of economic capture and a sense of generalised political impotence. To begin unravelling this question, I turn to Foucault's analytics of the Christian pastorate, as a turning point within the long-term history of the (political) direction of the soul.

In particular, I focus on how early coenobitic conduction severed the link, characteristic of the Ancient and Hellenistic life of practice, between the care of the self and the subject's free encounter with its 'others', broadly understood as the social, cosmological and moral marks of finitude. Monastic conduction required an intense, and potentially endless, ascetic and hermeneutic work on the self, which however, for specific theological reasons, also foreclosed the possibility for the individual to face up autonomously to its 'others' (demons, temptations, sins: the signs of the fallen, and therefore finite, nature of man). Obedience, both as a virtue and a practice, was secured on these grounds. My hypothesis is that the control over labour in neoliberal regimes (*qua* labour on the self and human capital)

replicates in several ways this mode of government, especially as far as the optimisation of the finite physical, psychological, and social capabilities of man is concerned. Human enhancement – as the goal of various contemporary economic and transhumanist agendas – rests on a specific rendering of our relation to the limits and, accordingly, of its necessary management. This, in turn, raises the question of how giving finitude another form – encountering it on a different terrain and as a different figure – may still be today, even though differently from the way Kant envisioned it, the horizon of our possible autonomy.

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The critique of emancipatory reason Christopher Watkin (Monash)

Modernity is addicted to what Jean-François Lyotard calls its emancipation narrative: the idea that moderns understand themselves as those who are becoming progressively liberated from oppressions, constraints and obligations. Bruno Latour identifies the ideology of freedom-as-detachment fostered by this emancipation narrative as a crucial factor in modernity's dynamics of self-destruction and exploitation, as well as in its failure to understand its own condition. In *Down to Earth* he identifies an alternative in terms of what he calls the "third attractor", but he remains vague about its nature. This paper explores how we can develop Latour's idea of a third attractor through Michel Serres's rewriting of Plato's cave allegory and his re-casting of the Lyotardian metanarrative of emancipation as a meso-narrative of evolutionary branching. Taken together, Serres and Latour provide a crucial counterpoint to modernity's vision of emancipation as purified, progressive detachment, and the new understanding of freedom that emerges in their work provides us with an important contribution to the urgent task of formulating a new social contract.