Community as Event[1]
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Abstract

Concepts and technologies of information and communication are discussed in the context of political philosophy and ontology. The questions of what is the meaning and sense of "information" and "communication" in modern political philosophy and what are the roles of technologies of such are discussed in regard to two notions of power and community: constitutional and constituent. The responsi-bility of designing and using information and communication technologies in response to an ontologically primary "social net" is discussed. One, ethical-political, role of the relation of philosophy to information is discussed.

I. Introduction

In this article, I would like to consider two models of community—one founded upon constitutional power and one founded upon constituent power--that give rise to various forms of agency and identity: the modern state or nation, cultural or social senses of community, and last, but not least, the organization of the self. I would like to consider these two models from the perspective of ontology, communication, and information. To position communication and information events and technologies within a problem of community through the framework of ontology means to engage such events and technologies within political philosophy. In particular, I would like to ask if the information and communication model popularly known as the "conduit metaphor," which is still the dominant theoretical model in communication studies and in library and information studies, adequately models the different levels of community or organization that make up our macro social selves and our more micro personal selves. In two early, but foundational works, "Animal Songs" and "Diagrammatic Bodies," I investigated the issue of community in terms of the "in-common" relations of beings, including humans and other animals, that occur within three horizons of bodily relation and temporality: language, physical extension, and finitude. In this work, I would like to more fully develop that analysis in terms of two concepts: "the people" and "the multitude."

This article attempts to disrupt simplistic, but common, assumptions that divide modern politics into totalitarian or fascist forms of government on the one hand and democratic ones on the other, because it challenges the notion of "communicative reason" (to use Habermas's term) that, I argue, forms the basis for all constitutional or "rational" forms of government. My argument assumes a different origin for

democracy—one that starts from what is in-common: affects, language, and at least for humans, a temporality beginning with a shared sense of finitude. Such an origin for democracy sees individuals as singular expressions of in-common relations rather than as a priori individuals. As an important horizon for forming social relations and, therefore, individual beings, the topic of language constitutes an exemplary horizon for discussing the in-common nature of beings. If my argument emphasizes human communities, however, I would like to stress that it is not limited to such. Humans share language, affect, and possibly some senses of time with other beings. Together these form the in-common horizons for our zoological community, and in some ways, extend out into the community of physis as a whole. In so far as language, affect, and forms of temporality constitute primordial ontological horizons to which we reply, they are informational and communicational and they give rise to the appearance of our selves as beings and as individuals. Thus, in sharp contrast to the concepts of "the people" and "communicative reason," the multitude and the ontological horizons of the multitude, however specific, may not in general exclude all that which is outside of "man" or the human.

II. The "common" of constitutionality

The tradition of political philosophy that finds community resting on constitutional interpretations of common law or "reason" itself has, of course, a long history in, particularly, the Anglo-Saxon countries. Thomas Hobbes, for example, in the 17th century argued that left to their own devices men form a mob or "multitude" of desires that result in a state of war (see Hardt and Negri, 2000). According to Hobbes, for the sake of peace the multitude must be organized as a "people" under sovereignty. Later, Locke would, of course, translate this notion of sovereign law into a notion of democracy by shifting the basis of reason from the monarchical seat to that of citizens. The right of individual communication would, under the guidance of reason, lead to a type of "communicative reason" that would be the foundation of the democratic State.

Sovereign and democratic forms of political community are constitutional because they constitute community through reason and reason's embodiment in law. Such an assemblage is often "capitalistic" in the sense that the constituted assemblage is also accumulated under a smaller body (that is, in the largest sense, "capitalized"); democratic relations are often synthesized into representational forms that are governmentally higher than themselves. By this, some powers are selected and combined so as to increase power in certain manners. Direct democracy is replaced by a representative democracy that also has a responsibility of managing and leading the State. Other powers, thus, are simply seen as surplus—trash or leftovers in regard to the future (what Walter Benjamin termed, -Abfall (Benjamin, 1968b)). Power here—the "potentia" (Hardt and Negri, 2000) of the multitude in their individualities and groups—is trimmed and increased according to ordained rational parameters, and this trimming begins with the basis of "rational" speech.

The constitutional tradition in political philosophy has deep historical roots, of course, in the Western democratic tradition, which can easily enough be seen in the opening words of the United States constitution, "We the people…." Equally, however, we must recognize that this tradition of unity founded upon constituted plurality has also been embodied in more fascist, mystical understandings of the "people," namely, as the soul of the nation as in, for example, the National Socialist understanding of das Volk during the Third Reich in Germany. Though the actual manifestation of constitutional plurality has been quite different in practice over political modernity, the form of the modern State remains quite similar. In general, the modern State is said to embody the people as the common surrender of individual desire within a totalizing, "rational" whole—whether that totalizing whole is understood in terms of legislated laws, a sovereign who embodies those laws or decrees those laws, or as a mystical soul of a people that rediscovers itself in national unity especially during moments of national crises or war.

What I am emphasizing here is the common explanatory logic of different evolutions of the modern State: sublimated individual desire and the triumph of constitution via a common sense beginning with language. Language, here, is "public" and "rational" not "private" and "irrational." Understanding is achieved by a correspondence of meaning between individuals beginning with a mutual attunement to a "common sense" of the world and of language first of all. Rationality in language is the first proper measure that then brings about the correspondence of minds and selves in understanding. Language in the constitutional society must be, as Norbert Wiener claimed, "clear"—that is, exact in terms of correspondence--else the entire rational community of the State falls apart (Wiener, 1954).

The communicational as well as the informational models that follow (or precede) this general logic or form for constitutional communities can be seen in terms of Realpolitik during times of war or similar moments of crisis, when the national body is understood as "pulling together"—that is, reestablishing, or in reality redefining, its cultural, social, and geopolitical boundaries by means of common pronouncements and judgments. In times of crisis the community of the State is explicitly expressed in patriotic statements, in the explicit use of force, and in the establishment of new types of laws. As always, when the implicit borders of a common sense or common -ratio are threatened, then the concept of reason explicitly appears in statements and in the formation of new laws. In this event of direct articulation, explication, and formalization, the flexibility of a common sense or reason that defines the public sphere of a modern nation State becomes less flexible. "Reason," as the regulative ideal of common sense, explicitly appears in the formalization of that "common sense" during periods of crisis.

The democratic political tradition, particularly within the framework of economic capitalism, stresses the necessity of there being a plurality of choices for desire to fixate upon and flow through. Particularly the capitalist State requires a certain

degree of flexibility so as to neither fully repress desire nor to allow it to overflow the object and thus make the subject appear to be irrational. The point is not to end desire, but rather to sublimate it into work or, from the aspect of consumption, satisfy it temporarily but not permanently. Rather than totally repress or conquer desire, one wishes to direct it to flow through the conduits, objects, institutions, and identities of expression that mark the common (this is the nature of "discipline" according to Foucault). Common sense, thus, not only characterizes forms of communication in general in the constitutional State but it also is the formal condition for production in general.

At the highest level of the modern State the concern about language and other "commerce" is not that of maintaining content, but of preserving (and with that as far as imaginable, recreating) form, not that of repeating statements per se, but rather that of perpetuating a common sense for meaning through formal continuity. If change is to occur, in other words, it should occur conservatively, that is, it should conserve first of all the formal conditions for reproduction in the future's production. And the conservation of "form" means here, in its most radical transformation, the conservation of the most general governing economies though which power flows and subjects emerge: the preservation of the notion of accumulation and the premise of the necessity of surplus value and profit as governing principles of everyday relations. (These terms must be thought both within and outside of specifically financial determinations—that is, these terms must be thought in regard to representation as accumulation or capital-ization in general, as well as economically.) The controlled flow of desire is essential for the modern state in its highest form, which today takes the form of the capitalist "democratic" State. Other twentieth century forms of the modern State, here (e.g., Stalinist) are "immature" forms that fail because they fail to understand the interests that the State has in maintaining itself through and by change, first of all, through language or "expression." Desire not only may, but it also must be allowed to express itself, but it must do so within the forms of rationality. Individual subjects are utterly desirable, but they are productive subjects only in so far as they are disciplined for production (Foucault, 1977). The older, "communist" States utterly failed to understand the necessity for "freedom of expression" in so far as this phrase does not deeply care about controlling the content of expression, but rather, is largely concerned with maintaining forms of expression. And, except in moments of crisis, it relies upon making the "rules" for such innate, self-censored, and at the level of common sense and the "moves" of ordinary language games, not at the level of statements, definitions, or laws. In this way, the "reason" of the State, its sovereign power, seems to only appear in times of crisis, and we believe that democracy flourishes because of this. Where in reality, what we often call "democracy" in the modern constitutional State is sovereign power at the level of formal, immanent, and common sense relations, concerned with maintaining its capacity for reproduction. On such a social and political basis, all language comes to be seen as a problem of measure, that is, as a problem of rationality. "One" voices opinions, "one" makes statements about one's emotions, and "one" communicates

information about private and public states. And in times of crisis or ambivalence, one is given more explicit rules for making such statements.

In communication and information theory, this famous principle of "freedom of expression" is articulated in Warren Weaver's rereading of Claude Shannon's "The Mathematical Theory of Communication" ("Some Remarks on The Mathematical Theory of Communication" (Shannon and Weaver, 1949)) within the concept of "freedom of choice." In this essay Weaver confuses Shannon's strictly technical notion of "freedom of choice" with human choices made within, among other realms, natural language. In Shannon's original paper the notion of statistical choice is explained by the ability to predict words through the statistical occurrence of letters in relation to one another within a given language. In Weaver's interpretation of Shannon's "freedom of choice," however, this statistical example of alphabetic occurrence within a language gives way to semantic and discursive "choices" (i.e., choices of expression) and, thus, Shannon's technical transmission model is reinterpreted within a particular speaker-hearer model of language (i.e., the conduit metaphor) with the "speaker" understood as the intentional "individual" of the liberal, and more generally, the constitutional political tradition. In other words, in Weaver's work Shannon's conduit model of signal transmission becomes a metaphor for communicative reason. The political meaning of such communicative reason in the Cold War would be expressed more fully in the two editions of Norbert Wiener's book, The Human Use of Human Beings (namely, published in 1950 and 1954; see Day, 2001).

In Weaver and Wiener's readings, communicative reason enters the age of statistics; there is no absolute border between communicative reason and irrationality, but rather, it appears in terms of statistical possibilities for semantic clarity and "understanding." As Wiener argues, the entire apparatus of the State, particularly its judiciary and laws, depend on semantic clarity (Wiener, 1954, chapter VI). Here, empirically verifiable statements, tropes, opinions, and all sorts of linguistic and epistemological types become a certain type of information "sent" from some one to another or to others. The conditions for understanding and for clarity are not interrogated in this model, however. Nowhere in Weaver or Wiener's texts can one find any discussion of the production of meaning outside of the concept of "freedom of choice." Subjects and language remain distinct from one another, as if language was only a commodity. No account is given in their texts of language being a communal property. No account is given of the possibility for this world—or of any world—by and through language. No account is given of the subject's development, that is, the subject's subjectivity, in terms of forms of language. Instead, the subject is spoken of in terms of 18th century Enlightenment values (a certain notion of freedom based upon classical subjectivity) and in terms of capitalist values (a commoditized notion of choice).

Philosophically, and poetically as well, communicative reason stems from a tradition of interpreting truth from Plato to Descartes to, at least, Kant. Plato in his Republic expels actors because they ambivalently appear to be someone other than who they

are and thus cannot embody true and trustworthy identity. Descartes describes truth in terms of the attributes of "clear and distinct" ideas; vague or ambivalent ideas are untrue, or worse, false. For Kant, objects are represented in the understanding according to the formal conditions of the understanding and those formal conditions constitute the basis for the universal judgments of practical reason, and thus, for morality and law, as well as, of course, judgments of taste and knowledge. Since ideas can be formed by nothing other than language, the relation between truth and writing in Western metaphysics is to be found in the problem of representation.[2]

It is with the greatest unconscious irony that Wiener in The Human Use of Human Beings rests his "republic" on the clarity of language, foremost, the clarity of scientific language, only then to undercut this claim in the beginning of the fifth chapter of his book by arguing that mathematics ("which most of us see as the most factual of all sciences," Wiener, 1954, p. 95) is, at essence, metaphorical. The key to understanding this tension lies in Wiener's belief that language must be controlled in order for human systems to exhibit the highest rational order in the face of chaos. This control begins with knowing "man's built in purpose" (Wiener, 1950, p. 210). Wiener, like Weaver, with the latter's "engineering theory" whose goal is to design a language "with a view to the totality of things that man may wish to say" (Shannon and Weaver, 1949, p. 27), argues through a circular and regressive logic that reduces all truth value to rhetoric, specifically, to a discourse that we, today, term "informational" or "communicational." According to Wiener, we must say only what we know is true, but we can say what we know is true only if it is rhetorically clear. Thus, for Wiener the true can only occur in language representationally. In this model, language is not seen as a production of meaning or knowledge, but rather, it is the medium for such, but only in so far as it is "clear." What the "clear" is, however, is never stated nor can it be, but rather than being a grammatical or linguistic category, it is a category of judgment. And judgment and its production are not contested, for they rest in "common sense." In such an account there is little room for discussing knowledge as a function of linguistic production even though by grounding truth as a function of rhetoric that is what precisely where the grounds for discussion lay. Such a discussion has occurred: for example in the third chapter of Rousseau's Essay on the Origins of Language (1781) (Rousseau, 1967)) where representation is seen as a product of linguistic production beginning with figurative speech. Wiener, however, rejects metaphor or other such rhetorical figures as the basis for truth because the social implications of this exceed the truth conditions required by the constitutional and representational State as Wiener conceives of it.

Of course, even as Wiener suggests at the beginning of his fifth chapter, the very problem of philosophy, as a discourse on truth, is that language exceeds and, indeed, produces this truth rather than is embodied by it. Wiener's text amply demonstrates this when it evokes metaphor again and again as its central vehicle for textual production. What is lacking in the positivist account is precisely that which Rousseau attempted to account for, that is, language as a means of production for

"truth" and for many other discursive and social values. Because Wiener and Weaver are unwilling to seriously engage language as a generational means of production instead of simply as an instrumental tool for production, language becomes reduced to a discourse on truth, most specifically in terms of meaning. The concept of meaning, within the domain of truth, is then divided into a set of binary distinctions such as "clear" and "unclear," "true" or "ambivalent" (at best, or at worse, "false"), "scientific," or "non-scientific," and in terms of communication and information, "successful" or "unsuccessful" transmission, "true," or "false" documents or information. Bluntly stated, Wiener would have been wise to engage in a more materialist analysis because, like Weaver, his conception of expressive "freedom" is even more restrictive than the democratic capitalist State he was trying to defend against what he saw as the twin evils of the day, fascism and communism.

The classical understanding of truth in terms of highly formalized or restrictive economies of language--valued not only in 18th century scientific discourse (Foucault, 1970), but in 18th century drama and poetry, and as JoAnne Yates (Yates, 1989) has shown, in commerce during the 19th and 20th centuries-- was challenged in the arts beginning with Romantic poetics. In Romantic poetics (in different manners, German, then, English and French), and later in the form of the 20th century avant-garde, knowledge takes the form of "new" statements produced by artistic techniques. The production of the modernist "new," however, splits off into different aesthetic veins in the 20th century: one type of modernism follows capitalism in premising "the new" in terms of new content while maintaining old forms while the other type of modernism premises "the new" in terms of new forms, sometimes explicitly joining with Marxism (i.e., Brecht's work and Benjamin's commentaries on it) in a critique of economic production through a critique of aesthetic production (that is, production as the production of the primary forms and relations for reproduction, including, of course, that of a common sense or aesthesis). While the first type of aesthetics continues in the more traditional representational "modern" arts, such as painting, the second type of aesthetics reached its logical climax, at least in terms of aesthetics per se, in the avant-garde performance "happenings" of the 1960s, where the very sensuousness of the event itself was seen as a moment of "truth" by virtue of its immediacy and non-reducibility.

One of the important elements of the counter-classical movements of literary Romanticism was the insight that the repetition of form was always already inclusive of a difference that differed from the same by virtue of time-valued and site-specific qualities. (This insight was central to philosophic Romanticism, as well, such as Hegel's philosophy, while at the same time then subsuming this insight to philosophy's reduction of such difference to the self-same exactness of truth (e.g., Left and Right readings of Hegel's work)). To put the matter another way, difference was seen as the basis for identity itself, existence and history as the basis for essence or truth. Now, if repetition was never simply a production of the same, then categories or mechanisms that produced an absolute sameness within repetition (i.e., philosophical truth) must be utilizing other forces than that of their simple

repetition in order to do this just as machinery uses formal molds to contain and shape the material being expressed. The avant-garde attempted to exploit this difference inherent in the same by developing it by means of difference in scale, context, material, and time, as well as by bringing to light the extra-textual forces that were deployed so as to maintain truth over time and space. Essential to the avant-garde was the notion of recombination with a disregard for normative instrumentality but, also, with a complete dedication to recognizing the material means for production. The material necessity of production, however, was expanded beyond a teleological formalism to a larger ethical realm. And on the other hand, the Kantian category for art, "purposeless purpose" was employed not toward aestheticism, but rather, toward a reassertion of ---art or skill (techne) beyond the narrow "technological" parameters employed in the modern machinic "industries."[3]

III. The Affective Bond

It may seem that such considerations as philosophy and art are very far from discussing community in terms of new information and communication technologies. But, as I have been suggesting, they are not if we consider that the suppositions that we make about the nature of knowledge and language are presuppositions upon our understanding of what community and other forms of relations and identity are and can be and that new information and communication technologies act as important mediators in bridging the relation between knowledge and language in the present and past and the relations and identities that are and will be with us in the present and future.

The ways that these new technologies form a bridge to the future is always an important consideration of their invention and speculations about their social meaning (speculations that often drive momentous economic events, for example, that of the recent dot.com "bubble," as well as drive further technological design and innovation). Doug Engelbart considered the networked sharing of knowledge to be of tremendous importance, and he embodied this in his vision of shared computer networks. Bill Gates and others have recently attempted to return computers to handwriting vis-à-vis the Tablet Pc. Graphic User Interfaces, as well as, obviously, command languages, have worked toward standardizing language in information retrieval. Microsoft Powerpoint has revolutionized and has truly changed what constitutes, today, a public lecture and the amount of time and intellectual space a speaker and audience can assume for that event.

The effects of information and communication technologies take hold on a mass scale beginning with film and radio in the 1930s and television particularly after the Second World War. Print media is comparatively restricted in relation to auditory

or multimedia broadcast media because of issues of literacy, distribution, and attention. With the arrival of modern broadcast technologies an entire nation could be reached, both allowing for broadcast information to filter into all aspects of local demographics and allowing the standardization of those demographics in terms of language and culture (as, for example, was the case with Italy following the Second World War). In other words, broadcast technologies allowed the formation of a cultural cohesion and hegemony across nation-states as never before. Governments in the first half of the twentieth century showed a great deal of interest in using such technologies for these purposes nationally and internationally, and one sees the effective nationalistic uses of such technologies not only in the fascist and totalitarian States during this period, but also in the democratic States, along with the use of increasingly popular techniques and tools from the social sciences such as those involved with polling. With such technologies and techniques not only could persons individually and collectively be organized around central symbols and themes, but also, and even more importantly in the democratic countries, through opinion polls their wishes could be monitored and guided so as to coincide with commercial and State priorities. Such technologies and techniques gave rise not only to the "masses" as the basis for the fascist States, but they also helped form and express the desires of "the people" within the formal interests of those polling them and broadcasting to them in democratic States.

Walter Benjamin observed these uses of information and communication technologies in the 1930s, seeing in them standardizing tools for introducing and maintaining formal constraints for language and actions while allowing consumerist expression through events such as entertainment and opinion. For Benjamin and Marxist avant-garde artists of the time such as Bertolt Brecht, reality under capitalism was characterized by contradictions and paradoxes that were then obscured and forgotten in narratives of progress. For Benjamin the disappearance of local traditions opened the door to the construction of national traditions erected by the State or by industry (for example, those erected under German National Socialism) (Benjamin1968a, 1968b). The manufacture of tradition suggested that everyman could be the teller of stories that he or she read in the newspapers, stories whose very function is to distance reality within a generality of public information and opinion (Benjamin, 1968a). Local tradition gave way to public information, which supplied the range of opinions to be expressed on sanctioned matters of importance, leading to an endless circulation of what Heidegger termed during the late 1920s "Alltäglichkeit" (everyday) chatter (Heidegger, 1966) which was so well parodied at the time in Robert Musil's novel, The Man Without Qualities. With mass film, radio, and television the viewpoint that was adopted was that of a modern "everyman," an everyman that expressed shared known desires and opinions about a world that no one ever fully lived in, but about which everyone was constantly concerned.

In Freud's Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics (1913) Freud presents a modern political model through a psychoanalytic reading of ethnographic materials. This political model is founded

upon the psychoanalytic sublimation of desire through an object of identity. In Totem and Taboo the social, emotive concern that each person expresses for one another, what Freud termed the emotional or affective bond (Gefühlsbindung), is transformed into an identity with a sovereign or leader (Führer) through a combination of jealousy and guilt (Freud, 1950). Reason is embodied in the leader (the father) and it forms the transcendental bond that both binds and suppresses the desire of the primitive brothers who plot to overcome it by really or symbolically killing the father. Freud's historical myth in Totem and Taboo reenacts the central myth of the Freudian Oedipal economy, the child's hatred and love for the father that leads to his "rational organization" and maturation, except now the male child increases his power through political, not just individual, organization.

As Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen (Borch-Jacobsen, 1993) has suggested, however, Freud's social bond presupposes a bond before reason, that is, a bond before either the identification with the father or the resulting identification of the "brothers" with one another, just as Hobbes' model of the State does, too, without Hobbes realizing it. The affective bond is the ontologically primordial bond prior to its reinvestment in terms of reason via identification, and with that, the resultant forces of love and hate. Indeed, as Freud's model shows, identification, or the reduction of the many to the one, is the principle of truth that supports the concept of "reason" in the Western tradition. In this way, psychoanalysis, as much of the Western metaphysical tradition, works toward the rational organization of affects toward a concept of true identity. Where for Hobbes the absence of reason leads to a state of war by the fact of warring individual desires, for Freud lack of sublimation leads to the emptiness of a state without a State, a community without reason—that is, without reason as an organizing principle for community, as a transcendental principle for law and discipline, or even as a regulative principle for a State yet to come. The myth of the State founded in reason brings with it not only the possibility for common identity, but also, the possibility for common mis-identification and even resultant war. Working from the top down, we can see that within this State, in fact, the logic of reason and its opposites are logical and pragmatic necessities that require that force be used to enforce not only the rational, but also the irrational as figures inscribed on more primary affective relations.

The function of mass information and communication technologies in modernity has often been to appropriate this common ground, this common Gefühlsbindung in affect, so as to "capitalize" or accumulate this in-common power within flows that would create political and/or financial power in terms of direct sovereignty or in terms of indirect profit and oligarchy. In so doing, the rational organization of the affective-bond is necessary, and so with this, the mythology of desire and reason, "messages" and "communication." With mass information and communication, the in-common of affect, inclusive of language, is made common for the production of political or financial accumulation and profit.

IV. "In-common"

Benjamin suggests, however, that information and communication technologies evolve faster than their appropriation by conserving social forces. For Benjamin, photography and then film are prime examples of this: by expanding and refocusing what could be seen in a new scale and rhythm, new political techniques then needed to be developed in order to catch up to these innovations and reappropriate them (Benjamin, 1968b). A mid-century example of this may be seen in Manuel De Landa's analysis of United States spy photography in the late 1950s and early 1960s. According to De Landa, this technology became so accurate as to cause the United States' Pentagon to awkwardly change its claims of Soviet bomber and missile production and even to begin claiming that the Soviet's military threat lie not in what could be seen by high-resolution spy-satellites, but rather, in what could not be seen by these technologies; in other words to claim that "there had to be Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) hidden somewhere" (De Landa, 1991, p. 199), and that this, indeed, was the source of the threat itself. This rhetorical shift from positive assertions of proof to negative assertions for a proof always said to be shortly around the corner suggests that sometimes the advancements in information and communication technologies outstrip political control, forcing embarrassing political situations upon the very agents that depended upon that technology for maintaining and asserting power. Technological series and social, political, and, overall, technical series are not exact in terms of their effects (particularly over large populations) even when there is a causal relation between them.

Information commons arguments in regard to the Internet have argued for preserving the Internet as a public space where "the public" can maintain itself against commercialism and its instrumental reason. In the past, this argument was made for radio and television and as the Internet has become more heavily directed toward multimedia convergence and, subsequently, toward corporately mediated broadband, the information commons argument has reappeared with this set of technologies as well.

Though this argument about the need for an "information commons" seems to me important, as could be expected from what has preceded I feel that there is a concept of "common" that, ontologically at least, goes beyond that offered by the liberal conceptualization of "the public" and, in fact, underlies this latter notion. Such an argument, centered upon issues of the "in-common," goes "beyond good and evil," placing moral and policy concerns upon a wider conceptual ground of ontology, focused upon questions about the total relation of bodies as both physical and intellectual entities. Such a focus doesn't negate the importance of the moral or the judicial realm nor that of governmental policy, but rather, it focuses upon the always already in-common that underlie these "common" realms of mediation.

As has been earlier suggested in the discussion of Freud's work, the philosophy of the constitutional state presupposes social bonds that are then organized into a

political State. In these models of the modern State, desire is viewed as belonging to and emerging from each individual, and each desire must then surrender itself to a sublimation within an implicit common sense ("reason"), explicitly formalized or "defined" in moments of doubt or crisis. Such a model of desire underlies Hobbes' account of the Stateless state characterized by "every man against every man," but in so doing, it also asserts a prior social bond whose presence it then negates.

Let us clarify this issue of primordial ontological relations further. What are these relations and what are their implications? How do they differ from the ontic and political assumptions of constitutional forms of the State as defined by various types of communicative reason? We have suggested several answers. First, the priority of affect is central to this ontology and its conception of any state or community of being—individual, group, governmental "State," etc.. All bodies are affected by one another and their very "being" is a product of these affects. "Being" is a trace of affects. Second, the facticity of language is privileged in this ontology as one of the fundamental horizons for affect. We are born into language. Language is not just a tool. The fact that there is language is coextensive with being. Third, our in-common relations with sentient beings are characterized by a temporality of finitude. With humans, at least, this basis for community takes the form of a sense of finitude in which death and the thought of death is the emblematic event. Further, this sense of finitude is marked and remarked by our existential limitations, giving birth to identification and mis-identification, love and hate. In this manner, the sense of finitude marks both the in-common and the common, the ontological and the ontic in Heidegger's terms (Heidegger, 1996). Finitude characterizes our ontological being in so far as it is the in-common structuring of our general mode of temporal existence. In so far as it is experienced individually in the mode of death, concern, anxiety, etc., then it appears on ontic, existential grounds.[4] The meaning of time in terms of finitude in regard to information and communication systems is difficult to ascertain. In so far as such systems are seen as means or as products of will and representation they may be read in terms of a relation to death and limitations, or equally, as desires for overcoming such through "reason" and "communication." However, in so far as they are seen as issuing from and developing always already prior relations of affect and language they may be seen as expressions of such (as we will soon touch upon in reference to Berardi's comments).

Thus, humans, as well as other animals, always already share various ways of being in-common with one another. As various writers--most famously, Maurice Blanchot (Blanchot, 1988), George Bataille in various writings (which Blanchot is partly responding to), and more recently, Jean-Luc Nancy (Nancy, 1991), Giorgio Agamben (Agamben, 1993), and Antonio Negri (Negri, 2003b), and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (Hardt and Negri, 2000)--have noted, community is a function of an always already in-common ontological ground.

The constituted community is always im-possible, it is "always already" because it is both always present and always yet to come. In Derrida's words, after Blanchot, it

comes to us from the future (a-venir) in so far as that future is made up of potential pasts and presents. Human historical existence is characterized by the future anterior; in Heidegger's words (Heidegger, 1996) by a certain type of historical retrieval or repetition (wiederholen).[5] For Spinoza in his Ethics, thought and extension are two attributes of substance or being. The expression of this sharedness, though, takes place, as Negri writes, "at the edge of time" (Negri, 2003b). As language shows us, community is the constant expression of a shared being, led by affects and by the fact of language and diverging by the fact of languages.[6]

What, then, is the role of information and communication technologies in regard to community? This is a difficult question if we limit their "role" to actions occurring within the common assumptions and metaphors for language and limit their role to supporting a conception of State that founds itself upon, and preserves itself by, these same assumptions and metaphors. On the one hand, in what we may term in this context "high modernity," much of the role of such technologies within political economy has been that of the formal, if not the substantial, reproduction of the conditions for producing meaning at the behest of controlling modes and persons in power. This occurs negatively through sovereign suppression or more positively through the formal directing of in-common powers via education, training, discipline, recognition, and the social construction of hopes and dreams. On the other hand, sometimes opposing the modern state and its disciplinary uses of information and communication technologies, we have the narrative of the "information commons" which largely avoids these formal issues and instead attempts to reestablish the republic on a narrative of free exchange.

But what happens when the information commons is always already there, when what is in-common is the constant ebb and flow of affects, of the phenomenology of in-formation—not yet, or even ever, a fact or a commodity ("information"); not that of an orderly production, but rather, in-formation as affects and their relations and self-organization? Not just "philosophical" or more broadly, "theoretical," the question is always historical and ethical-political in character: How can we think of information and communication technologies in relation to the in-common of in-formation? Asking this question is the essence of any "philosophical" or "theoretical" political view of information and information technologies. More broadly, though, asking the question of "in-formation" in relation to "information" means working against the often inevitable institutionalization or habituation of events. This is why, too often at least, any metaphysics of information[7] is simply tautological: "information" today is almost always solely understood according to the metaphysics of presence and re-presentation that runs through Western philosophy and culture and which dominates modernity.

To think, literally, against information means to think against not only metaphysics and its dominating presence in modern societies but it means, most importantly, to

think against this in terms of our historical conceptions of time itself, most importantly, against conceptions of time as simple, objective and sequential presences (what Heidegger (1996) calls the "ordinary" or "vulgar" concept of time)—a foundational "context" in which history too is understood as a series of progressive "nows.". It is neither possible nor necessary to think dialectically opposite this, but rather, it is necessary to think critically against this if we are to account for human agency "in" history and thus reopen history to the experience of time itself. To reopen history to time itself means, for humans, to disclose historical time to the essence of time, that is, to the complexities of events, wherefrom various senses of time and series of histories open up and unfold. Further, this means that agency (though not at all necessarily that agency of the classical subject and its will and its freedom) is once again seen as important in relation to time and that its freedom is seen not as an attribute to its subjectivity, but rather, is seen as foundational for the possibility of their being a subject at all. To think being at the "edge of time" which is, at the same time, the edge and possibility of beings and the "site" where dwells the potentiality of being altogether (Negri, 2003b), is the essential activity of any critical philosophy (Derrida, 1982; Heidegger, 1996; Negri, 2003a, 2003b; Wood, 2002), including a critical philosophy of knowledge and, today, information. The analytical necessity is to realize that this "edge" is not divorced from beings and doesn't simply exist objectively from them as the infinite, but rather, is being itself in so far as this latter constitutes the essence of beings and makes up the -eternal of each their own "nows." This is the point where being as potentia is the multiple series of both pasts and futures that meet in each singularity, in so far as that singularity exists as an event and not simply as an "individual" traditionally conceived.

To return to the problem of the in-common in relation to the common and information and communication technologies, I think that in the past few years we have come to realize that various new, digital information and communication technologies are not the driving force to the in-common, but rather, they are a means for its expression today. To borrow from Franco Berardi, we may state that the essence of the Internet is the social net—that is, the net of being (Berardi, 1998); the relations of the in-common. Information and communication technologies are means of expression for this "net" of the in-common, but only one set of means.

In the beginning of his essay, "The Question Concerning Technology" ("Die Frage nach der Technik" (1953) (Heidegger, 1977b)), Heidegger challenges the traditional view of technology that is itself technological. Instead of viewing technology as a means to an end, Heidegger counters the modern conception of technology, as a teleological mechanism, with the Ancient Greek notion of -techne. He does this by reengaging Aristotle's four causes from the Physics, that is to say, the four conditions of technology in terms of causation—formal, material, efficient, and final. Heidegger challenges the Latin tradition's interpretation of cause (aitia), arguing that Aristotle's notion of cause is not that of a means for teleological determination, but rather, of co-responsibility for bringing a thing into being (poiesis) by man, a process in its specificity (in contrast to the poiesis of nature) that characterizes

--techne (irregardless whether it occurs in the "fine arts" or in what used to be called the "industrial arts").

Information and communication technologies and techniques may also be considered in the mode of their co-responsibility in bringing things forth, in allowing them to be expressed in certain manners. According to the epistemological framework of modern technology that governs so many forms of human life today, nature is understood as a resource and as a means for this technology ("natural resources"), persons are understood the same way ("human resources"), and so are social relationships even in their most general and "private" manners ("social capital"). Heidegger was quite right to point to this issue, including in this list, as the most problematic and also as the most threatening because it mediates understanding as a whole, language (technologically understood as a resource for communication and information transmission).

Today, even more than in Heidegger's day, however, it is clear that the resourcehood of our modern resources is running out. Marx termed the overextension of capital to the point where it snuffs out the extra-capitalist resources that support it, "real subsumption." Instead of aiding in real subsumption by increasingly monitoring human and natural activity for the purposes of further surveillance and exploitation, information and communication technologies need to be viewed in terms of their co-responsibility in regard to affects, language, and ultimately, time, and the relation of these three "elements" to the poiesis or emergence of community and being, in general.

To "respond" means that one responds to something given. Thus, responsibility in terms of information and communication technology means, foremost, to listen to affects, language, and time in a way other than the rationality of modern "common sense," that is, in terms other than as "resources" or commodities or to put it another way, as "presences" which are then, in Heidegger's words, objectively available as "ready-to-hand" (zuhanden) entities. The response that information and communication must give to the question of community will be formed in how it addresses these three "elements." Each element needs to be listened to in relation to the other, each must be listened to in terms of the whole. Each is "co-responsible" for "community," whether such a term refers to the singularity of "individuals" or "groups." To listen to a whole means to help it emerge toward a whole—a whole that is never a totality nor is a fully rested "state." Information and communication technologies are only responsible in so far as they maintain this openness that is being, and they are only politically responsible in so far as they assert this openness in contrast to the constituted State. This event is primordial, a function of being and time.

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[2] Derrida's work, particularly his early work, engaged this problem in the domain of philosophical linguistics, beginning with the trope of voice as a privileged means for -logos-.

[3] Heidegger's valorization of this "purposelessness" in the face of instrumentalism can be seen in his defense of aesthetics in the face of generalized cybernetics (Heidegger, 1977a). Unfortunately, Heidegger's critique of art often ended with a reduction of art to an aestheticized understanding of philosophical truth, forming a weird parallel to performance art's philosophical understanding of aesthetics. In both cases, art ends at the point of truth, just as much as philosophy ends at the point of aesthetics. In both cases, a more materialist understanding of production would have revealed different surfaces or "rhetorics" operative in the production of meaning (philosophy or episteme) and sense (art or aesthesis). In other words, the parallel dead-end of performance art and the Heideggerian understanding of truth lie in their confusion of the ends of production with the means of production. Despite a common concern with phenomenology, phenomena are read in both these approaches according to a metaphysics of identity rather than of difference: the identity of meaning in sense or the identity of sense in meaning. What fails to be thought are phenomenon as the event of relation between sense and meaning, between episteme and aesthesis. The two categories are not reducible to one another because they are two aspects of becoming: singularities and the "affects" or senses of their production. This is the basis from which all post-"logocentric" arts and knowledge must proceed, including those that study language in events of "communication" and even "information" (if, indeed, it is possible to displace these terms from their modern logocentric inscriptions).

[4] It must be noted that language and even affect too, of course, may be viewed ontologically or ontically. Language may be interpreted in terms of individual intention, affect in terms of will and representation. But, as we have noted, these ontic modes are structured by social parameters. Death, however, is defined in this way to a lesser extent because it is not an expression of an in-common relation, but rather, the withdrawal of beings back into an in-common inorganic being. As such, in anxiety, death literally "throws" beings out of their in-common relations in ways that may drag language and affect with it. In other words, with the thought of death the chasm between the ontological and the ontic become much stronger, though with the experience of death this difference becomes so much weaker as to, of course, eventually collapse.

[5] An insightful reading of temporality in Heidegger, Blanchot, and Derrida's works is Herman Rapaport's classic, Heidegger and Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language.

[6] This fact of language and this fact of languages which so much characterizes the relation of being to beings for humans, and which, when seen in a larger context of affects and "language" characterizes the relation of being to beings universally is that which is most overlooked in information studies that are concerned with the linguistic metaphor of semantic "messages" and their rational correspondence. In so far as this latter, rather than the former, sense remains the focus of information we will remain caught within an anthropomorphic and rationalist science. One purpose of this article, as well as an important strain of almost all my work in the field of information studies, has been to shift the grounds for analysis from a cognitive and anthropomorphic focus to a perspective that looks at the problem of information ontologically and historically, not to mention sometimes attempting to address a zoological, if not to say a cosmic (physis), scope. In this manner, it critically addresses the Enlightenment discourse on "man" (a discourse which can be clearly seen in Norbert Wiener's works (see Day, 2001)) from the aspects of episteme (inclusive of the modern concept of information), ontos, and -aesthesis before the "refinement" of these categories according to modern sub-divisions dictated by "technical" approaches (itself, as I have suggested following Heidegger, a "perversion" of the ancient Greek concept of techne). The increasing division of knowledge (episteme) into knowledge and information, the division of being (ontos) into public action and policy and that of private psychology, and the division of feeling (aesthesis) into the physical senses and the fine arts, along with the division of making (techne) into the practices of the "industrial arts" and the "fine arts" (following the Kantian discourse on teleological pragmatism or "purposefulness") is long in coming in Western culture, but its full blossoming (far from over, today) is relatively recent, dating from the late Enlightenment and the co-emergence of modern industrialism and modern capitalism. The category of the "modern" may perhaps be seen as the beginning of this "turn" in Western thought in relation to, but also in counter-distinction to, the "Ancients," particularly the works of the Ancient Greeks.

[7] This is not to be confused with a philosophy of information, however, which, properly speaking is not philosophy applied to the problem of information (i.e., a philosophy of information), but rather is information, as a component or synonym for events, applied to the rewriting of the dominant metaphysics of philosophy, that is, of representation structured according to Aristotelian form-content, genre-species, analytical analysis. Gilles Deleuze's work is exemplary for challenging this tradition of representation with one of surfaces and emergence, utilizing baroque architecture, thermodynamic theory, material emergence analyses (chemical, genetic, evolutionary) and various elements from the history of philosophy (stoicism, empiricism, Spinoza's work, etc.) in order to rewrite dominant notions in philosophy and Western cultures. The articulation of information as an event, and events in terms of information is yet to be written for LIS, though it has appeared in the physical sciences, to some extent in the social sciences, and in philosophy and in different ways than Deleuze, sociology (e.g., Niklas Luhmann's work).