

Establishing an immanent counterhumanism for the un-foreclosure of the future

Deleuze, Mbembe, Hartman and the anarchic Open World

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Contents

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Introduction | 4 |
| The contingent history of the human: The Enlightenment('s) human | 7 |
| A preliminary note on language, and the development of these paradigms in this essay | 8 |
| Part I: Responses to the Problem of the Human | 10 |
| 1. Introduction | 10 |
| 1.1 Counterhumanism | 10 |
| 1.2 Aimé Césaire | 11 |
| 1.3 Frantz Fanon | 12 |
| 1.3.1 <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> ' old humanism: | 13 |
| 1.3.2 <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> ' new humanism: | 14 |
| 1.3.3 The Wretched of the Earth | 15 |
| 1.4 Sylvia Wynter | 16 |
| 1.4.1 The appeal of counterhumanism | 21 |
| 1.5 Nonhumanism | 21 |
| 1.5.1 Deleuze and Guattari | 21 |
| 1.5.1.1 The postulates against the dogmatic image of thought | 22 |
| 1.5.1.2 A critique of our ideas of the subject | 27 |
| 1.5.1.3 A critique of our ideas of rationality | 27 |
| 1.6 What 'nonnormative' means: Deleuze's ontological immanent ethics | 28 |
| 1.7 Identifying normativity in texts | 31 |
| 1.8 The nonhuman turn | 31 |
| 1.9 Faciality and nonnormative ethics | 33 |
| 1.9.1 The human face | 33 |
| 1.9.2 The nonnormative project, if there is one: to escape the face | 35 |
| 1.10 The appeal of nonhumanism, and the consequences of counterhumanism or non-humanism | 35 |
| 1.11. Conclusion to Part I | 36 |
| Part II: Achille Mbembe's Immanent Counterhuman | 37 |
| 2. Introduction | 37 |
| 2.1. <i>Humanitas</i> and the European enclosure (race as a spatial relationship) | 38 |
| 2.2. The partition of the world: Enclosure(s) and the world-outside | 38 |
| 2.3. Mbembe's nonnormative resentment critique | 40 |
| 2.4. Mbembe's positive critique | 44 |
| 2.4.1. An immanent counterhuman | 44 |
| 2.4.2. Lines of flight | 45 |
| 2.4.3. Situated thinking and a rejection of abstract universals | 47 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 2.4.4. Future-orientation; Black art and religion; probe-heads | 48 |
| 2.4.4.1. Probe-heads | 48 |
| 2.4.4.2. Mbembe's characterisation of Black Art | 48 |
| 2.4.4.3 Mbembe's characterisation of Black religion | 49 |
| 2.5. To make the world <i>a world</i> : Nonhuman becomings, and cosmology | 50 |
| 2.6. The Open World, transverse ethics, and blackness as a call | 53 |
| 2.6.1. A pragmatic concept | 53 |
| 2.6.2. What is the content of Mbembe's 'human', and the meta-value directing it? . . . | 54 |
| 2.7. The Open: Transversality against enclosures | 55 |
| 2.8. The Open and/as the human. | 57 |
| 2.9. Mbembe's <i>Blackness</i> : a call to the Open, for a world-to-come | 58 |
| 2.10. Conclusion to Part II | 59 |
| Part III: The Human, A World | 60 |
| 3. Introduction | 60 |
| 3.1. The human against a hierarchical division of the world | 61 |
| 3.2. The human as stateless | 62 |
| 3.2.1. A small aside on representability, co-optability, and the affinity of Blackness and anarchism | 66 |
| 3.3. The human against civilization and transcendent notions of progress | 67 |
| 3.4. Economies: Enclosure as theft from the commons and property as enclosure – the human as anti-capitalist | 69 |
| 3.5. The human as borderless, borderlands as transversal, against nationalism | 72 |
| 3.6. Against capitalist and authoritarian socialist human rights discourses | 73 |
| 3.7. The lines between negative and positive critique: War machines, co-opted or no- madic, faciality and probe-heads | 74 |
| 3.8. Mutuality – the socio-political-economic relation of the human | 76 |
| 3.9. Political organization for a human world | 77 |
| 3.9.1. Beyond Mbembe and Deleuze: Hartman's General House Worker | 78 |
| 3.9.1.1. Mandela as nomadic war machine | 79 |
| 3.9.1.2. Hartman's critical fabulation, and the fabulatory function | 81 |
| 3.9.1.3. The General House Worker and her chorus as more appropriate to the human than Mandela | 83 |
| 3.10. Insurrectionary time: Prefiguration and the world-to-come | 86 |
| 3.11. Conclusion to Part III | 87 |
| Conclusion | 89 |
| References | 90 |

Introduction

This essay addresses the political form of the human, its multiply-stratified nature, and the world it makes up - by focusing first on a tension between two broad kinds of approaches in philosophy of race that intend to unmake that stratification. The political form of the human as understood here is fundamentally tied to all aspects of human relations, and as such when changed will come with a corresponding fundamental change in our political arrangements. Given that, this essay addresses those arrangements and the ways they might be brought about as an inherent part of this question, including a central question of identity politics; how we might use the categories we wish to destroy in order to move beyond them.

The starting point for this essay is to draw first from pre-existing paradigms to demonstrate and flesh out a major conflict between two kinds of theoretical movement that are not just found in race philosophy, but in my experience is most pronounced there. Both movements deal with the problem of the human; specifically, how the present universalised image of the human that has come to be deeply built into the material and conceptual structures of global society advantages those with a specific set of characteristics in various ways. One view, which following Sylvia Wynter I called *counterhumanism*, takes on the Césairean challenge to create a new humanism “made to the measure of the world”; that is, inclusive of all humans (Césaire, 1955, p. 73). The other view, following some Deleuzo-Guattarian scholarship, I will call *nonhumanism*, is based on a creative nonnormative philosophy and understands the very category of the human to be harmful, as a universalised and transcendent norm. The former view holds that we should replace the current human with another all-inclusive one, whereas the latter view holds that any possible conception of the human is problematic in the way that it limits our possibilities and conserves harmful values, claiming that it is desirable to go beyond any such human.

I will outline more fully what I mean by “nonnormative” in the sections on Deleuze in Part I, but for now since it is the fundamental point of critique that divides the two major positions I am considering, it is worthwhile to outline what is meant. Deleuze’s nonnormative project is a project against *transcendence*;¹ value frameworks grounded in abstract universals. They are transcendent in the sense that they are “outside,” rather than immanent to the context in which they are. We can understand the nonnormative project as a set of philosophical tools against transcendence, and ‘immanence’ the positive form of that project.

Counterhumanism, as will be exemplified in Sylvia Wynter’s approach, seeks to ground humanness in an abstract universal; to create a complete, alternate, model of humanness – it is as

¹ Although Deleuze argues extensively against transcendent frameworks, he calls his own method *transcendental empiricism*, which sometimes leads to confusion. So why does Deleuze insist on using the term ‘transcendental empiricism’ if he claims that nothing is ever transcendental as he does in his book on Hume? The reason is because “the ultimate products of the principles of association” are beliefs which “constitute claims about the world that the world itself does not license”; so beliefs go beyond – or *transcend* – the given (Roffe, 2016, p. 26). However, Deleuze insists on an empirical method, even for thinking that which exceeds the given, because for him, at the level of practice and following Hume, it is “a matter of knowing whether the question” raised is “the most rigorous possible” (Deleuze, 1991a, p. 107).

such a normative approach. The nonhumanist approach has three kinds of claims constitutive of a nonnormative approach: It is sceptical that any model can ever be adequate to the complexity of reality, demonstrates that what we understand to be humanness today is simply the result of contingent historical processes which have since the beginning been harmful, and claims that one result of this models-based approach is that there is a tendency to police all that which does not fit within the model.

Part I is divided into two. The first half introduces counterhumanism; two of its foundational historical proponents, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, before arriving at that of Sylvia Wynter, developing a schema of the kinds of claims that they make, and its uses. Though each to differing degrees have critiques of transcendent frameworks, they are not grounded in pure immanence and, in the case of Wynter, overtly accept transcendent grounds. The second half introduces nonhumanism; delving into a Deleuzian nonnormative approach through his unique Spinozian-Nietzschean philosophy of difference, applying nonnormativity to the idea of the human generally and also in the specific ways that Deleuze and Guattari do through the concept of *faciality*, and introducing positive elements of their critique of transcendent normativity. Sylvia Wynter's approach and the Deleuzian approach conceptualise the relationship between the dominant form of the human and what is dominated in similar ways – where Wynter says that the dominant form, Man, overrepresents itself over the complete space of the human, and Deleuzians will say that the dominant form, the face, overcodes itself over the complete space of the world, and both understand their task to be the unmaking of those relationships that co-constitute with the dominant form to come with a concomitant radical change in our political arrangements and how we all relate to one another. Despite these similarities, we will find the counter- and nonhumanist solutions to be incompatible – divided along the lines of whether transcendence is acceptable.

Part II is my engagement with Achille Mbembe's recent book, *Critique of Black Reason* (2017), and also has two sections. The first gives an introduction to the book and discusses a central element of critique within the book; that of resentment. The second engages Mbembe's positive critique on multiple levels. I will set out to establish some of the relevant and central movements of the book while highlighting both the counter- and nonhumanist elements that sustain it, in order to set up his work as a space demonstrating the way that he resolves the conflict between both. My claim is that his work resolves this problem by reframing humanness in terms of a nonnormative geographical relationship, which allows for us to reconceptualise counterhumanism, maintaining its use, language, and spirit, while also upholding the nonhumanist immanent critique of transcendence. Mbembe, in conceptualising race in terms of enclosures and political-geographical relationships that span the world, provides a clear framework from which we can seek to overcome the stratified nature of the human, as well as an approach to identity politics that does not reify the categories that we wish to destroy, that sets conditions for us to make the world *a world*, what he calls the 'Open World', a world politically unstratified along lines such as race, class, and gender.

Part III takes the framework for a world that Mbembe has developed with his nonnormative counterhumanism and considers the forms of political structures and resistance emergent from and compossible with that solution. Though Mbembe does not overtly draw from anarchist theory², it is productive for me to introduce various elements of anti-authoritarian anticapitalisms

² It is clear, however, that Mbembe has at least a passing familiarity with anarchism, as he mentions it multiple times, sometimes favourably and sometimes critically, in *Critique Of Black Reason* (Mbembe, 2017, pp. 30, 41, 43, 77),

to argue that Mbembe's utopian vision of an Open World, a world-in-common, makes some clear calls for an anarchism otherwise. By anarchism, here, I refer to the radical position that is fundamentally politically anti-hierarchical and emergent from a direct action ethic; decentralised, stateless, moneyless societies free of coercive and dominating social structures including the full ranges of identity-based oppressions, such as racisms, classism, sexism, to name some – and 'direct action' meaning that actions not mediated by transcendent political structures, such as vanguards, political parties, state institutions, NGOs, etc., a position corresponding to the range of possibilities for the Open World, the human world we arrive at in addressing the initial tension between counterhumanism and nonhumanism. Having said this, what my essay seeks first to do is to establish the most liberated conception of the human that we may find and a sense of what that world would look like; and rather than working from anarchism as a first set of principles, anarchism is enacted and arrived at as a result of the various applications of critiques in this essay. The critiques and the essay itself then are a *doing* of anarchy, an elaboration of the immanent counterhuman in resonance with overtly anarchist and implicitly anarchic theory, developing of a full anarchism corresponding to Mbembe's Open World that is grounded in the meta-ethical and metaphysical critique of transcendence, from metaphysics through ethics and politics, rather than an ascription of some pre-existing anarchism to some set of politics outlined in the paper. In doing so, I will extend the nonnormative critique to challenge one of Mbembe's positions – arguing that claiming Nelson Mandela as a model political actor, given that he is a highly particular legendary statesman of grand proportion, fails the nonnormative project – instead, I propose Saidiya Hartman's General House Worker from her text *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*(2019), a marginal, multiple, interchangeable black woman whose names are both numerous and inessential, a woman who can be found in the history that Hartman writes as well as in the present, as one better exemplar of a promising political subjectivity. It is the everyday anarchy of their lives, full of mutual aid, refusal, and joy, that prefigure the Open World – not grand heroes or elevated vanguards.

My essay then can be thought broadly to be answering the following interrelated questions: How do we resolve an apparent impasse between counterhumanism and nonhumanism – which in other terms is to ask, how we can bring the nonhumanist critique of transcendent normativity to bear on counterhumanism? When this impasse is resolved, and humanness reframed in terms of sets of global political-geographical relationships that make up a world, what is this human (world) and how does one arrive at it?

The answer being a completely decentralised, dis-enclosed political world, prefigured in practice by everyday people with an orientation in the present that unforfeits the future; Mbembe's Open World; anarchy.

In what follows I sketch out the genealogy of the idea of the human as will ground the further conversation, as well as make a note on how I will approach using the term 'human' through the text, as it is used differently in different contexts, before moving to Part I.

for example that in the nineteenth century anarchism was "the principal vehicle for opposition movements against capitalism, slavery, and imperialism" (p. 30) – or that in the early twentieth century the "socialist Paul Louis and the Anarchists, however, offered an uncompromising critique of colonialism" (p. 77).

The contingent history of the human: The Enlightenment('s) human

Each of the theorists and philosophers I engage with in this essay engage in the following problem in their own ways. Around the time of the Enlightenment, and with the emergence of humanism, together with the invention of race and the colonial conquest of much of the world by European countries, a particular idea or image of the human that became (to some significant degree) increasingly globally pervasive emerged and was imposed upon populations. They then show this idea to be deeply limited or fundamentally flawed, for the way it tends to create and self-perpetuate a system of hierarchy along invented racial (and other) lines. Central to the question of race, then, is our idea of the human, which in turn reflects on all the ways that humanness has been stratified. Humanism, which ostensibly includes all, hides within it hierarchies and impositions of subhuman status which it imputes to those who do not fit the mould of the able-bodied, cis-heterosexual white European man³. As Fanon notes, “the bourgeois ideology that proclaims all men to be essentially equal, manages to remain consistent with itself by urging the subhuman to rise to the level of Western humanity that it embodies” (Fanon, 1963, p. 110).

It is worthwhile here to briefly touch on points demonstrating the non-fixed and contingently developed historical nature of the human. Following Costas Douzinas’s deft work on the topic (2013), we can note:

Pre-modern societies that would come to birth humanism did not develop an all-inclusive idea of the human. For example, in ancient Athens free men were considered Athenian citizens, not members of humanity, and people were more broadly categorised as Greeks or barbarians. From the start, forms of the word ‘human’ were used to exclude those who were not human. (ibid.)

The word *humanitas* appeared for the first time in the Roman Republic as a translation of the Greek word *paideia*. It was defined as *eruditio et institutio in bonas artes* (the closest modern equivalent is the German *Bildung*). The Romans inherited the concept from Stoicism and used it to distinguish between the *homo humanus*, the educated Roman who was conversant with Greek culture and philosophy and was subjected to the *jus civile*, and the *homines barbari*, who included the majority of the uneducated non-Roman inhabitants of the Empire. (Douzinas, 2013)

Humanitas came with generally recognised normative requirements; it implied “generosity, politeness, civilization, and culture and [was] opposed to barbarism and animality” (ibid.). Political and legal uses of *humanitas* that follow this are standardly found to stratify the polis along the lines of rulers, ruled, and excluded – it becomes a normative source grounding the structure of its society and against a variable inhumanity (ibid.). The first universalist conception of humanity came with Christian theology, where old divisions were cast out, and all people were equally part of humanity as people who could be saved through God; all having a divine soul. Later, in classical humanism generally, we can characterise reason as that universal thing that determines the human.

And yet, the universalist notions did not overcome the dividing nature of the human. People posing or understanding themselves as representatives of God took on absolute rule, and the

³ The description of the norm changes variously depending on the politics of the writer and also what they are responding to. For example, in Deleuze and Guattari, when talking about languages and the relations of major and minor languages to each other, describes the standard as “the average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 105).

divide between believers and non-believers was exploited and used to justify forcing Christianity on heathens; as such, the strata of rulers/ruled/excluded remained (ibid.).

In the periods of global colonisation to follow, debates about the meaning of humanity were strongly contested, usually with many proponents arguing that coloniser nations had the right to be so; the humanity of the coloniser compared the colonised was as adult to child, or man to monkey. Those who disagreed, arguing for universal humanity based under a shared ability to reason that they recognised, nevertheless regularly excluded groups they held prejudices against from their estimations (ibid.). Theological and humanist forms of the human were in vigorous competition, but both were exclusive, and groups of humanity were racialised; cast as sub-, part-, or inhuman. This casting was used variously to justify “enslavement, atrocities, and even annihilation as strategies of the civilizing mission” (ibid.). Today it can be seen readily in colonial and neo-colonial practices, old racial categories, Islamophobia, “rogue states,” anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiments (ibid.). It is a distinction that underlies our everyday racism, deeply imbricated in the mechanisms of our State apparatuses: private property laws, geographical segregation of racial groups, housing and land discrimination, income and employment inequality, access to education and medical care, profiling by police and disproportionate policing, etc.

Under this schema the relatively recent category of whiteness, as it was created and emerged over the last few centuries, is ontologically and epistemologically conflated with humanness, and Blackness negated or minimised in relation to the human, whiteness taking up the spaces of ruler and ruled, Blackness excluded, and yet ostensibly includable insofar as it any individual Black person assimilates to whiteness.

Not just racism, however, the human is multiply-stratified along lines such as gender, sexuality, ability, and nationality - wherever there are people being dehumanised for their positionality or identity. As such, addressing the question of the human with regards to race and colonisation will be bound up in addressing it in relation to these other axes.

A preliminary note on language, and the development of these paradigms in this essay

There is no simple way to make choices about how to use terminology that does not to some degree already prejudice the question. It is best to take a cue from the context when interpreting my uses of ‘human’ and ‘non-human’ or ‘those excluded from the human’. For the most part, I refer to ‘the human’ as the dominant image of humanness, which in the case of counterhumanism is understood to be the present image, but one that ontologically colonised the full range of humanness – and in the case of nonhumanism is understood to be the contingent form of the human. Especially in the case of nonhumanism, ‘our’ common-sense or prima-facie idea of what constitutes humanness is part of what is in question – and ‘human’ is not merely a descriptive term but one laden with the values of the one employing it, co-constituted with the full range of values and meanings one is also co-constituting with the material conditions of the world one lives in. Often for ease of understanding I use ‘people’ to denote those who according to our biological models are human but do not fall within the present dominant image of humanness – a prejudiced move that reflects more a lack of ways of expressing paradigmatically different understandings of concepts. This is also in contrast to those who do the opposite, and speak of humans becoming full persons – a convention that will not be used at all in this essay.

Similarly, I have set out my explication of the counterhumanist and nonhumanist work as separately as I have in order first to take each on their own merits as well as might be possible, rather than assuming a primary overarching framework with which I interpret both. That said, there are many significant overlaps, and at key points in Part I, I will relate similar theoretical elements between the two paradigms.

Part I: Responses to the Problem of the Human

1. Introduction

This Part will expand on two broad approaches to overcoming the problem of the exclusionary nature of the human, the first of which, following Katherine McKittrick (2015, p. 11), a scholar of Wynter's work, I will call *counterhumanism*, and the other, taking the word from the 'nonhuman turn' in philosophy, I will call *nonhumanism* (Roffe and Stark, 2015, p. 2). Both Wynter's counterhumanism and Deleuzian nonhumanism generally speak to more than just the problem of race and have an analysis of the current political form of the human as it affects our political arrangements throughout the world, with relations of humanness and dehumanisation central to all forms of oppression, stratifying our societies together with mutually-reinforcing material socio-economic-political relationships. It is always worthwhile, then, to think on the ways that challenging the current dominant political form of the human would be bound up in challenging those relations the world over.

1.1 Counterhumanism

We have set out on a quest for true humanity, and somewhere on the distant horizon we can see the glittering prize. Let us march forth with courage and determination, drawing strength from our common plight and our brotherhood. In time we shall be in a position to bestow upon South Africa the greatest gift possible – a more human face. (Biko, 1987, p. 98)

This chapter sets out the general characteristics of counterhumanist approaches and shows that it is a position that many major theorists hold. I sketch the accounts of the two most significant historical writers on this, Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, before setting out more fully a prominent recent iteration of the view which I will take as the paradigmatic example and representative for the group, namely Sylvia Wynter's argument.

Counterhumanist approaches are pervasive in postcolonial and race theory and, although diverse, they generally share the following characteristics, which will be attributed to specific theorists in later sections:

- They consider the Enlightenment humanism a "pseudo-humanism," flawed for privileging (among other categories like gender and class) certain racial groups over others, excluding many from the human even when it purportedly includes all.
- As such, they typically understand the colonised's humanity to have, in some sense, been stolen in their oppression, and the coloniser to have, in some sense, relinquished their humanity in the process of coming to be able to do such harm.

- Recognising that the current image of the human is a false human that all are societally co-opted into maintaining, subscribing to, and trying to be included in, they reject those politics that prescribe assimilation and inclusion into the societal form that the current image constitutes. They then try to create the conditions under which people may choose to be otherwise, despite our social conditioning.

- They call for a new humanism, and a concomitant new human, to replace the old one in some way – a new, ecumenical, all-inclusive human. A human counter to the current one; counterhumanism. The epistemological shift required does not, however, pertain merely to epistemology, as it requires a radical change, that we *act* differently, think and see ourselves differently, and relate to the world and others differently – it is not merely a new understanding of humanness. With this should come the end of invented dichotomies that divide humans into socially-constructed groups; whites/Blacks, Europeans/Africans, civilised/savages, colonised/coloniser, such that they no longer exist in any way that implies a socio-political-economic structural power imbalance.

- They assert their own humanity, that they are (despite denials and minimisations) indeed human, along with all marginalised peoples (especially, all races).

- And they claim as part of their goal the aspiration to become fully human, to restore the dignity and humanity that has been taken from them by years of colonisation and racialisation. The new human is usually tied to some other counter-structures of value, along with dignity, like land or nationhood, or cosmology.

It is worth noticing here that this assertion of humanity together with an aspiration to become fully human reflects assumptions about a stratified idea of humanness; that one can be a human, but also that there are lesser or greater amounts that one can be human (or be considered human) on the route to full humanness.

In what I will introduce the work of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Sylvia Wynter, highlighting those elements of counterhumanism that I have just laid out while exploring (relatively briefly, in the case of Césaire and Fanon, and in a fuller form for Wynter, which will be taken as paradigmatic of contemporary counterhumanism) the forms of their human and counterhuman ontologies.

1.2 Aimé Césaire

Aimé Césaire was a founder of the Negritude movement. His foundational postcolonial text *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955) locates the origins of fascism within colonialism, and hence within the traditions of humanism, which at the time generally was thought to be what fascism was threatening, rather than emergent from (1955, p. 10). Like white Marxist surrealists of the time¹, he saw the humanism that built the West as the same one that justified colonialism, genocide, and slavery, except unlike those surrealists, together with other Black radical intellectuals of the time he recognised how Europe had only come to oppose Nazism when it arrived on their doorstep (1955, p. 36), how Europe had been silent as Nazism cut its teeth in Black and brown countries of the world, that “before they were its victims, they were its accomplices” (1955, p. 36) – going a step further and claiming a direct link between colonialism and fascism, seeing fascism as the natural development of Western civilisation. A poetic text, *Discourse* does not set out to make point-form arguments, but to capture a distilled argumentative force and, influenced by

¹ See Breton, André et al. “Murderous Humanitarianism.” *S. Beckett trans.* (2001)

surrealist and anti-rationalist thought, express his most important ideas with minimal conservation of those (humanist, colonial) values he wished for all to escape – a specific writing technique that allows the reader more room to envision alternative ways of being with minimal prejudice.

Discourse on Colonialism from the outset inverts the idea that it is the coloniser who is civilised and the colonised that is brute. Césaire calls humanism a “pseudo-humanism” (p. 37), at the end of which is Hitler, and says that within colonialism there is not a single human value (p. 34), that between colonised and coloniser there is “human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production.” Colonisation is “thingification” (p. 42) – it “dehumanizes even the most civilized man [...]”; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his [*sic*] conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal” (p. 41). The dehumanisation of the other was a necessary precondition for colonial conquest. For Césaire, “the West has never been further from being able to live a true humanism – a humanism made to the measure of the world” (p. 73). Instead of a universal abstracted out from the image of a few people – a “disembodied universal” – his idea of the universal is “rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all.” (Césaire, 2010, p. 152)

The project of creating a humanism made to the measure of the world, a true humanism, is rooted in this work by Césaire. We see the dehumanisation of the colonised as thingification reflected in both Wynter’s understanding of the discursive colonisation of humanness to exclude those who are not white and in the Deleuzian concept of faciality, which punishes and polices those who do not conform to its dominant image.

1.3 Frantz Fanon

[In the silence that suffocates the torturer] we find the old law stating that anything alive cannot afford to remain still while the nation is set in motion, while man both demands and claims his infinite humanity. (Fanon, 1963, p. 221)

Continuing the counterhumanist line with some overlap in the time that Césaire is publishing, in a period of anticolonial struggle spanning much of Africa, the Caribbean and other areas, anticolonial psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon is engaging the same topic in *Black Skin, White Masks*, calling for “a new humanism” (Fanon, 2008, p. 1). He expresses how, within the old paradigm of humanism, Black and white people are locked in an ontological dualism, that within it “the black is not a [hu]man”² (p. 1), and proposes “nothing short of the liberation of the man of color from himself” (p. 2). It is a text that draws from a wide range of philosophical influences, from some of Sartre’s notions of freedom, to Hegel’s transcendent dialectical thinking, to Nietzsche’s life-affirming ethic and his critiques of reaction and resentment.

Black Skin, White Masks introduces the concept of *sociogeny* as a development on and corrective to pre-existing Freudian concepts of phylogeny and ontogeny, to explain the construction

² Homi K. Bhabha, in his foreword to the 1986 edition, notes that “Fanon’s use of the word “man” usually connotes a phenomenological quality of humanness, inclusive of man and woman” (p. xxxvi). Fanon uses Jung’s “collective unconscious” (p. 112), which Fanon understands as “purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group” (p. 145).

of race and its naturalisation³. Phylogeny here being the study of the history of an individual's evolutionary species development in order to understand their pre-history and so their various psychological dispositions, coming largely from simplistic Darwinian understandings of human motivation. Ontogeny is a term taken from biology and developed by Freud, as a corrective to simple (and sometimes social) Darwinist accounts, and is the biological development of a person from fertilised egg to its present or mature form, to explain the individual differences across species. Ontogeny and phylogeny were used by Freud in order to explain psychological traits and neuroses. The concept of sociogeny is developed by Fanon to explain the development of social phenomena, what are often called "social constructs," those features of society or individuals that are socially produced rather than biologically or genetically given. Fanon shows how socially produced characteristics come to be linked to population groups as if they were inherent biological characteristics⁴. This is important in particular for the way it is taken up in Wynter, when she argues that the current overrepresented form of the human, *Man*, is biocentric and does not properly account for sociogeny, in a way that reinforces and naturalises the maintenance of *Man*, against the possibility of an ecumenical human (Wynter, in Duran-Cogan and Gómez-Moriana, 2001).

Within *Black Skin, White Masks* we can draw two general sets of ontologies, one for the old and one for the new humanism. It is worthwhile to characterise them here briefly, keeping in mind the general structure of counterhumanism as it has been outlined towards the beginning of this Part:

1.3.1 *Black Skin, White Masks'* old humanism:

Here, Black and white are two camps of a co-constituting dualism, where whiteness is depicted as human and Blackness as a kind of potentially-human animal or object, where Black people may approximate humanness by assimilating to whiteness; "For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white." (p. 4); "The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter – that is, he will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language" (p. 8); "He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle" (p. 9). Colonial racism has been that process that deprived Black people of the possibility of being a human (p. 65) – in a manner reflecting Césaire's thingification. Moreover, a second colonisation is enacted because the only way to find redemption from thingification with this model is via assimilation to whiteness.

³ Fanon: "Reacting against the constitutionalist tendency of the late nineteenth century, Freud insisted that the individual factor be taken into account through psychoanalysis. He substituted for a phylogenetic theory the ontogenetic perspective. It will be seen that the black man's alienation is not an individual question. Beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny. In one sense, conforming to the view of Leconte and Damey, let us say that this is a question of a sociodiagnostic. What is the prognosis? But society, unlike biochemical processes, cannot escape human influences. Man is what brings society into being." (Fanon, 2008, p. 4)

⁴ Sociogeny is, as we see here, a diagnostic tool in the spirit of Nietzsche's symptomatology, and is an active rather than reactive method. Like Nietzsche, Fanon was posing "questions of power and pursu[ing] the relations of forces that become evident by asking them" (Kaiser, 2017, p. 186). Sociogeny, as a symptomatology, is a clinical and critical tool, as Deleuze would later explicate, "an activity to distil the relations of forces underlying the currently congealed order of things" (ibid.)

1.3.2 *Black Skin, White Masks*' new humanism:

At the least, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, there is a clear rejection of the old ontology with respect to himself (p. 88⁵, 108), which in turn undermines it with respect to all. More broadly Fanon says that the “only means of breaking this vicious circle that throws me back on myself is to restore to the other, through mediation and recognition, his human reality, which is different from natural reality.” The language of restoration is most easily framed in normative terms: what it is to be human exists like a goal that may be reached by fulfilling its conditions. Some elements were taken but they can be restored. This is to be achieved in part not through framing oneself in terms of whiteness and one’s ability to assimilate and become human, but by bringing people to the position where they are able to choose how to act “with respect to the real source of the conflict – that is, toward the social structures” (p75).

The concept of sociogeny explains how there are social structures in any society that direct desire and delimit what is considered to be part of or normal to that society. Where each individual human is made up of phylogeny, ontogeny, and sociogeny, but sociogeny is largely defined by the dominant social (and economic and political) forces, the imposition of those forces in the form of colonisation, for example, has grave consequences for the colonised insofar as they generally do not fit into this normative structure, not least because they direct desire towards fulfilment of the social scripts of the imposed social structures, rather than their own, and those structures are radically different from their own. *Black Skin, White Masks*, then, rejects the false solution of assimilation and inclusion (the wearing of white masks) into the pseudo-human structure of Enlightenment humanism, through a challenging of the underlying desire matrices (the social structures) that push Black people to reinforcing that structure, despite their actual interests. That is, sociogeny, as a diagnostic tool, exposes the false dilemma set up by the invention of race which renders white and Black oppositional and offers as redemption a white mask; that is, assimilation to whiteness.

Much of Fanon’s work on a solution, especially in this book, relies on Nietzschean concepts. He brings up resentment⁶ and a desire not to frame one’s values in opposition to another’s, and further, a politics of affirmation^{7,8} and a rejection of a philosophy of lack:

[The Human] is not merely a possibility of recapture or of negation. If it is true that consciousness is a process of transcendence, we have to see too that this transcendence is haunted by the problems of love and understanding. [The Human] is a *yes* that vibrates to cosmic harmonies. (p. 2, emphasis in the original)

⁵ “Negroes are savages, brutes, illiterates. But in my own case I knew that these statements were false. There was a myth of the Negro that had to be destroyed at all costs.” (Fanon, 2008, p. 88)

⁶ Often left untranslated as *ressentiment* elsewhere and marking Nietzsche’s use of the French term in his (originally German) writing, it is translated into English in Fanon and Mbembe’s (originally French) work, while maintaining the structure of *ressentiment* as used by Nietzsche and Deleuze through Nietzsche.

⁷ “Man’s behavior is not only reactional. And there is always resentment in a reaction. Nietzsche had already pointed that out in *The Will to Power*” (Fanon, 2008, p. 173).

“To educate man to be actional, preserving in all his relations his respect for the basic values that constitute a human world, is the prime task of him [sic] who, having taken thought, prepares to act” (Fanon, 2008, p. 173).

⁸ The “politics of affirmation” has undergone some critique recently in Andrew Culp’s book *Dark Deleuze* (2016).

Even as he avoids placing things in terms of transcendent dialectical frameworks, in his answers Fanon speaks in terms of rights and duties, neither of which are likely to be seen in Nietzsche:

I find myself suddenly in the world and I recognize that I have one right alone: That of demanding human behavior from the other. One duty alone: That of not renouncing my freedom through my choices. I have no wish to be the victim of the Fraud of a black world. My life should not be devoted to drawing up the balance sheet of Negro values. (p. 179)

This is interesting especially because these Nietzschean elements are extended into full critique in Mbembe's work, discussed later, where he develops a critique of resentment in Black anticolonial thought, using that critique to argue against precisely the "drawing up the balance sheet of Negro values" – the enumerating and deepening of differences of Blackness against whiteness and the humanness it is conflated with. Deleuze, as someone deeply influenced by Nietzsche also, makes the same kinds of critiques more generally with relation to identity politics – in particular, the question of how we might use the categories we wish to destroy in order to go beyond them. Which is to say that these two paradigms being discussed, counterhumanism and nonhumanism, though distinct, have many overlaps and have been in conversation with one another, even if not always explicitly so.

1.3.3 The Wretched of the Earth

Moving on to Fanon's other most engaged text, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). This text has a different politics and yet still holds a fundamental interest in the human and the creation of a new humanism; "man in his totality" (p. 62). For the most part, instead of the Black/white relation, it focuses on the colonised/coloniser relation, where the people of the "third world" take on the position of revolutionary class⁹. The colonised world is understood as Manichaeian and compartmentalised, in which 'objectivity', 'universal' values, and calls to be reasonable always work against the colonised. The colonised fight off their dehumanisation, the imposition of animal and subhuman status, for a human one, not through assimilating to the image of the old human but in inventing "a [hu]man in full." More than in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon presents the colonised as wise to the game of the coloniser, always resistant to the imposition of less-than human or animal status¹⁰.

The Wretched of the Earth's new human similarly has some content, new values against that of the old human's values, for example,

For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity. But this dignity has nothing to do with "human" dignity. The colonized subject has never heard of such an ideal. (p. 9)

⁹ "The Third World must start over a new history of man" (p. 238).

¹⁰ "But deep down the colonized subject acknowledges no authority. He is dominated but not domesticated. He is made to feel inferior, but by no means convinced of his inferiority. He patiently waits for the colonist to let his guard down and then jumps on him" (p. 16).

Here we see an element of the counterhumanist approach: There is a pseudo-human that comes with a pseudo-dignity that must be rejected, for a real human whose dignity is provided by the land. Land and dignity, then, contentify Fanon's image of the human.

Perhaps referencing the African politician, or implying some kind of vanguard, Fanon notes that,

Our greatest task is to constantly understand what is happening in our own countries. We must not cultivate the spirit of the exceptional or look for the hero, another form of leader. We must elevate the people, expand their minds, equip them, differentiate them, and humanize them. (Fanon, 2008, p. 137)

Often it is "honour, dignity and integrity" that he refers to as a desirable goal in the process of *restoring* one's "weight as a human being" – the same weight that should be placed on your torturer's (the coloniser's) body so that they are forced to restore their own "human dimension." This process of restoring one's humanity includes ensuring "that all the untruths planted within him by the oppressor are eliminated." Together with values such as dignity, there are other substantive elements of Fanon's new human – they are "a living, working, self-made being" (p. 237), who does not draw inspiration from the ways of Europe (p. 239), but instead is part of a "new history of man" that among other things takes account of the pathological dismembering of people's functions, and the erosion of their unity; function and unity taking on decidedly normative status (p. 238). Similarly, in Césaire's work, in the process of colonisation as thingification we see "societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary *possibilities* wiped out," which were, though not faultless, largely cooperative, communal, anti-capitalist, democratic (Césaire, 1955, p. 44, emphasis in the original). In their writing we can understand these characteristics to be bound up in their image of the true human.

Humanness is further given content in terms of spatial, territorial, geographical dimensions; his writing deeply embroiled within the political context of nationalist struggle, for Fanon humanness and nation (and national independence) are strongly imbricated, together with national and international unity. Fanon goes as far as to say that the new human and the nation co-constitute¹¹. This unity, bound up in national consciousness, is similarly bound up in 'detrribalisation' (p. 141).

Having considered these three foundational texts, we now turn to the contemporary work of Sylvia Wynter, a major Black feminist scholar whose work I will take as paradigmatic of contemporary counterhumanism as I have presented it.

1.4 Sylvia Wynter

David Scott, in his lauded interview with Sylvia Wynter, notes how instead of abandoning humanism as a failed project of modern Europe, Césaire and Fanon want "to correct its vision and fulfil its promise" (2000, p. 120). Scott remarks how a partial response to the need for Europe to dissolve its idea of itself came from structuralism, with its antihumanism and its "infamous

¹¹ "When the nation in its totality is set in motion, the new man is not an a posteriori creation of this nation, but coexists with it, matures with it, and triumphs with it." (p. 233)

idea of a subjectless history”¹², of which Michel Foucault’s (1973) *The Order Of Things* is the paradigmatic instance (2000, p. 120). Central to this is setting the history of Europe in terms of changes in episteme – “cognitive orders that determine the rules of formations of concepts, theories, objects of study and the like” – which “seriously undermined the conceit of Europe’s Reason as the progressive unfolding of the consciousness of a singular subject” (2000, p. 121).

Wynter can be located in both the Césairean/Fanonian anticolonial tradition as well as among (post)structuralists like Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard. For her, race is a construct of language bound to co-constituting material relationships; in its present form, it is “the naturalized and secular organizing principle of those global relations that are wedded to the Darwinian/Malthusian macro-origin stories that iterate and normalize homo oeconomicus” (McKittrick, 2015, p. 10). She argues that a specific “descriptive statement,” or *genre*, of the human, (white, cis-heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class) *Man*, has come to “overrepresent” itself in humanness, colonizing *human being*, and discursively marginalizing those humans who do not fall under that descriptive statement; i.e. insofar as you do not fall under the description of *Man*, you are considered less than human, and must circumcise yourself from yourself (i.e. negate oneself through assimilation) in order to become human. In particular, Blackness for Wynter is considered to be the nadir of the racial hierarchy organised by *Man*’s overrepresentation in the human. I discuss this ‘overrepresentation’ in terms of ‘overcoding’ in later sections when I unpack Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of faciality.

For Wynter, humans, as uniquely language-using among animals, are hybrid beings made up of *mythos* and *bios*, origin stories that work together with our (neuro)biology to create us. *Man*, as *homo oeconomicus*¹³, is conceptualised as those “storytellers who have storytellingly invented themselves as purely biological” in ways that reinforce and reproduce its overrepresentation (McKittrick, 2015, p. 11).

Here is worth quoting Wynter at length:

In the world in which we live today, it is not primarily the mode of production – capitalism – that controls us, although it controls us at the overtly empirical level through the institution of the free market system, and the everyday practices of its economic system. But you see, for these to function, the processes of their functioning must be *discursively* instituted, regulated *and* at the same times normalized, legitimated. So what I’m going to suggest is that what institutes, regulates, normalizes and legitimates, what then controls us, is instead the economic conception of the human – *Man* – that is produced by the disciplinary discourses of our now planetary system of academia as the first purely secular and operational public identity in human history. While this identity induces us all to behave as producers, traders or consumers, it unifies us as a species in economically rather than, as before, in theologically absolute terms. This means that in order to be unified in economic terms

¹² An idea from Foucault’s more structuralist period, which effectively sought to remove humanness from orders of symbolic knowing towards creating a kind of objective *a priori* knowledge from an anti-humanist epistemological approach – (even as he remained skeptical of such knowledge and creates the concept ‘historical *a priori*’ in later work to address this dilemma, arguing that all *a priori* knowledge is historically formed and informed).

¹³ Foucault (1978) argued that biopolitics is not merely concerned with governmental control apparatuses, but the way in which these structures cohere with the rise of the *homo oeconomicus* – a person of “enterprise and production” deeply entangled in consumerism and the entrepreneurship of the self (p. 147) which is then appropriated into normative discourses of self-governance.

we have to first produce an economic conception of being human. [...] What I'm saying is that it is the bioeconomic conception of the human that we inscript and institute by means of our present disciplines and their epistemic order, as Foucault shows so incisively, that determines the hegemony of the economic system over the social and political systems – even more, that mandates the functioning of the capitalist mode of production as the everyday expression of that hegemony. (Scott, 2000, pp. 159–160)

These elements of mythos and bios reflect strongly a Fanonian understanding of sociogeny and ontogeny/phylogeny respectively, and can be understood as a direct development of the Fanonian project in this way. Just as in Fanon we see an argument for how sociogenic traits are mistaken for ontogenic ones, in Wynter our origin stories have been written as if inherent to our biological reality, even as they are malleable and wholly contingent on the peculiarities of the societies we participate in (Wynter, in Duran-Cogan and Gómez-Moriana, 2001). In recognising that we are hybrid beings made up of both mythos and bios she understands that each human society is always-already embedded in some mythos/bios combination from which they understand themselves and their world, but that for each society there is typically a systemic non-recognition of the invented nature of the mythos elements and, as a result, within each the society functions with its ethno-human form as natural, for which all other embodies forms of people are “signifiers of Otherness as the negation of its self-concept” (Wynter, 2007, p. 38). So, following Fanon, with the present globally pervasive neoliberal form of Man, *homo economicus*, even those others preconceptually experience themselves in terms of White Masks, i.e. that all people's skins can only be human by performatively enacting themselves as human in the always-already sociogenically established terms of the *socius*¹⁴ (2007, p. 76), and those characteristics such as their Black Skins, “their population's skin color and Bantu phenotypic physiognomy,” “together with their population's origin continent of Black Africa,” inherently a relation of negation of humanness in relation to Man (2007, p. 15)

A task for individuals and scholars seeking to destroy racism, for Wynter, involves a *praxis* of being human, of becoming included in humanness, and she argues that we should introduce into the world a *counterhumanism* – a new “descriptive statement” or *genre* of the human that is just in that it does not overrepresent itself, but, following Césaire, is “made to the measure of the world.” Humanness, on this view, is a verb – a *praxis* – and can be likened to Judith Butler's (1999) understanding of gender; it is a specific sort of performance of a narrative, or ‘genre’. By it, if enough people were to perform another genre it would come to replace the current one, and with it replacing the various relations of the current genre with the new. Wynter's work is significant as the progenitor of a line of work that seeks to bring about that new descriptive statement. It does so first by requiring a “new heuristics – that of the systemic mistrust of their self-evident, subjectively experienced, ostensibly instinctive and natural order consciousness,” and in so doing, importantly, “overturning one of the fundamentals of the West's inherited philosophical tradition – that of the ostensibly indubitability and self-determined nature of consciousness as experienced by the Cartesian ego cogito” (2007, p. 16) – a move briefly touched on in her 2007

¹⁴ The *socius* does not merely connote a society but, rather, “a particular social instance which plays the role of a full body . . . upon which all kinds of flows flow and are interrupted,” including “the social investment of desire” (lecture given on 14 December 1971). Moreover, this conception is part of Deleuze and Guattari's “comprehensive undoing of the transcendental basis of the constitution of the social order” (Surin, in Parr, 2010, p. 258)

unpublished work, reflecting the beginnings of one major point of metaphysical critique that we will see in our discussion of Deleuze's second postulate against what he calls the 'dogmatic image of thought'. Here, in Wynter, it amounts largely to recognising that we are all, always-already, embedded in a hybrid form of humanness including mythos, a fictive element that, as an autopoietic form, we have the capacity to make otherwise. And so rather than being merely autopoietic, we should be actively auto-instituting, through a study of sociogeny, working towards "towards a new order of imperatively self-correcting (however eventually) thereby open-ended mode of cognition." A praxis of being human then recognises, following Wynter's understanding of mythos, as Césaire's study of the Word, and Fanon's conception of sociogeny, that a performance of humanness that "enact ourselves as being, hybridly human – that is as both a sociogenic and therefore, an already symbolically encoded *I*, one thereby cloned or made similar with, all other members (or *I*'s) of one's origin-narratively co-identified, and therefore inter-altruistic, kin-recognizing, eusocially bonded "we" or "fictive mode of kind." (2007, p. 28), which I understand to mean the creation of a metasystemic/metacosmogonic mode, through recognition of shared humanness in the recognition of our hybrid nature, that we are all bound up of these biological and fictive mythic elements, that they are fictive, and this then is the ground of humanness. Once we are able to recognise that our sociogeny is part of our hybrid humanness, and that it is fictive and may be otherwise, we can understand humanness from a more meta-level, in a way that includes all, in part through this relativizing of Man in relation to other forms of humanness. "The recognition therefore [that we are part sociogeny], that which we have made [i.e. our sociogenic elements], we can unmake, then, consciously now, remake." (2007, p. 75)

Importantly, for Wynter, Man does not just stratify us at the level of race, as I have focused on here, nor is Man a complete monolith. We are stratified along many lines of identity, such as Man/woman, rich/poor, developed/under-developed, Global North/South (2007, p. 4), and there are localised "nation-state" sub-unities of Man that exist in to the global one and effect the stratification of those nations (2007, p. 46).

In Wynter we do see partial moves against transcendence in her unpublished 2007 essay, *Human Being as Noun? Or Being Human as Praxis? Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overtturn: A Manifesto*, which I include for that reason, despite how such moves are not as easily found in her later work. So far we have seen arguments for a heuristics of mistrust against inherited always-already instituted and thereby opaque forms of humanness that each individual is immersed in, towards recognising the possibility of another sociogeny, another mythos that allows us to arrive at a more open-ended mode of cognition in relation to our humanness. But there is more. When speaking about the various transformations of the European-emerged form of Man, from an originally theological form to a secularised form, she characterises each form of Man as sociogenically coded from an extra-human ordination, "determined by a projected extra-human Agency" (Wynter, 2007, p. 29), whether (as in the case for the first Man) divinely so, or (for the second Man) secularly so. Though not a complete and overt rejection of transcendence, this mode of rejecting that which comes from the outside, or is imposed from the outside, in this case "extra-human Agency," is a rejection of those particular forms of transcendence.

Specifically, in relation to the current overrepresented form of the human, Man, she proposes that we "initiate the processes of the de-extra-humanization of all the entities and/or concepts onto which we have hitherto projected our own empirical agencies, and, thereby, the unblocking of the systemic mechanisms by means of which our present order's now purely secular form of the traditional existential imperative, has functioned to keep our own collective agency opaque,

to what is our now normative symbolically encoded ethno-class order of consciousness, and, therefore, opaque to ourselves (2007, p. 75). Wynter calls this opacity, with respect to our mental experience, “cognitive closure” – which, I will later show, loosely reflects much of what Mbembe proposes as enclosure of the mind in Part II.

However, her attack on transcendence does not go far enough. Scott notes in his interview with her that “one of the more striking features of her work is its *foundational* character, its restless quest for the most interconnected and totalizing ground on which to secure the humanist ideal to which she aspires” (Scott, 2000, p. 121) – it is this feature that is pervasive among people doing anticolonial work. Scott notes how the sheer density of Wynter’s image of the human is something it is “impossible *not* to be deeply inspired – even awed – by”; saying that it “is a humanism made to the measure of the world” (p. 122). And yet it is this feature, the transcendent totalising ground, that is fundamentally undercut by nonnormative critique, and it is this critique that I think is important to bring to bear upon counterhumanism generally. Later, we will see how Mbembe resolves this problem by introducing a geographical conception of the human that allows for both counterhumanism and nonhumanist critique to work together.

Wynter is aware of Foucaultian antihumanism and paradigms that do away with humanism altogether, and yet she still seeks the human as a kind of unhistoricisable *a priori* universal, as we see in the interview with Scott, when she is asked directly why she does not abandon humanism and leave it to Europe. For her, until humanism, we had ethnohumanisms, an intersubjective idea of the human held by populations.¹⁵ Humanism tried to make that intersubjective idea no longer an ethnohumanism, but one that included all, in moving from a theological conception of the human to a secular one. But ultimately it failed and produced an idea of the human that overwhelmingly imposed the secularised Judeo-Christian idea of the human on all. This ethnoculturally-coded narrated history “is taught both now in global academia as well as in all our schools, while it is this history in whose now purely secular terms we are all led to imagine ourselves as Man, as largely just biological and economic beings. The history for Man, therefore, narrated and existentially lived as if it were the history-for the human itself,” as if it were “transcendental, supracultural, universal” (Scott, 2000, p. 198). A true humanism instead would come about if we “reimagine the human in terms of a new history whose narrative will enable us to co-identify ourselves with each other,” and could emerge starting with taking our present history “as empirical data for the study of a specific cultural coding of a history whose narration has, together with other such disciplinary narrations, given rise to the existential reality of our present Western world system” (Scott, 2000, p. 198). Which, to my best judgement, seems to me a belief in the original project of a universalising humanism, one that now merely need to be extended and given its full due, overcoming the ways in which its description is just an intersubjective one for a certain population group.

¹⁵ The point that Wynter is making also references indigenous knowledges and more connectionist ways of understanding the world. Eduardo Vivieros de Castro argues, similarly, that the Western understanding of ‘person’ and ‘personhood’ is markedly different from indigenous understandings. Drawing on his own anthropological work in Latin America, he argues that “All animals and cosmic constituents are intensively and virtually [in the Deleuzian sense] persons, because all of them, no matter which [he classifies these as ranging from the dead and plants to gods and subjective agents], can reveal themselves to be (transform into) a person.” (de Castro, 2014, p. 57)

1.4.1 The appeal of counterhumanism

Wynter's counterhumanism is likely to appeal to whoever believes ethics and norms can be grounded in transcendent universals, and what might be considered top-down ontologies more broadly. Counterhumanism does provide people with a framework and a set of directions for taking action against racism and colonialism. This framework has, to some degree, been effective as part of anticolonial struggles around the world. Though not limited to this framework, Fanon's work alone is mandatory reading for any engagement in postcolonial and decolonial struggle, and has been employed across the world, from anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa, to the Algerian war of independence (of which he was a part), to the US Black Power and Civil Rights movements – indeed, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in his most famous text, *Decolonizing The Mind*, says that *The Wretched Of The Earth* is one of two books without which it is impossible to understand what informs African writing (1981, p. 63). None of these places are free, of course, but within each of these struggles these ideas are understood to be fundamental to whatever success has come or may come.

The claims about the failed nature of Europe's enlightenment humanism are generally shared by all anticolonial scholars, including other such major figures as Léopold Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Amílcar Cabral, Julius Nyerere, Huey Newton, Steve Biko, and Paulo Freire, and its response, counterhumanism, has come to be deeply intuitive (commonsensical) and pervasive among many of those doing antiracist and anti-colonial work in South Africa and globally. It is the paradigm through which almost all major anticolonial scholars have written. Its language and directions then, of regaining stolen or lost humanness, of affirming one's humanity, and of seeking full humanity for all, are already deeply built into how resistance is already being done. This alone seems to be good reason to keep using it, or to repurpose it somehow, albeit partly inadequate.

In what follows I introduce the Deleuzian nonhumanist approach and its nonnormative underpinnings, as primarily a critique of transcendence in ontology, as well as a critique of transcendence in politics, through an exploration of the basis of Deleuzian metaphysics and its application to the human, before moving to Part II, which expounds on Achille Mbembe's reframing of humanness in geographical terms in such a way that we may have a counterhumanism without transcendence.

1.5 Nonhumanism

There are varying post-, anti-, and nonhumanisms. My essay will focus primarily on that of Deleuze (and Guattari) and those for whom they are a major influence. Understanding the basics of Deleuze's metaphysics is essential to this approach and the specific critique that nonhumanism brings to bear on humanisms, including counterhumanisms, so I begin there.

1.5.1 Deleuze and Guattari

Deleuze's metaphysical position has far-reaching consequences for theories of value such as ethics and political philosophy, as well as our understanding of what it means to learn. It is ethico-metaphysical in that it understands any metaphysical question or answer to be cast by preexisting

values – i.e. what we perceive is co-constituting with what we already believe and value. His position seeks to take Kant and Descartes' critiques further, and draws from a range of influences including Spinoza's ontology-based ethics, Nietzsche's critique of morality and his philosophy of difference, Bergson's idea of duration, and Hume's account of the human and his conceptions of subjects as multiplicities. It is useful to introduce Deleuze's metaphysical critique, because it is itself a critique of transcendent normativity through a kind of representational thinking, and for how it is the basis of a critique of State thought, which will set our understanding the spatial and geographic thinking that Mbembe and other prominent Deleuzian scholars¹⁶ do in their work, which will be addressed later.

In *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Deleuze introduces eight postulates towards his critique of the 'dogmatic image of thought' – a prevalent way of thinking, and prevalent way we think of ourselves as thinking, that he argues is harmful and illegitimate. Taking the method of Cartesian doubt further, he makes eight postulates, in an attempt to create a philosophy without presuppositions whose claims are based in immanent experience. Each postulate is separate but form a constellation that works to create a specific set of parameters which we may then be able to apprehend with. The postulates are aimed at revealing the limits of representation; that is, identity of the concept, analogy of judgement, opposition of predicates, and resemblance of the perceived. This is important for thinking about the human and thinking the human, as I show, and thus goes some way to addressing the main research question of this essay.

1.5.1.1 The postulates against the dogmatic image of thought

- Against the assumption that everybody knows how to think and that thought "formally possesses the true and materially wants the true" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 131). This postulate is divided into two, the argument against assuming the good will of the thinker (that human beings desire and strive for truth) and the argument against assuming the good nature of thought (that thought is innocent and is in tune with, can reach, the truth). Our desires, and the ways that they have constructed us as those who have emerged in a socius, drive us to act and believe in ways that are counter to our interests. We may even, as many in fascist and even democratic countries do, *desire fascism*, even when it is not in our interest, and overcoming this desire is not merely a matter of truth-seeking, because our thoughts themselves are directed by deeply-entrenched ideological structures, and enforced by emotions such as fear.¹⁷

- Against the assumption that we have good or common sense. This postulate works further to undermine our belief in the individual "I" of Descartes's cogito as something that can be simply apprehended and marked as self-evident – and is skeptical of any kind of claim that something is self-evident. *Good sense* is our ability to arrange objective reality mentally through a distribution of faculties appropriate to apprehending objects. *Common sense* here includes the idea that a

¹⁶ See for example Rosi Braidotti's *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (2006), or Kathryn Yusoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2018).

¹⁷ Wilhelm Reich was the first person to take seriously the idea that people *desired* fascism. He refused to "accept ignorance or illusion on the part of the masses as an explanation of fascism," arguing that "the masses were not innocent dupes; at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they wanted fascism, and it is this perversion of the desire of the masses that needs to be accounted for" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1982, p.29). Deleuze and Guattari argue, however, that although Reich asked the right question, he did not provide a sufficient explanation. They go on to argue that it is a problem of *desire*.

person is a singular harmonious subject in concord with our other facilities. Neither of these things are self-evidently true, and undermining them has huge consequences for how we consider subjecthood.

Mbembe explains the ‘fantasy of Whiteness’ in terms of such ‘common sense’ also when he writes:

Three historical determinants, then, explain the power of the fantasy of Whiteness. First of all, there were many who believed in it. But far from being spontaneous, the belief was cultivated, nourished, reproduced, and disseminated by a set of theological, cultural, political, economic, and institutional mechanisms whose evolution and implications over the centuries have been carefully analyzed by critical theorists of race. [...] There, racial segregation became a semiotic that was simultaneously a right, a faith, and a doctrine, any transgression of which could result in a range of punishments, including death. Second, such mechanisms often functioned to transform Whiteness into *common sense* as well as a form of desire and fascination. (Mbembe, 2017, p.45)

We see also here how Mbembe makes an important links between this understanding of ‘common sense’ and desire. In fact, in the Antebellum South of the United States, for many it was self-evident that the slavery of Africans was a natural fact, along with a naturalised idea of race. But common sense is just the prejudices we share. We see this kind of thinking in Fanon and Wynter’s use of the naturalization of sociogeny as ontogeny, or the conflation of mythos with bios, in our self-understanding.

- Against the model of recognition. This is an argument that our ability to recognise things is essentially conservative because it relies on a prior knowledge of what that thing is. Beyond simple reproduction, “what is recognised is not only an object but also the values attached to an object” (ibid., p. 135). This has a strongly political and ethical element. Where the values of the present are used to recognise emerging values, what is recognised as good is going to be those things that fall within the range of things that were already thought good, and as such new values that are not easily recognizable in terms of the old struggle to be understood against that pre-existing value set, making it easier to reject them, or forcing them to engage in the moral discourse in the terms of the original values instead of their own. This often means a rejection of the new values and implies that this approach to thinking has a built-in tendency to conserve old values and reject new ones.

As an example, we can consider how European models of humanness were imposed the standard of humanness against which other humans are measured. Indigenous people globally have largely been considered less-than-human by colonisers insofar as they have not fit that model, rather than those experiences solely opening up the colonisers idea of humanness.

The three postulates so far here understood as critiques of unfounded ways of thinking, one presuming that thought is naturally upright, the next that there is some kind of natural common sense, and the third showing that recognition is a transcendent exercise, as is seen in much of philosophy,¹⁸ still enables one to do much with philosophy – for one to build an epistemological ground that allows for great disagreement, for refutations of any particular bad belief, while

¹⁸ All forms of philosophy that metaphysically prioritise sameness over difference, including most of what is called analytic philosophy.

still maintaining the *form* of bad belief: a value-conserving tendency that prevents new thought and creativity. Where our image of thought is grounded in common sense, in the assumption of harmony of the faculties within a universal thinking subject who exercises those faculties upon objects, and in the model of recognition that requires previous ideas of an object in order to recognise another object as the same, then we are trapped in a kind of thinking that is inherently epistemologically and ethically conservative¹⁹. At this stage, Deleuze is just in the mode of critique, but will soon provide an alternate approach that overcomes this problem.

- Recognition depends on representation, and for Deleuze representation is the major part of the image of thought he critiques; representation cannot apprehend difference in itself.²⁰ Deleuze critiques the “four iron collars of representation: identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgement and resemblance in perception” (1994, p. 262) – four problematic modes of thinking involved in the metaphysics of identity.

Each involves a conserving function that precludes new knowledge from being created because it relies on future knowledge first being defined in terms of previously-held beliefs. Take analogy: like recognition, analogical judgement involves the imposition of an already-given structure of meaning upon “an actual variety of subject-forming events [and so doing] reduces them to a limited and predetermined interpretation of experience” (Bignall, in Saldanha and Adams, 2013, p. 81). We can understand analogy to be inherently majoritarian (present-day examples of majoritarianisms are racism, or sexism, or homophobia), because it is always the imposition of a prior identity (whiteness, manness, straightness respectively) on a new one which inversely requires the new object to be understood in terms of the old values.

Referring to these four forms of representation, Deleuze says:

¹⁹ “The supposed three levels – a naturally upright thought, an in principle natural common sense, and a transcendental model of recognition – can constitute only an ideal orthodoxy. Philosophy is left without means to realise its project of breaking with doxa. No doubt philosophy refuses every particular doxa; no doubt it upholds no particular propositions of good sense or common sense. No doubt it recognises nothing in particular. Nevertheless, it retains the essential aspect of doxa – namely, the form; and the essential aspect of common sense – namely, the element; and the essential aspect of recognition – namely, the model itself (harmony of the faculties grounded in the supposedly universal thinking subject and exercised upon the unspecified object). The image of thought is only the figure in which doxa is universalised by being elevated to the rational level. However, so long as one only abstracts from the empirical content of doxa, while maintaining the operation of the faculties which corresponds to it and implicitly retains the essential aspect of the content, one remains imprisoned by it.” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 134)

²⁰ “Representation fails to capture the affirmed world of difference. Representation has only a single centre, a unique and receding perspective, and in consequence a false depth. It mediates everything, but mobilises and moves nothing. Movement, for its part, implies a plurality of centres, a superposition of perspectives, a tangle of points of view, a coexistence of moments which essentially distort representation: paintings or sculptures are already such ‘distorters’, forcing us to create movement – that is, to combine a superficial and a penetrating view, or to ascend and descend within the space as we move through it. Is it enough to multiply representations in order to obtain such effects? Infinite representation includes precisely an infinity of representations – either by ensuring the convergence of all points of view on the same object or the same world, or by making all moments properties of the same Self. In either case it maintains a unique centre which gathers and represents all the others, like the unity of a series which governs or organises its terms and their relations once and for all. The fact is that infinite representation is indissociable from a law which renders it possible: the form of the concept as a form of identity which constitutes on the one hand the in-itself of the represented (A is A) and on the other the for-itself of the representant (Self = Self). The prefix RE- in the word representation signifies this conceptual form of the identical which subordinates differences. The immediate, defined as ‘sub-representative’, is therefore not attained by multiplying representations and points of view. On the contrary, each composing representation must be distorted, diverted and torn from its centre” (Deleuze, 1994, pp. 55–56)

On precisely these branches, difference is crucified. They form quadripartite fetters under which only that which is identical, similar, analogous or opposed can be considered different: difference becomes an object of representation always in relation to a conceived identity, a judged analogy, an imagined opposition or a perceived similitude. Under these four coincident figures, difference acquires a sufficient reason in the form of a *principium comparationis*. For this reason, the world of representation is characterised by its inability to conceive of difference in itself; and by the same token, its inability to conceive of repetition for itself, since the latter is grasped only by means of recognition, distribution, reproduction and resemblance in so far as these alienate the prefix RE in simple generalities of representation. The postulate of recognition was therefore a first step towards a much more general postulate of representation. (Deleuze, 1994, p. 138)

Deleuzian metaphysical critique seeks the destruction of the dogmatic image of thought that privileges identity, and instead proposes a philosophy of difference which forces us to think; “The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself” (p. 139). Those moments when we are forced to think include when we sense something that we cannot recognise, that is imperceptible in terms of our current conceptual frameworks. Our minds then are forced to pose a problem, a sign or concept intended to make perceptible the sensed object. Deleuze wishes to seek out whatever else is imperceptible – in order to understand the limits of our faculties and perhaps even discover ones that have been repressed by common sense – so that we can expand our understanding of what is possible in (real) experience²¹. This experimental process is what Deleuze calls “transcendental empiricism” – and he calls “Ideas” the problems we pose in order to come to grasp what is not captured by the faculties, but only by immediate sensibility. Rather than a transcendental idealism seeking to understand the conditions of possible experience, as in Kant, Deleuze proposes his transcendental empiricism that seeks to explore the limits of experience – to learn about what is possible in experience, through creative experimentation.

It is not necessary to go through the fifth and sixth postulates as the others are sufficient for establishing what I am calling the nonnormative approach; rather I will touch on the political implications Deleuze draws from the seventh. He has, since the fourth postulate, begun to outline his transcendental empiricism and theory of Ideas. Ideas are problems made up of a set of coordinates that relate to each other and define each other. They can be imagined, for example, as the set of assumptions brought to a question, the plane of foundational beliefs and their building up to some question(s). This plane constitutes the question and the rules or logic that can be

²¹ My use of “possible” in this Part should not be confused with its use in Deleuze’s challenge to Kant in making a distinction between the conditions of real experience and the conditions of possible experience, a distinction that makes up part of Deleuze’s argument that the transcendent thinking involved in Kant’s tracing of his transcendental realm from the empirical realm is illegitimate. Here I am not talking about *conditions* of either real or possible experience, but the creation of actual experiences through the creation of concepts (‘Ideas’) and/or affects which bring them about, and in their actualisation the opening up of our sense of what is possible in experience through those new experiences themselves. With each new affect created, for example, we can say, “This is also possible”, and in so doing push back our sense of the limit of what may be experienced. This takes on an ethical/political dimension when concept and affect creation is calculated with the intention of reorienting our subjectivities and broader political arrangements.

applied to answer the question, and in that sense it also contains the solution to the question – because simply following the logic defined by the problem to its conclusion will reach the possible solution. Descartes’ plane was built on the cogito, Kant’s was built on a transcendental realm, psychoanalysis has the Oedipus Complex, and each provides the rules of engagement within which one can solve the problems that realm was created to solve.

Deleuze is wholly uninterested in this kind of philosophy – the reduction of thought to exploring pre-established answers to out-of-context, ready-made problems is for him is an “infantile prejudice [...] a social prejudice with the visible interest of maintaining us in an infantile state” (p. 158) – instead, we should be building Ideas (problem-spaces, transcendental fields) immediately relevant to the objects of the problem and evaluate them based on how useful they are – where *usefulness* is measured by whether they increase or decrease *puissance* – a specific use of the word ‘power’ by Deleuze referring to the joy-bringing power to affect and be affected, which is his more overtly political work is bound to collective growth and undoing of coercive hierarchical structures, which I will address fully in Part III.

- The postulate of knowledge (against the subordination of learning to knowledge, and of culture to method). This is an argument against knowledge as the possession of rule-enabling solutions, as the mere remembering and applying formulas. Instead, Deleuze proposes learning as the exploration of ideas. One might be able to describe to someone how to swim, or even to demonstrate it, but the process of learning is not in the apprehension of those descriptions or the comprehension of the demonstration. Tossed into a turbulent ocean, it is the process of organising the various points of your body such that they are able to be sensitive to the delicate balance of your weight against the various forces and directions of the water, in order to keep yourself afloat and to propel yourself in the direction you wish to go. It is a fluid, extra-propositional process that cannot simply be captured by instruction. Similarly, you can be told how to drive a manual car, but only once you are seated in one, sensitive to the singular points at which, say, the clutch grips the gears as you engage it and as your foot presses the accelerator, and have become attuned to the careful relations maintained in passing through those points, you have properly explored a problem-space and as such have learned something. Rule-based knowledge is not adequate to the complexity of actual systems, which require learning as a kind of apprenticeship²², a practice of embedding corporeal skills.

Deleuze’s critique does have a positive element as well, and he proposes a metaphysics of difference; being as a single, univocal substance. That substance is difference; a single differential mass that actualized in experience through processes of differentiation. In it, “discrete entities are not primary, but emergent, temporary stabilizations in the general dynamism of being” (Roffe & Stark, 2015, p11).

Representation always refers to something ‘outside’ – however, Deleuze argues that everything just *is*, that there is nothing transcendent that may ground it as a pure beginning. A central problem of representation is that is subordinates difference to sameness, eliding the differences between objects in order to think them.

What these postulates serve to do, among other things, is to undermine two major approaches to thinking in what is called modern thought, both of which have come to be the foundation of

²² See Chapter 4 of Bogue (2007), *Search, Swim and See: Deleuze’s Apprenticeship in Signs and Pedagogy of Images*, for more on not-obviously-corporeal explications of apprenticeship, drawing from Deleuze’s analysis of the narrator in Proust’s *In Search Of Lost Time*, and Deleuze’s theory of cinema.

the kind of normativity critiqued here; the assumption of the transcendent self-same subject, and the assumption of rationality, both of which are fundamental to ideas of humanness in Enlightenment humanism.

1.5.1.2 A critique of our ideas of the subject

“Liberal political philosophy – not to speak of modern [Cartesian-Kantian] philosophy more generally – begins with the concept of the individual, self-identical subject (as opposed to non-subjective concepts such as essences, substances, or, in the political realm, sovereigns). Within this framework, the subject is not only conceptually distinct from the world but substantially distinct; it is, in a word, beyond or transcendent to it. This is because the subject (which is immaterial and active) constitutes the world (which is physical and passive)” (Jun, 2011, p. 93).

On of the consequences of the immanent critique of the postulates is that we come to understand the modern subject as a fiction. Within Deleuze’s thought, the transcendent subject, the commonsense “I” of Descartes’ cogito is undermined and rethought in terms of variable and historically diverse processes of subjectivation (Smith, 2012, pp. 155, 180). Deleuze, with his co-author Félix Guattari, speak instead of ‘machines’ and machinic processes that always take place within concrete social assemblages, directing desire. Machines as used here are like the abstract functions – sets of relations that affect other sets of relations within the continuous becoming of everything. Uncontained and not transcendent, machinic processes are “nothing more than [their] connections; [they are] not made by anything, and [have] no closed identity” (Colebrook, 2002, p. 56; cf Deleuze & Guattari 1977, p. 1).

As such subjects are not the distinct self-same entities assumed by liberal conceptions of the self. Rather than individual subjects, we are multiplicities. Rather than subjects that apprehend objects, it is in apprehension that subjects, already deeply embedded in subjectifying structures, gain coherence, and so rather than a dualism where subjects are some kind of outside (transcendent) being in relation to some object(s), subjecthood is directly emergent from the various elements of the world the subject is being affected by. That we gain this coherence as a result of the structures of our socii highlights how our social structures structure ourselves and our desires including through processes that delimit what is appropriate for us to desire, and so the liberal idea of and individual as sovereign agent able to make decisions for their self and in their own interests, as is an assumption of much liberal philosophy, is undermined, especially when combined with the following critique of rationality.

1.5.1.3 A critique of our ideas of rationality

What is commonly understood to be *rationality* is a fiction. Rationality here involves the assumption that there is at least a general concord between our thoughts and the world, and between our conscious moral beliefs or our desires and our actions – that we have the capacities necessary to act in our own interests. That we have good sense and common sense. Both of these involve the idea of representation and are underpinned by the assumption that “our thoughts are rational to the extent that they accurately represent the world (i.e., are true); our actions,

in turn, are rational to the extent that they accurately represent our desires/moral beliefs” (Jun, 2011, p. 94). For Deleuze there is no pure reason, but only a plurality of heterogeneous processes of rationalization (Smith, 2012, p. 180).

Subjects then exist as constantly produced, heterogeneous multiplicities that are co-constituted with the social assemblages in which they are imbricated. The range of possibilities for life in a liberal socius are then fundamentally curtailed by that socius.

So far in this section I have introduced some of the relevant basics of the metaphysics that underlies the Deleuzian corpus, and the kind of critique I find in his approach. It is a philosophy that finds difference rather than sameness to be metaphysically primary, a philosophy that allows for the contemplation of difference in itself rather than first in relation to some other form. So doing, Deleuze’s metaphysics avoids a tendency always to reproduce old values in our evaluations. This we have also seen to some degree in Wynter, in her understanding of ourselves as always-already sociogenically coded such that our sociogenic coding is opaque to us, typically creating a cognitive closure that reinscribes the dominant form of the human. Going forward in this section, I will outline more thoroughly what I mean when I say ‘non-normative’, giving more content to the sketch I made in the introduction. Then I will take forward the question of how the Deleuzian, and Deleuzoguattarian, nonnormative project applies to the human (and so to the world that the human is mutually reinforcing of), presenting a nonhumanist critique of the human, Deleuze’s concept of faciality, and the implicit task of the nonnormative philosopher; to unmake all transcendent forms of humanness, to create a world without an externally imposed and limited form of the human.

1.6 What ‘nonnormative’ means: Deleuze’s ontological immanent ethics

We do not endeavour, will, seek after or desire because we judge a thing to be good.
On the contrary, we judge a thing to be good because we endeavour, will, seek after
and desire it. (Spinoza, *Ethics*, III, p. 9)

In the same way that Deleuze criticises representation on an ontological level, his critique is extended to the political and ethical. In the case of ethics, it amounts to a critique of all transcendent (“outside”) moral frameworks (or better; they are the same critique). That is, our use of any singular universalised representational framework (all of which are fundamentally inadequate to the complexity of reality) in mediating between us and our actions involves a circular thinking, and closes off in advance the range of possibilities that are not made cogent by that framework. Non-normative ethics, then, is a meta-ethical approach to ethics that is deeply critical of the use of singular, universal, transcendent onto-epistemological frameworks in order make ethical decisions.

Any transcendent ethics has inherently conservative tendencies in that whatever framework is chosen and imposed upon a situation in order to judge an action; though it must be played out²³, the framework itself circularly decides the rightness or wrongness from a start - it always refers

²³ By “played out” here I mean that the sets of rules around how to evaluate must be applied to completion – so, for example, a utilitarian would have to go through the processes of calculating and measuring out the utility of any action.

back to the framework and as such conserves the values that are implicit in them. (Referring back to my explication of *Difference and Repetition*'s fourth postulate, transcendent ethics involves the subordination of thought to chasing after pre-established answers to out-of-context, ready-made problems). This epistemological conservation amounts to an ethical and political conservatism because this referring-back to what is 'already known' as the basis of adjudicating an action is effectively a tendency built into this kind of thought that causes the conservation of those values.

Going back to points made when I introduced the postulates (section 1.5.1.1) – I am not claiming that transcendent ethical frameworks cannot be radical compared to others. Any particular bad belief may be challenged from the epistemological ground provided by a transcendent framework. Someone who believes in the aristocracy proposed by Plato in *Republic* and uses that as a framework for the society that they wish to build may well build a radically different society to any present capitalist representative democracy, for example. However, inasmuch as that society is built from a transcendent framework it is conservative within itself – the frame may be used to challenge beliefs held in any other frame, but the frame itself decides in advance what beliefs may be arrived at, and as such will tend to conserve itself as it continuously circularly reinforces itself, maintaining the form of bad belief.

Not just moral frameworks like utilitarianism or deontology, but all transcendent normative frameworks fall similarly under this ethical critique. 'Happiness' as an injunction for example is a contingent construct, reflecting commonly-held values – for example, one such value is getting married, a major 'happiness indicator' in research. Placing our image of happiness as a goal that we use to construct our imperatives will define and delimit the range of possible actions we take and our sense of what possible futures are desirable, ahead of time (Ahmed, 2010).

To try to make a conspicuous example of such circularity, we can look at 'happiness' further. In the huge popular and academic field of positive psychology, many studies have been done on what sort of people are happy, which has built an image (or norm) of happiness. They draw from individuals in the current world who are already imbued with this world's values then they notice that certain factors, ranging from social relations like marriage, to demeanours, like optimism, are associated with happiness – and then it is just a matter of time before they are *prescribing happiness* (in the form of marriage or taking on an optimistic viewpoint, for example) *in order to achieve happiness*. Notably, even when happiness is reported missing despite having undertaken the recommendations, what "is striking is that the crisis in happiness has not put social ideals into question and if anything has reinvigorated their hold over both psychic and political life. The demand for happiness is increasingly articulated as a demand to return to social ideals, as if what explains the crisis of happiness is not the failure of these ideals but our failure to follow them" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 7)

Thus, not explicit in the word 'happiness', there is the historically contingent content of the concept that is codetermining our lives, and excludes other forms that our lives may take. Norms, when treated as universal and transcendent, hold in them mechanisms that elide those who and that which do not fit the image that the norm proposes. As do all ideas of central import to our value systems, like justice, or goodness, or humanness, in the case of happiness there are deep racial, gendered, class and other political dimensions which distribute individuals' relative proximity to happiness in our social (- and it is of central importance that these are addressed, then, if we are to unmake those stratifications, something I will increasingly do throughout this essay). To make an example, cisgender women's given image of happiness provides a script for happiness bound up in societal expectations, one example being the pervasive image of the 'happy

housewife', with its demands to fulfil domestic labour, have particular relations to her husband, her children, and her parents, and have the perceived happiness of those family members conditional on whether she may consider herself happy or be seen as happy (Ahmed, 2010, p. 56). The injunction to do these various forms of emotional and domestic labour for low or no pay is justified by happiness; it will "make her happy" – and this in turn maintains the sets of exploitative economic relationships that capitalism depends on, not by accident, but through the conditioning conservative nature of transcendent frameworks in our society. Failure to achieve any of these things then is understood to explain a person's lack of happiness, and becomes the grounds for individuals to police her behaviour, for her to police herself, even when successfully ticking all the boxes of the happiness list may not make her feel happy, may even make her miserable, because there is no single way for women to live. Here, rebelling against 'happiness' with even the most basic of divergences such as not wanting marriage or children, may find her labelled a failure, or a (feminist) killjoy.

As a curative Deleuze proposes a transcendental empiricism – an experimental approach and an immanent ethics, not one that seeks further to define and delimit some *x* in the form of the Socratic question "What is happiness?" but just to ask, "what does happiness do?" – and then to experiment with other *x*'s, to learn what they *can do*. The same would go for 'justice', or 'goodness', to mention some common examples. This approach fends off the conservative nature of normativity (here, understood as universalised transcendent norms) by avoiding the reification of abstractions that purport to be the best while simultaneously policing and destroying that which is different to it, *and* because it is highly effective in increasing our sense of what is possible, which in itself counters the shrinking aspect of values referring-back to what is already known. Instead of being stuck, committed to a universal sense of the Good, whose content we seek to discover and expand upon until we have the most comprehensive model, we rather understand the idea to be the result of a historically contingent process that promotes certain ways of living while obscuring and policing others. Instead of a single value or model inherently limited regardless of its depth and fullness, Deleuze proposes the proliferating creation of concepts, always treated as created for a localised and contingent setting, each with their own ontological-epistemological normative structure, the capacities and limits of each we seek to understand so that we may know the concept's use-value. No longer asking what any normative framework *is*, we ask, *what does it do?* Constantly creating concepts and learning what each makes possible works only to open up our world, to 'broaden our horizons' by creating wholly new horizons to map our experience, instead of limiting ourselves to the one and trying to push back its edges to cover and detail everything.

The nonnormative approach does not unequivocally eschew norms, then, but *transcendent* norms - it does not raise any norm to the level of a singular universal truth, and instead prefers the immanent use of a multitude of norms whose capacities we are as familiar with as possible, in pragmatic ways. It is the conditioning, policing, normalising element that tends to come with transcendence that is considered 'normative' here, not merely the use of norms as value frames for understanding.

1.7 Identifying normativity in texts

Having said this, it is useful to further outline the range of things we can understand as normative when they are spoken about by philosophers.

Overt normative frameworks: The broad frameworks of utilitarianism, deontology, and to a large extent virtue ethics each typically fall under the title of ‘normative ethics’. Each one typically involves a transcendent framework for classifying various activities or states as ethical, and each generally is universalist in nature – meaning that it purports to apply to all. Each also typically circularly justifies itself (often through appeal to ‘common sense’ intuitions) with claims acceptable to the framework coming from within the framework itself; something which takes various forms often appealing to a kind of systematised ‘common sense’.

Most important of these for our purposes is deontology, for its rights- and duties-based framework, and its relating those rights and duties to forms like justice and dignity. Not only ethical rights, but legal rights typically stem from a deontological framework. Within deontology the most important ethical imperatives are built in relation to norms that are understood to fulfil some overarching transcendent goal. The paradigmatic version of this is Kant’s categorical imperative, which answers the question “should I do x” with “only if you would will it become a universal law” – that is, each time you want to ascertain whether some action is ethical, one’s decision must be mediated by the categorical imperative and whether it can be fulfilled by that action. In Part III, I will address a pragmatic form of human rights that can exist outside of transcendent frameworks.

Other important identifiers of normative frameworks come from what can be called ‘philosophy of lack’ – those cases of framing being in terms of its non-fulfilment of the conditions for some transcendent norm it participates in. In terms of counterhumanisms this is readily visible in the language – they understand the humanity of colonised and racialised peoples to have been ‘stolen’, they want this humanity ‘restored’ to a ‘full’ state. Each of these implies an overarching idea of the human whose conditions can be fulfilled for complete human status. In Deleuzian, and Deleuzoguattarian, philosophy instead, we have machines, which, in contrast, “do not operate out of lack. They do not seek to fulfil needs. Instead they produce connections. Moreover, the connections they produce are not pre-given [...] Machines are productive in unpredictable and often novel ways” (May, 2005, p. 25).

1.8 The nonhuman turn

One of the scholarly and philosophical movements at the moment could be called the ‘non-human turn’ (Roffe & Stark, 2015). This position is at least a heavy criticism of the idea that the category ‘human’ is what we should aspire to in political struggle. Instead, together with non-normative critique, it understands the human as a category of exclusion, like man, or white, and just as women need not aspire to be men, those excluded from the category of human need not aspire to that category. The human, for a Deleuzian, is “the site of a capture and diminution of life”²⁴ (p. 8), stratifying and limiting all of human social life through prescriptions and imposi-

²⁴ For a useful texts that cover how Deleuze’s particular vitalism overcomes the various problems of vitalism generally, see chapter 2 of *Deleuze and the Non/Human*, “Nonhuman Life” by Ashley Woodward, and also Donna V. Jones’s (2010) book *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Négritude, Vitalism, and Modernity*.

tions constituted with mutually-reinforcing sets of material relations, social-political-economic, which make up systemic inequality and the world's political violence. Following sections will be dealing directly with how transcendence in relation to humanness is central to these problems. It is useful now to introduce the topic by relating the human to another axis of stratification: gender.

Thinking about the human in Deleuze studies has been taken up by many significant feminist scholars today (of which Claire Colebrook and Rosi Braidotti are perhaps the most well-known); for them, implicit in the universal human through the processes of normativity, is masculinity – (like it is for Wynter) the universal human is ‘man’:

“If reason is that characteristic that marks the human, then women have been understood as unreasonable, irrational, unruly; if language defines the human, then ‘great writing’ is that undertaken by men; if political (or religious) community defines the human, then women are relegated to the tasks of handmaiden and server. To the extent that the human is regarded as an accomplishment, it is denied to women, mothers, girls and all those associated with their denigrated or less-than-adequate characteristics.” (p. 19-20)

Here we can see quite quickly that the human norm has done a similar kind of work to create hierarchy of gender as it has of race. We find also same distinction in approach between what Stark (p. 20) calls “Egalitarian Feminism” – one which aims to create a more (or fully) inclusive concept of the human, and “so-called difference feminism” which is interested instead in what goes beyond the human and the masculine so as to free us from the constraints of the human.

This same kind of tension can be found in relation to any axis of stratification within society, like race, gender, and class – where the human constitutes and is put in service of those relations. Both counterhumanist and nonhumanist engagements with the human seek to fundamentally challenge the dominant form of the human such that those stratifications are unmade, and in so doing are trying to radically restructure the entire world. In Part III, once we have resolved the tension between these two positions in Part II in arriving at Mbembe's geographical conception of the human in terms of an Open World, we will build that world that the solution makes up, as an inherent part of addressing the solution.

* * *

By now, I hope that I have made clear the distinction between the counterhumanist and non-humanist approaches. Counterhumanists believe that a new, ecumenical, all-inclusive human can be made, while nonhumanism as portrayed here uses immanent critique to undercut the idea that any concept can be all-inclusive, and argues that any particular concept tends to conserve itself, literally prejudiced in favour of the current dominant epistemological and social order, because any new information must first be understood in terms of that concept in order to be recognised as acceptable information, and also makes a genealogical argument for the use of ‘human’ through history to show how despite appearances and intentions, the category remains stratified along the lines of rulers-ruled-excluded. Abstracted out, the conflict here is around whether something like a transcendent universal model approach to ontology or an immanent and pragmatic approach to ontology is preferable. The solution I propose, coming from Mbembe, is to bring nonnormative critique to bear on counterhumanism and to create an immanent counter-humanism which carries the strengths of both positions, providing a framework from which to build a world without harmful political hierarchies.

1.9 Faciality and nonnormative ethics

In my first reading of Achille Mbembe's *Critique of Black Reason*, I was not sure how to understand his use of both the counterhumanist and nonnormative approaches, and set out to try to undermine the conflict that I saw in his work. Instead, I came to see how his work opened the way for a non-normative, or immanent, counterhumanism, a particular antiracist and decolonial form of posthumanism that avoids the problem of transcendence and creates a framework to address political hierarchies other than race as they pertain to humanness.

But before moving onto that I should cover Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of the human as well as some of the consequences of nonnormative view, some further elements of its ethical positive and negative critique, so that we may be best able to recognise them when they appear in our analysis of Mbembe's work.

1.9.1 The human face

One of the consequences of the kind of Deleuzoguattarian critique we've engaged is that we can no longer understand humans in terms of a "universal or transcendental subject, which could function as the bearer of universal human rights," and instead the what is human is "only variable and historically diverse 'processes of subjectivation'" (Smith, 2012, p. 346). Deleuze's treatment of the human is broadly as follows: locating the concept as a product of historical processes, critiquing that concept, placing the human within his univocal ontology, and in so doing, affirming the multiple nonhuman contexts that relate to the human and set it into creative movement. (Roffe & Stark, 2015, p. 6)

'Faciality' is the name of the concept developed by Deleuze and Guattari that expresses how the dogmatic image of thought works for the human – it is an idea, conveying "that language functions as a disciplinary ordering device operating at the nexus of the signifier and the subject" (Bignall, in Saldanha and Adams, 2013, p. 72). Faciality is an abstract machine – a pre-actualised potential designating matter and function²⁵ comprised of a black hole and white wall system – it is the machine that delimits human experience. For our purposes, making up the face we can understand the *white wall of the signifier* as that information making up all of the forms of information that constitute the present image of the human, and the *black holes of subjectification* are those spaces in which difference is consumed and assimilated into the register of the white face. Together, these effect the operation of representational thinking as explained in the critique of the dogmatic image of thought: difference is judged "in terms of its recognised resemblance to a given or established representative form; this privileging of similitude and resemblance categorises inassimilable difference as 'unruly' or 'outcast' and reproduces an expanding principle of identity or sameness in the process of signification" (p. 79).

Faciality then is that which "provides the coordinates and contours that allow the signifying subject to emerge." As such it is bound up deeply in the economy and the organization of power. "It organises a field of possibilities, [and] determines, at least to a certain extent, what we are capable of seeing, doing and being." (O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 311) Humankind developed its 'face'

²⁵ "We define the abstract machine as the aspect or moment at which nothing but functions and matters remain. A diagram has neither substance nor form, neither content nor expression. Substance is a formed matter, and matter is a substance that is unformed either physically or semiotically." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 141)

on its non-human (nonsignifying, nonsubjective, essentially collective, polyvocal and corporeal) head. Deleuze and Guattari express how the faciality machine is what abstracts the human from the world (here they say “the body”) – “The face is produced only when the head ceases to be a part of the body, when it ceases to be coded by the body, when it ceases to have a multidimensional, polyvocal corporeal code – when the body, head included, has been decoded and has to be *overcoded* by something we shall call the Face” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 170, emphasis in the original). In simple terms, this means that over time, a particular image of humanness (the face) becomes abstract, dominant over and policing of what were once a plurality of human being, effected at the levels of meaning-making (significance) and subject-making (subjectification). This abstraction is ‘overcoded’ – in the same way Wynter’s ‘Man’ overrepresents the whole of humanity – in the sense that it doubles the virtual space, the body/world, it is imposing on. This understanding is utilised in multiple ways by Deleuze and Guattari – I will focus on what is most relevant to the discussion at hand.

The white wall/black hole system of the face becomes a site of transcendental illusion: from within the face everything seems to confirm to the logic of the face: “When the established political regime of the face is erroneously taken as the cause of significance, it operates as a ‘site of transcendental illusion’ which suggests the apparent inevitability of that regime of signs” (p. 81). It becomes easy to say that it is in human nature to be greedy, for example, when a an overwhelmingly singular image of what it is to be human becomes globally pervasive, as we have today; when in fact this is a result of historical processes and reflective of our current social assemblages (e.g. global neoliberalism), and, importantly, could be otherwise.

It is worthwhile here to reiterate an outline of some of Wynter’s ideas around the development of the human in relation to faciality. For Wynter, humans evolved language, becoming language-using animals, who use it to develop origin stories, mythoi, about themselves. Mythoi structure the subjective reality of each individual human and make up an inherent always-already existing element of humanity’s hybrid existence as both bios and mythos. Because our always-already existing mythoi structure our subjective experience, they are preconscious and internal to us, and so, in some sense opaque to us – its logics are the conditions of our experience as humans, and though constituted together with experience, also prior to them. This hybrid form exists in co-constituting relationship with the material world, and as such the stratifications of each ethnohumanism are reflected in the cosmogonies and the societies over which they are imposed.

Some parallels exist, then, between Wynter’s account and Deleuze’s account of the emergence of humanness. Both are centred around the importance of language and subject-making, the mutually-created nature of these structures with the material world and the reflection of their stratifications across both. The opacity of the ways our own mythoi always-already structure our own experience also has some parallel with Deleuze’s understanding that from the face everything appears to conform to the logic of the face – that is, as a transcendent form, the face conditions our experience so as to be invisible in it, normal.

Again, the nonnormative project is not nonnormative in the sense that it does not value. It simply is aware of how certain modes of valuing – those that allow for transcendence, are radically harmful. As humans, understanding ourselves in non-transcendent ways, ie. immanently, is perhaps our most fundamental ethical task. I engage this in the section that follows.

1.9.2 The nonnormative project, if there is one: to escape the face

This section is important towards understanding how, from a nonnormative framework, transcendent humanness, as the face, as the site of a capture and diminution of life, is unsurprisingly a core element of human being, reflecting and mutually reinforcing with our broader political context, such that the dominant image of the human is central to all forms of oppression. All oppression, from this perspective, is built around systemic dehumanisation of groups that do not conform to the face. As such, the unmaking of this form and the corresponding political world is the project of nonnormative ethics.

The range of possibilities for our lives are limited and policed by faciality, and as such it should be clear that it has great importance for us. Deleuze and Guattari frame it as perhaps the overarching goal of their work: “If human beings have a destiny, it is rather to escape the face, to dismantle the face and facializations, to become imperceptible, to become clandestine” (1987, p. 171), a task reflecting Deleuze’s early position, that “the meaning of philosophy” is “to go beyond the human condition” (Deleuze, 1966, p. 28).

In Deleuze and Guattari we do see, in a moment, one significant counterhumanist element suggestive of a potential for a counterhuman project when they say; “The face is not animal, but neither is it human in general; there is even something absolutely inhuman about the face” (1987, p. 170). This reflects the counterhumanist understanding of the present human as a fundamentally ‘pseudo-human’, but also that, if that thing that constitutes humanness is fundamentally inhuman, there may be some other measure of humanness we can make that evaluation from. This opens us to the possibility that it is what is bad about the face that is bad about the human: transcendence.

Deleuze offers a whole ‘toolbox’ of approaches to unmaking and escaping the co-opting power of transcendent norms, several of which will be discussed in conjunction with Mbembe’s approaches later. This is the toolbox for creating a whole world that relies on immanent relations, and not transcendence, destroying the face and all the axes of oppression it is built into. Part II of this essay will show how this world is possible, and Part III will show what this world, the human (world), is made of.

1.10 The appeal of nonhumanism, and the consequences of counterhumanism or nonhumanism

The Deleuzian nonnormativity that gives rise to nonhumanism seems to me to be the most liberatory ethics, as a meta-ethics which critiques the very way that ethics is done and thought is thought, with a formal tendency to open up rather than close down or conserve our sense of possibility. Grounding thought in immanence rather than the transcendence of, for example, a foundationalist epistemological framework or a transcendental idealist noumenal world is for me so far the furthest extent of philosophical critique of thought I have come across.

By now it should be becoming clear that the difference between counterhumanism and nonhumanism is not merely a linguistic problem (although they do both involve understandings of how language structures social relationships). Both involve fundamentally different ways of engaging ethics and politics. One relies on transcendence, and the other on experiential immanence. Transcendent thought, as a conservative kind of thought, tends to favour the current

social order; that is, it is inherently centralising in its conservation, and as such tends to favour statist and authoritarian modes of political life. Immanentist nonnormativity on the other hand is fully decentralised, seeking always to escape the range of forms (including State-forms) in the established social order and set it into creative becoming.

Social authority in the form of the state (or any political structure of authority) is itself a transcendent normative structure that overcodes the socius on its territory in the same way that any normative structure does. Capitalist assemblages, though they are always fluidising the rigid codes of normative structures, are also always reterritorializing them (recoding the fluidised codes) in such a way that they become products for the market, coding complex phenomena not in terms of their socially-developed qualitative differences but in terms of exchangeable quantities. An important implication of this basic observation, as we will see elaborated fully in Part III, is that one consequence of nonhumanism is that it rejects the state and capitalism from the outset, whereas if a counterhumanist does so it is not a necessary aspect of their counterhumanism and, furthermore, counterhumanists are arguably less likely to do so, as individuals who find transcendence acceptable.

1.11. Conclusion to Part I

In this Part I have introduced the problem of the human as central to all forms of systemic oppression, such as race, class, and gender, and introduced two kinds of approaches within philosophy of race that deal with the problem.

I have developed an account of Sylvia Wynter's counterhumanism as part of a long theoretical tradition founded in the work of great anticolonial scholars Césaire and Fanon. These accounts propose that we replace the current exclusionary form of the human with one that includes all. I have also developed a Deleuzian nonhumanist account that is sceptical that any transcendent forms, including the human, can provide a world liberated from racially or otherwise politically stratified society.

What follows in Part II is an exposition of Mbembe's resolution of this tension, through the introduction and development of an immanent counterhuman that reframes humanness geographically, in terms of a set of global political relations. With this resolution, in Part III we will be able to develop on the outlines and limits of that set of relations which make up humanness, by considering how the immanent counterhuman world relates to significant political relations today, like states, capitalism, and political resistance.

Part II: Achille Mbembe's Immanent Counterhuman

2. Introduction

Achille Mbembe's *Critique of Black Reason* is, amongst other things, a Césairean re-reading of Fanon for present times, resituating his knowledge in our present sociopolitical context¹, and in light of recent changes in (especially post May 1968 French-speaking) philosophy. Reading it, one immediately notices his working both counterhumanist and nonnormative positions together – the title of the introduction, “The Becoming Black of the World,” uses the Deleuzian notion of “becoming black” – and the introductory quote is by Césaire², speaking of the wounds of racialisation and colonisation. By the second page Mbembe has invoked Deleuze by name, and introduced the claim that Blackness and race have played multiple roles and occupy a central place in modern knowledge and discourse about humanity and humanism. Together with introducing the text, this chapter notes and expands on the consequences of these ostensibly incompatible notions, focusing in particular on relevant elements of Mbembe's negative nonnormative critique as well as noting the various strongly counterhumanist notions. *Critique of Black Reason* is a multifaceted and multidirectional text – I will be engaging just some of them.

Mbembe is aware of the conflict in approaches I am working with – he works to outline how the “latent tension that has always broadly shaped reflection on Black identity disappears in the gap of race” (p. 90), which much of the book works to resolve and is perhaps the major tension he identifies in Black thought. “The tension opposes a universalizing approach, one that proclaims a cobelonging to the human condition, with a particularizing approach that insists on difference and the dissimilar by emphasizing not originality as such but the principle of repetition (custom) and the values of autonomy” (ibid.). This can be understood roughly as analogous to the distinction between egalitarian and difference approaches to feminism noted earlier, as well as corresponding to the tension within identity politics around how to use one's identity to unmake that identity. How Mbembe works out this tension and the implications of that are the focus of the remainder of Part II of this essay.

¹ “To reread Fanon today, then, is partly about learning to resituate his life, work, and language within the history into which he was born and which he tried to transform through struggle and criticism. It also means translating – into the language of our time – the major questions that forced him to stand up, uproot himself, and travel among companions along the new road that the colonized had to build with their own strength, with their own inventiveness, with their irreducible will. We must reactualize this marriage of struggle and criticism in our contemporary world. And so it is inevitable that we must think at once with and against Fanon, the difference between him and some of us being that, for him, to think was first of all to uproot oneself from oneself. It was to put one's life in the balance.” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 162)

² “These heads of men, these collections of ears, these burned houses, these Gothic invasions, this steaming blood, these cities that evaporate at the edge of the sword, are not to be so easily disposed of” (Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, quoted in Mbembe, 2017, p. 1).

Mbembe sets out to do a broad critique of Black thought since the invention of Blackness. He frames his approach through characterising Black thought as made up of two parts, like sections in a constellation. *Western Consciousness of Blackness* is the first, and is the founding form of Blackness – a collection of discourses and practices in multiple, contradictory and divergent forms “whose goal was to produce the Black Man as a racial subject and site of savage exteriority, who was therefore set up for moral disqualification and practical instrumentalization” (p. 28). *Black Consciousness of Blackness* came in response to this, it was “one that saw itself as a gesture of self-determination, a way of being present to oneself and looking inward, and as a form of utopian critique,” and sought “to exorcise the demon of the first narrative and the structure of subjection within it” (p. 28) Where the first narrative was a judgement of identity in relation to a white identity which was treated as primary, the second was a declaration of identity in order escape that imposition. Much of Mbembe’s work in the book is to show that despite profound disjunctures between Western and Black consciousness of Blackness there are also solidarities, and also to critique those solidarities as in part a result of resentment.

2.1. *Humanitas* and the European enclosure (race as a spatial relationship)

In the translator’s introduction, Laurent Dubois describes *Critique of Black Reason* as a “conceptual and historical cartography” (p. xiv). This is an effective starting point to draw an outline of the core engagements of the text. The book maps the historical movements that make up the relations of race, Blackness, humanity, and Africa; the processes by which the “Black Man would [...] no longer be someone who simply participated in the human condition but the person who, born in Africa, lives in Africa and is of the Black race” (p. 91).

Mbembe uses multiple terms to think spatially about race as a negation of the idea of the common, or of common humanity (p. 54). In small-scale terms: “radical difference,” “being-apart” (p. 86); and at the level of global geography: that of “World-outside,” “enclosure,” “apartheid,” “partitioning of the world” (p. 54). These divisions always mark the borders between those whose humanity has been negated, and therefore those with legitimacy as rights-bearing subjects in the political world. For Mbembe, Africa is a paradigmatic case of this kind of negation, as is Blackness.

2.2. The partition of the world: Enclosure(s) and the world-outside

Mbembe’s approach to enclosure appears to draw directly or indirectly from Henri Bergson’s, perhaps through Deleuze. In sum, Bergson’s major essay on social theory, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1935) outlines two sorts of societies, the closed and the open, where closed societies establish an opposition between “us” and “them” – those within and without the society, and where open societies instead have qualitatively different principles of organisation, rooted in a kind of universal love for the human, a conception that “can only come into existence through a creative reconception of humanity and community” (Bogue, 2010, p. 15). It is this creative reconception, the conceptual and historical cartographic relation that we will address in this Part, that opens the way for a new human in terms of a whole open world not bound to the yokes of transcendence.

For Mbembe, Europe ‘enclosed’ itself in the process of colonizing other places, a process that went hand in hand with what is called ‘modernity’; seeing modernity as “just another name for the European project of unlimited expansion undertaken in the final years of the eighteenth century,” the critique of which is incomplete “if we fail to grasp that the coming of modernity coincided with the appearance of the principle of race and the latter’s slow transformation into the privileged matrix for techniques of domination, yesterday as today.” (p. 55). This enclosure is a bordered space inside which the inhabitants are considered human and given at least potentially the full set of rights seen to be fit for humans (in practice, only in common to “men endowed with reason” and recognised by the law as such, as citizens). The ‘World-outside’, however, Mbembe’s term for the space beyond the enclosure, is seen by colonisers as a lawless zone inhabited by those who are not fully human and that may be exploited with no consideration of the kinds of ethics and laws commonly held within the enclosure³. “The World-outside was therefore beyond the line, a frontier that was always re-created. It was a free space of unrestricted conflict, open to free competition and free exploitation, where men were free to confront one another as savage beasts. There, the only way to judge war legally or morally was to ask whether it was effective.” (p. 59) For Mbembe, the World-outside was also its own enclosure (p. 60). These enclosures emerge as the colonizing process of creating sharp distinctions between various kinds of war and acceptable action in each space are made – the subjection of those in the World-outside justified “through the allegation that they are slaves by nature and, therefore, enemies,” for example by distinguishing between wars against Christians and wars against non-Christians. These distinctions related to each other and were used to create a justificatory network of moral claims for the domination and subjugation of those outside.⁴ It is useful to note that this enclosure and World-outside relation is an ideological relation that relates to global political assemblages – it is from the outset understanding race and colonisation in terms of how we politically arrange our world.

On the backdrop of highlighting how we could “never sufficiently emphasize the complexity and heterogeneity of the colonial experience,” Mbembe does note that the creation of race was always an essential and even constitutive structure of what would become the imperial project (p. 62). This justificatory network constituted in significant part by racialization was a vast categorizing and classifying endeavour on the part of European countries, which went together with a perception of cultures closed-in on themselves and history as shaped “by forces that emerged only to destroy other forces, and by struggle that could result only in liberty or servitude” (p. 17). These processes

went hand in hand with a division and shrinking of the historical and cultural imagination and, in certain cases, a relative closing of the mind. In sum, once genders, species, and races were identified and classified, nothing remained but to enumerate the differences between them. The closing off of the mind did not signify the extinction of curiosity itself. But from the High Middle Ages to the Enlightenment,

³ The world outside as “a zone outside humanity, outside of the space where humans exercise their rights. It is a space where human rights can be exercised only through the supremacy of humans over those who are not completely human. For if there are indeed humans in these territories, they are fundamentally inhuman.” (p. 60)

⁴ Deleuze uses the concept of the outside in a number of ways. For example, drawing on Foucault’s work, he speaks of “thought of the Outside” (Robinson, 1999), then later reconceptualises it as in “excessive logic” (Pearson, 1997, p. 2) in *The Fold* (1991b). When I refer to the outside in this essay, I use it to mean external to enclosures, as spoken of by Mbembe, or beyond or external to conceptual models that attempt to map a plane.

curiosity as a mode of inquiry and a cultural sensibility was inseparable from the work of fantasy, which, when focused on other worlds, constantly blurred the lines between the believable and the unbelievable, the factual and the marvelous. (ibid.)

Fantasy on the part of colonisers is then is a major part of the process of racialization; the projection of invented realities and ontologies upon those outside, coupled by a “tremendous will to ignorance that, in every case, seeks to pass itself off as knowledge” (p. 70). Mbembe notes this will, and some important cases of it, together with how it is unclear whether this will has disappeared, despite the flood of information and academic studies now available on these topics. This intended misunderstanding and fantasy is done for the purpose of excluding those outside and closing in on oneself. (p. 71)

Mbembe’s main concern here is not so much the colonial processes occurring from the part of Western Consciousness of Blackness. What is crucial for him is his claim that these logics were then reproduced by Black people even, and often in, resistance that they carried out the “logic of self-fictionalization and self-contemplation, indeed of closure” (p. 1) – and that these processes need to be undone. For him, these logics lead to the creation of a reality in which the “spatial body, racial body, and civic body all became one,” whereby there became no way to imagine identity without racial consciousness and the “Black Man would henceforth no longer be someone who simply participated in the human condition but *the person who, born in Africa, lives in Africa and is of the Black race*” (p. 91, emphasis in the original) – where partitioning does not only occur in the world, but in perception. Here we see a direct relationship between geographical partitioning, racial segregation and the partitioning of the sensible, and this partitioning corresponds to the same partitioning of the human as a relation. The primary way that Mbembe engages these processes is through what I will call here nonnormative resentment critique.

2.3. Mbembe’s nonnormative resentment critique

Critiquing resentment is one significant tool of negative nonnormative critique and is perhaps the major one that Mbembe uses. Often left untranslated as *ressentiment* elsewhere and marking Nietzsche’s use of the French term in his (originally German) writing, it is translated into English in Mbembe’s (originally French) work, while maintaining the structure of *ressentiment* as used by Nietzsche, Fanon through Nietzsche⁵, and Deleuze through Nietzsche.

I will speak generally about resentment as is relevant for our purposes before moving to Mbembe’s analysis of resentment in certain forms of Black Consciousness of Blackness. *Resentment* is a reactive feeling towards the perceived cause of one’s suffering, the attribution of blame to that ‘cause’, and often the creation of a moral framework in reaction to (and grounded in mediation by) the values of that perceived cause, inverting those values while maintaining some fundamental elements of it, as part of completing an impotent revenge-fantasy against the perceived cause. Resentment subordinates our power to act to itself because our subjecthood becomes recursively mediated by our fantasy-fueled relation to our oppressor, and in so doing tends to

⁵ The centrality of this question for Fanon can be seen in the broader passage wrapping up the final chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*: “Man’s behavior is not only reactional. And there is always resentment in a *reaction*. Nietzsche had already pointed that out in *The Will to Power*. To educate man to be actional, preserving in all his relations his respect for the basic values that constitute a human world, is the prime task of him who, having taken thought, prepares to act” (2008, p. 173).

conserve elements of the fundamental values of our oppressors while inverting others. Resentment, or framing oneself in relation to an oppressor, then creates an image of oneself first in terms of those ways one lacks what the oppressor has, which in turn tends to relegate challenges to the oppressor to purely symbolic forms of inclusion rather than ones grounded in immanent autopoietic subject-formation.

This reactive moral framework both positions one as good and as the blameless victim in relation to the evil and blameful perceived cause of one's suffering (Jenkins, 2016). Typically the blamelessness is extended so far as to frame the harm as inevitable as the perceived cause is seen as the only active (and therefore only responsible) party in the action. A standard example from Nietzsche is that of Christian slave morality, where elaborate revenge-fantasies become complete with the invention of hell and the promise of a god who will do the revenge by proxy, and a value system built on the inversion of the values of the perceived cause and on the understanding of their own impotence to change the suffering as good. The resentful are able then to relish in their inaction as they are harmed, having made a virtue of their inaction in the ethic of "turning the other cheek," they believe they are Good and that the Evil ones will receive their due in the afterlife. Following Deleuze, the resentful subject

"makes the object responsible for [the subject's] own powerlessness. [...] It is venomous and depreciative because it blames the object in order to compensate for its own inability to escape from the traces of the corresponding excitation. This is why *ressentiment*'s revenge, even when it is realized, remains 'spiritual,' imaginary, and symbolic in principle." (Deleuze, 2006, p. 116)

Utilising Fanon, Mbembe frames Black Consciousness of Blackness as an often-reactive force that made 'Blackness' also a word for a bitter resentment and concomitant disavowal of responsibility, through a paradigm of victimisation (p. 10, p. 88), which will be elaborated upon later in this section. Describing the first African modern thinkers and their project of seeking liberation from servitude through "the acquisition of the formal power to decide autonomously for oneself" (p. 88), he extends the claim of resentment to many Pan-Africans, postwar African Nationalists, and Negritude scholars. For each case, Mbembe makes mention of an ideology within Black Consciousness of Blackness and then some underlying problematic assumptions that their ideology conserved through their resentment and counter-positioning. In what follows I discuss some of these as he uses them, focusing on the section in *Critique of Black Reason* called "The Universal and the Particular," which is dense with cases of resentment, relating each to the way that Blackness is framed in relation to the 'universal' some particular image (and project) of the human, as a spatial relation.

Just prior to the section, "The Universal and the Particular," Mbembe outlines three major historical responses from the West to the question of "whether Blacks were human beings like all others" (p. 85), each either excluding Black people from humanity or at least assigning them the status of inferior humans. The first response saw Blackness as fundamental difference, where with this "radical difference, this being-apart, it was deemed legitimate to exclude them in practice and in law from the sphere of full and complete human citizenship: they had nothing to contribute to the work of the universal" (p. 86). In the second response, Blacks continued to be seen as nonsimilar but were also ostensibly recognised; now there is content to the sign. "If Blacks were beings apart, it was because they had things of their own, customs that should not be abolished or

destroyed but rather modified. The goal was to inscribe difference within a distinct institutional system in a way that forced it to operate within a fundamentally inegalitarian and hierarchical order” (p. 86). The third response involved a policy of assimilation, recognising the possibility of a world in common to all human beings, except this world is not granted outright to indigenous peoples – they needed conversion, through which “their humanity would cease to be indefinable and incomprehensible,” where under certain conditions difference could be abolished, erased, or reabsorbed (p. 87).

For Mbembe, when Black criticism took up the question of the right to sovereignty and self-determination, it maintained these three responses and, in doing so, “authorized the distinction between the human and the nonhuman – or the not-yet-sufficiently human that might become human if given appropriate training” (p. 87). Including ‘civilisation’, which is incidentally replaced by the notion of ‘progress’, which he attacks later, Mbembe argues that there were two central categories mobilised in the struggle to gain power. The first was the Black Man as a victimised and hurt subject, and the second, “the recovery and redeployment by Blacks themselves of the thematic of cultural difference, which, as we have seen, was at the heart of colonial theories of inferiority and inequality” (p. 88).

This Post-War African Nationalist approach to self-definition was based “on a reading of the world that later ideological currents would amplify,” a paradigm of victimization clearly paralleling Nietzschean resentment which had at its heart “a vision of history as a series of inevitabilities [...] essentially governed by forces that escape us, following a linear cycle in which there are no accidents, one that is always the same, spasmodic, infinitely repeating itself in a pattern of conspiracy” (p. 88). Presented as the radical discourse of emancipation and autonomy, this reading was the foundation for “a so-called politics of Africanity” (p. 88), transcendent ideas of Africa that Mbembe takes issue with.

Mbembe calls this paradigm the “neurosis of victimisation,” and remarks that behind it “lurks in reality a negative and circular way of thinking that relies on superstition to function. It creates its own fables, which subsequently pass for reality. It makes masks that are conserved and remodeled in different epochs. So it is with the couple formed by the executioner (enemy) and his victim (the innocent). The enemy – the executioner – incarnates the absolute form of cruelty. The victim, full of virtue, is incapable of violence, terror, or corruption” (p. 88). It is in closing the final chapter of the book that Mbembe reiterates the task he sets for those carrying resentment: “On the one hand, we must escape the status of victimhood. On the other, we must make a break with “good conscience” and the denial of responsibility. It is through this dual approach that we will be able to articulate a new politics and ethics founded on a call for justice” (p. 178).

Mbembe notes how this rejection from humanness or placement as inferior to other humans forced “such discourse to inscribe itself, from the beginning, in a tautology: “We are also human beings.” Or better yet: “We have a glorious past that proves our humanity.”” (p. 89) The tautology here reflecting the circular logic of transcendent thinking in relation to the human, which fails to judge humanness outside of the dominant form of the human – a tautology which he claims became prevalent at the origin of Black discourse, one it “still has difficulty escaping” (p. 89). Mbembe’s problem is that this discourse of refutation – which generates reaffirmations of human identity denied by others for the purpose of confirming the cobelonging of Black people to humanity – “does not – except in a few rare cases – set aside the fiction of a racial subject or of race in general.” Which is to say that, in the many movements against the norm of the human through a process of recognition and assimilation into the human, rarely is this done by

destroying the racial logics underpinning the image of the human. Mbembe accuses both Pan-Africanism and Negritude of this, emphasising that this conserved element is often deepened further by establishing race as “the foundation not only of difference in general but also of the very idea of nation and community, since racial determinants are seen as the necessary moral basis for political solidarity” (p. 89-90). As a result of this quite standard form of resentment, race comes to define the Black Man as the conscious, moral subject, and race comes to serve as proof of the existence of nation, and “the fundamental foundations of nineteenth-century anthropology – the prejudice of evolutionary thinking and the belief in progress – remain intact” (p. 90).

A central problem here for Mbembe is that Black people are being considered human usually at the same time as claims are made about the specific nature of Blackness; Black people as something in relation to race, tradition, customs, history, and place. “We rebel not against the idea that Blacks constitute a distinct race but against the prejudice of inferiority attached to the race,” and similarly with Africa, the “specificity of so-called African culture is not placed in doubt” (p. 90). In this critiqued approach, any contribution to humankind is marked as of a particular sort, the particular kind of contribution that only Black people are able to make, instead of a contribution of a nonracialised person who is contributing to all as one in common with those of the all. Nationalist historiography, for example, sought to “[establish] a quasi-equivalence between race and geography, and then in creating a cultural identity that flowed from the relationship between the two terms” (p. 91), and developed strong conceptual links between these elements to the point that the “spatial body, racial body, and civic body all became one” (p. 91) and so, again, the “Black Man would henceforth no longer be someone who simply participated in the human condition but the person who, born in Africa, lives in Africa and is of the Black race” (p. 91). Following this and in another clear case of showing this nonnormative critique of Black discourse, Mbembe states:

More fundamentally, Pan-Africanism developed within a racist paradigm that triumphed in Europe during the nineteenth century. It was a discourse of inversion, drawing its fundamental categories from the myths that it claimed to oppose and reproducing their dichotomies: the racial difference between Black and White, the cultural confrontation between the civilized and the savage, the religious opposition between Christians and pagans, the conviction that race founded nation and vice versa. It inscribed itself within an intellectual genealogy founded on *the territorialization of identity on the one hand and the racialization of geography on the other*, or the myth of a racial polis. And it forgot a key fact: that if exile was certainly the result of the rapacity of capitalism, its origins also lay in a family murder. There were fratricides. (p. 92, emphasis in the original)

What we see here is just the form of resentment as we have outlined it before; the remarking that an “inversion” (counter-positioning), where “drawing its fundamental categories from the myths that it claimed to oppose” (significant underlying values are conserved), “reproducing their dichotomies” (re-instantiating the original issue in terms of the new ideology), while forgetting fratricides (ignoring or eliding their part, their responsibility).

It is in Part III of this essay, when we consider the immanent counterhuman that Mbembe establishes as a set of geopolitical relationships, we will begin to chart those relations’ compatibility with some of the most significant elements of our current political arrangements –

addressing how a human world relates to states, nationalisms, capitalism, spaces and borders, civilisation and progress, and all forms of human political organisation as well as the (human) forms of political praxis that it brings about. What follows here in the second half of Part II, is first Mbembe's solutions, his answer to the question of the human, which will be the metaphysical basis for that whole world, a free world.

2.4. Mbembe's positive critique

"We have just shown that, behind a particular rhetoric of cultural difference, a certain kind of political work was in fact being done, one that made choices within a form of memory that sought to order itself around the double desire for sovereignty and autonomy. Paradoxically, such work only reinforced the sense of resentment and the neurosis of victimization among Blacks. How might one take up the interrogation of Black difference in a new way, as a gesture not of resentment and nostalgia but of self-determination? Was it possible to take up this new line of questioning without critiquing memory and tradition, and with conscious effort to determine what, within difference itself, offered possibilities for creation and re-creation?" (p. 92)

With his engagement of Fabien Eboussi Boulaga's work and his thoughts on vigilant memory, Mbembe begins to turn to positive critique and positive difference. Approaching tradition and memory with vigilance becomes a means to escape the repetition of racial alienation. Mbembe notes that Boulaga does not reject difference in itself, because the moment of recognizing difference from others is also a moment of autonomy in relation to them and not in principle a negative moment, and "allows the Black Man to rediscover himself as an autonomous source of creation, to attest that he is human, to rediscover direction and a foundation for what he is and what he does" (p. 94). Positive difference is future-oriented and allows for "the recognition of what each person, as a human, contributes to the work of the constitution of the world" (p. 94).

It is in closing the book, blending together the work of Césaire, Glissant, and Fanon to create a positive kind of difference – what Deleuze calls 'difference in itself' – that also affirms a shared humanity and avoids the pitfalls of transcendence, that Mbembe creates an immanent counterhumanist world.

2.4.1. An immanent counterhuman

So far in this essay I have introduced the problem of the human and two general approaches to the problem which I have called counterhumanism and nonhumanism. I've located nonhumanism as part of a particular nonnormative project that critiques transcendence in favour of immanence. I have explored Mbembe's engagement with the problem of the human in combining both approaches, and have outlined Mbembe's framing of race and the human in spatial terms on a global political scale; in terms of enclosures, being-apart, and a World-outside. I have also run through one of Mbembe's core critiques of Black thought, that of resentment, and tied it to the nonnormative project.

I am interested now to turn to solutions. Each of Mbembe's approaches that I will engage here can be understood in terms of common Deleuzian, and Deleuzoguattarian, theoretical applications, and yet he weaves into each distinctly counterhumanist thought, in a process that

highlights and draws out the contingent, intensive and future-oriented elements of it. Though they all make up overlapping elements and perspectives of the same creative and nonnormative process, I will try to separate out some of them into identifiable processes for ease of expression, though there will be some overlaps included in order to maintain some linear progression of thought within each section.

- The understanding of the revolutionary Black Man as a line of flight, (Jackson, 1970; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Koerner, 2011) – in particular he speaks of Mandela, a point I will critique in Part III – and Blackness/Humanness not as a noun but as a concept, in a poststructuralist reading of Césaire that differs from Wynter’s humanness as verb. Blackness becomes that mask that one calculatedly wears in order to escape the face.

- Situated thinking; a wholly contingent and fluid approach to knowledge. This goes hand in hand with a rejection of abstract visions of universals.

- Orienting oneself in the present time by employing other temporalities, in particular through Black Art and religion, corresponding to modes of becoming in Deleuzian thought, and to the Deleuzian concept of the probe-head (O’Sullivan, 2006).

- Nonhuman becomings, and how within the nonnormative human there are animal and other elements that give it life and content and intensity (Roffe and Stark, 2015).

- Finally, the most substantive reframing of the problem of race, responsibility, justice and the human in terms of the dis-enclosure of the world for the creation of an Open World, a world uncontained and borderless, undivided along racial lines and allowing for the participation of all, through a transverse ethics (Bogue, 2007).

With these major techniques we will find that counterhumanist and nonhumanist approaches are able to work together in a productive way, and we will have made the room necessary to think about what the Open World, the human, looks like in Part III. Now I will consider each of these points in turn.

2.4.2. Lines of flight

In the choice to make Nelson Mandela an exemplar of effective resistance and paradigmatic revolutionary subject, Mbembe characterises him in terms of a line of flight. Within Deleuze and Guattari’s work, lines of flight are movements of escape into the exterior of the hegemonic power structures. They come from that structure and as such have no frame from which to apprehend what is beyond it - they are a shot in the dark (Deleuze & Parnet, 1977, p112). They are experiments, which may ultimately be absorbed by the black holes of the face (i.e. co-opted and reintegrated into the form they once were escaping), or maintain their intensity and become part of some more fluid arrangement antagonistic to the face, in so doing becoming a nomadic war machine. (The nomadic war machine a Deleuzoguattarian concept that will get more attention in the third part of this essay, but for now we can just say that the term denotes a relatively less-transcendently-structured arrangement, whether conceptual or sociopolitical, exterior to State-forms, that tends to deterritorialise spaces, which may continue to do so through maintaining a plateau of intensity, or else be co-opted by a State-form, or else be destroyed). The notion of lines of flight is drawn from murdered Black Panther Party member, George Jackson, who is often deployed by Deleuze & Guattari (1983, p. 277, 1987, p. 203) for saying, “I may run, but all the while

that I am, I'll be looking for a stick" (Jackson, 1970, p. 328)⁶ – expressing how “a line of flight composes itself as a search for a weapon” (Koerner, 2011, p. 161) – for Deleuze and Guattari, it is “on lines of flight that new weapons are invented, to be turned against the heavy arms of the State” (1987, p. 204).⁷

Mbembe's characterisation of this is more detailed. For Mbembe, Mandela came to “name” the resistance movement because “at each crossroads in his life he succeeded – sometimes under pressure from circumstances, but often voluntarily – in following unexpected paths” (2017, p. 170), that he was a man “constantly on the lookout” who “lived intensely – as if everything were to begin again, and as if every moment was his last” (p. 170-171). At the same time, Mandela is centrally characterised as an individual who, even when incarcerated and stripped of almost everything, “refused to relinquish the humanity that remained.” Working for life from the depths of bare incarcerated existence, his direction was rooted in “seeking an idea that in the end was quite simple: how to live free from race and the domination that results from it,” becoming “a revenant from the land of shadows, a gushing force on the eve of an aging century that had forgotten how to dream” (p. 172). Here we find an expanded sense of what it is to live as a line of flight against race. For the most destitute,

effective action consists in creating montages and combinations, of advancing masked, always ready to begin again, to improvise, to install oneself in the provisional before seeking to cross boundaries, to do what one does not say and say what one does not do; to say several things at once and marry the opposite; and, above all, to proceed by metamorphosis. Metamorphosis is possible only because the human person can only ever refer back to himself by relating to another power, another self – the capacity to escape oneself, to double, to become a stranger to oneself. Power is being simultaneously present in different worlds, under different modalities. (p. 133)

For Mbembe, the human is by definition plastic. The capacity to transform, to become-another, is the characteristic of the human par excellence. Understanding the human as such, as essentially fluid, contingent, multiple, metamorphic, can easily be rendered in nonnormative terms. To be able to use one's Blackness as a mask (to “embrace and retain the signifier “Black” not with the goal of finding solace within it but rather as a way of clouding the term in order to gain distance from it”), a mask that sets one into becoming, and to be able to use one's destitution as a provisional ground from which to wait vigilantly, to seek weapons, to strike, on the “threshold of revolt” (p. 19) – these are the actions of one committed to escaping the world of transcendent norms, and of faciality in particular.

⁶ This quote is from the original George Jackson text – the translation of Deleuze and Guattari's translation in *Anti-Oedipus* is “I may take flight, but all the while I am fleeing, I will be looking for a weapon,” and in *A Thousand Plateaus* is “I may be running, but I'm looking for a gun as I go” (1983, p. 277, 1987, p. 203).

⁷ Deleuze, in conversation with Claire Parnet, rephrases this as follows: “A society, but also a collective assemblage, is defined first by its points of deterritorialization, its fluxes of deterritorialization. The great geographical adventures of history are lines of flight, that is, long expeditions on foot, on horseback or by boat: that of the Hebrews in the desert, that of Genseric the Vandal crossing the Mediterranean, that of nomads across the steppe, the long march of the Chinese – it is always on a line of flight that we create, not, indeed because we are dreaming but, on the contrary, because we trace out the real on it, we compose there a plane of consistence. To flee, but in fleeing to seek a weapon” (Deleuze & Parnet 2002: 135-136).

It is not entirely clear to me why Mbembe understands Mandela in this way, or if he is referring to the Mandela of the particular period of his activity in Umkhonto we Sizwe, given the revelations and critiques around Mandela's capitulations to colonial and capitalist powers during the regime change, and the roaring of today's youth that, just as we see in Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection* (1997), changes in overtly racist laws towards a simpler liberal capitalism always came with more insidious forms of racism while ostensibly resolving elements of racism in such a way that co-opted more people into the colonial system. Rather than Mandela, we might look to the character of the General House Worker found in Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019), who is similarly positioned as Mbembe places Mandela and as Deleuze positions Black Panther George Jackson (Koerner, 2011), as a line of flight, but an everyday person living resistance rather than an idol, "She is always on the lookout for an escape route" (2019). In the final Part of this essay on the Open World, I take up this critique, arguing that Hartman's General House Worker is a better 'line of flight' for prefiguring the Open World than Mandela.

2.4.3. Situated thinking and a rejection of abstract universals

But what is a probe-head? To a certain extent this is an open question. It will depend on the specifics of time and place, on the particular materials at hand – and on the concrete practices of individuals. (O'Sullivan, 2006, pp. 312–313)

But for which rights should Blacks continue to struggle? Everything depends on the locations in which they find themselves, the historical contexts in which they live, and the objective conditions they face. Everything depends as well on the nature of the racial formations in the midst of which they are called to live. (Mbembe, 2017, p. 176)

Situated thinking is an extension of nonnormative philosophy's scepticism of externally-imposed solutions to problems, and as such refers to thinking that is born out of the context – where the context is the specific contingent socio-historical location co-produced with the specific subjectivity that experiences it. In this Mbembe finds Fanon paradigmatic, and the following quote is perhaps reflective of his own idea of an ideal thinker and revolutionary:

[Fanon's] was a *situated thinking*, born of a lived experience that was always in progress, unstable, and changing. An experience at the limits, full of risk, where the thinking subject reflected in full awareness on his history, his very existence, and his own name, and in the name of the people to come, those yet to be born. As a result, in Fanon's logic, to think was to walk with others toward a world created together unendingly, irreversibly, within and through struggle. (p161)

This is his model of critical thought, always a "metamorphic thought," and as such an ever-present and ever-relevant guide through the ruins of the present (p. 161, 162). It is rooted in immediate experience, which in turn is understood properly in as full a historical and existential context as one can muster, and always avoiding the solidification of transcendent structures of meaning, through a permanent vigilance and sensitivity to change. To be aware of one's own name is to understand oneself as having a part in the whole of being and of humanity. For Mbembe, to name is to delegate a share, and in this case the share is of humanity, sharing in which

is like a debt, a debt that calls for the unmaking of race. This would be done by calling forth a “people-to-come,” a Deleuzian term for those who prefigure in the present a world uncontained by transcendence. This term will get further attention in the final Part of this essay.

2.4.4. Future-orientation; Black art and religion; probe-heads

For communities whose history has long been one of debasement and humiliation, religious and artistic creation has often represented the final defense against the forces of dehumanization and death. (Mbembe 2017, p173)

In the short final section of the last chapter of *Critique of Black Reason*, entitled “Democracy and The Poetics of Race,” Mbembe introduces two tools that can be utilised in the struggle against enclosure; Black art and Black religion. He uses both Black art and Black engagement with Christianity to show how their critical engagement with the past and present has and can open up desirable futures, as part of a radical critique of race with utopian aspirations.

2.4.4.1. Probe-heads

Central to the task of art and religion in the context of unmaking race for Mbembe is how they do and have “constantly reinvented myths and redirected tradition in order to undermine them through the very act that pretended to anchor and ratify them” (2017, p. 174). The productive utilisation of other temporalities in order to call a particular people into being is not unique to Deleuze, but the specific way that Deleuze and Guattari relate this to humanness and subject-making and time is clear in Mbembe’s approach.

The ‘probe-head’ is one of the concepts Deleuze and Guattari employ as a curative to faciality. Where faciality is the conjunction of subject-making and meaning-making forces as constitutive and reinforcing of the current human, Deleuze also outlines a ‘primitive’ head, which is that presignifying and presubjective past state before the development of a face; that is, an anchored, rigid identity reinforced by the material relations of the world. Probe-heads are distinct from the face or the primitive head, they are a presubjective and presignifying disruption of the face in such a way that may bring about new more fluid organization of it, or even its dissolution. Probe-heads in particular are characterised as having an orientation in relation to the present, treating elements of the past and/or the future as resources for transforming the present. I will speak more on this in Part III.

2.4.4.2. Mbembe’s characterisation of Black Art

Artists can only invoke a people, their need for one goes to the very heart of what they’re doing, it’s not their job to create one, and they can’t: Art is resistance: it resists death, slavery, infamy, shame. (Deleuze 1995, p. 174, in O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 318)

Mbembe’s understanding of Black art is as a future-oriented affect creation that calls for (Mbembe would say ‘conjures’) new forms of subjectivity from the realm of what is possible - here the

function of a work of art is not to represent reality, but to “simultaneously confuse and mimic original forms and appearances,” redoubling “the original object, deforming it, distancing itself from it, and most of all conjuring with it” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 173). This view of Black art reflects the setting together of a certain African history with the programme of art as probe-head - that it “operates at the cusp between the present and the future, as a present object whose content calls for a subjectivity to come. This stuttering and stammering of existing materials and languages, this deterritorialisation of existing regimes of signs, constitutes the ethicoaesthetic function of art” (O’Sullivan, 2006, p. 320). On this view, art’s function is to rupture dominant regimes and habitual formations, constantly reinventing myths and redirecting traditions through the acts that pretend to confirm them, and in that process actualise other temporalities and other possibilities for life (2006, p. 319; Mbembe, 2017, p. 174). This rupture is a kind of violence, “a miming of sacrilege or transgression, through which art aims to free the individual and their community from the world as it has been and as it is” (Mbembe, 2017, pp. 173–174).

Central to this is the answer of how to deal with the category of Blackness – what is for artists to do is to “embrace and retain the signifier “Black” not with the goal of finding solace within it but rather as a way of clouding the term in order to gain distance from it” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 176). This is to be done with the goal of humanizing all, always avoiding the reinscription of racial categories: “We must conjure with the term in order to reaffirm the innate dignity of every human being and of the very idea of a human community, a same humanity, an essential human resemblance and proximity” (2017, p. 173). Important to note here then is that conjuring is not done indiscriminately, but vigilantly, taking the time to ascertain what kind of future, what kind of people, is called forth, because we may well reinforce the face if we do not. Moreover, within this framework we can understand it the task of all to become an ‘artist’. In the translators’ introduction to Guattari’s *The Three Ecologies* (2000), Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton argue that Guattari urges us to “continually reinvent our lives like an artist,” singularizing it, working at it, because the

best artists don’t repeat themselves, they start over and over again from scratch, uncertain with each new attempt precisely where their next experiment will take them [...] Life is a work in progress, with no goal in sight, only the tireless endeavour to explore new possibilities, to respond to the chance event – the singular point - that takes us off in a new direction. (Guattari, 2000, pp. 12-13)

2.4.4.3 Mbembe’s characterisation of Black religion

In talking about religion, Mbembe does not mean that we should utilise the Church, which “installed itself from the beginning as a form of dogmatic control” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 174), nor does he utilise a particular image of the Christian god, whose function has often been to instil a sense of the powerlessness of humankind to connect with its desires. Instead, what “the enslaved and their descendants mean by Christianity is a space of truth that opens up within an odd scission in a terrain of a truth that itself is always opening itself up – it is a becoming, a futurity” (2017, pp. 174–175).

Earlier in the book as Mbembe is developing frames for us to understand how difference constituted itself in relation to universalizing projects like Islam, Christianity, and colonization generally, he starts from the fact of colonial encounter and the refusal on the part of the colonised

to “foreclose” on those encounters – a refusal that is the process of becoming an active power and participant in one’s own becoming, not merely a victim:

From this openness – which at the same time was a refusal to foreclose on new encounters – there emerged popular practices of observance of the faith and the law that gave ample space to the arts of healing and divination, for example, or to the interpretation of dreams – in sum, to the resources of mysticism and the great orphic knowledge of local traditions. (ibid., p. 97)

For example, when talking about Black religion, Mbembe points out how nativist assumptions that indigenous lifeways were largely effaced in colonisation have been undermined by recent anthropology, and instead he considers the “creative assimilation” (ibid., p. 97) by indigenous peoples to counter the encroachments of Islamic and Christian monotheism, where instead of erasure under these regimes, the monotheisms were appropriated for their own use. Christianity, for example, “appeared to Blacks as, first of all, an immense field of signs that, once decrypted, opened the way for an array of practices that moved constantly away from orthodoxy. Africans used Christianity as a mirror through which to represent their own society and history to themselves.” (ibid., p. 101)

Mbembe also considers the way that the core of certain religious traditions functioned to decentralise power, for “the state itself became just one possible variant of social organization, one that could not solely contain the imaginary of the community” (ibid., p. 98) – as an organization whose pretences to authority were undermined by religious authority.

Mbembe makes two examples of how Christianity has always made up part of the “praxis of liberation” for Black people (p. 174). The first comes from Edward Blyden, who “saw in the suffering of the Son of God an anticipation of the sufferings later experienced by the Black race” (p. 175). God’s choice to send a son in the form of a Black body that would suffer terribly was a gamble whose meaning is “open and still to come,” and the event of the crucifixion “reveals a conception of God and his relationship to suffering humanity that defines the latter as a relationship of justice, freedom, and unconditional recognition” (2017, p. 175). The second example comes from Martin Luther King, who saw in Christ’s resurrection the capacity to convert the negative into being, and who drew the lesson that one could die for another because death was overcome, and that there was nothing but the infinite becoming of life (2017, p. 175). Each of these examples is a creative utilisation of Christian myths towards an unconditionally inclusive human, one not predefined in terms of any concrete image but just in terms of the infinite unfolding of possibilities for life.

2.5. To make the world *a world*: Nonhuman becomings, and cosmology

In the epilogue of the book, “There Is Only One World,” Mbembe touches on a direction necessary for a world shared by all; one in which we are set into nonhuman becomings. Within this framework, the current world order has created a false binary in the human/nonhuman which upholds a political hierarchy rooted in anthropocentrism. Currently the difference between the world of humans and the world of nonhumans, here referring (not to those people excluded from

the dominant image of the human but) to “animals and vegetables, objects, molecules, divinities, techniques and raw materials, the earth trembling, volcanoes erupting, winds and storms, rising waters, the sun that explodes and burns, and all the rest of it,” is an “external” one, meaning that for the most part we understand (what is nebulously termed) “nature” and “the environment” to be outside of humanness. For Mbembe, in “opposing itself to the world of nonhumans, humanity opposes itself” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 180). As is an key part of the nonhuman turn and a Deleuzian nonnormative ethic, Mbembe is signalling the necessity of engaging with entities that have “traditionally been devalued in our systems of meaning and cultural practices: animals, objects, plants, nonhuman nature, etc.” (Roffe and Stark, 2015, p. 3), in order to upset the hierarchies that exist in symbolic and material forms between them, and build a world in which those norm-governed hierarchies no longer exist. In our successful attempts to become-together-with some elements of nature, we create “new forms of life, labor, and language” which contribute to the universal project of a world-in-common (Mbembe, 2017, p. 181).

The classic example of this in Deleuze and Guattari is the wasp and the orchid. There are orchids formed to look and have other sensory characteristics of a female wasp, drawing in males who inadvertently pollinate the orchids in their attempts to copulate with the flower. These orchids are dependent on the wasps for their reproduction, and so it is not that the orchids are merely mimicking the female wasp, but that the male wasps are an indispensable part of the orchid’s reproductive system. The male wasp, in its attempt to copulate, is undertaking a becoming-orchid, and similarly, the orchid is undertaking a becoming-wasp in inhabiting a zone of indiscernibility in which it functions as wasp. What we have, then, is a new productive connection, made through a rupture of the ‘natural’ species-specific filiation (Roffe and Stark, 2015, p. 1). As a praxis, we are then to become indiscernible, at the intersections between our humanness and the nonhuman world, embracing our ability to transform, to create, to advance masked – i.e. with form, in order to undermine that form, as one might do in claiming Blackness as one’s own:

Power cannot be enclosed within the limits of a single, stable form because, in its very nature, it participates in the surplus. All power, on principle, is power thanks only to its capacity for metamorphosis: today a lion, tomorrow a buffalo or warthog, and the day after tomorrow an elephant, panther, leopard, or turtle. That said, the true masters of power, those who hold the truth, are those who can travel the path of shadows that calls to them, a path that one must embrace and go down precisely with the goal of becoming another, of multiplying, of being in constant movement. (Mbembe, 2017, pp. 131–132)

To make another example employing humans, we may understand the bacteria in our gut to be wholly discrete entities from us, but they as a whole are indispensable to our lives and we to them, and exist together in a productive connection which exists at the zone of indiscernibility between two apparently discrete things. It is in these connections that new possibilities for life exist.

It is this kind of relationship, what he often calls “sharing,” that Mbembe wants us to proliferate with everything, the becoming-together-of-all-with-all that makes *the world a world*. This is aptly put in Ronald Bogue’s work on Deleuzian fabulation, which will get more attention in Part III: “On the far side, we find ‘becomings-elementary, -cellular, -molecular, and even becoming-imperceptible’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 248). Such a becoming emerges when all common-sense distinctions are effaced and one becomes nothing but differential speeds and intensive

affects. At this point, rather than becoming within the world, one becomes with the world. To engage in a becoming-imperceptible ‘is to world (*faire monde*), to make a world (*faire un monde*)’ (Bogue, 2010, p. 26). As part of this action, Mbembe draws from “ancient Africans” who saw “the seed that one placed in the soil” as the sign of “the epiphany that is humanity,” by which he means that in the complex interrelationship that was cultivated between human life and the nonhuman environment was the ground from which those people “invented speech and language, objects and techniques, ceremonies and rituals, works of art – indeed, social and political institutions” (2017, p. 180). Cosmologies and vernacular knowledge then were set to the task of fostering the “endless labor of reparation” in the form of the “transformation and regeneration” of nature that is required of those who are in harmony with nature, rather than outside of it (2017, pp. 180–181).

Mbembe takes an example from the major postcolonial Deleuzian scholar Édouard Glissant, echoing his image of Blackness in silt,

as the castoff of matter: a substance made up of seemingly dead elements, things apparently lost, debris stolen from the source, water laden. But he also saw silt as a residue deposited along the banks of rivers, in the midst of archipelagos, in the depths of oceans, along valleys and at the feet of cliffs – everywhere, and especially in those arid and deserted places where, through an unexpected reversal, fertilizer gave birth to new forms of life, labor, and language. (2017, p. 181)

Through this, Édouard Glissant sets our images of silt and Blackness into creative motion, towards a new form of arrangement, in which the social death of Black people could be returned to life⁸. It is in doing so, this task of sustaining the “reservoirs of life” through an all-encompassing building of productive relationships with everything outside of ourselves until they are all something we share in, that Mbembe sees the only hope for our world. The sustaining of these reservoirs, in the refusal to perish, is what opens up the potential for “the world to become a world” – and this world is the one that he would call just, or non-racist, or shared, or in-common (2017, p. 181). Humankind is that thing which it is in the moment that it as a multiplicity is completely open to affecting and being affected by that differs from it. Humanness, then, is not human, it is in the relationships of our life with everything; “it is in the relationship with the totality of the living world that the truth of who we are is made visible” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 180).

Deleuze and Guattari also use the language of “making a world” in this context – the setting all of being into becoming with the cosmos, with all of itself. Notably in the Plateau 10. “1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible...” we see the same core theoretical applications as we find in Mbembe throughout, for example:

It is in this sense that becoming-everybody/everything, making the world a becoming, is to world, to make a world or worlds, in other words, to find one’s proximities and zones of indiscernibility. The Cosmos as an abstract machine, and each world as an assemblage effectuating it. If one reduces oneself to one or several abstract lines that will prolong itself in and conjugate with others, producing immediately, directly a world in which it is the world that becomes, then one becomes-everybody/everything. (1987, p. 280)

⁸ One recent sustained approach to this can be found in the interdisciplinary geological text rooted in a Deleuzian approach to human geography as well as Black Feminist theory, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, by Kathryn Yusoff (2018)

What should be clear, and what I have tried to highlight throughout this essay, is that the human that Mbembe is setting up is a global set of relations extending even to the cosmological. As we come to grips with its political conditions in this Part, culminating in the following section, we open the way to answer the question of what the human is, which is the same question as what making a world is, in Part III.

2.6. The Open World, transverse ethics, and blackness as a call

This final section of this part is pivotal to the essay as a whole. It consolidates what we have covered so far and presents the possibility of a nonnormative counterhuman, which resolves the conflict I have been outlining.

Mbembe has been engaging with what some would call the problem of ‘identity politics’ – seeking out an answer to the question of how we might employ categories that we wish to destroy in order to move beyond them. The category he has chosen and placed in its contingent historical context is *Blackness*, as part of a process that would contribute to unmaking race more broadly, and the identity-based oppression that makes up the stratification of our global societies more broadly still. Throughout the text Mbembe has focused primarily on “Black Consciousness of Blackness,” critiquing how resistance to racialization and dehumanization from Black people has often reinscribed and reinforced Blackness and dehumanisation at other levels, towards finding effective ways of resistance that avoid those pitfalls.

Mbembe has conceptualised race as enclosure and racism as enclosing; the geographical and ontological closing off and separate development of groups of people that in these processes are racialised. This is a multidimensional enclosing, not limited to legislative and spatial segregation, the deep enumeration of ‘differences’ between the categories of white and Black, the large range of semi-conscious techniques and habits white people learn to maintain a frightened and entitled ignorance of those outside of whiteness, and the ways Mbembe considers Black people to have reactively conserved racialisation.

2.6.1. A pragmatic concept

Mbembe’s concept of the human is a pragmatic one, that is, it is deliberately conceived in order to fulfil the function of achieving a meta-value, and not drawn from a process of trying to identify some characteristic(s) that makes up a ‘common sense’ human. So instead of what we might see in much philosophy of sameness, for example looking at many homes and trying to identify their common features on order to claim that those features are what makes up a home (e.g. walls, a bed and bathroom, family, a sense of belonging), we would ask ourselves what would the content of ‘home’ be for when that home was employed to produce the sort of world we want. We might then find something unexpected, that it may be more useful to understand home as the thing that sets us on a journey and drives us to expand our sense of possibility and go beyond our horizons, that is, returning to the case of the human, as a probe-head.

2.6.2. What is the content of Mbembe's 'human', and the meta-value directing it?

I have identified four major elements of Mbembe's human, the first three of which were introduced in a previous section, '2.5. To make the world *a world*: Nonhuman becomings, and cosmology'. How might we understand these to be nonnormative? Each of these elements hold content, but only content that sets the current human in motion: it gives the minimal grounds for the human to be otherwise, to be uncontained by forms (identity of the concept, analogy of judgement, opposition of predicates, and resemblance of the perceived).

- For Mbembe, one's humanity can never be completely taken away or lost: Though one's humanity may be mutilated, it is "never fully annihilated" (Mbembe, 2017, p36), and even where no creative capacity is present, there still remains a humanity in waiting, biding time in which to create again (the becoming-artist of humanity). Even where it is nowhere to be seen, and one is unable to create, there remains a 'supplemental humanity', a humanity in waiting.⁹ (Mbembe, 2017, p. 48)

- This sets the basis for Mbembe's other elements of the human, and is framed in terms of "work for life"¹⁰, a twofold approach to avoiding "degenerating into absolute thingness" – to avoiding the complete loss of humanity. Mbembe notes that there is "only one mode of existence that makes this possible: an ambiguous mode of existence." Work for life is characterised by the ability to metamorphose, and the ability to distance oneself from parts of oneself temporarily and allow for the possibility of a wandering subject, one which, in moving, can find itself in places not prescribed or expected.

- The ability to metamorphose – the human as definitionally plastic. Against common Western metaphysics, which "has traditionally defined the human in terms of the possession of language and reason." (p. 85), for Mbembe the "human subject par excellence is the one who is capable of becoming another." This characterization fluidises humanness, resisting attempts to lock its image down to a static form, and framing humanness in terms of potentials, intensities. "The ultimate act of metamorphosis consists in constantly escaping oneself, getting ahead of oneself, in placing oneself ahead of others in an agonizing, centripetal movement that is all the more terrifying because the possibility of return is never guaranteed" (pp. 144–145) Wherever we are particular it must only be provisionally so, with our identity tied to as little as possible so that we may at any time be set in new directions.

- One's humanity is increased with increases in power: one's ability to create, i.e. to affect and be affected (to "give and receive forms"), and to go beyond normatively prescribed limits (to "escape existing forms") – humanity includes a surplus (Mbembe, 2017, p. 132). The body must

⁹ This echoes what Deleuze and Guattari say in *A Thousand Plateaus*, speaking generally to the point of transforming organic bodies: "You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of signifiante and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality. Mimic the strata. You don't reach the [body without organs], and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying." (1987, p. 170) – that is, it is a pragmatic move that accepts some element of an organism in order to transform it into something that goes beyond that organism.

¹⁰ "Work for life" here seems to be Mbembe's term for what in Deleuze's terms would be called the *nomadic war machine* of the racialized subject (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 351). More on those in the section on that topic in Part III.

move, it must be a wandering subject¹¹, open to the unforeseen ways it may be affected and the nonprescribed destinations it may arrive at.

- Humanity, also, is *shared*, it “belongs to each of us,” and “each person is a repository of a portion of intrinsic humanity” (2017, p. 182). It is then something to be cared for by all since we all share in it: there is a “constitutional debt at the heart of all human community,” which gives life to an ethic of restitution and reparation. (2017, p. 174)

- Humanity has a universal destination; the universal community of an Open World.¹²

2.7. The Open: Transversality against enclosures

But as long as the retreat from humanity is incomplete, there is still a possibility of restitution, reparation, and justice. These are the conditions for the collective resurgence of humanity. Thinking through what must come will of necessity be a thinking through of life, of the reserves of life, of what must escape sacrifice. It will of necessity be a *thinking in circulation, a thinking of crossings, a world-thinking*. (Mbembe, 2017, p. 179, emphasis added)

Mbembe poses the problem of race as enclosure in contrast to the idea of the Open. He is in favour of what he calls “universal community,” as the non-racist future, the question of which is “by definition posed in terms of how we inhabit the Open, how we care for the Open – which is completely different from an approach that would aim first to enclose, to stay within the enclosure of what we call our own kin.”

How does one dis-enclose the world? Mbembe calls for a “a thinking in circulation, a thinking of crossings, a world-thinking”: Transversals¹³. Transversals provide communication between that which is closed in upon itself, between that which is “seemingly without communication with anything outside themselves” (Bogue, 2007, p. 1). At the same time, transversals work towards the formation of a group subject (rather than a subjugated group), one capable of shaping itself according to its own needs and desires, whose “libidinal investments are themselves revolutionary” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 348); creating a people-to-come. Transversals assemble multiplicities, “yet in such a way that the differences among entities are not effaced but intensified” (Bogue, 2007, p. 2). As a mode of thinking, the transverse way is “the activity of forming transverse connections that intensify differences and bring forth new possibilities for life,” (Bogue, 2007, p. 3). And so one possible act available to the nonnormative philosopher is to construct transversals.

Examples of a transversal approach at a social or institutional level can be found in the compilation of Guattari’s essays, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* (1972), in his critique of the struc-

¹¹ “Wandering” here echoes Glissant’s “errant” (Glissant, 1990) and Hartman’s “wayward” (Hartman, 2019), as well as Fernand Deligny’s “wander lines” which contributed to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “lines of flight”. For more, see Deligny, F. (2015), *The Arachnean and Other Texts*.

¹² Mbembe does mention at one stage what appears to be a normative characteristic of humanity; speech, when describing one of the most destitute forms of human being, the rag-human; “Speech remains, the last breath of a pillaged humanity” (p. 135). There is also the ambiguous statement: “What we all therefore have in common is the feeling or desire that each of us must be a full human being. The desire for the fullness of humanity is something we all share.” (p. 182), which can, as we will see, be reframed in nonnormative terms.

¹³ Deleuze was introduced to transversality by Guattari and sees it also in Proust’s method in *In Search Of Lost Time*.

ture of psychiatric institutions. Critiquing the vertical modes of authority in the pyramidal staff structure of the institution as well as the horizontal modes of interaction in the wards and courtyard, he speaks of a ‘coefficient of transversality’ – measured by the degree of ‘blindness’ of the staff. This blindness reflects the “sterilising modes of transmitting messages” maintained by those structures, and can be understood entirely in terms of enclosure.

The task then becomes to reduce this blindness by creating “maximum communication among different levels and, above all, in different [directions],” by intensifying transversals to the point that there is “a structural redefinition of each person’s role, and a reorientation of the whole institution” (Guattari, 1972, p. 113). Doing so we can create a new group subject with increased capacity to shape itself according to its own desires and needs.

We can see different ‘coefficients of transversality’, for example, in comparing the capitalist nation-states of twenty-first century and Mbembe’s characterisation of precolonial territoriality. Precolonial territory operates through “thrusts, detachments, and splits,” as “an *itinerant territoriality*” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 99, emphasis in the original), where there are no fixed borders but rather the outlines of imbricated countries and spaces, often extensible or incomplete, overlapping and subject to change. This logic of networks operates according to a principle of entanglement in border(land)s, leading Mbembe to conclude that it is “likely that, in the past, the processes of identity formation were shaped by the same logic that governed the institution of borders and the social struggles linked to their constitution” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 100). In this context, each border’s tangle comes with the capacity to create transversal alliances, “to extend and invest nodal points within a space that is constantly in motion.” In the relatively imbricated, entangled and fluid characterisation of the precolonial territory/borders, identity “is not necessarily what fixes a location. It is what makes it possible to negotiate the crossing of spaces that are themselves in circulation because they are of variable geometry” (ibid., p. 100). These borderlands, then, are less the boundary of an enclosure that we might find in the contemporary nation-state, which involves a “division and shrinking of the historical and cultural imagination and, in certain cases, a relative closing of the mind” (ibid., p. 17) than it is an intensive, connective capacity to be affected and an opening up of generative possibilities.¹⁴

An example of transversals in art from Deleuze comes in his book on Proust, *Proust and Signs* (1972), in the connections between the distant and separate walking routes in the countryside, Germantes way and Méséglise way, which the narrator describes as sealed vessels, together with all of the many instances of involuntary memory in the book. Each of which, seemingly immured (enclosed) upon themselves, are shot through with transversals in the work,

that cause us to leap from one of Albertine’s profiles to the other, from one Albertine to another, from one world to another, from one word to another, without ever

¹⁴ (Bogue, 2007, p. 134): “Deleuze and Guattari are frequently associated with advocates of hybridity and border crossing in cultural studies – and with good reason, for the motif of “becoming-other” is central to their thought. Yet by no means do they celebrate all processes of hybridization and blurring of identities as inherently positive. They recognize that the dissolution of social and cultural traditions may well usher in nefarious regimes of power, and they would concur with those who criticize the prophets of unrestrained hybridity for incautiously opening themselves to manipulation by the forces of globalization (in our restricted use of the term). Yet Deleuze and Guattari would have little sympathy for cultural studies that advocate an identity politics whereby local distinctions are reinforced through a return to traditional institutions and practices. What their work suggests, I believe, is that cultural studies should avoid the twin pitfalls of unqualified hybridization and reactionary identity politics and instead cultivate the local absolute as a means of engendering a genuine globalism.”

reducing the many to the One, without ever gathering up the multiple into a whole, but affirming the original unity of precisely that multiplicity, affirming without uniting all these irreducible fragments. Jealousy is the transversal of love's multiplicity; travel, the transversal of the multiplicity of places; sleep, the transversal of the multiplicity of moments. The sealed vessels are sometimes organized in separate parts, sometimes in opposing directions, sometimes (as in certain journeys or as in sleep) in a circle. But it is striking that even the circle does not surround, does not totalize, but makes detours and loops, so that it shifts what was on the left to the right, bypasses what was previously in the center. And the unity of all the views of a train journey is not established on the basis of the circle itself (whose parts remain sealed), nor on the basis of the thing contemplated, but on a transversal that we never cease to follow, moving 'from one window to the next.' For travel does not connect places, but affirms only their difference. (Deleuze, 1972, p. 82)

Transversals connect those entities which are closed in on themselves, structures which by their very operation typically prevent communication, prevent their collective creative setting-into-motion. The nonnormative philosopher builds them, selecting connection points determined by the expected *and* unexpected productiveness of their encounters. Each encounter has as its goal not a reassertion of the dominance of one of the two enclosures, or the inclusion of one into another, but the mutual transformation of the enclosures and the invention of new ways of being that belong wholly to no given enclosure, in order also to "foster the interactive creation of an open Whole whose unfolding horizons extend beyond those of any one of the sites" (Bogue, 2007, p. 136). This is the same Open World we find in Mbembe's work.

2.8. The Open and/as the human.

Humanity was stolen from the commons in the creation of enclosure. At the level of the human, the creation of racial enclosures, that is, the exclusions of some others from one's enclosure, is the process of dehumanisation. Mbembe characterises Blackness as a world-outside that then became its own enclosure through contentifying itself, resentment, and a "desire for vengeance that all racism calls into being" (Mbembe, 2017, p. 183). And so the deterritorialization¹⁵ of racial enclosures through a process of connecting them where they do not tend to connect, especially where those connections produce a mutual disturbance in which possible worlds yet unspecified interact to generate a different world (Bogue, 2007, p. 13).

Here, one is not stealing-back but unstealing¹⁶, dis-enclosing rather than including a new enclosure. Here we reframe the human not in terms of internal content, but in terms of a kind of spatial relation to all others and all else – that relation being in an Open World.¹⁷

¹⁵ i.e. The loosening/unmaking of relatively fixed social codes/functions that inhere over a space.

¹⁶ Unstealing in the form of 'stealing away' is a time old form of resistance to racial violence. See Hartman (1997, p. 65) who draws from Proudhon (1994), and its use in Deleuze (1986, p. xvii).

¹⁷ (Bogue, 2007, p. 133): "Smooth space, by contrast [to sedentary striated space], is an open Whole, an expanse with no limits, a ceaseless process of acentered proliferation in all directions. It is, say Deleuze and Guattari, "a *local absolute*, an absolute that has its manifestation in the local, and its engendering in a series of local operations with varying orientations" (MP 474/382). The open Whole appears only as an uncompleted ongoing process, and always from the vantage of the local. The open Whole is a rhizomatic multiplicity without fixed center that cannot be appre-

On this understanding, we are human insofar as we are not limited by enclosures. Full humanity (at least with regards to racial divides) is the state of relations one would have in the Open. Mbembe writes:

To build a world that we share, we must restore the humanity stolen from those who have historically been subjected to processes of abstraction and objectification. From this perspective, the concept of reparation is not only an economic project but also a process of reassembling amputated parts, repairing broken links, relaunching the forms of reciprocity without which there can be no progress for humanity. (Mbembe, 2017, p. 182)

Reparations, then, are the processes of dis-enclosing the world – an endless labour which may arrive at an Open World that needs continual care and maintenance. Contribution to the production of that world is what we would call participation in the universal.

2.9. Mbembe's *Blackness*: a call to the Open, for a world-to-come

Mbembe insists on a particular Césairean understanding of Blackness here no longer as a distinct race but as a call to the Open, where, and here it is worthwhile to quote at length, the “term “Black” communicated something essential that had nothing to do with the idolatry of race. Because it carried the experience of so many trials [...] and because it constitutes the ultimate metaphor of being “put to the side,” the name best expresses, *a contrario*, the quest for what he calls a “greater fraternity” or “a humanism made to the measure of the world” (Mbembe, 2017, pp. 159–160). That said, this humanism made to fit the world can be articulated only in the language of what-is-to-come, of that which will always be ahead of us and will therefore always be deprived of a name and of memory, but not of reason. As such, it will always escape repetition because of its radical difference. The universalism of the name “Black” depends not on repetition but on the radical difference without which the dis-enclosure of the world is impossible.

In employing Blackness, then, for Mbembe, people must affirm the difference of Blackness within a non-totalising whole of the world, through transversal connection, as a call to the Open. This process is also the creation of a ‘people-to-come’ – the revolutionary group subject that comes into being when the coefficient of transversality is significant.¹⁸

It is the creation of a people-to-come and the deterritorialization of the world towards the establishment of an Open World that is the task of all of us who create; philosophers, artists, scientists, humans.

hended as an enclosed totality. One can encounter the open Whole only in the local, and at whatever local site one encounters it, that site functions as the provisional, shifting center of a proliferating process of formation of the open Whole.”

¹⁸ To the extent that any identity category is a molar aggregate that functions as an enclosure, that category may be repurposed as a call to the Open, and as such this approach may be seen as a general tool towards resolving identity politics.

2.10. Conclusion to Part II

The only acceptable finality of human activity is the production of a subjectivity that is auto-enriching its relation to the world in a continuous fashion. (Guattari, 1995, p. 21)

Whatever the location, epoch, or context in which they take place, the horizon of such struggles remains the same: how to belong fully in this world that is common to all of us, how to pass from the status of the excluded to the status of the right-holder, how to participate in the construction and the distribution of the world. (Mbembe, 2017, p. 176)

I have introduced Mbembe's immanent counterhuman: an open-ended set of political-geographical relations participated in by all – a destination that is that state in which the most can become otherwise, in which we are least governed by the structure of the face, in which the face has dissolved into something else, unhindered by transcendence, unenclosed. Instead of seeking to become and fulfil a particular form of the human, we are instead to proliferate forms of life through calculated and creative experimentation until the face encloses nothing and the world is Open. For a person to be human the world must be human, and one can get closer in prefiguring the Open – by being someone always on the lookout, open to giving and receive forms, in relation to a broader multiplicity that is similar but not reducible to any individual, a people-to-come, always taking responsibility for one's share in the common. Humanity in its fullness is the human in the spatial/geographical relation of Openness. Part III extends the nonnormative critique to some of our substantive political arrangements, in order to see what the Open world, the human, looks like.

Part III: The Human, A World

3. Introduction

For the race summoned forth by art or philosophy is not the one that claims to be pure but rather an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic and irremediably minor race. (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, p. 109).

The human in full is a world, unenclosed and immanent. In Part I, I introduced a tension between two kinds of approaches to the problem of the human, focusing on one area where it is especially pronounced – philosophy of race – as part of a broader project of seeking full liberation from the current dominant image of the human’s stratified nature. In Part II, I developed Mbembe’s immanent counterhuman, a form of counterhumanism that avoids the pitfalls of transcendence, which reframes humanness in terms of sets of geographical relationships that he calls the Open world. Mbembe has given us the grounds from which to build the human, and we have the tools, the nonnormative toolbox, to extend immanent critique through the political arrangements of our current world in order to gain a better grasp of what the human world would look like, and the modes of relating that would bring it about. If the human is an unenclosed world, then showing that a political arrangement is an enclosure (or the result of enclosure) is enough to reject it as a possibility for the human.

This final Part of the essay extrapolates the implications of this human world to outline the various forms of social and political organization compossible with it. The Open World appears to have a very clear relation to states, capitalism, political hierarchies, rights, borders, resistance organisations and other kinds of State-forms. Given the relation between the ontological and the ethico-political in this approach to metaphysics¹, the kind of political world hinted at by Mbembe should reflect the human he has formed. Which is to say, this Part is not merely about the political worlds compossible with the immanent counterhuman, it is that human. I continue to answer the question of what the human is, and how we may arrange ourselves politically to seek humanness in the present, less-than-human, enclosed world. What I will show, with the assistance of a range of anarchist and anarchistic theory, is that the Open World has deep resonances with the world sought by anarchists; it is an anarchic world.

The first six sections of this Part make up negative nonnormative critique build immediately on each other (against political hierarchies, states, civilisation, capitalism, borders and nationisms, and liberal rights discourses respectively), focusing on the nature and development of stratified societies, through Deleuze and Guattari’s Nietzschean method of typological genealogy – all the while relating it back to what we have to build from in Mbembe, and projecting it forward through the creation a heuristic for the world in common and a life lived that does the

¹ Outlined in Part I and expanded in Part II, where we addressed how certain modes of thinking metaphysically tend to conserve values (transcendent or State thought) while others open up possibility (immanent and transversal thought), in such a way that imbricates metaphysics and ethics.

work for life to share in the common. This has a double function – firstly of demonstrating how the logic of enclosure and its unmaking are applicable to these forms, and further as part of a general project of understanding contingent social formations through time so that we may have a calculated response to their most harmful element, namely transcendent forms. What follows those sections is a pivotal section on Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the *nomadic war machine*, which opens the door to the remaining sections of the essay, positive critique and positive conceptions of the Open World. I include in that a critique of Mbembe’s choice of Nelson Mandela as a paradigmatic political actor, extending nonnormative critique to that choice and proposing in his stead Saidiya Hartman’s General House Worker. Each section in this Part acts as a deepening and elaborating of our understanding of the core question of this essay, that of the human – what it is and how we may bring it about.

We start in the broadest terms, on hierarchical political divisions, the stratification of society, rooting our engagement in some of Mbembe’s claims.

3.1. The human against a hierarchical division of the world

Historically, race has always been a more or less coded way of dividing and organizing a multiplicity, of fixing and distributing it according to a hierarchy, of allocating it to more or less impermeable spaces according to a logic of enclosure. (Mbembe, 2017, p. 35, section called “The Logic of Enclosure”)

In our world of hierarchical division, the idea of a common human condition is the object of many pious declarations. But it is far from being put into practice. Old colonial divisions have been replaced with various forms of apartheid, marginalization, and structural destitution. Global processes of accumulation and expropriation in an increasingly brutal world economic system have created new forms of violence and inequality. Their spread has resulted in new forms of insecurity, undermining the capacity of many to remain masters of their own lives. (ibid., p. 161)

Procedures of differentiation, classification, and hierarchization aimed at exclusion, expulsion, and even eradication have been reinvigorated everywhere. New voices have emerged proclaiming, on the one hand, that there is no such thing as a universal human being or, on the other, that the universal is common to some human beings but not to all. (ibid., p. 24)

These three quotes are the most instructive of many more (Mbembe, 2017, pp. 7, 24, 30, 56, 66, 177, 182), all of which link enclosure with the hierarchical division of the human. It is clear: the first enclosure is the partitioning-off of an in-group that sets itself up at the top of a political hierarchy. In the case of race, it is in the formation of a white enclosure. But it is not just a world of race that is implicated in this critique, but all enclosure, because enclosure prevents the expression of a world in-common. The Open World, then, is a world without political hierarchies like race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability.

We can draw from anarchist thinker Mikhail Bakunin for some clarity on what constitutes a political hierarchy in these terms:

“Does it follow that I drive back every authority? The thought would never occur to me. When it is a question of boots, I refer the matter to the authority of the cobbler; when it is a question of houses, canals, or railroads, I consult that of the architect or engineer. For each special area of knowledge I speak to the appropriate expert. But I allow neither the cobbler nor the architect nor the scientist to impose upon me. I listen to them freely and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and verification.” (1870)

Here we find a clear distinction between authority in expertise as a relative capacity at some task, and the coercive imposition of that task’s enactment based on that expertise. This basic concept can be extended to include impositions based on no expertise but a pretence to legitimacy in the imposing. At the micro-level, it is the element of legitimised imposition which anti-authoritarians reject, and in the macro level (molar formations; social aggregates) this extends to a rejection of self-perpetuating and self-justifying systems of oppression of all kinds. *Enclosure* is one way of conceptualising such systems.

What follows is Deleuze and Guattari’s typological account of the emergence of states, showing the ways that the emergence of states is similar to the emergence of enclosure in its shared relation to transcendent forms, and as part of the nonnormative toolbox noting its contingency and capacity to be otherwise. I will show how Deleuze’s account of the emergence of states – or the State-form or State apparatus more pertinently – has substantial parallels with anarchist anti-civilisation theory, and outline some of the consequences of that for the Open World. This will be developed on when we extend the account to the emergence of capitalism and the ways that capitalist processes and colonial processes such as racecraft are intertwined. Deleuze and Guattari go into great detail over multiple books developing their account of the emergence of states and capitalism; what I will provide is just the basis to understand their work in relation to the broader aims of this Part of the essay, i.e. the ways that transcendence functions for these sets of relations and how they then are incompatible with humanness.

3.2. The human as stateless

Mbembe locates the deep, mutually dehumanising roots of colonialism in, among other things, European statism². Quoting Foucault, he notes that the modern state “can scarcely function without becoming involved with racism at some point, within certain limits and subject to certain conditions,” since race or racism (as dehumanization) is the precondition that makes killing acceptable, and so once the state functions to manage life, racism alone can justify its murderous functions, which doesn’t pertain only to the act of killing, but also to allowing to die (Foucault, 2003, pp. 254, 256; Mbembe, 2017, pp. 31–32). This section works to show that the colonial logic of enclosure as seen in the previous Part involves the same kind of process as what occurs at the emergence of states, through what Deleuze and Guattari call *overcoding*, the transcendent layer of meaning that structures flows of desire and acts as an appropriative force for the state. This section will serve to show how our nonnormative project here is inherently anti-state, mak-

² Those other dehumanising roots its “modes of production and accumulation” – an indirect way of saying capitalism and the feudalism prior to that, and its “religious and artistic production.” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 107)

ing important overt room for understanding the human world as anarchic, as part of radically resituating the human.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the State apparatus is a transcendently applied force that imposes a homogenizing and appropriating coding upon territorialised spaces (segments) to make them places, places which remain segmented but can be understood now also in relation to the totalizing, unifying, fixing, and centralizing logic of the State-form, a form which regulates the segments and the ways that segments may relate to and resonate³ with one another.

This logic of enclosure is explained by Deleuze and Guattari in terms of *segmentarity*, which can further be divided into two types, the rigid and the supple. Segmentarity refers to the ways in which life is organised into segments, which extends both to the spatial and the social (1987, pp. 208–209). According to them, and in line with Mbembe's thought, spaces and humans are segmented in multiple kinds of ways; 1) "in a binary fashion, following the great major dualist oppositions: social classes, but also men-women, adults-children, and so on"; 2) "in a circular fashion, in ever larger circles, ever wider disks or coronas," for example a city centre, its suburbs, its townships and informal settlements (not literally circular but understood as forming concentrically); and 3) "in a linear fashion, along a straight line or a number of straight lines, of which each segment represents an episode or 'proceeding': as soon as we finish one proceeding we begin another, forever proceduring or procedured, in the family, in school, in the army, on the job" (ibid.). We think segments in space and in all directions; hierarchies not merely arranged pyramidally, but for example, "the boss's office is as much at the end of the hall as on top of the tower," (ibid., p. 210) and there may be informal settlements in pockets of the city centre.

In the context of the emergence of states, Deleuze and Guattari draw from history and archaeology in order to create a typological account of the development of states and capitalism from societies without overt forms of either. Segmentarity constitutes the beginning of the earliest social formations, what Deleuze and Guattari call "so-called primitive" societies. I will follow that usage, not using "pre-state," to avoid the progressivist implication that the movement to becoming a state society is necessary or unidirectional. So-called primitive societies – counter-state societies without overt states that Deleuze and Guattari show to be only contingently prior to state societies (1987, p. 431; Clastres, 1989) – are said to have segmented functions, whereby flows of desire are coded with meaning (socialised) in relation to the land that they are on (territorialised), to create a social formation (a segment). Deleuze and Guattari make clear the processes that give rise to the transcendent overcoding of the state in explaining the processes that seek to ward it off:

Primitive societies do not lack formations of power; they even have many of them. But what prevents the potential central points from crystallizing, from taking on consistency, are precisely those mechanisms that keep the formations of power both from resonating together in a higher point and from becoming polarized at a common point: the circles are not concentric, and the two segments require a third segment through which to communicate. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 433)

³ 'Resonating' can be thought of as to render another segment redundant through a kind of replication, for example when certain functions of the State are taken over and replicated by the Church, education or the nuclear family. Each of these elements become nodal points that reinforce by having the same values as the others, in such a way that together they are a totalizing force with a relatively homogenized collective value set.

These societies have complex but fragile decentralised nodes of power that each practically function to undermine the emergence of a singular power that would subordinate all. Primitive segmentarity is characterised as generally supple rather than rigid, allowing for flows between segments and changes in flows of segments, though there are rigid elements to be found in primitive segments also; nuclei of rigidity that relatively fix relations and flows of desire – which as much anticipate the State as ward it off (1987, p. 213).

The despotic formations and caste hierarchies of the state are prefigured in the formations of so-called primitive territoriality – in some of the tensions between lineages and marital affiliations within clans, in relations of ranking among the population, in some of the spaces where power has become relatively solid and fixed, in the ways that surplus resources may be redistributed to favour those coagulations of power (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 195). “Primitive societies cannot ward off the formation of an empire or State without anticipating it, and they cannot anticipate it without its already being there, forming part of their horizon. And States cannot effect a capture unless what is captured coexists, resists in primitive societies, or escapes under new forms, as towns or war machines” (1987, p. 435). This prefiguration is why, when a despot does instantiate a state, the state emerges fully formed, having amplified and reterritorialised the prefigured power relations for his purposes, often capturing multiple autochthonous territories: “The State was not formed in progressive stages; it appears fully armed, a master stroke executed all at once; the primordial *Urstaat*, the eternal model of everything the State wants to be and desires” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 217). That is, the transcendent form of the State is immediately fully formed, all its overcoding functions already in place, albeit not all actualised.

The despot, often literally a conqueror from elsewhere, is always from outside insofar as in installing the State apparatus and himself at its apex, he is an imposing force. This transcendent force, the essence of the state, is the *overcoding* by the despot of the primitive codes, appropriating them for the despot. The overcoding does not replace the original codes so much as layer over them, and in appropriating them for the despot relatively fix their relation, rendering their surpluses that of the despot: no longer a gift of the land maintained primarily by a system of familial lineages and marital alliances, the society’s flourishing is claimed by the despot (often as a proxy for his god) who redirects it upon himself and starkly reduces the segments’ capacities to become otherwise. This appropriation of surplus is the beginning of a permanent relation of debt to the despot, in the form of tribute or tax, and as such goes together with the beginning of money. This continuous debt rendered to the despot and his claimed metaphysical relation with him and/or his god as quasi cause of all, centralises that society around him at the top of that society.

The State apparatus “operates by stratification; in other words, it forms a vertical, hierarchised aggregate that spans the horizontal lines in a dimension of depth. In retaining given elements, it necessarily cuts off their relations with other elements, which become exterior, it inhibits, slows down, or controls those relations” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 443). The primitive segments remain in form, but some become centres, which are consolidated with the exterior by subordinating that exterior and creating strata with the centres on top: “the only way that it can recombine what it isolates is through subordination” (p. 443).

To review and expand, I have been outlining the contingent processes that brought about states, through a typological genealogy, as part of showing how states are bound up in transcendence and enclosure. As contingent, it could be otherwise. What I have shown is that the earliest

forms of social formations can be understood in terms of segments, whereby flows of desire are structured and given social meaning/function. In so-called primitive societies these flows are directly structured onto the earth or the earth as god and reflect the immediate function(s) of that segment of land in relation to human significance/use. Distributions of power in these societies are generally maintained by complex systems of marital alliance and bloodline filiation. Each primitive society has latent authoritarian elements and power centres in contention with one another and undermining one another, elements that prefigure the state as well as ward it off. With the advent of the despot those forces are appropriated along with the full territory such that the state emerges fully formed, the primitive segments remain but are now relatively fixed cogs in the machine of the state, producing surplus for the state. Filiation and alliance are repurposed, with a metaphysical reframing of lineage with the despot at the root, the ‘father’ of that society. The state invents a formalised money system as a way to claim the infinite debt it imposes.

As with State thought, the State apparatus in Deleuze and Guattari is a transcendent force – overcoding, as we have expressed it here, is a transcendent layer of signification that structures the territory it inheres over and makes it resonate with itself even as it maintains different segments. It controls the relations between the segments within itself and the way that those segments relate to what is beyond itself – with a centre (above), and exterior, and an outside – corresponding to rulers, ruled, and excluded respectively. As such, State-forms themselves are enclosures, deepening, self-reproducing, the other side of which are others who are excluded from being called our kin, where instead what we should have is others who are inherently worth knowing, inherently worth mutual engagement with. Moreover, states, by their representative nature, and through a need to homogenise the people in certain respects in order to maintain their own coherence, create exclusionary zones for no matter what form of government states assume, they cannot represent everyone. They are always an imposing overcoding, an overrepresentation inadequate to the complexity of reality as transcendent forms, dividing up our world into enclosures and so cutting away each from their share in the human.

In its rejection of transcendence, the external imposition of forms upon territories, Deleuze and Guattari’s work is inimical to all State-forms, whether conceptual or political. This section has worked to show that enclosure relies on transcendence and that the general critique of enclosure includes transcendence in the case of State-forms of all kinds, and as such they are incompatible with the human. Further implications include a rejection of the political forms such as the revolutionary vanguard, and/or political party form, as well as the Marxist transition to full communism through an intermediary state that “withers away” (Engels 1962, p. 262) once political power is gained by some vanguard force. Instead, what I will introduce later is a clear prefigurative politics whereby one continually creates different, more fluid (supple) arrangements to the dominant State-form(s). In Mbembe, it is the arrangement of the human, in which we all share, a decentralised unstructuring that emerges from context and does not impose itself beyond itself.

Before moving to the development of capitalism and its inherent relation to colonialism and enclosure, it is worthwhile to consider various scholars’ theoretical perspective on Blackness in relation to anarchic forms of self-organisation.

3.2.1. A small aside on representability, co-optability, and the affinity of Blackness and anarchism

Mbembe is not alone in arguing that “Africa and the Black Man have become signs of an alterity that is impossible to assimilate; they are a vandalism of meaning itself, a happy hysteria” (2017, p. 38) – but other scholars in Black queer and feminist studies, especially Saidiya Hartman, Zoé Samudzi, William C. Anderson, and Marquis Bey⁴ have drawn from this fact some of the productive affinities between certain elements of Black social organisation and that of anarchism. Their argument is that the overwhelming exclusion of Black people by State-forms like states and enclosure generally has meant that Black people have had to build ways of relating to one another outside of those forms, and as such as a group have a general association and proclivity to anarchic forms of self-organisation antagonistic and minimally reliant on to states, even as some Black people are tokenistically and conditionally included (Barack Obama being an exemplar of this, as is Mandela to some degree, as I will argue) – a co-opting false sense of inclusion while there remains an oppressive anti-Black system⁵. The same can be said (when compared with other relevant groups) of predominantly Black ‘underdeveloped’ postcolonies whose economies have been subjugated and whose underdevelopment has continually been fostered under colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial regimes (Amin, 1974)⁶.

Samudzi and Anderson, drawing from Charles Mill’s appropriation of John Rawls’s ‘social contract’ (Mills, 1997), argue that “Blackness itself is anarchistic as a result of Black exclusion from the social contract (and thus non-assimilation into the state). This existence and a reflexive understanding of our existence within a color-based caste system can predispose us to be more readily primed for radical politics, which include anarchist and anti-authoritarian ideas” (2018, p. 109). Others, like Hartman in *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997), show in detail the ways that changes from the overtly racialised capitalism of US slavery to liberal capitalism came with forms of subjectification to the racialised order that were in more insidious, including how they, due to no longer being overt, came to co-opt more people to what remained a terribly unjust system, where again, parallels are readily made when considering predominantly Black postcolonies, such as the transition from apartheid to liberal democracy in South Africa. A person’s act of refusal of “the terms of visibility imposed upon them” (Hartman, 2019, p. 18) becomes the beginning of “mak[ing] a way of no way” (2019, pp. 24, 261, 347) – finding alternate forms of life imperceptible from within the frameworks of

⁴ See *Anarcho-Blackness: Notes Toward A Black Anarchism*, by Bey (2020)

⁵ “As opposed to recognizing Black Americans as a group of people upon whose suffering the state is constructed, we too often understand the acquisition of Black rights and the eventual inclusion (assimilation) of Black people into the social contract as a reason to continue our fight within State apparatuses. The myth of the arc of social progress flies in the face of the reality that our rights are being actively rolled back and continuously denied. Understanding the anarchistic condition of Blackness and the impossibility of its assimilation into the U.S. social contract, however, could be empowering.” (Samudzi and Anderson, 2018, p. 113)

⁶ Alternate versions of this kind of argument can be seen in Charles W. Mills’s *The Racial Contract* (1997), where he argues that the founding social rules of broadly Western societies were, one by and for white people rather than all people, that then the racialised state excluding of Black people (and others, such as indigenous people and those in the Global South generally) is a feature and not a failure of the systems born of that, including our current globalised one: “is not a contract between everybody (“we the people”), but between just the people who count, the people who really are people (“we the white people”)” (1997, p. 3). A significant corollary of this being that Black people have been excluded in a multitude of ways for hundreds of years and have had to build ways of living as excluded.

State-forms. To refuse the terms of visibility imposed upon oneself, what Deleuze might frame in terms of becoming-imperceptible, is a tool often used by radicals at the nadir of their axis of oppression, in recognising the ways that all difference will not and cannot be consumed by the face, that there will always be margins to that enclosure, and that there should instead be a wholesale destruction of the face.⁷

It is in considering Saidiya Hartman's concept of *the chorus* that we will find a deeper affinity between Blackness (and Black womanhood) and anarchy, so that we might say something about what it is to be a revolutionary subject. For now, however, we continue our negative critique through a furtherance of Deleuze's typological account, including civilisation and teleological notions of 'progress' as transcendent forms to be done away with for the Open World.

3.3. The human against civilization and transcendent notions of progress

For Mbembe, our notions of civilisation and progress are both antagonistic to the Open World. Civilisation as is relevant to his context is the cities, empire, and commerce of the European enclosure, as well as the co-constituting notion employed as a justificatory framework for imperialism (Mbembe, 2017, p. 59). The "civilizing mission" is the growth-oriented imperialist mode of engagement with the World-outside that is rooted in a morality of the European-enclosed form of the human (pp. 76, 77). Importantly, for Mbembe the notion of civilisation "authorized the distinction between the human and the nonhuman – or the not-yet-sufficiently human that might become human if given appropriate training," and was a process of domestication that involved three vectors: "conversion to Christianity, the introduction of a market economy through labor practices, and the adoption of rational, enlightened forms of government" (pp. 87-88). Even when the notion of civilisation was challenged, it was replaced by the notion of "progress" (including by postwar African nationalists, who were "embracing the teleologies of the period" – which is to say; Marxian Hegel-derived dialectical materialism, with its "march of history"), which served similar ends (p. 88).

Though much of what Mbembe refers to is part of the history of the emergence of specifically European civilisation (including more recent elements such as Christianity and capitalism), the parallels to be found here with both anarchist anti-civilisation critique, which will be minimally introduced here, and Deleuze and Guattari's account of the emergence of states are productive.

In Deleuze and Guattari, the homogenising coding imposed upon the territory by the despot in the birth of the state favours relatively fixed groups in the territory who are relatively agrarian, sedentary, and agricultural in their formation, in comparison with nomadic hunter-gatherers. Once it has appears, "the State reacts back on the hunter-gatherers, imposing upon them agriculture, animal raising, an extensive division of labor, etc." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 431). Indeed, plant and animal agriculture, the relatively fixed division of labour as well as fixed gender roles are all parts of the anti-civilisation critique made by anarchists – which is to say that Deleuze's characterisation of the emergence of the State parallels the anti-civilisation anarchist account of the emergence of civilisation.

⁷ For example, anarchic queers who have embraced relations of non-assimilability as part of their attack on authority – see the formulation of 'catachresis' in *baedan: journal of queer nihilism* (2012)

Anti-civilisation anarchism is a wide range of positions with a great amount to say about cities, agriculture, technology, language, mathematics, measurement, time and other topics. Rather than engage them all I will just introduce the minimal core critique here, positions which take a more radical stance (in the literal sense of *radix*, root, change from the roots) in relation to the main foci of critique typical of other anarchists and anti-capitalists generally. They recognise that the birth of agriculture allowed the emergence of the rural-urban dichotomy by being a key enabler of the existence of cities, as concentrated groupings of people who get their resources from an outside – another structure we can understand in terms of the logic of enclosure. People in cities, in turn, became alienated from the source of their resources and, as cities become more complex, the ends of their waste. For example, when our food and raw materials are sourced from some removed place, and our garbage and sewerage sent off to some elsewhere, we tend to lose touch with some fundamental ways that we affect the world. This founding alienation creates a tendency for cities to grow with its populations relatively unaware of the consequences of that growth, as a space requiring more and more land and resources from the rural/beyond to maintain itself. And so prior to the capitalism detailed by Marx we have a form of growth-oriented society rooted in alienation. It is when that rural space extends all the way into another group's territory (or valued raw materials are known to be found there) that conflict arises and colonial war becomes a tendency in the lands beyond the territory. In the reproduction of a rulers/ruled/excluded stratification much like that of the current dominant image of the human, there comes to be a set of enclosures situated in relation to the urban/rural/beyond respectively, preventing the Open and therefore not compatible with humanness.⁸

Where scholars like Mbembe critique notions of 'progress' as practically a justification for colonial conquest to replace the notion of civilisation – the 'bringing of progress' to peoples from the world outside, commonplace ideas of 'progress', that there is some overarching teleological direction of history towards a better state of being over time, is also challenged by anti-civilisation critique – partly through their argument that cities were the first substantive enclosures in human history, and that since them, the world has only gotten worse as stratifications of the human have proliferated and deepened. An anti-civilisation anarchist will argue that our increasingly alienating worlds are not progress, and that counter-state societies that avoid the stratification invariably found in cities are preferable to the increasingly inhuman world of the face. An immanent framework does not allow for transcendent teleological framework and understands them to be harmful for their prescriptive and policing element.

In addressing evolutionist progressive narratives, Deleuze draws always from archaeological and anthropological evidence, for example from anarchist anthropologist Pierre Clastres, undermining such simplistic evolutionist teleologies, by pointing out the abundance of skipped steps, zig-zags, and reverse causalities in apparent rigid teleologies that are easily found when studying changes in societies (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 431)⁹. If an adequate idea of progress were

⁸ Anti-civilisation critique has some interesting overlaps with decolonial critique. Both look to past and present pre-colonial societies in order to try to identify modes of organisation that may in some sense be reinstituted in ways that help to unmake imperial modes of being in the world, while simultaneously claiming that this would not be a simple return to the precolonial. It is a looking-back to go forward, without reifying any fantastical or racialised past in the form of the "noble savage" or any other fiction. As a result, they also receive a similar straw-man counter-argument: *Colonisation/civilisation was a good thing. We have modern medicine now for example, and the wonders of technology.*

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari go further to critique Clastres for failing to completely leave evolutionism, arguing that "one does not depart from evolutionism by establishing a clean break. In the final state of his work, Clastres main-

to exist, understanding progress not in terms of civilising or domesticating functions, technological advancement and the corresponding specialisation that tends to come with coagulations of power, ‘progress’ as a notion, if it is to be used at all, would be the relative success we have as a global collectivity at seeking out and destroying transcendence wherever it may be. In a world of enclosure, the groups in the dominant enclosures are always considered relatively advanced and modern while marginal groups are considered backwards and primitive, not because of whatever advancements may exist, but because the values of the face define the positions of the ruling class as advanced. From a nonnormative framework, progress would be the unmaking of the ruling and other enclosures.

It appears that civilisation and all growth-oriented forms of society rooted in alienation, together with their justificatory frameworks, such as teleological notions of progress, fall into the same transcendent traps of enclosure that we have established as incompatible with the human. What follows is a continuation of our account in considering the development of capitalism, and the transcendent forms inherent to its relations that preclude its possibility in a human world.

3.4. Economies: Enclosure as theft from the commons and property as enclosure – the human as anti-capitalist

Mbembe discusses different types of characterization of enclosure, the first of which he argues is like a theft. Among other things, it was a stealing of humanness, a limiting of it only to those included in the enclosure of the invented category ‘whiteness’. In the process of creating race, the people who came to be white stole humanness from the commons and made it their property. For the people who came to be Black, colonialism and racecraft was “the fundamental violence that from the beginning had stolen [their] humanity and reconstituted [them] as Black” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 68), the making of which requires the un-stealing of humanness (“we must restore the humanity stolen”), in the form of reparation and restitution (2017, p. 182). Not just colonised and racialised people, but “for those whose share of humanity was stolen at a given moment in history,” our task is to bring about an Open World (Mbembe, 2017, p. 183).

This characterization parallels another classic anarchist text, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s *What Is Property?*, where property is named the same; a theft, and withholding of the means for life from the commons by a group that encloses those means as their own. We see expression of property as theft from the commons and in terms of enclosure in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*:

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying ‘This is mine’, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or

tained the preexistence and autarky of counter-State societies, and attributed their workings to an overmysterious presentiment of what they warded off and did not yet exist” (1987, p. 429), that “As long as archaeology is passed over, the question of the relation between ethnology and history is reduced to an idealist confrontation, and fails to wrest itself from the absurd theme of society without history, or society against history. Everything is not of the State precisely because there have been States always and everywhere” (ibid), in their stead proposing an Urstaat, a state that always exists, reflected in our micropolitical relationships, as the horizon of a society, that can be warded off by decentralised power nodes, those same nodes that would be captured by the state if it were actualised.

filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody (1755, p. xvi).

Enclosure and property are both originary acts that come have a set of regulations and rules for their own maintenance, producing multiple classes of humans in a hierarchical political-socioeconomic system. Understanding property as a kind of enclosure puts it in terms of and at odds with the human; that is, the human requires the dissolution of property as closing-off of ownership from others, not only the closing off of the means of production, but as yet undecided forms of ownership.

We can develop on this basic conception of property in elaborating Deleuze and Guattari's account of the emergence of capitalism. For them, just as with the emergence of the state, capitalism comes to be through a contingent intermingling of events (1983, pp. 223–224) that result in a territory taking on a new set of relations of production, which in this case they call the capitalist axiomatic¹⁰, what Marx called the 'general formula of capital'. To do this, we continue where we left off in considering the emergence of the State. As with that account, Deleuze and Guattari's development of these ideas are detailed and complex, spanning over multiple of their major works. I will be reducing them to what is most relevant to our purposes; how the development of capitalism shows capitalism to relate to transcendence and enclosure and thus to be incompatible with Mbembe's project of an Open World.

In order for the despot to maintain his power over his territory, he must build alliances, giving resources to groups not directly filiated with him and his claims to power, and building a relation of debt. This is where private property is born – the despot allowing or endowing those he allies with their own stake in what remains his territory, but now also privately theirs. This is a kind of relinquishing of power that is done to maintain power, a decoding of the despot's power in the relinquishing of market forces. Money goes into a more general circulation, enabling merchants and usurers to build up reserves of money, which puts them in a position to acquire private property. Classes emerge that are not directly merged with the State apparatus, but distinct power nodes. An increasingly large and state-independent land- and property-owning class appears and a corresponding propertyless class, and the new sets of relations are a steady unmaking of the codes of the despot for the purposes of commerce (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 218).

This breakdown of codes is the result of the societal mode of production taking on the capitalist axiomatic, which I will explain here briefly. Where prior to capitalism money was used *as money* in a specific sense, whereby one would sell commodities to get money to buy other commodities, in a qualitative transformation from one set of commodities to the others, the capitalist axiomatic is when money is used *as capital*, whereby capital is used to buy commodities which are sold in turn for *more* capital – a quantitative transformation where money is not qualitatively transformed, but advanced, with the expectation from the capitalist that there will be a greater return of money at the end of the process (that difference between the first and second amount of

¹⁰ I will elaborate on this further soon: An axiom is something that is taken to be true and can thus be used as the premise for further reasoning and arguments. In capitalism axioms replace codes; thus, whereas symbolic codes and values were formerly produced by the State or similar bodies to produce and reproduce centralised systems of meaning, capitalism bases its organisation on axiomatisation which, unlike codes, does not require beliefs, meaning or conventions to function, nor are they related to any specific social sphere “such as religion, politics or law, which would provide their ground or justification” (Jameson 1997, p. 398).

capital being called ‘surplus value’)¹¹. The move from qualitative to quantitative transformation allows for *all* of the material relations subsumed under the capitalist axiomatic to be reducible to its monetary value. This change is one way to understand how the axiomatic is a decoding rather than another coding – it vacates the qualitative element of the relations and reduces it all to an empty abstract quantity. Capitalism expands because under the axiomatic money becomes continually sought after in greater and greater quantities, incentivising the transformation of all relations into relations of value for the market. That transformation is the unmaking of the codes (those so-called primitive codes that themselves were first transformed through overcoding by the despot) which had existed prior, a transformation happening fast and powerfully enough that they exceed the State’s ability to overcode – corresponding to a privatisation of the commons, i.e. the enclosure of the commons, which Marx calls primitive or original accumulation. The capitalist axiomatic becomes more and more pervasive until it appropriates production for itself (historically, with the advent of industrial revolution in Europe), and transforms the diminished State into a mechanism of business, “putting despotism in the service of the new class relations” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 218). The state is reduced to a moral authority that holds the society together, by mediating between the movements in resistance to the system and some of the excesses of the continual decoding under capitalism, at the expense of the vulnerable classes. As a moral authority in service of class relations it also becomes a disciplinary apparatus in relationship to those people who have been dispossessed by the increasing privatisation of the commons. People are forced to become ‘good’ workers for capitalism or to suffer the carceral system. These are just some of the ways that the human tends to be conditioned and limited through the enclosure of property.

Deleuze and Guattari draw from Samir Amin’s work in *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (1974) to show how capitalism now as a world system (because though there are relatively socialistic territories existing within it they are unable to escape participation in the capitalist world market) has a direction of decoding going from its centre to its periphery, not as two separate kinds of territories (the developed and the underdeveloped) but one world system whereby the underdeveloped is subjugated to the developed world. Also, Deleuze and Guattari add, the centre itself has “organized enclaves of underdevelopment, its reservations and its ghettos as interior peripheries” (1983, p. 231). This corresponds quite well to Mbembe’s framing in terms of enclosure, as should be clear.

From this, continuing the typological account, we see that capitalism begins with and continually perpetuates eventually even at a world scale the ‘original sin’ of enclosure of the commons into commodity form, an enclosure which restricts indigenous peoples’ access to the resources that were once in common, forces them into subjection and work for capitalists in order to survive while capitalists profit off of the surplus value of their labour; alternatively they starve, or face criminalisation under that system. Capital itself tends to concentrate in centres, and to expand and deepen its territory (in the process of commodifying ever more of the world), in much the same way as a State-form. Capitalist modes of production incentivise the creation of race, the creation of enclosure, because they incentivise capitalists to pay workers as little as possible in order to extract as much surplus value as possible, and this in turn incentivises the creation and

¹¹ “In brief, the capitalist machine begins when capital ceases to be a capital of alliance to become a filiative capital. Capital becomes filiative when money begets money, or value a surplus value.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 227)

maintenance of whole classes of people who may be paid a less-than-human wage, or, as with slavery, no wage at all. This is what Mbembe means when he says that capitalism relies on “racial subsidies”¹² in order to exploit the planet’s resources, and that race (and therefore Blackness) is imbricated in the history of capitalism. So capitalism and enclosure go hand in hand, and a human economy is at minimum anti-capitalist, and may well be antagonistic to many forms of socialism, dependent on how they distribute their resources. And so similar to and part of the transverse way of the human, the dis-enclosure of capital implies its maximal decentralisation and ultimate dissolution of private property, the commodity form, and commodity relations, returning them to the commons and into a relation of being in-common. Decisions about resources would happen at the most local of levels, through pragmatic judgement collectively taken by all those immediately affected, based on a pragmatic engagement of collective needs and desires. As decentralised, both desire- and need-based, and pragmatic, this rules out most forms of centralised socialist economy. What remains then – the full range of stateless, noncapitalist, decentralised, desire- and need-based economies – are rightly called anarchist economies. Here, stealing-back not so much a stealing as a restoration, it is to return something to the commons, to dis-enclose it as property. The antiracist praxis of unstealing has many precedents, notably for our purposes in the “stealing away” of slaves in early US history, those brief escapes from captivity taken in order to fulfil any number of tasks, “from praise meetings, quilting parties, and dances to illicit visits with lovers and family on neighboring plantations” – sets of invariably illegal acts “focused on contesting the authority of the slave-owning class and contravening the status of the enslaved as possession” (Hartman, 1997, p. 66).

In the next section, I expand on an anarchic geography by deepening what we have said about the Open World as borderless and transversal.

3.5. The human as borderless, borderlands as transversal, against nationalism

The Open world is incompatible with any world in which we “create borders, build walls and fences, divide, classify, and make hierarchies.” In section 2.7 of Part II, “The Open: Transversality against Enclosures,” I showed an image of what might take their place in Mbembe’s characterization of precolonial border(land)s. Already we have established how states and capitalism are incompatible with the Open World. With this, any idea of nationhood and their borders would have to dramatically change, enough that they may not be recognisable in liberal terms as such.

Understanding borders as not primarily a means of control and management of movement and the basis from which to form an enclosed identity, but as enabling connections to spaces beyond the local, would be the first point of departure. They would not be borders “in the legal sense of the term but rather the outlines of imbricated countries and spaces,” “extensible and incomplete,” fundamentally enabling the creation of “transversal alliances, to extend and invest nodal points within a space that is constantly in motion” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 100) – having a maximum coefficient of transversality. In the Open World, a border, along with any identity formed within the spaces it contains, “is not necessarily what fixes a location. It is what makes it

¹² “But in our contemporary world the liberal state is transformed into a war power at a time when, we now realize, capital not only remains fixed in a phase of primitive accumulation but also still leverages racial subsidies in its pursuit of profit.” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 23)

possible to negotiate the crossing of spaces that are themselves in circulation because they are of variable geometry” (ibid.). And so, nationalism, the development of a relatively static and distinct notion of the territory together with a corresponding identity that one is subject under, which in turn is and allows for its enclosure and the hierarchical division of the world into an us-and-them paradigm, must along with this border-form be abolished for an Open World. Seeking the human is then inherently anti-nationalist, and therefore anti-fascist and anti-xenophobic.

Today’s borders under a globalizing neoliberal capitalism maintain a global apartheid. Overwhelmingly, whiter countries have more access to the rest of the world, to jobs, resources, and vacations, in the global *dompas* system¹³ of passports. Fulfilling similar function to South Africa’s apartheid, they enable ‘separate development’ and the temporary inclusion of others as migrant labour, even as more powerful countries plunder indigenous lands for their resources through transnational corporations, and punitive devices like colonial debt that functions much like the introduction of colonial taxes in order to force indigenous peoples to work within capitalism and to remain in poverty.

The Open World as a positive project then excludes authoritarian borders and any State-form as we have understood them here in terms of transcendence and overcoding, whether socialist or capitalist, and excludes certain enclosing relations in what is called civilisation, leaving a range of stateless forms of society as the range of what is possible, and the continual unmaking of the enclosing state border-form as the general praxis of humanness. There are substantial resonances here between anarcha-indigenous philosophies that reconfigure nationhood in Open terms, truly inclusive, horizontal, and interrelated (maximally transversal), by comparison with nation-states based on enclosure/exclusion, control, and domination (Kaba, in Samudzi and Anderson, 2018).

In the next section, I outline the limitations of human rights discourse to recompose them in terms of the Open World, before elaborating in some detail Deleuze’s conception of the nomadic war machine and its relationship to State-forms, as the turning point in this Part that then comes to focus on positive critique.

3.6. Against capitalist and authoritarian socialist human rights discourses

A Deleuzian framework has a *prima facie* disdain for forms of rights and especially human rights - given the exclusionary and contingent nature of the human; the deontological or otherwise transcendent framework from which most rights discourse arises; the state-mediated nature of rights in most Western conceptions of them - requiring at minimum some state and legal apparatus; and the ways that liberal democracies have used rights discourse to co-opt subjects to their agenda, even as they selectively enforce them in a way that tends to maintain the current order. Mbembe’s reframing of the human and particular engagement with rights makes room for their possibility for the human.

Mbembe also addresses rights, mainly in terms of two overlapping directions that engage with rights as part of situated resistance: “But for which rights should Blacks continue to struggle? Everything depends on the locations in which they find themselves, the historical contexts in which they live, and the objective conditions they face. Everything depends as well on the nature

¹³ For anybody unfamiliar with South African history, a *dompas*, or pass, was the required document in the internal passport system designed to segregate various racial groups during the Apartheid era.

of the racial formations in the midst of which they are called to live” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 176). The other is simply a push to be no-longer-excluded, in this case meaning no longer in a world of enclosure(s); a world where there no longer are people from whom “the right to have rights is refused” (p. 177).

How might we understand rights outside of a transcendent framework like deontology? It is my contention that Mbembe’s reframing of the human and particular engagement with rights makes room for their possibility within a nonnormative framework. Because Mbembe does not address some elements directly, it is instructive to draw from anti-authoritarian approach to rights that is simply framed in the text *African Anarchism* by Mbah and Igariwey (2014).

These writers, in surveying the large range of acephalous, egalitarian, anarchic societies across historic and present sub-Saharan Africa, argue that you can find “[r]ights and duties, privileges and obligations” within stateless societies, but they are not maintained or enforced, and are instead emergent from two factors; those societies’ “intense sense of humanity and respect for human dignity” (p. 89), coupled together with how within these non-authoritarian societies “no restraint upon conduct is required because of the natural tendency of people in a state of freedom to respect each other’s rights” (pp. 2–3). The state of freedom referred to here, in describing decentred and counter-state noncapitalist societies with no fixed borders, and an intense sense of humanity, has deep resonances with what we would expect from any decentralised locale in Mbembe’s Open World – these are human societies, or at least, vastly closer to human than exists under neoliberal capitalism. Here, because none are excluded, because there is no property or commodity form one is excluded from, and because there is no single centralised body controlling the resources or maintaining exclusionary borders, ordinary practical reasoning is generally enough to form mutually beneficial social arrangements. With all in common, sharing is a given, and the provision of the needs for flourishing are given, assuming that the context allows (where the context is not political arrangements but things beyond our control, like drought). In cases where simple appeals are not forthcoming, adjudication processes amounting to a “pragmatic consideration of means and ends coupled with a descriptive framing of ethical concerns can achieve outcomes as optimal as those stemming from moral laws, with the advantage that the former approach allows solutions to emerge from the situations themselves; it is an ethics immanent to each encounter that does not separate us from our capacities through an appeal to abstractions” (Eloff, 2013, p. 14).

The uses of rights within Mbembe’s conception of the human are then, if ever useful, contingent, and emergent from context, as concrete tools for the furtherance of the agenda of creating an Open World, a world without rights as we typically know them.

The following section forms a bridge between the halves of Part III, the first half being that of negative critique, the second being positive – the section on the nomadic war machine being what emerges from our historical account as the condition whose existence enables the resistance to State-forms and enclosures of all kinds.

3.7. The lines between negative and positive critique: War machines, co-opted or nomadic, faciality and probe-heads

In continuing their typology of the contingent historical processes that make up our world of states and capitalism, Deleuze and Guattari also outline a form that provides a framework for

their unmaking: *the nomadic war machine*¹⁴. Drawing from wide bricolage of influences – for example anthropology, history, military strategy, mythology, they outline the war machine as a form of exteriority from State-forms¹⁵. In their political account, the nomadic war machine is an army made up of warriors and nomadic types who collectively do not limit themselves to movements prescribed by the State apparatus because they are exterior to it, and though the State apparatus may co-opt the war machine and practically reduce it to a standing army, there is always a latent threat that the standing army may take up its arms against the state and destroy it. Here we understand the State apparatus as a capturing process that works to inscribe a homogenizing unity upon a territory, overcoding and striating territories and rigidifying relations between segments in service of ruling elites. As a form of exteriority, the uncaptured war machine functions in almost the opposite way to the state - by loosening up the codes and smoothening rather than striating the spaces it inhabits. Importantly, as Deleuze and Guattari tell us, what makes a nomadic war machine different from the sedentary captured war machines of the state is that war is not its primary objective, but rather “its second-order, supplementary or synthetic objective, in the sense that it is determined in such a way as to destroy the State-form and city-form with which it collides” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 418). To reiterate, then, the main aim of the *nomadic* war machine is to deterritorialise the sedentary regime of the State apparatus which it does by ensuring that its power is “no longer based on segments and centres” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 392) and the resonance and redundancies between these.

Just in how we find Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphysical, conceptual, and ethical to be imbricated we find parallels between states and war machines in the world and State thought and war machines in thought. For them the classical image of thought functions much like a state in striating mental space by operating through two universals – “the whole as final ground of being or all-encompassing horizon, and the Subject as principle that converts being into being-for-us” (1987, p. 379) – critiques of both of which we have addressed in Part I when considering the postulates against the dogmatic image of thought. These universals transcendently structure our thought, bringing us in general to (and reinforcing our beliefs in) conservative, universalist and transcendent metaphysical being. To make thought into a war machine, then, is to engage in what they call “outside thought” – to place thought in an immediate relation with an outside. They draw from Nietzsche to make their example, in making a distinction and comparison of maxims to aphorisms, where maxims are authoritative and overdetermined in meaning, “like an organic State act or sovereign judgment” (1987, p. 377), whereas aphorisms get their meaning from an external force, some further force that transforms it into something beyond what it is on its own.

To make thought a nomadic war machine is to use thoughts that do not fit with mental models to fluidise and break those models – not just at the level of content but also undermining of the kind of thinking involved in modelling, to understand models as pragmatic problem-posing rather than true or universal.

Part I of this essay ended with some sections on faciality, the name of the concept used by Deleuze and Guattari that expresses how the dogmatic image of thought works for the human, with the Face as an overcoding force upon what were “primitive” heads. We learned the face’s

¹⁴ See plateau 12, “1227: Treatise on Nomadology: The War Machine” (1987, p. 351).

¹⁵ In particular, exterior to State-forms, both metaphysical (in the form of transcendent overcoded ideas), and political (in the form of the State apparatus).

basic structure in terms of the white wall / black hole system and noted that for the nonnormative philosopher, our primary task is to unmake the face, liberating humanness from enclosed/overcoded forms. In section 2.4.4, 'Future-orientation; Black art and religion; probe-heads', their concept of probe-heads was introduced, as presubjective and presignifying experimental forms which challenge its transcendent structure and could possibly dissolve it – characterised as having an orientation in relation to the present, treating elements of the past and/or the future as resources for transforming the present.

Deleuze and Guattari's account of the emergence of the state and State thought parallels their account of the emergence of the human as the face, showing how transcendence and its accompanying overcoding through State thought are the root of both political States and mental state structures like the face as oppressive, policing, homogenising, and conservative forms. A probe-head, continuing the parallel, is a nomadic war machine against the face, building experimental forms uncaptured by the face to break it and dissolve it.

To make thought a war machine is to connect it to an outside. This essay has taken examples from art and religion to show this, as well as developed on transversality, all as examples of outside thought made into a practice, to consider how it can bring new, unforeseen thoughts into being. Various conceptions of nomadic war machines will be developed on for the remainder of this essay.

This section has served as the minimal introduction of the concept of the war machine, and functions as a pivot section for Part III, because it is through the various conceptualisations of nomadic war machines that we find the possibility of escaping not only limiting and harmful conceptions of humanness, but all authoritarian political forms, as part of the same overall anti-authoritarian project – the path to the human. What follows is the first section in positive critique, on mutuality, which exists as an anti-authoritarian socioeconomic frame that can replace that of state-capitalist social relations.

3.8. Mutuality – the socio-political-economic relation of the human

These final sections of this essay introduce in overlap all of the elements of this essay, moving from negative critique – rejecting current sociopolitical forms – to the more positive project of developing a clearer sense and set of directions towards an Open World. Mbembe's use of 'mutuality' and 'mutual belonging' frames and closes the book, and is always in reference to our shared recognition and participation in the universal – the set of relations of Openness (pp. 1, 74, 180, 181). Mutuality is related to naming, the recognition of an interconnectedness with the world beyond oneself which in turn becomes part of one's constitution. But it also enters well into conversation with the classic anarchist text by Peter Kropotkin: *Mutual Aid: A Factor In Evolution* (1902). Kropotkin wrote the text as a curative to a pervasive view of evolution at the time among Darwinists, understanding Darwin's "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest" over-simplistically, and overwhelmingly in terms of a kind of permanent struggle "of every animal against all its congeners, and of every person against all other people," such that barefaced tooth-and-nail competition was treated as a law of nature and therefore justified it as an ethic (1902, p. 2), and often then used by social Darwinists as reason to embrace and justify an ethic of fascistic dog-eat-dog competition.

Instead, Kropotkin shows in his book that, especially among the same species, it is often mutual cooperation that makes one “fit” for survival. Mutual Aid, then, is a form of *work for life*¹⁶. As a praxis, it can be used against dehumanization and death, recognizing the value of our interconnected cooperation with our species and the world beyond us. The concept of mutual aid has been extended by anarchists in contrast to mutual acquiescence; the passivity, compliance, and indifference that comes with accepting State-forms into one's constitution as subjects (Sakolsky, 2012). Understanding the state and State-forms as engendered in social relationships, they “can be destroyed by creating new social relationships; i.e., by people relating to one another differently” (Landauer, 2010, p. 214) – and mutual aid has since been theorised as exactly that kind of relationship; one outside of the state and State-forms.

This is what we see in Saidiya Hartman's characterization of the mutual aid society, (2018, 2019); those groups of young Black women making up a people-to-come by taking on unpre-scribed sets of relations in the present; the “ongoing and open-ended creation of new conditions of existence and the improvisation of life-enhancing and free association” defined by collaboration, reciprocity, and shared creation (Hartman, 2018, p. 471), called variously the chorus, the ensemble, the swarm, always denoting a multiplicity living otherwise and creating the conditions for unforeseeable arrangements of human life. Nomadic war machines. *Mutuality*, then, denotes a way of living fluidly otherwise and outside of established forms, in cooperative bonds between one another, and *mutual aid* a work for life and an ethic of the Open. We will expand on and unpack these ideas and mutuality as a form of political organization in the following section.

3.9. Political organization for a human world

Where Mbembe does speak directly to generalised political struggle, it is this:

Fanon's great call for an opening up of the world will inevitably find many echoes. We can, in fact, see this in the organization of new forms of struggle – cellular, horizontal, lateral – appropriate for the digital age, which are emerging in the four corners of the world. (Mbembe, 2017, p. 170)

Cellular, horizontal, lateral - this is just how one would describe an affinity group, known as the building block of anarchist organization, and its relation to other such groups (CrimethInc., 2017). Affinity groups are small groups of friends who have built political intimacy, working in a highly adaptable, fluid, unbureaucratic, leaderless structure and usually through consensus decision-making rooted in the shared political trajectory that their intimacy makes up, that sometimes work in ad hoc networks with other such groups.¹⁷ “Most important of all, affinity groups are motivated by shared desire and loyalty, rather than profit, duty, or any other compensation or abstraction” (CrimethInc., 2017), which is to say that they work together oriented immanently around their own desires, rather than having their goals be transcendently-determined.

¹⁶ See section 2.6.2, *What is the content of Mbembe's 'human', and the meta-value directing it?*, for our first engagement with the idea of *work for life*.

¹⁷ “This leaderless format has proven effective for guerrilla activities of all kinds, as well as what the RAND Corporation calls “swarming” tactics in which many unpredictable autonomous groups overwhelm a centralized adversary” (CrimethInc., 2017).

The bridge from an individual focus to one of collective arrangements is easily built in the anti-authoritarian framework – here I draw from K. Aarons’ work around what solidarity over lines of difference looks like:

The only consistent and honest fight is one we engage in for our own reasons, oriented immanently around our own idea of happiness. By the latter is meant not an individual psychological state, but rather the affective complicity and feeling of increased power that arises between people who, based on a shared perception of the lines of force surrounding them, act together to polarise situational conflicts in pursuit of ungovernable forms of life, in whatever experimental forms this might take in the present. (Aarons, 2016)

That is, attuned to differences, based on a shared orientation built on immanent self-organisation, individuals may come together, and through calculated experimentation intensify that which escapes the logics of State-forms, for the purpose of unmaking those forms, and the joy of collective liberatory resistance in itself.¹⁸ This is the basic form of political resistance for those who wish to instantiate the human. I turn now to specific political actors – persons – to think about how immanent critique and the human apply to them, to think about the characteristics held by a political actor who shares in the human.

3.9.1. Beyond Mbembe and Deleuze: Hartman’s General House Worker

We must not cultivate the spirit of the exceptional or look for the hero, another form of leader. (Fanon, 2008, p. 137)

Mbembe’s other direct comments on political organization, action, and exemplars of struggle are notably individual-oriented. Where he does speak of political organization on a broader scale, it is through analysis of fabulation done by novelists, or through other artistic or religious creation as discussed in Part II. These examples are relatively oblique to the task of speaking to *what the political organization of the Open World looks like* – when compared to Mbembe’s straightforward naming of Mandela and the enumeration of Mandela’s traits as paradigmatic, and the idea that “to be African is first and foremost to be a free man, or, as Fanon always proclaimed, ‘a man among other men.’ A man free from everything, and therefore able to invent himself” (Mbembe, 2017, p. 178). This section develops on what Mbembe has said, using Saidiya Hartman’s work to critique and go beyond it, in order to arrive at a fuller sense of what individual and collective organization in and towards the human looks like. The core of the critique is a turn away from Mbembe’s focus on Mandela as individual, and from the hero narrative built around him.

In Part II of this essay, the section *Future-orientation; Black art and religion; Probe-heads*, engaged how, in Mbembe’s consideration of Black art and religion, we see the outlines of collective practices towards an Open World as already a part of our present. What we found there was

¹⁸ Importantly also, the quote returns to a core ethical question around the point of happiness as raised in Part I of this essay, section 1.6, titled ‘What “nonnormative” means: Deleuze’s Ethico-ontological Immanent Ethics’, where we challenged the notion of transcendence in our major ethical concepts, such as goodness and justice, and made the example of happiness through Sara Ahmed’s work.

a praxis including an active refusal of victimhood and creative utilisations of art and myth towards an unconditionally inclusive human, one not predefined in terms of any concrete image but just in terms of the acts that opened up the space for difference in response to a colonial and overcoding force. When considering Mbembe's engagement with Black religion, one might begin to interpret his understanding of "creative assimilation," which he characterises as emerging through "popular practices of observance and faith and the law that gave ample space for the arts of healing and divination," (2017, p. 97) as one which is ipso facto content with the form of that faith and law - but from within the nonnormative framework we have built, and the conception of the African as "man free from everything, and therefore able to invent himself," we must understand this as the beginning of a process of complete reopening towards the Open World, through ever-deepening embrace of immanence, against transcendent forms.¹⁹

3.9.1.1. Mandela as nomadic war machine

This section primarily works to show that we can understand Mandela both as he is characterised as a line of flight, and as a nomadic war machine, in order to set us up for some of the comparisons that will be made between Mandela and the General House Worker. It is worthwhile to revisit what we said in section 2.4.2, on Mbembe's characterisation of the revolutionary Black Man as a line of flight, with Mandela as paradigmatic case. For Mbembe, Mandela was a line of flight who came to "name" the resistance movement because "at each crossroads in his life he succeeded - sometimes under pressure from circumstances, but often voluntarily - in following unexpected paths" (2017, p. 170), that he was a man "constantly on the lookout" who "lived intensely - as if everything were to begin again, and as if every moment was his last" (p. 170-171). At the same time, Mandela is centrally characterised as an individual who, even when incarcerated and stripped of almost everything, "refused to relinquish the humanity that remained." Working for life from the depths of bare incarcerated existence, his direction was rooted in "seeking an idea that in the end was quite simple: how to live free from race and the domination that results from it," becoming "a revenant from the land of shadows, a gushing force on the eve of an aging century that had forgotten how to dream" (p. 172). Here we find an expanded sense of what it is to live as a line of flight against race. For the most destitute,

¹⁹ The parallels between the proposal that the African is one free from everything, and therefore able to invent himself, and the project of anarchistic scholar Max Stirner are strong. The preface of his magnum opus *The Unique and Its Property* is often translated as "All things are nothing to me" (1995, p. 5) - in a way corresponding exactly with one being free of everything, where "things" in both cases are imposing transcendent forms. Stirnerites - also often called egoist anarchists - speak of "the creative nothing" - the unique being that brings creation into existence, unlimited by transcendence (understood primarily as materially-supported reifications of ideas). What we find is that one cannot merely unmake transcendence in one's mind to become a free being, one must also unmake the co-constitutive material relations supporting the transcendent ideas - and so egoism necessitates bringing about the material relations of anarchy. This argument is made clear in Jacob Blumenfeld's *All Things Are Nothing To Me: The Unique Philosophy of Max Stirner*, where Blumenfeld shows how "Stirner's egoism is Marx's communism seen from the first person singular perspective" - which shows how the free individual unhindered by transcendent impositions in mind or the material is the correlate of the stateless moneyless society that is full communism - anarchy. Without going too deeply into Stirner's work, we can say that by making all things nothing to myself (i.e. freeing myself from reified transcendent forms), nothing owns me, my actions (my creations) are not first those of transcendent forms, but emergent from the unique instance of becoming that I am.

effective action consists in creating montages and combinations, of advancing masked, always ready to begin again, to improvise, to install oneself in the provisional before seeking to cross boundaries, to do what one does not say and say what one does not do; to say several things at once and marry the opposite; and, above all, to proceed by metamorphosis. Metamorphosis is possible only because the human person can only ever refer back to himself by relating to another power, another self – the capacity to escape oneself, to double, to become a stranger to oneself. Power is being simultaneously present in different worlds, under different modalities. (p. 133)

As we see here, this is primarily an example of what an individual actor (even, we get the sense, a unique hero) may do to act well within Mbembe's ethical and political framework. I will work to move beyond this individual-focus, but first it is useful note the resonances seen in the beginning of Deleuze and Guattari's plateau, "1227: Treatise On Nomadology: The War Machine," where they introduce an example of an individual as war machine as attested to by myth, taking from Georges Dumezil's analysis of Indo-European mythology:

Indra, the warrior god, is in opposition to Varuna no less than to Mitra? He can no more be reduced to one or the other than he can constitute a third of their kind. Rather, he is like a pure and immeasurable multiplicity, the pack, an irruption of the ephemeral and the power of metamorphosis. He unties the bond just as he betrays the pact. He brings a furor to bear against sovereignty, a celerity against gravity, secrecy against the public, a power (puissance) against sovereignty, a machine against the apparatus. He bears witness to another kind of justice, one of incomprehensible cruelty at times, but at others of unequaled pity as well (because he unties bonds...). He bears witness, above all, to other relations with women, with animals, because he sees all things in relations of becoming, rather than implementing binary distributions between "states": a veritable becoming-animal of the warrior, a becoming-woman, which lies outside dualities of terms as well as correspondences between relations. In every respect, the war machine is of another species, another nature, another origin than the State apparatus. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 352, emphasis in the original)

Mbembe and Deleuze and Guattari use different language, but the parallels are there – as just one of many references in the war machine plateau (12) that shows the parallel between Mbembe's depiction of Mandela and Deleuze & Guattari's depiction of an individual as nomadic war machine. In the cases of both Mandela and Indra we see multi-perspectival descriptions of becoming and metamorphosis, each a variant of the provisional and the in-betweenness constitutive of multiplicity, and where their movements of becoming fluidise, puncture, and open transcendent structures, moving in unexpected ways with form, and in so doing transforming them into something that is not recognised within prescribed binaries and other conventions. But here Indra is not being presented as a champion so much as a free agent warrior of great power, who has no fixed allegiance to the powers that seek to contain him.

Without delving into the questions of whether Mandela's acts in reality were as Mbembe describes, or questions around the contested nature of his legacy especially among anti-capitalists,

which are less appropriate for me to adjudicate, there is the question of whether Mbembe's Mandela as *revolutionary subject par excellence* is apropos. The core of the critique is a turn away from Mbembe's focus on Mandela as individual and from the hero narrative, through a recognition of the revolution of everyday life lived by minor characters, elided in the present and by history, through the constant and overwhelming maintenance of the face. The best straightforward example that I have found of such an everyday minor character comes from the work of Saidiya Hartman; the plural General House Worker.

3.9.1.2. Hartman's critical fabulation, and the fabulatory function

We find the General House Worker in Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019) – and the preceding shorter text that was reworked in the former, *The Anarchy of Colored Girls Assembled In A Riotous Manner* (2018). Where for Deleuze and Guattari, Black Panther George Jackson says “I may take flight, but all the while I am fleeing, I will be looking for a weapon,” and for Mbembe, Mandela is “constantly on the lookout” – Hartman's description of the General House Worker listed in the books ‘Cast of Characters’ carries the same description of a line of flight: “Appears over the course of the book from 1896–1935. She is always on the lookout for an escape route.”

Wayward Lives is a book of critical fabulation, born out of reconstructing a minor history from History. A history of anarchic young Black women in the early twentieth century in US cities that understands how their presences are foreclosed from archives, that despite how thousands upon thousands existed, their lives are largely inaccessible and effaced²⁰. Hartman reads archival records against the grain to construct a history of the present, a counter-history of young Black women, from “journals of rent collectors; surveys and monographs of sociologists; trial transcripts; slum photographs; reports of vice investigators, social workers, and parole officers; interviews with psychiatrists and psychologists; and prison case files, all of which represent them as a problem” (2019, p. xiv), to “offer an account that attends to beautiful experiments – to make living an art – undertaken by those often described as promiscuous, reckless, wild, and wayward” (ibid). Her method is called critical fabulation. “Critical” here used much like “Critical Theory,” referring to the various decolonial, Black feminist, anticapitalist lenses that can be put to the analysis of material culture and archives, and that may in turn populate the speculative history that unfolds from that analysis. Fabulation, a kind of pragmatic and historically-rooted mythmaking, where ‘myth’ does not have the modern connotations of falsehood, is a mode of creation for thinking and becoming otherwise.

It is useful to draw briefly from Deleuze and Guattari's related notion of creative fabulation, and Henri Bergson, who they draw it from, as it appears linked to Hartman's use and will assist us

²⁰ Some of the earliest remarks in *Wayward Lives* and the preceding shorter piece *On The Anarchy of Colored Girls Assembled in a Riotous Manner* reflect how the anarchic lives of young Black women in the early twentieth century are a kind of *anarchism otherwise*, a minor anarchism that may even go without recognition as such by anarchists, sometimes only visible through a kind of misreading (Hartman, 2019, p. 231). She comments on how one such woman might walk straight past famous anarchists like Emma Goldman and they would not recognise each other (2018, p. 465, 2019, p. 229) – and she notes how Kropotkin “never described black women's mutual aid societies or the chorus in Mutual Aid, although he imagined animal sociality in its rich varieties and the forms of cooperation and mutuality found among ants, monkeys, and ruminants. Impossible, recalcitrant domestics were not yet in his view or anyone else's. So Esther Brown's minor history of insurrection went unnoted until she was apprehended by the police” (2018, p. 446, 2019, pp. 231–232).

in understanding what it can do. “A machine for manufacturing giants” (Bergson, 1935, p. 307)²¹ – this is what Bergson considers fabulatory function to be, and Deleuze takes it up with the added task of giving it further political meaning, whereby the artistic element of fabulation is done by a population that makes living an art, identifying and producing collective utterances and other speech acts that function as the seed, or in Deleuzian terms, a *dark precursor*, of a people-to-come. Hartman’s work then is at the same time a work of art in literature and a work of art and a *work for life* – in this case an engagement with the past that invokes a people in the present. In this philosophy, language is seen more like a machine, in the sense that they do not primarily *mean*, but *function* (Bogue, 2010, p. 46) – to set things in motion, to become otherwise. Bogue says it well:

When novelists engage in fabulation, when they diagnose the impasses of the present and their historical causes, and then instigate disruptive becomings-other and lines of flight toward a people to come, they are experimenting on the real, fashioning machines within machines that have a real existence within a material world that is inseparably cultural, semiotic, biological and physical in its functioning. This does not mean that fabulation is guaranteed a lasting or even measurable effect, for novels do not necessarily change the world [...]. But it does indicate that in fabulation the realm of the aesthetic is inextricable from the larger world in which it functions. (2010, pp. 46–47)

Bogue draws from Deleuze to call this a kind of “legending *in flagrante delicto*” (Bogue, 2010, p. 44), understanding legending to be the creation of a diagnostic politico-historical allegory (situated and calculated), to bring about a fundamental break in the subject(s) of the legend and the recipients of the story, where they become more and qualitatively other than what they were before, in a kind of change that breaks perceived limits²². Important for Deleuze is that this creative interpretation involves the calculated production of a new arrangement of the current constellation, an act of creation or fabulation *in flagrante delicto* (see Smith, 2005) – surging out against the current political order of things. “*In blazing crime*” or “*in blazing offence*” can just as well be said of Hartman’s work insofar as, as she says, the lives she depicts are against the law and the moral order, and the sources she has drawn from saw those lives as, like anarchists, anarchically, understood to be a fundamental threat to their civilisation (Hartman, 2019, p. 9). Hartman, drawing from her extensive archival engagement, notes:

What the law designated as crime were the forms of life created by young black women in the city. The modes of intimacy and affiliation being fashioned, the refusal

²¹ The original quote in the English translation of Bergson referenced here is “a machine for the making of gods” – however, the translation I use and reflecting Deleuze’s use in his book, *Essays: Critical and Clinical* (1997, p. 118), is more useful for us.

²² This diagnostic method – or symptomatology – has a long history in Deleuze and Guattari’s oeuvres, both separately and together. Deleuze first develops his critical-clinical method in his book on Sacher-Masoch, *Coldness and Cruelty* (1989), to demonstrate how the novels of Sacher-Masoch and the Marquis de Sade “isolated two different desiring structures (masochism and sadism)” (Kaiser, 2017, pp. 185–189), rather than a single one (sodomasochism) as most psychoanalytic theories held. Deleuze’s critical-clinical method espouses the idea that writers, artists and philosophers are profound symptomatologists of culture in the same way as doctors and clinicians are of bodies. Moreover, in the same way that doctors have to map the symptoms of a patient onto a constellation of other symptoms in order to isolate a disease and arrive at the correct diagnosis, so too writers, artists and philosophers map symptoms of their culture in order to treat social diseases.

to labor, the ordinary forms of gathering and assembly, the practices of subsistence and making do were under surveillance and targeted not only by the police but also by the sociologists and the reformers who gathered the information and made the case against them, forging their lives into tragic biographies of crime and pathology. Subsistence – the art of scraping by and getting over – entailed an ongoing struggle to live in a context in which deprivation was taken for granted and domestic work or general housework defined the only opportunity available to black girls and women. The acts of the wayward – the wild thoughts, reckless dreams, interminable protests, spontaneous strikes, riotous behavior, nonparticipation, willfulness, and bold-faced refusal – redistributed the balance of need and want and sought a line of escape from debt and duty in the attempt to create a path elsewhere.

We see here a dual action, both the ways that the face criminalises and disciplines the everyday lives of these women – their loving one another, their being together, their work to survive – through law and psychiatry, and the ways that these women embrace and explore the world beyond those disciplining structures – the acts of the wayward. Waywardness here is the anarchic response and resistance the face – an idea is reflected in the work of very many other theorists with related approaches²³; it is to move down unexpected and unforeseen paths, to see what connections are generative of ways of being that can escape processes that reify the dominant image of the human.

A main element of importance here that Bogue notes of Deleuzian fabulation is that “certain characters gradually assume a larger-than-life, heroic, or even quasi-divine stature, and it is this aspect of ‘legending’ [he is] labelling ‘projective mythography’”. Such mythographic projections,” according to him, “are essential to the invention of a people to come” (2010, p. 10). This is one point of contention. Unlike Mandela, and unlike the heroic characters of the novels in consideration by Bogue as making up a people to come, Hartman’s General House Worker is and remains a minor figure barely on the margins of history. To be minor, in the Deleuzian sense, is to diverge from the imposed overcoded normative structure, to become becoming. My modest claim here against both Mbembe and the approach proposed by Bogue will be that Hartman’s General House Worker is more appropriate and exemplar of a political subject for this project than Mandela – creating the possibility for a great break in subjectivities without appeals to great heroes, and locating the larger-than-life element rather in the broader collectivity that individuals are imbricated in, making up a war machine. We have introduced Mandela and Mbembe’s conceptualization of him in terms of a line of flight and war machine – let us now turn to the General House Worker and the chorus she is part of.

3.9.1.3. The General House Worker and her chorus as more appropriate to the human than Mandela

The choice to have the General House Worker as generally nameless and interwoven in the lives of other such young Black women of that time reflects a stronger relationship with such

²³ As pointed out in an earlier footnote, Mbembe uses “wandering” (2017, p. 144), Glissant uses “errant” (Glissant, 1990). There is also Fernand Deligny’s “wander lines” (2015) which contributed to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “lines of flight”.

individuals to the broader collective, while undermining the element of grand heroism that comes with a single individual with a proper name, like Mandela, who facialises everyone who comes after. Speaking of the General House Worker, Hartman says:

“The fiction of a proper name would evade the dilemma, not resolve it. It would only postpone the question: Who is she? I suppose I could call her Mattie or Kit or Ethel or Mabel. Any of these names would do and would be the kind of name common to a young colored woman at the beginning of the twentieth century. There are other names reserved for the dark: Sugar Plum, Peaches, Pretty Baby, and Little Bit – names imposed on girls like her that hint at the pleasures afforded by intimate acts performed in rented rooms and dimly lit hallways. And there are the aliases too, the identities slipped on and discarded – a Mrs. quickly affixed to a lover’s name, or one borrowed from a favorite actress to invent a new life, or the protective cover offered by the surname of a maternal grandmother’s dead cousin – all to elude the law, keep your name out of the police register, hold the past at a safe distance, forget what grown men did to girls behind closed doors. The names and the stories rush together. The singular life of this particular girl becomes interwoven with those of other young women who crossed her path, shared her circumstances, danced with her in the chorus [...]” (2019, pp. 14–15)

Here, their interwovenness, lack of proper name, and multiplicity of provisional names allows a character to become “a placeholder for all the possibilities and the dangers awaiting young black women in the first decades of the twentieth century. In being denied a name or, perhaps, in refusing to give one, she represents all the other girls who follow in her path. Anonymity enables her to stand in for all the others. The minor figure yields to the chorus – what might be considered a kind of minor collective enunciation. All the hurt and the promise of the wayward are hers to bear” (2019, p. 15). This interchangeability imbricates the character into a collective spanning space and time, steeped in a refusal of all imposed upon them, in a present permanent creative experimental search for an escape route, to make a way of no way, to create a free life in the context of enclosure (2019, pp. 24, 261, 347). The General House Worker is a part of the chorus like a warrior is part of the nomadic war machine. That collective, called variously the chorus, the swarm, the ensemble, and the mutual aid society, is a clear case of a nomadic war machine, a probe-head, but one liberated from the kind of legending that requires Great Heroes, or leaders from on above, to break forth from the modes of subjectification imposed by state overcoding and enclosure.

Our approach so far would ask us to consider here is *what does the chorus do?* In *Wayward Lives*, all the utterances of the chorus are italicised and, when traced throughout the book, present a kind of alternative history – what Hartman refers to as the “everyday anarchy of ordinary colored girls” (p. xiv) – to more readily accepted narratives. Beyond overt connecting of the General House Worker and the chorus, Hartman uses literary techniques to make clearer their multi-layered relationship. To make just one example, in the chapter, “Wayward: A Short Entry on the Possible,” the chorus utterances make up what might be thought of as a spoken word poem:

beautiful experiment
smashing out
what might be

This can be done for all the chapters – and what we see is that the chorus, through their collective enunciations within specific machinic arrangements, effectuates a very different desire – a minor desire, a whole micropolitics within a given social field. This, then, is why we can think of the chorus as a nomadic war machine, or a probe-head, at a broader social level and still directly relating to the individual and their imbrication in the social. Revolutionary action is found in the underlying collective liberatory desires that escape capture by transcendent structures – the in-betweens and breaking-outs that fluidise arrangements. Resistance, and dance within the enclosure that creates the conditions for the end of enclosure, insofar as the end of enclosure is possible in a world so deeply reduced to State thought and capitalist logics, is accessible to all of us if we enter into a creative becoming that builds a present which can open up the future:

The chorus bears all of it for us. The Greek etymology of the word chorus refers to *dance within an enclosure*. What better articulates the long history of struggle, the ceaseless practice of black radicalism and refusal, the tumult and upheaval of open rebellion than the acts of collaboration and improvisation that unfold within the space of enclosure? The chorus is the vehicle for another kind of story, *not of the great man or the tragic hero*, but one in which all modalities play a part, *where the headless group incites change, where mutual aid provides the resource for collective action*, not leader and mass, where the untranslatable songs and seeming nonsense make good the promise of revolution. The chorus propels transformation. It is an incubator of possibility, an assembly sustaining dreams of the otherwise. (2019, pp. 347–348, emphasis added).

So what do we have here, among many quotes outlining Hartman's positions, so clearly related to the ones we have been engaging throughout this essay? We have just one located kind of everyday resistance lived around the world all over, outside of anarchism proper but thoroughly anarchic nonetheless, in this case from a group multiply marginalised and oppressed, making life an art, so much so that for them their everyday forms of life are against the law and against the state. Like Mandela, their lives are built on improvisation, experiment, identities slipped on and discarded, a play with shadows and the moral underworld, but more than Mandela (and especially, Mbembe's portrayal of Mandela), they are deeply imbricated in the collectivity that they make up a larger social form with, so much so that they are any of the chorus, they are permanently becoming, they are flashes. They are a nomadic war machine at a much larger scale. Though Mandela and the General House Worker are both incubators of possibility that may puncture and break enclosure, the General House Worker does not rely on the idea of a great individual, a leader above and ultimately outside and invariably eventually co-opted (or killed, like Chris Hani). They are themselves, and something else and something more, together with the rest, in a life of refusal and strike, against the desire for mass, against work, against leaders, for experiment, provisionality, and becoming, together with those who share affinity through lived experience and embodied, to build a new world, a mutual aid society, in and alongside the shell of the old world, Leviathan, where, if the Open World is possible at all, it may emerge.

The General House Worker, in the way that she is more always-already collective and individual, and never larger than life in a simplistic sense in ways that make her perceptible to transcendent structures, is better than Mandela generally as an exemplar of a political actor within and towards the human.

Having made this small adjustment to Mbembe's conceptualisation of the human in favour of one even more appropriate to the nonnormative project, in the final section, I tie everything together with the anarchist notion of prefiguration.

3.10. Insurrectionary time: Prefiguration and the world-to-come

"The project of a world in common founded on the principle of "equal shares" and on the principle of the fundamental unity of human beings is a universal project. If we look carefully, we can already see the signs of this world-to-come in the present, although it is true that they are fragile. (Mbembe, 2017, pp. 176-177)

Mbembe calls for specific relationships to times, having developed an argument about how, for Black people, one of the functions of colonial violence was not "only to empty the colonised's past of all substance, but also to foreclose on the future" 2017, p. 164). A world-to-come, just like a people to come, is an arrangement of some multiplicity in the present that is formed in conjunction with some elsewhere or some other time, to provide the possibility for a future that is otherwise. In other words, it involves the creation of contingent conditions that could allow for the emergence of a different kind of future. That set of conditions are actualised as nomadic war machines, arrangements breaking from State-forms to build more fluid arrangements, less determined by transcendent forms, in processes of creative experimentation. Through a deep understanding of one's history, one's capacities, one's options in the present, and the connecting of concepts and times and forms that are not prescribed for one another, we can choose to arrange ourselves differently, to form and make up probe-heads which may make the face more fluid, and may ultimately dissolve it.

The parallels between a nomadic war machine in the people to come and the anarchist praxis of prefiguration are substantial. Prefiguration is an active orientation in the present, based on a rigorous critique of the past – an orientation of oneself and those one has affinity with to adopt new relationships that prefigure future, anarchic forms of self-organisation.²⁴

For Mbembe, as with Deleuze, coming to see oneself as sharing a world in common begins by recognising difference as metaphysically primary to sameness, as "positive difference" (Mbembe, 2017, p. 93) – not subsumed under sameness or actualised diversity and defined in terms of its negation of an original form. In a world of positive difference, unity is always a multiplicity. Recognising oneself as different but still participating in the whole, one can recognise oneself as "an autonomous source of creation, to attest that [one] is human, to rediscover direction and a foundation for what [one] is and what [one] does" (2017, p. 93). This kind of differing is a becoming, a futurity. In a sense, Mbembe is furthering the project of taking up Black difference in a new way, in which, "on the basis of a critique of the past, we must create a future that is inseparable from the notions of justice, dignity, and the in-common" (Mbembe, 2017, p. 177). In it, critiques of time itself should teach "us that time is always unpredictable and provisional. It changes endlessly, and its forms are always uncertain. It therefore always represents a heterogeneous, irregular, and fragmented region of human experience" (p. 122), it is a multiplicity²⁵ -

²⁴ See for example Ruth Kinna's *Utopianism and Prefiguration*, in Chrostowska and Ingram (2016, p. 198), or Cindy Milstein's *Reclaim the Cities: From Protest to Popular Power*, in Moser (2012, pp. 57–65), or likely any introduction to anarchist politics.

²⁵ See *Bergsonism* (Deleuze, 1966).

our relation to which we should always aim to grasp for our own use, in such a way that minimises how it conditions us, in order to produce the unexpected, whereby the present as present is “is a time of differential duration whose two laws are those of disjuncture and simultaneity (co-occurrence)” (p. 122), including elements of both the past and future while providing for the possibility of their abolition (p. 122). This, incidentally, is also a good critique of notions of ‘progress’ and the homogeneity and linearity it contains.

Here “to remember is above all to distribute difference and produce a doubling precisely because there always exists an essential disjuncture between the different units of time in their relation to the event” (p. 122) – and our relationships to the past as memory and to the future as repetition of the same are in themselves relatively fixed structures that must be multiplied, fluidised, and proliferated, to become as lively and interpenetrating as possible.

What then do we prefigure in our political praxis? What Mbembe would call for the un-foreclosure of the future, through processes of divination (2017, p. 122); the studied, vigilant, and situated process of setting arrangements (of time) into creative becoming with one another, towards making unexpected (*unforeseen*), more fluid (less transcendently-structured) arrangements. But the Open World, the nonnormative world, as a fully and continually decentralising set of global loci in as flowing a fluidity as can be found, is less an arrangement than a meta-arrangement of un-arranging that makes arrangements fluid and supple, maximally allowing for un-arranging – for arrangements to be otherwise.

Following from Max Stirner, who is a significant and deep influence on both anarchism and Marxism²⁶, and whose work has many parallels with Deleuze²⁷, this is a call for permanent insurrection, and not for revolution; “The revolution is aimed at new arrangements, while the insurrection leads us to no longer let ourselves be arranged” (Stirner, 2017, p. 328). What we have then is the insurrectionary anarchist notion of prefiguration as permanent calculated revolt against transcendent forms. Yet this insurrection is a reframing of the term itself, both appropriate to its original image and differing from it, because it includes in it a reparatory process; the return to an un-enclosed set of relations. Insurrection is the continuous destruction of State-forms, and insurrectionary time is to live in the present with an employment of memory, a critique of the past, a critique of holding an image of the future in the form of positive projects, and an ethic of reparation towards the wounds living in each, that un-forecloses the future.

3.11. Conclusion to Part III

What this Part of the essay has served to do is to expand our minimal idea of the human as unenclosed world, arrived at in Part II. I worked to show further ways that enclosure and transcendence make up the same processes that constitute many of our current, contingent, political arrangements, and plotted out the beginning of the sets of political relations we can understand as human, arguing that the form of the human corresponds to anarchic societies.

In thinking about political praxis on the way to those societies, I considered forms of political organisation and exemplary political actors, including Mbembe’s example of Mandela, arguing that Hartman’s General House Worker is more appropriate to the project of the human – and our general praxis towards the human world as that of prefiguration, the becoming of a what

²⁶ See Blumenfeld’s (2018) introduction to *All Things Are Nothing To Me: The Unique Philosophy Of Max Stirner*.

²⁷ See Chapter 7 of *Deleuze and Anarchism* (2019), “Deleuze and Stirner: Ties, Tensions and Rifts.”

Deleuze and Guattari call a “people to come” (1987, pp. 345, 377, 1994, pp. 109, 176), and Mbembe calls a “world-to-come” (2017, p. 177).

Conclusion

This essay has been a metaphysical-ethical-political engagement with the question of humanness, primarily from an antiracist and anticolonial perspective, but extending to all forms of oppressive relations, by bringing Achille Mbembe's Deleuzian immanent critique to bear on the rich tradition of counterhumanisms. Mbembe's geographic reframing of the Open World as human, then, allows a the complete integration of the projects of counterhumanism and nonhumanism as explicated in Part I. Conceptualising the human in terms of the Open World, we have grasped a humanness outside of what would generally be considered its common sense idea, to find a form of humanness that is liberatory and unstratified, one that enables the ever-opening-up of possibility for life, while still allowing us to use the term in regular ways, including those employed by anticolonial movements that have always recognised the centrality of our idea of humanness to liberation, and humanness as that which has been wounded by the world-destroying forms enabled by transcendence; state-capitalist colonialism. Through our survey of the relations engendered by an immanent critique of State-forms in our current political arrangements, which I have shown to be the same critique that brings about the Open World, I have established that the human is an ever-deepening world characterised by anarchic values; a decentralised anticapitalist world rooted in work for life - the prefigurative and insurrectionary ethic of mutuality and sharing, not just of the resources of the earth, but in the relations of the cosmos and the project of humanness itself.

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