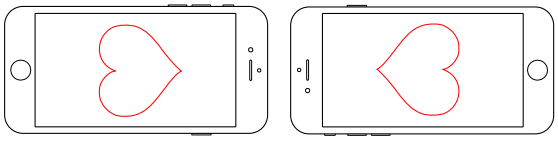
The Fibreculture Journal
DIGITAL MEDIA + NETWORKS + TRANSDISCIPLINARY CRITIQUE

issn: 1449-1443

issue 25: Apps and Affect.



FCJ–185 An Algorithmic Agartha: Post-App Approaches to Synarchic Regulation

doi: 10.15307/fcj.25.185.2015

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Abstract:

This rather suggestive and altogether speculative essay began as an attempt on our part to use a model of bio-chemical signal-transduction (Howard Rasmussen's schema for 'synarchic regulation') to explain, beyond the boundaries of cell-transduction in molecular chemistry, transduction in cell-phone applications: the 'synarchic regulation' — and rather remarkable reticulation — of 'cellular transmission' in the techno-communicational rather than bio-chemical field. It was to be a complement and/or an alternate perspective to our conference-paper and subsequent book-chapter on the 'app-alliance' both of which had been written in and for the event of the Apps and Affect conference in October 2013. It became something slightly different, unmoored from mere cellular transmission as such and suggestive of a much more general and more comprehensive techno-scientific, market-economic and politico-military — or 'synarchic' — network, operating as the regulative engine for an emerging and overarching planetary system of algorithmic governance. In what follows, we offer an 'app'lication of the principles of 'synarchic regulation' to the field of 'algorithmic governance'.

Let us begin with indefinition (the indefinite): specifically the question of information — proceeding from there to the myriad methods and mechanisms used to capture and control (or 'net') it.

There is no single, unified mechanism governing the definition and distribution of information today, and this may account for some of the major tensions and tendencies in the so-called 'information era'. The concept of 'information' itself has no single, unified definition, even though there are various theories that have been put forward to conceptualise it — as some 'thing' akin to a commodity-cum-object that can be possessed (indeed purchased), traded and legislated, or alternatively (for example) as a 'process' akin to signal-transmission, feedback- and/or stimulus-response circuits ('information transfer' and 'information flow'). Hence, although information may be a useful and much-used idea, there is as yet no agreement on its basic definition and 'no unified theory appears imminent' (Schement and Curtis, 1995: 2). Similarly, there is no one single, unified, global mechanism for the governing of societies—that is, there is no one law, one political form, one economic system, one unified science: a fact that does not mean, however, that there is an absence of mechanisms for the governing of information-flows (political, economic, scientific) but rather — and this is our point — that there are several such mechanisms in operation. That said, the past decade has witnessed rather remarkable convergences in the globalisation of politico-military surveillance, marketplace economics and ongoing scientific investigation, all of which hinge on the accumulation, processing and management of this ill-defined concept (*un concept informe*, in the words of the late Georges Bataille viz. formation and information, 1929: 382).

The recent controversies surrounding Facebook's 'Emotional Contagion' study, [1] TrapWire's and Stratfor's (Strategic Forecasting Incorporated's) ongoing CCTV-monitoring equivalent to Philip K. Dick's previous science-fictional 'Pre-crime Unit', [2] Edward Snowden's revelations concerning the extent of the global surveillance security state (and his most recent NBC interview) [3], the July 2014 rush to pass the Data Retention and Investigatory Powers — DRIP — bill without debate in the United Kingdom [4], et cetera, demonstrate with unnerving clarity the convergence of at least three distinct but interrelated forces of info [5]-governance: politico-military (involving regulatory pathways and mechanisms of government and national/state security), market-economic (involving pathways and mechanisms of market investment and exchange), and techno-scientific appropriations and applications of information (involving pathways and mechanisms for intellectual research and development). What we see is that the political governance and regulation of information (q.v.) is always at the same time intricately implicated with economic and scientific forces; political control, in other words, always overlaps with commercial transactions and scientific investigations. Our central contention in this essay is that information — its very definition[s] and its variable distribution[s] — tends to be

regulated synarchically: that is to say, the circulation of information today is appropriated and applied (captured, categorised and conveyed), not to mention produced and propagated, in at least three distinct but interrelated ways, which for present purposes are here outlined in terms of politico-military, market-economic and techno-scientific mechanisms of info-regulation (which implicate and include 'interests', 'agencies', and 'organisations'/'institutions'/'assemblages' of varying sorts). Therefore, governance is never merely or even principally just a political concern that falls exclusively within the purview of political interests and institutions; rather, in the schema we would like to present, governance is always synarchically regulated. Governance in the 'information era' — which is the governance of information: its definition and distributions — should always be conceptualised as simultaneously 'political', 'economic' and 'scientific' (albeit always in differing degrees and in varying concentrations, as will be made clear in what follows).

These 'political', 'economic' and 'scientific' regulators function in many respects like the 'archons' — Greek ρχοντες: 'rulers', 'regulators' or 'governors' — to whom the late Howard Rasmussen (founding director of the Institute of Molecular Medicine & Genetics at the Medical College of Georgia, former chief of Endocrinology & Metabolism at the School of Medicine at Yale University, and erstwhile Chair of the Biochemistry at the University of Pennsylvania) refers in his study of Calcium and cyclic Adenosine Mono-Phosphate — cAMP — as synarchic messengers: 'The term synarchy', Rasmussen explains, 'is based upon the Greek term archon' (ἄρχων: 'ruler', 'regulator' or 'governor'). 'Because of the importance of their role in disseminating information' — οικονομική, πολιτική και πνευματική-ιδεολογικό: economic, political and ideologico-intellectual — archons 'were often employed in pairs to carry the same message or, under other circumstances, only part of the total message' (Rasmussen 1981: 2). In other words, an archon tended to work in conjunction and collusion with other archons (archontes): i.e.in a syn-arch[on]ic manner. 'Because [of this] analogy' — for which 'I am indebted to Victor Bers of the Classics Department at Yale', he admits — 'the term synarchic regulation (syn meaning 'together') is proposed to categorize this system' (1981: 2)

In the present paper we want to suggest that not only is the question of governance entirely a question of information (q.v.), but also that in the new world order, whenever and wherever signals which enter into a given communicational environment stimulate noticeable friction ('and thus facts take place upon which it is impossible to calculate', as Clausewitz — describing such 'friction', 'fog', or operational obscurity — explained in his treatise On War, 1943: 53–4) at odds with either the political, economic or scientific orders, these become subject to simultaneous ordering and organisation by all three control systems, synarchically. Although Rasmussen applies his model of synarchic regulation to a set of sub-cellular processes — namely the complex bio-chemical 'stimulus-response' chains initiated by a cell-system's encounter with specific external signals — he claims

in his study that synarchy can, to a certain extent, be considered a 'generic' mechanism or 'universal' schema of information-transfer (1981: 130). Here we would like to take up the Rasmussenian schema as a way of thinking about what happens when externalities — specifically ones that cause a high degree of friction or calculative obfuscation for regulatory institutions and institutional algorithms, i.e. signals which appear to display cascading contingencies — disrupt the otherwise relatively stable (at times and in certain places what would seem to be seamless) self-organisation, self-sustaining, or 'maintenance' of political, economic and scientific regimes/regulations of information (info-reticulation). In any given environment where friction or uncertainty is perceived as a possible threat or disruption with respect to the coordinated flow of political, economic and scientific control, the simultaneous (synarchic) activation of political, economic and scientific information-governance is initiated as and for the sake of the normal (normative) metabolic processes of their respective and joint information system[s]. We use the term 'synarchic regulation' (taken from Rasmussen) in this case to refer to that particular triad of control-mechanisms which work together to informatically manage and govern friction[s] within a given information-environment.

So, how is information synarchically regulated? According to Rasmussen, through a kind of *saptapadian*, or sevenfold/sevenstep semiconduction: that is, 1. by signal recognition and reception, 2. transduction or translation of the latter, 3. incorporation and material conveyance of this transduction/translation, 4. reticulation and reticulated reception (or if you like, 'digestion') of the received and incorporated material, 5. transformation or modulation of behaviour based on this reticulation, 6. consequent response — actual and/or virtual, but in any case modified — based on this transformation, and 7. the application of a term —a terminological marker—closing and disclosing this loop qua circuit. [6] These seven particular protocols are the mechanisms of info-metabolism by which externalities perceived as 'anarchic' (i.e. beyond the bounds of archons, regulators) are 'metabolised' as meaningful, manageable messages that can be transduced, transmitted and interchanged between political, economic and scientific domains. Borrowing again from Rasmussen, these protocols are piloted — directed, driven — by one of five functional frameworks *qua* piloting permutations (that is, they are handled by one of only a handful of handling procedures): depending on the nature of the 'abnormal'/'atypical'/'anarchic' activity, the protocols can be either sequentially steered, hierarchically handled, controlled via coordination, regulated through redundancy, or arranged and articulated altogether antagonistically (1981). When activated in response to a single (singular) externality, 'coordinate control' takes place: political, economic and scientific responses — proceeding according to the aforementioned protocols — participate in a coordinated fashion to regulate information within a given milieu (1981: chapter 5). [7] By contrast, 'hierarchical control' (1981: chapter 6) takes place when different concentrations of the same externality call for the separate activation of political, economic and scientific mechanisms, which interact in a hierarchical manner (one or the other 'taking the lead' as dictated by the situation) to produce complementary and enhanced environmental responses.[8]

'Sequential control' (1981: chapter 9) involves the primary/preliminary activation/mobilisation of one of the archon-administrations followed by the activation of the other two as a result of an increase in the intensity of the first operation. [9] Finally (finishing the list of the five frameworks or piloting permutations), 'redundant control' (1981: chapter 7) takes place when separate externalities initiate the same response, and 'antagonistic control' (1981: chapter 8) occurs when all three archon-administrations are active — each activated by separate externalities — but the intensity of one of these controls cuts/counters/hinders (i.e. antagonizes) the effect[s] of the others, that is: when the synarchic institutions and institutional mechanisms turn out to conflict one with the other.

By focusing on the overarching relations in a given control-operation, these Rasmussenian classifications can be of considerable value, drawing attention as they do to the organisational complexity — the complex interaction[s] — of the suggested synarchic control-system and to the remarkably 'networked' nature of its technical missions and various transmissions (its reticular emissions, in sum). The latter leads us by a *commodius vicus* of recirculation to something which we — the present essay authors — had discussed in a recent review [10] of Bernard Stiegler's three-volume series on *Disbelief and Discredit* (2011, 2012, 2014) where Stiegler wrote of the 'missionary' work of contemporary technocratic endeavours and reminded us, when we had read those two sections of his study (2011: Sections 1.5 and 1.6), of an even earlier version and vision of synarchic regulation formulated one hundred years before that of Howard Rasmussen by Saint-Yves d'Alveydre in 1882.

In *The Decadence of Industrial Democracies*, Stiegler highlighted a certain *Spiritus Mundie* — our words rather than his, *N.B.* — at work in the present-day digitised world, referring as he does to the case of Craig Mundie (former Chief 'Research & Strategy Officer' and current 'Senior Advisor to the Chief Executive Officer' at the Microsoft Multinational Corporation) who 'has explicitly aimed since 1997 to control digital television'; 'in that year', explained Stiegler, Mundie 'declared that the world contained a billion televisions, enabling just about every consciousness on the planet to be reached' (Stiegler 2011: 21). The presence — indeed omnipresence — of a *missionary* (or if you like, *emissionary*) spirit became all the more clear: 'at very nearly the identical moment that Mundie launched his mission' (sic), Irving Kristol declared that its 'missionaries … live in Hollywood' and thus that Mundie's 'mission for a new television system technically based on multimedia technology, to be created by [the] Microsoft [Corporation]' (Stiegler 2011: 21), was indeed, beyond the bounds of an economic strategy (and, being global, a political one), also 'missionary' in the spiritual sense of the word, and in the spiritual sense of a world-encompassing war as well. 'It is very much a matter of missions', explains Stiegler,

> *… that is, of spiritual war. Even if this crusade has, since the … election of George W. Bush, been transformed into a [quote-unquote] conventional war, … the genuine issue for industrial democracies … is still to construct their own politics and economy of spirit … in accordance with digital technologies and the new industries they make possible, as well as in accordance with unprecedented practices … which must not be confused with anything that marketing or industrial design refers to in terms of uses. (Stiegler 2011: 21)*

The correlation of political, economic and spiritual agendas/affairs/activities ('actions'), operating independently but inter-reticulatedly, and the hypothesis (via Stiegler) not only of their crossing or converging — their net or network — but of their likeness to a modern-day 'crusade' (harkening back to the 'spiritual war' of the Medieval Templars, which was at once spiritual, political and formidably fiscal) calls to mind — as we mentioned above — the works of Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, whose vision of 'synarchy' had the very same structure, inclusive of networked 'missions'. Alexandre Saint-Yves, a contemporary of Friedrich Nietzsche, started his career as a naval physician in northwestern France around 1860, fought in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, worked as a civil servant and independent scholar in years following that, and began publishing his theory of synarchic missions in the early 1880s. Reviving in many respects the syncretic theory of Antoine Fabre-d'Olivet outlined in the generation that immediately preceded him (Fabre-d'Olivet being perhaps best-known through the writings of the later Édouard Schuré, whose 1889 treatise on *The Great Initiates: A Study of the Secret History of Religions* disseminated the crux of the Fabrean worldview to a wide readership), Saint-Yves examined throughout his life the mytho-historical missions of the great governors and governance-networks from mythic antiquity to his historical time-period, [11] including for instance the mission of Manu in *La mission de l'Inde*, the mission of Moses in *La mission des juifs*, that of Charlemagne in *La mission des souverains*, as well as the ongoing medieval 'allegorithm[ission]', so-to-speak — to steal a word from Wark (2007: 30–50) and Galloway (2006: 91) — of the Medieval guilds and old Templar networks that, according to him, form the matrix that undergirds (or rather, should undergird) the activity of industrial workers (and the 'integral interrelation' of industrial workers with industrialised — or if you prefer, post-industrial — governance, the latter in the brief/62-page *Mission des ouvriers* and extensive/542-page *Mission des Français*). These five treatises form the manuscript — speaking of Manu (*manu* here in the Latin rather than Sanskrit sense: that is, as the handy *manus*) — by which and with which Saint-Yves's vision of 'synarchic governance' can be grasped. The missions are, like the five Rasmussenian controls, model-modes for the saptapadian semiconduction of globe-girdling synarchic system: a global governance-system at the heart of which lies a conjunction and collusion of archons (archontes), 'regulators'. [12] In a manner not entirely unlike that of Rasmussen [13] — but macro- rather than micro-scopic, anthropological rather than biochemical — Saint-Yves envisioned these archons as a set of distinct yet inter-communicating systems which he saw as financial-commercial (or what we called 'market-economic', above), political-judicial (or what we called 'politico-military') and

spiritual-pedagogical (or what we called 'scientific-intellectual') archon-administrations, each possessing its own governor-administrators whose power is invested in regulating messages that come in — or are intercepted—from other spheres of influence. But unlike Rasmussen's five-pronged model of synarchic regulation, the archons of Saint-Yves's synarchy are ordered in straightforwardly hierarchical fashion (i.e. according to the Rasmussenian schema above, they are exclusively characterised by 'hierarchical control'), privileging the spiritual-pedagogical archon over and above the political and the economic.

Today one would have to admit that synarchic regulation extends far beyond the straightforwardly hierarchical version and vision outlined in the work of Saint-Yves, and — following the more contemporary Rasmussenian model — that it would have at least a handful (at least a five-fingered digital deck) of piloting permutations for the political, economic and scientific regulation of information. In our algorithmically-driven information era, which appears as an algorithmic 'Agartha' (the name of St. Yves's synarchic utopia which was hidden under the earth [14]), political, economic and scientific 'control becomes a matter not just of the management of bodies and their wants' 'but a more subtle business of extracting' and directing informational entanglements within any environment. [15] Synarchically regulated society, driven by digital techno-mediation and the rising demand for developing and monetising interactive virtual realities, opens whole new vistas for the kinds of power that can co-opt and commercialise not only a human's bodily labour-power through the (inter)disciplinary control of its work, but also control — again recalling Rasmussen's synarchic schema — the neuro-chemical and neuro-architectonic levels of information-transmission that Lazzarato (2006: 171–91) and Stiegler (2011b: 52–61) and Scott Bakker in his novel *Neuropath* and his *Three Pound Brain* blog [16] would call a neuro-'nöopolitics'. The synarchic steersmen and 'elites' envisioned in Saint-Yves's synarchic model of Agartha [17] (the subject of much controversy amongst his most critical readers and fuel or fodder for a host of para-academic conspiratists) in this [more current] case are entirely electronic — the electronic elite being one of the signs of an already-arrived post-humanism in which 'human being' itself becomes syn-tactically and syn-technically constituted by synarchically-regulated missions, emissions, transmissions, transductions. As Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker have reminded us, today's exploitation occurs 'informatically as well as corporally… The biomass, not social relations, is today's site of exploitation' (2007: 135) . Thus, as Stiegler himself warns (2011, 2012, 2014), 'individuation' along with the possibility of the 'privacy' and 'free time' (*otium*) essential for such individuation, is and are rapidly becoming extinct, having become 'short-circuited' and rerouted (*i.e.,* captured, categorised and conveyed) by the 'programming industries' of current hyper-industrial capitalism in and through real-time [hyper]synchronisation, as well as the synched mass-production qua mass-management of human behaviour (Stiegler 2011: 23).

No one domain, one institution, or one set of elites are holding the reins over the regulation of information — its technical designs and technological applications (this latter being the current and currency that animates the inter-communicational control-mechanisms of governance in the 21st century) . Within the context and current logic of 'open data', 'regulation' is not to be considered rigid and deterministic but instead something flexible and open to variation. Rather than being rule-focused, today's regulatory processes are said to be outcomes-based: 'Regulations, which specify how to execute those laws in much more detail, should be regarded in much the same way that programmers regard their code and algorithms — that is, as a constantly updated toolset to achieve the outcomes specified in the laws' (O'Reilly 2013). This kind of algorithmic regulation is more than merely a metaphor; it is the mutable operational logic of a synarchically-regulated planet-wide informational governance-system. And while individuals, elites, interest-groups and governmental-organs — all the normal and normative 'agents' or 'actors' commonly considered by political and social scientists — are still conduits for synarchic regulation, the so-called 'transformative potential' of today's informational paradigms lies almost exclusively within the processing power of algorithmic (and not necessarily human) intelligence:

> *No human being can write fast enough, or long enough, or small enough … ('smaller and smaller without limit … you'd be trying to write on molecules, on atoms, on electrons') … to list all members of an innumerably infinite set by writing-out their names, one after another, in some notation. But humans can do something equally useful in the case of certain enumerably infinite sets: they can give explicit instructions for determining the nth member of the set, for arbitrary finite n. Such instructions are to be given quite explicitly, in a form in which they could be followed by a computing machine, or by a human who is capable of carrying out only very elementary operations on symbols. (Boolos and Richard 1974: 19)*

In the era of algorithmic governance — when the capture, co-ordination and capitalisation of data has been adopted wholesale by neo-liberals in the name of consumer convenience and increased governmental/educational/medical efficiency on the one hand, as well as by neo-conservatives in the name of a preservation of security and moral values on the other — we are managed, more and more, by automated info-systems (systems of scientific, governmental, and commercial information-transfer) that 'steer us' synarchically — that is, 'govern us' by regulating the flows of [our] data, and information more generally, in three interrelated domains: politico-military, market-economic and techno-scientific. From the increased governmental surveillance of socio-commercially produced data (typically in the name of national security, defense against terrorism and public health) to the increased interest in the 'smartification' of every environmental object (e.g. ambient computing, self-driving cars and 'the internet of things'), the control and regulation — read:

standardisation — of behaviour is being conducted by automated informatic processes that produce so-called 'desired outcomes' based on real-time, modulated feedback. 'It is axiomatic that any activity performed by many persons on a regular or continuous basis will be monitored by the managers of our socio-economic system', wrote Robert MacBride (former corporate communications specialist in the American aerospace and weapons-systems industries) back in 1967; … the activity need not have any other significance than this' — and:

> *… if enough people are doing it, it will become either a source of profit to some group or a problem to another … Put another way, activity produces information, and information produces a computer system. But the computer system itself, as it records, processes, and stores all this source data, becomes a source of information. In many respects, it is a far richer source than the activity itself, since the data are already in machine-readable form. (MacBride, 1967: 82)*

The digitisation and automatisation of data-processing systems 'that record, store, classify, calculate, compare and print at lightning speed' (MacBride, 1967: 80) in accordance with specific algorithmic rules does not merely make the management and the present costs of doing 'business' cheaper or easier (although this is definitely the way that the digitisation of information is being politically and commercially sold to us): it also regulates future actions by making projections and prescriptions about the specific courses of future activity — e.g. what in the banking sector is referred to as 'forecasting' about an investment's future 'outlook' — in scientific, politico-military and economic affairs. Algorithmic governance 'synarchically regulates' by creating both the 'informational problems' and the latter's 'computational solutions' within a given environmental system; thus, in the words of Robert MacBride once again, 'it is also axiomatic that if an activity is of sufficient interest to warrant the use of primary computer systems, it will become at least equally profitable to develop a second-level system capacity' (MacBride, 1967: 82–83). 'This is exactly what has happened to all third-generation computer systems (those that process data in real-time)', he notes; 'Now each purely operational system can summarize and analyze the mass of operational data that it processes; this capability was added to the primary systems in many of the earlier systems, but as its value comes to be appreciated, a second-level capability tends to be built-in from the beginning' (MacBride, 1967: 82–3). This 'built-in' function of nested informational capabilities is virtually limitless insofar as it effectively and indefinitely creates the technical conditions for its further expansion and development.

As long as the major costs of gathering and processing information are covered by the system's primary level output, by-product data can be had at virtually no extra cost. As it stands, this is interesting but hardly of epochal significance. However it becomes so when you consider that the amount of by-product information can be obtained in this way is virtually unlimited. The appreciation of this is what the computer revolution is all about. (MacBride, 1967: 79–80)

The Automated State: Computer Systems as a New Force in Society (1967) declared with remarkable prescience that one of the basic principles of computer systems — 'one that has great bearing on how they develop and expand in new areas' — is 'the uses of information about information' (his emphasis) as opposed to 'information about things (or persons or events)' (79). Against the prevalent view that widespread computerised automation would remain useful and innocuous tools under the control of traditional historical institutions and values, its author, the aforementioned MacBride, suggests instead that computational data-processing, in addition to solving problems and processing routine data, would become the core driver steering the development of future social, economic and scientific knowledge: namely, a vast and complex computational communications network that directs and controls message-traffic throughout the network, thus forming automated pathways and protocols that more automatically regulate power. Echoing *avant-la-lettre* the point made by Gilles Deleuze in his 'Postscript to Societies of Control' (1992) that the disciplinary societies of enclosure described by Michel Foucault — in which individuals never ceased to pass through enclosed and institutionally molded environments—have today given way, more and more, to digitally reticulated and informatically modulated environments:

> *The different internments of spaces of enclosure through which the individual passes are independent variables: each time one is supposed to start from zero, and although a common language for all these places exists, it is analogical. One the other hand, the different control mechanisms are inseparable variations, forming a system of variable geometry the language of which is numerical (which doesn't necessarily mean binary). Enclosures are molds, distinct castings, but controls are a modulation, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point' (Deleuze, 1992: 4).*

MacBride locates the catalyst for future governance in the automated informational processes that Deleuze would characterise in his essay as ever-expanding 'ultra-rapid forms of free-floating control' (Deleuze, 1992: 4). Again , in an almost prophetic manner, MacBride urges us to think of the impact of computational systems, or what today is being

called algorithmic governance, not in terms of structures and structure-units, but instead as assemblages of human and non-human information-processes involving such diverse components as hardware, software, strategies, policies, and of course (the highlighted element here), human beings.

Suppose that instead of a socio-economic structure, we are dealing with a process, a system, or a kind of fermentation. If we then see our socio-economic system as the manifestation of a flow of intelligence—of transfers of information — a complexity of varying quantities and rates forming different channels, then the computer's alteration of even some of these ultimately changes everything. Established channels are overloaded, bypassed. New channels are formed … Equilibrium never occurs. And the socio-economic pattern itself is entirely and unintentionally transformed. … We are not faced merely with an automation-employment problem, or (anticipating a little) an invasion-of-privacy problem, but with an interlocking set of rapidly evolving situations in which computer systems will exert an unforeseen effect. The form of every social and economic development will be more than subtly determined by the manner in which computer systems are woven into them. It is not too much to say that the whole manner of our lives, the limits of the possible for each of us, will be subject to the continuous effects of the evolution of machines. (MacBride, 1967: 76–6)

Just as MacBride here prognosticates about the future capacity of computational systems to capture and control — regulate and reticulate — the informational channels by which individuals are steered through any given system of informatically nested environments, we have further suggested in our paper that this mode of control — 'algorithmically governed' as it is — is also, in addition, 'synarchically regulated' and hence implicates the involvement and interrelation of techno-scientific, market-economic and politico-military information-rationales. No longer can we naïvely hold onto the view espoused by techno-optimists like Tim O'Reilly that 'new technologies make it possible to reduce the amount of regulation while actually increasing the amount of oversight and production of desirable outcomes' (O'Reilly, 2013; also quoted in Morozov, 2014); in fact, as we have tried to suggest, we can expect increases in synarchically regulated algorithmic governance — what we have herein described as the politico-military, market-economic, and techno-scientific regulation of behaviours and activities by way of increasingly intelligent complex information-processes.

As Evgeny Morozov argues in *The Guardian*, shifting narratives and policies have drawn our attention away from the critical but seemingly dystopian public discourses that demand accountability and transparency from institutions and corporations, to the forces of an apparently utopian techno-solutionist algorithmic 'Agartha' — 'Agartha' understood as a globally-reticulated/planet-wide system of synarchic regulation — which seeks to render political dissent and dialogical deliberation all but obsolete under the use of innovative planetary governance-strategies:

> *In shifting the focus of regulation from reining-in institutional and corporate malfeasance to perpetual electronic guidance of individuals, algorithmic regulation offers us a good-old technocratic utopia of politics without politics. Disagreement and conflict, under this model, are seen as unfortunate by-products of the analog era — to be solved through data-collection — and not as inevitable results of economic or ideological conflicts. However, a politics without politics does not mean a politics without control or administration. … Thus, it's a mistake to think that Silicon Valley wants to rid us of government institutions. Its dream state is not the small government of libertarians — a small state, after all, needs neither fancy gadgets nor massive servers to process the data — but the data-obsessed and data-obese state of behavioural economists. (Morozov, 2014)*

In other words, the immediate adversaries are those who, in the name of technical efficiency and technological innovation, seek not to curtail and simplify but to amplify, expand and monetise the algorithmic governmentalisation of everyday life. Synarchically regulated algorithmic governance fosters the development of predictive analytics [18] and — in a techno-pharmacological sense — information addiction[s] (calling to mind what Rachel Law has recently called 'datamania' [19]) that depend on reconceptualising individuals as data-bodies: that is, as a discrete set of data-points — what Deleuze called 'dividuals' [20] — that can be tracked, coordinated and re-assembled (this is what theorists today call 'surveillant assemblages' [21]). While these facts in-themselves may not be enough to warrant pessimism for many, 'algorithmic regulation—whatever its immediate benefits — will give us a political regime where technology corporations and government bureaucrats call all the shots' (Morozov, 2014). Naïve techno-optimism lacks the gumption necessary to overturn the false (often intentionally deceptive) impression that algorithmic governance, with its discourses of 'big-' and 'open-data', leads inevitably to less bureaucracy and error, more time and efficiency, more individual freedom, more social knowledge. What algorithmic governance leads toward — as both Morozov and others endeavour to show, Edward Snowden especially, N.B. — is, not freedom from demagoguery, despotism and oligarchy, but synarchically-regulated convergences of information-governance that often elude public scrutiny and societal deliberation.

In the final analysis, instead of the utopian vision of 'ubiquitous connectivity' wherein 'the digital cloud' would unite humans and non-humans (subjects, objects, what-have-you) in an ever-tightening mesh of mechanisms that would cater to every need and desire from the most mundane to most exotic, algorithmic regulation should be understood as the control and regulation of network-behaviour conducted by automated informational processes that produce so-called 'desired outcomes' for humans based on real-time modulated feedback. Algorithmic governance is thus a paradigm of self-organisation in which networks are governed, managed and reproduced through the capture and processing of

digital information (and this necessarily in a synarchic manner, as we have argued): the use of algorithms leads to the need for more algorithms to manage the previous algorithms, and so on and so forth. Now, techno-utopians like O'Reilly assure us that this is nothing to worry about; in fact, algorithmic regulation 'makes the market more transparent and self-policing' (O'Reilly, 2013) , thereby accomplishing all the goals of good governance that humans have always sought but have rarely found in their politics and politicians. Algorithmic governance is an as-yet just-discernible form of planetary governance based on ubiquitous machine mediation and regulation; it colonises and propagates by creating more opportunities for digitally regulating information, thus creating the conditions for continued algorithmic expansion into networks of increasingly planetary scale. Like Bacon's *New Atlantis*, which describes a utopia ruled by 'Salomon House', a college of benevolent scientific keepers of knowledge, algorithmic governance promises the rule of algorithmic knowledge applied to the betterment of human beings. And yet the promise of 'more transparency' turns out to mean, for those such as O'Reilly, 'more disclosure of data' in 'machine readable' form: 'regulation', he says, 'depends on disclosure — on data required by regulators to be published by … firms in a format that makes it easy to analyze' (2013). The seeming freedom produced by algorithmic regulation ends up becoming entangled with a strictly machine-readable model of governance in which and through which humans are controlled by digitised networks of increasingly synarchically regulated data-flows.

Biographical Notes

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Notes

[1] Adam Kramer, Jamie Guillory & Jeffrey Hancock, 'Experimental Evidence of Massive-Scale Emotional Contagion through Social Networks', *PNAS: Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 111.24 (June 2014), pnas.org/content/111/24/8788.full; also see latimes.com/nation/nationnow/la-na-nn-facebook-study–20140703-story.html#page=1 and theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/07/the-test-we-canand-shouldrun-on-facebook/373819.

[2] See [Anonymous Author], '*Stratfor* E-mails Reveal Secret Widespread *TrapWire* Surveillance-System', 10 August 2012, at rt.com/usa/stratfor-trapwire-abraxas-wikileaks–313; Ben Doernberg, '*TrapWire:* The Truth Behind the Hype', 12 August 2012, at storify.com/bendoernberg/test-post; and — if you can find it since it has been expunged from the web—the Abraxas Corporation's blurb re: the '*TrapWire*™ Pre-Attack Terrorist Detection System for Protecting Critical Infrastructure', 26 September 2006, formerly at tdr.uspto.gov/jsp/DocumentViewPage.jsp?76610388/SPE20060927110512/Specimen/7/26-Sep–2006/sn/false#p=1 (deleted). Re: Philip K. Dick's concept of 'pre-crime', see 'The Minority Report', published in *Fantastic Universe* 4.6 (January 1956): 4–36, and Steven Spielberg's filmic version (Universal City: DreamWorks Studios, 2002).

[3] See leaksource.info/category/snowden (the most recent Edward Snowden interview at the time of this essay's composition, June-July 2014 — 'Inside the Mind of Edward Snowden', NBC News, 28 May 2014 — available at dailymotion.com/embed/video/x1xfc4b via nbcnews.com/feature/edward-snowden-interview/watch-primetime-special-inside-mind-edward-snowden-n117126).

[4] See Alan Travis and James Ball, 'Unprecedented New Powers in Surveillance Bill, Campaigners Warn: Prime-Minister insists Fast-Track Legislation will do No More than Confirm Existing Powers, but Privacy Groups Say Otherwise', *The Guardian*, 13 July 2014, theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/13/surveillance-bill-new-powers, and Pam Cowburn, 'The DRIP Myth List', 14 July 2014, openrightsgroup.org/blog/2014/the-drip-myth-list (also Cory Doctorow, 'Snowden: #DRIP defies belief', 14 July 2014, boingboing.net/2014/07/14/snowden-drip-defies-belief.html).

[5] Here again the sense of information/informe-governance, see Georges Bataille, 'Informe', *Documents* (1929), 382; cf. aphelis.net/georges-bataille-linforme-formless–1929 for an online version c/o Philippe Theophanidis.

[6] ‘The process[es] under discussion can be viewed as an information-transfer sequence involving a number of discrete steps: 1. recognition of the external signal by specific receptors on the cell-surface; 2. transduction of the extracellular signal within the membrane-system into an intracellular message or messages; 3. transmission of the intracellular message from cell-surface to cell-interior; 4. intracellular reception by specific receptor proteins; 5. modulation of the structure and activity of cell proteins by those intracellular receptor-proteins; 6. response of one or more elements within the cell leading to an alteration in cell behaviour; and 7. termination of the message either within the cell and/or at its site of generation’ (Rasmussen, 2).

[7] The term ‘coordinate’ in this context refers to the way political, economic and scientific governors (‘archons’) act in coordinate fashion to control response to a given externality (for example in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 crashes in the United States, in which a shocking externality — or series of related externalities — introduces enough friction to catalyse large-scale coordinated responses from the major political, economic and intellectual regulatory powers). Within this prototypical model, the same externality can induce both increases in the respective regulatory capacities of each of the domains of governance, as well as enable overlaps so that domains can interact to regulate each other’s responses.

[8] The term ‘hierarchical’ refers to the way in which one of the domains of governance initiates response to an externality, thereby controlling the responses within the two other domains — the responses of these latter acting to supplement or enhance the initial response (for example the 2008 subprime mortgage crash in which the collapse of major financial institutions — partly caused by reductions in regulations for certain kinds of financial transactions in the years leading up to the crisis — prompted economic in the form of government bailouts and the political regulation of monetary policies by said government) .

[9] The term ‘sequential’ refers to the way in which information-flows in one domain generate information-flows in the other domains, which — taken together — determine overall response to an externality.

[10] Our ‘Mort à Discrédit: Otium, Negotium, and the Critique of Transcendental Miserablism’, originally written for the 2015 special ‘Bernard Stiegler’ issue of *Boundary 2: International Journal of Literature and Culture* at the invitation of its Guest Editor, forthcoming in the next issue of *Parrhesia: Journal of Critical Philosophy. A rough-draft of the essay is available online at academia.edu/4184488. The present paper—above—also*

draws from and is in many ways an extension of our Apps And Affect conference-presentation ('Planet of the Apps: Coming to Terms with our New Overlords') as well as our contribution to The Imaginary App* anthology (eds. Svitlana Matviyenko and Paul Miller, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014: 230–250) which was based on the conference-presentation; the anthologised title being 'From the Digital to the Tentacular, or From iPods to Cephalopods—Apps, Traps, and Entrées-without-Exit', a rough-draft of which is available online at academia.edu/4184569 & academia.edu/4184524

[11] Saint-Yves seems to have been well aware of how easily mythical sources are dismissed and how quickly visions of contemporary science dismiss those in and of scientific antiquity ('il n'y a aucune science réelle dans les temples antiques' he wrote at the outset of *La mission de l'Inde*, the last book of the 'Missions' he composed — completed in 1886 — albeit covering the most ancient period of the 'Missions' studied; a book which was published posthumously, following his own request, forty years after his death, by Dourbon-Ainé, Paris, 1949; for this passage, see page 4); these dismissals are in fact — even in the face of science-'fictions' — a type of willed blindness according to the Alveydrian outlook, a willed blindness that securely shuts the eyes from perceiving the ongoing application (i.e. dissemination) to-this-day of even the most ancient, obscure and outdated techniques, especially in cases where governance has greater and greater — multinational/worldwide — scope, and most pointedly in the globe-girdling operations of synarchic governance. 'Governance' here, once again, is a matter of missions — of emissions, of transmissions — and the 'missionaries' of its Spiritus Mundi[e] live in (or rather, through) the archono-archaeometrical hype, hyperstition and hypersynchronisation (re: hyperstition, cf. Delphi Carstens, 'Hyperstition', merliquify.com/blog/articles/hyperstition 2010 ; re: hypersynchronisation, cf. Stiegler, 2011, 43–60) of a pan-mediational — today, digital / fibrecultural / televisual — 'Hollywood' (here citing Kristol-via-Stiegler once again). Some have also called this, following after the 'military-industrial complex', the 'military-entertainment complex' see Tim Lenoir and Henry Longwood, 'Theatres of War: The Military-Enterianment Complex', Stanford University, 2002, online at web.stanford.edu/class/sts145/Library/Lenoir-Lowood_TheatersOfWar.pdf, along with Stephen Stockwell & Adam Muir, 'The Military-Entertainment Complex: A New Facet of Information Warfare', in the inaugural issue of this very journal: *the Fibreculture Journal* 1, 2003, online at one.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj–004-the-military-entertainment-complex-a-new-facet-of-information-warfare). This pan-mediational Hollywood/'Military-Industrial-Congressional'-Infotainment-Complex is in some sense[s] akin to the 'Cathode-Ray Mission' of David Cronenberg's early-'80s film Videodrome. The latter 'Mission'-qua-emission originates rather ambiguously (according to Cronenberg's film-script) in Malaysia or Philadelphia and/or Pittsburgh as the eponymous videodrome transmission; the locus of the Alvedyrian equivalent — which Saint-Yves calls 'Agartha', is presented as equally ambiguous: viz. high up in the heights of the Himalayas, but running up to these loftiest of its myriad gates from the cavernous confines of the subsurface/subterranean depths, which have pathways throughout the globe, including under America, as he states in his 1886 *La mission de*

l'Inde on the 28th page of the 1949 edition, where he writes of 'la surface et … les entrailles de la terre l'étendue réelle de l'Agartha', 'sans parler de l'Amérique, dont les sous-sols ignorées lui ont appartenu [depuis longtemps]' (a passage that has always reminded this essay's authors of those pages from William Burrough's *Naked Lunch* where 'evil' — which here we can invert so as to make it the interzone where, as Craig Mundie said, the televisual missionaries 'live' — is described as a radiation preceding its radiant pioneers. From the perspective of Saint-Yves's 'Agartha' or Burroughs's 'Interzone', 'America is not a young land' and Hollywood is indeed almost horrifying archaïc: 'before the settlers, before the Indians', it was 'there waiting' — *Naked Lunch*, New York: Grove Press, 1959, 11). Hollywood, of course, makes use of materials both current and altogether ancient: its hype, hyperstition and hypersynchronisation appropriate and articulate the up-to-date and the archaïc, as does Saint-Yves's multi-volume study of synarchy, and (according to Saint-Yves) any synarchic system as well.

[12] In his work he undertook an 'archaeology' (or if you prefer, an 'archonteleology') of synarchic regulation — the kind of 'archaeology' which Claude-Sosthène Grasset-d'Orcet would later take up in the essays that make up his *Matériaux Cryptographiques and Oeuvres Décryptées* (works collected and anthologised by Auguste Barthélemy & Bernard Allieu for Éditions les Trois R, Le-Mesnil Saint-Denis, 1976; cf. the original essays he published in *La revue britannique* from 1875 to 1890 — especially his essay 'Les Anciennes Corporations de Paris', published in the August 1st issue of 1884, which resounds in many ways of Saint-Yves . This 'archaeology' or 'archonteleology' culminated in *L'Archéomètre: clef de toutes les religions et de toutes les sciences de l'antiquité*, published posthumously in Paris, two years after the death of Saint-Yves, by Dorbon-Aîné in 1911.

[13] Rasmussen (and perhaps also his source, Victor Bers) appears not to have known of the Alveydrian precursor to his synarchic system — which was without question the case, more recently, when the multinational advertising and public-relations conglomerate WPP-PLC chose 'Synarchy' as the name of a new agency built to handle its Dell Computer multinational hardware and software account (see Rupal Parekh, 'WPP Settles on Name for Dell Shop: Synarchy Worldwide', published in the May 14 2008 issue of *AdAge*, online at adage.com/article/agency-news/wpp-settles-dell-shop-synarchy-worldwide/127081; in a follow-up to that article, published five days later, Parekh stated that the 'WPP Group's decision to choose Synarchy as the likely name for the new agency … prompted anarchy in the blogosphere' — this because of the post-Alveydrian glut of conspiracy-theories that sprang-up around the term synarchy in the early 1940s, which culminate[d] after the turn of the millennium — i.e. post–2000 — in Lyndon LaRouche-style readings wherein synarchy is taken to be synonymous with fascism and neo-nazism; cf. Parekh, 'Blogosphere Abuzz with Criticism over Roots of Controversial Word', published in the May 19 issue of AdAge, online at adage.com/article/agency-news/wpp-s-synarchy-choice-sparks-sneers/127164).

[14] Hence the title of the present paper which alludes to this synarchic utopia, i.e. its underground undercurrent, its subterranean/subtextual schema.

[15] Wark, 2012: 81.

[16] Scott Bakker, *Neuropath* (London: Orion Books, 2008) and The Three Pound Brain (rsbakker.wordpress.com).

[17] Saint-Yves d'Alveydre seems to have developed his vision of Agartha, a.k.a. the depth/**गर्त** (gartha) that runs across the [w]hole surface/अगर्त (a-gartha; cf. Saint-Yves, La Mission de L'Inde, 1886; 1949, 26–27), from out of the work of Louis Jacolliot, whose *1876 Législateurs religieux: Manou, Moïse, Mahomet* was (notoriously) a sourcebook for Nietzsche as well as for Saint-Yves. Agartha/Asgartha is first mentioned by Jacolliot in his treatise on *L'Initiation et les Sciences Occultes dans L'Inde et chez Tous les Peuples de L'Antiquité* (Paris: Éditions Lacroix, 1875), translated into English by William Felt under the title of *Occult Science in India and Among the Ancients* (London: William Rider & Son, 1919; see page 26 of that edition re: Agartha/Asgartha). With respect to its different transliteration-spellings, one can find references (for example) to Agarta, Agartta, Agartha, Agarttha, Asgartha, Agharti, et cetera , et cetera ('Agharta', for instance, was used as the title for what has been called 'the greatest electric funk-rock jazz record ever made' — in this case a 1975 record by jazz-musician Miles Davis; see twitter.com/seoirsethomais/status/421935991155220480; the same title was used for the opening track of the drone-metal band Sunn 0)))'s 2009 Monoliths and Dimensions record; Wikipedia lists a number of other examples, cf. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/agartha). See footnotes 32 & 34, above for more subtext[s].

[18] See IBM's definition: 'Predictive analytics helps your organization predict with confidence what will happen next so that you can make smarter decisions and improve business outcomes. IBM offers easy-to-use predictive analytics products and solutions that meet the specific needs of different users and skill levels from beginners to experienced analysts. With predictive analytics software from IBM, you can 1. transform data into predictive insights to guide front-line decisions and interactions; 2. predict what customers want and will do next to increase profitability and retention; 3. maximize the productivity of your people, processes and assets; 4. detect and prevent threats and fraud before they affect your organization; 5. measure the social media impact of your products, services and marketing campaigns; 6. perform statistical analysis including regression analysis, cluster analysis and correlation analysis' (http://www–03.ibm.com/software/products/en/category/predictive-analytics).

[19] Rachel Law, 'Datamania': a lecture presented at the Center for Tranformative Media, Parsons: The New School for Design, New York City, April 14 2014.

[20] 'The numerical language of control is made of codes that mark access to information, or reject it. We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair; individuals have become dividuals, and masses, samples, data, markets, or banks' (Deleuze, 1992, 5).

[21] 'We are witnessing a convergence of what were once discrete surveillance systems to the point that we can now speak of an emerging "surveillant assemblage". This assemblage operates by abstracting human bodies from their territorial settings and separating them into a series of discrete flows. These flows are then reassembled into distinct "data doubles" which can be scrutinized and targeted for intervention'; Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson, 'The Surveillant Assemblage', *British Journal of Sociology* 51 (2010): 606.

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The Fibreculture Journal is published by The Fibreculture Journal Incorporated in partnership with Open Humanities Press.