The Text
An International Peer Reviewed Online Journal of Language, Literature and Critical Theory
ISSN:2581-9526

Algorithmic Flesh: Data Bodies, Surveillance Capitalism, and Posthuman Embodiment

P. Prayer Elmo Raj
Assistant Professor
PG & Research Department of English
Pachaiyappa's College for Men
Chennai
ORCID: 0000-0002-4771-2107

Abstract

This paper elaborates the notion of algorithmic flesh as a critical analytic for rethinking posthuman embodiment within the regimes of surveillance capitalism and digital biopower. Departing from liberal humanist ontologies that suggest body as an autonomous, self-transparent site of agency and presence, it contends that contemporary computational substructures inaugurate a profound ontological, epistemic, and political rearticulation of corporeality. In the algorithmic milieu, embodiment is no longer apprehended as the locus of subjective propinquity but as a divisible, machinically intelligible assemblage of data derivatives, continuously extracted, parsed, and prognostically modulated. Positioned at the intersection of biopolitical governance, societies of control, and critical posthumanism, the paper theorizes the mutation from biological administration to algorithmic governmentality, where life is reformatted as an operational substrate calibrated for capital's anticipatory capture. Rejecting affirmative posthumanisms that celebrate hybridity, becoming, and boundary dissolution, the paper advances a materialist and critical posthumanism attuned to the asymmetrical distributions of power and vulnerability embedded in digital ontologies. Algorithmic flesh designates the paradoxical condition where corporeal susceptibility and affective exposure are intensified through their algorithmic exteriorization and quantification.

Key words: Algorithmic flesh, posthumanism, surveillance capitalism, digital biopower, datafication, embodiment, control societies, power, computational capitalism

The Text
An International Peer Reviewed Online Journal of Language, Literature and Critical Theory
ISSN:2581-9526

The accelerating imbrication of human life with computational infrastructures has engendered an epistemic and ontological rupture, where digital technologies cease to function as mediatory apparatuses and emerge instead as generative agents in the production, modulation, and governance of life. Human body, under this condition, is reconstituted as a machinically decipherable assemblage of datafied fragments, distributed across networks of capture, prediction, and optimization. Ontological reformatting signifies a decisive passage from disciplinary and biopolitical modalities of governance to algorithmic governmentality, characterized by anticipatory computation, infrastructural modulation, and perpetual surveillance. Algorithmic flesh designates the paradoxical locus where corporeality endures and dissolves, persisting as a site of affect and vulnerability even as it is externalized, abstracted, and operationalized as a data resource. Rather than announcing a post-corporeal transcendence, algorithmic rationality intensifies the corporeal regime by enfolding bodily life within circuits of capital accumulation and predictive control. Flesh does not vanish but is reprogrammed as an extractive substrate whose analytic value resides in its generativity as data and futurity as crisis.

Situated within critical posthumanist inquiry, biopolitical theory, and analyses of surveillance capitalism, this paper delineates the historical shift from sovereign and disciplinary power to regimes of digital biopower, forms of governance that act pre-emptively upon affects, tendencies, and potentialities. While classical biopolitics sought to regulate by norm, algorithmic governance operates through speculation, rendering life calculable within probabilistic frameworks that displace the epistemic centrality of lived experience. In contrast to affirmative posthumanisms that romanticize hybridity, techno-symbiosis, or ontological indeterminacy, this intervention asserts a materialist-critical posthumanism attentive to the asymmetrical distribution of vulnerability, exposure, and exploitation inscribed in algorithmic architectures. It reveals how digital infrastructures perpetuate and intensify pre-existing hierarchies by differentially computing and governing bodies according to logics of extraction and value production. Reconceptualizing embodiment as an infrastructural interface of inscription, dispossession, and control, this study advances posthumanism as a genealogical critique of the technopolitical conditions through which

life becomes intelligible, governable, and economically operational within the contemporary digital order.

From Biological Flesh to Algorithmic Flesh

Contemporary moment is defined by a radical crisis in the status of human body as a coherent ontological and political figure. Long stabilized within the liberal humanist episteme as a discrete, autonomous unit, body has historically served as the metaphysical anchor of subjectivity. It is structured by interiority and corporeal integrity but has become indefensible amid digital infrastructures. What is at issue is the dissolution of embodiment as a stable ground. In the posthuman "there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation" (Hayles 3).

Within the logics of ubiquitous computation, body no longer manifests as an organic locus of lived being. It is increasingly decomposed into machinically legible fragments. It signals a shift from corporeal unity to informational dispersal. Embodiment, therefore, assumes the status of a divisible, modular archive, an object of computation rather than a subject of perception. Lupton describes it as a "body decomposed into strings of symbols... increasingly constituted by them" (28). The transformation exceeds technological evolution. It institutes a profound reconfiguration of power. Body now functions as a privileged site of extraction, subordinated to computational regimes. Experience ceases to be possessed. Contemporary crisis of embodiment coincides with algorithmic infrastructures that transmute vital processes into operational substrates. What collapses is the fiction of a sovereign subject. In its wake arises a posthuman condition where embodiment is externalized and quantified. Body endures only as a residual effect of systems that exceed it.

Posthumanist theory emerges in response to the crisis of embodiment by displacing anthropocentric presumptions. Through its critique of the human, posthumanism has provided instruments for dismantling human exceptionalism. However, it remains an uncontested formation. A critical distinction must be maintained between affirmative posthumanism and a more negative or critical posthumanism. Affirmative posthumanism, drawing upon new materialist vitalisms, focuses on the generative collapse of boundaries. Braidotti argues that we must ensure "becoming-machine... does not simply serve the 'becoming-human' of the machine for the sake of profit" (37). While essential, these frameworks risk aestheticizing interpenetration while neglecting

asymmetrical power organizing these entanglements. Cyborg has been thoroughly assimilated into a technocultural matrix that normalizes algorithmic governance. Celebrations of posthuman embodiment frequently obscure how digital infrastructures differentially render bodies exploitable. Critical posthumanism, by contrast, insists on embedding embodiment within material histories of capitalism. It enquires whose interests coalescence serves and at what corporeal cost. "The more 'life' is defined as information, the more it becomes manageable... as a substrate for power" (Galloway and Thacker129). Within this outline, posthuman body must be theorized as a site of algorithmic inscription.

Algorithmic flesh is a critical heuristic for theorizing embodiment within surveillance capitalism. Rather than framing posthumanism as a narrative of enhancement, it situates embodiment within formations that reorganize life as a domain of control. Couldry and Mejias suggest that "appropriation of human life" allows data to be "extracted from it for profit" (xi). Three interrelated problems direct this inquiry. First, what becomes of embodiment when flesh is transmuted into data? Second, how does algorithmic governance reconfigure power over life? Finally, is posthuman embodiment to be understood as emancipatory or disciplinary? Together, these questions reorient posthuman theory toward a materialist critique, arguing that the future of thought lies in confronting the conditions through which life is rendered computable.

From Biopolitics to Digital Biopower

Foucault's formulation of biopolitics marks a decisive rupture in the conceptualization of modern configurations of power. Departing from paradigms centred on juridico-sovereign authority, biopolitics designates a modality of power that takes life as its privileged object and field of intervention. "Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects... but with living beings" (Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge* 143). Power no longer functions through spectacular punishment or the threat of death but through the calibrated management of vitality. It transforms biological existence into an irreducibly political problem. Body functions as the material substrate upon which power inscribes itself, rendering life calculable, regulable, and governable.

Biopolitical power operates at two interlocking and mutually reinforcing levels: the anatomo-politics of the individual body and the biopolitics of populations. At the level of the individual, disciplinary techniques fabricate docile, useful, and productive bodies. At the level of the population, "biopolitics deals with the population as a political problem... as power's problem"

(Foucault. *Society* 245). Biopolitics does not displace but supplements discipline, extending power from the enclosure of institutions into the diffuse management of social life. Agamben argues that that the "entry of *zoē* into the sphere of the *polis*... constitutes the decisive event of modernity" (4), signalling the politicization of bare life as such. Body remains fundamentally biological but is governed as an organism whose functions can be optimized, normalized, and secured. Normativity assumes a central role. "Biopolitics was always concerned with the 'optimization' of life" (Rose 54). However, Foucauldian body preserves a degree of material opacity and recalcitrance. It is rendered visible, mapped, and monitored, but not yet fully externalized as a continuous stream of machinically operable data. Biopolitics presupposes a body that can be observed and aggregated, but not one captured and parsed at the level of micro-temporal signals and real-time behavioural fluctuations. Regulation operates retrospectively and statistically rather than anticipating and modulating behaviour instantaneously. Revisting biopolitics today is to acknowledge both its diagnostic power and its historical limits. While biopolitical rationalities endure, they are increasingly supplemented and transformed by forms of power that treat life as informational pattern and probabilistic profile. It is precisely at this threshold that digital biopower takes shape.

Deleuze's assumption of "societies of control" provides a conceptual hinge between classical biopolitics and contemporary regimes of algorithmic governance. Deleuze identifies a mutation where power ceases to function primarily through spatial confinement and institutional enclosure, operating instead through continuous modulation, circulation, and variation. "Enclosures are molds... but controls are a modulation, like a self-deforming cast" (Deleuze 4). Control generalizes and intensifies discipline, dissolving the rigid boundaries that previously organized social life into discrete institutional zones. Individuals no longer move between clearly delimited enclosures. They circulate within an open-ended, metastable system of permanent evaluation and scoring. Within such emergent configuration, power functions through codes, passwords, and protocols rather than laws alone. Subjectivity undergoes a profound transformation, "individuals have become 'dividuals,' and masses, samples, data, markets, or 'banks'" (Deleuze 5). Identity is no longer conceived as fixed, continuous, or interior, but as operational and derivative, constituted through dynamically updated profiles and calculative segmentations. It marks a shift in the ontology of subject. Bounded subjectivity gives way to a dispersed, datafied mode of existence. Control works by modulating behaviour in advance through

continuous feedback loops and algorithmic adjustments. As Galloway observes, "control is not a weight that crushes; it is a fluid that surrounds" (13), suffusing the milieu rather than descending from a transcendent centre. Deleuze's analysis anticipates important structural features of digital and networked systems, including their emphasis on modulation, circulation, and coded access. However, control society remains in many respects formally and abstractly sketched. What remains underdeveloped is a detailed account of the material and computational infrastructures, platforms, databases, machine-learning systems, through which control is concretely actualized. Deleuze identifies modulation as the signature of a new regime but does not fully thematize the algorithmic architectures and data economies that render such modulation technically and economically viable. Nevertheless, disappearance of bounded subjectivity and emergence of the dividual are important for thinking posthuman embodiment. Dividual names the condition of a body apprehended, disaggregated, and circulated as extractable signals and data points. Deleuze's control society furnishes a conceptual grammar for digital biopower, even as it calls for further elaboration in light of contemporary algorithmic governance.

Digital biopower designates a regime in which life is regulated, formatted, and optimized through algorithmic prediction and large-scale data analytics. Unlike classical biopolitics, digital biopower governs life not primarily at the level of the visible organism but at the level of its informational surrogates and representations. It "targets us no longer as subjects but as 'profiles' or 'patterns' of behavior" (Rouvroy 152). Object of power is no longer the embodied organism, but the behavioural pattern extracted from its traces, logs, and signals. There is a shift from normalization to prediction. Biopolitical governance seeks to align bodies with statistical norms, algorithmic systems forecast future behaviour and act upon the space of potentiality. Predictive rationality transforms governance into an anticipatory and pre-emptive enterprise. Power intervenes not only in response to actions that have occurred, but in anticipation of actions that may or are algorithmically inferred to occur. Surveillance capitalism translates experience into data prepared as prediction products designed to anticipate what you will do. Present is subordinated to the management and capitalization of potential futures. Choice remains formally intact but is pre-structured by inference, recommendation, and nudge architectures. Digital biopower operates through pre-emption rather than overt prohibition, producing compliance and modulation by shaping the very conditions under which decisions appear to be freely made. It

functions largely below the threshold of conscious awareness and deliberation. "Datafication of life... is a new way of governing it through the extraction of value" (Couldry 21), relocating power within opaque socio-technical systems that convert everyday practices into monetizable information. Body becomes legible and politically relevant only insofar as it generates data streams that can be harvested, aggregated, and traded. Embodiment is reconstituted as an operational surface, a sensorium for capture, on which what matters most is not what the body is in itself but what it is likely to do. Han describes the "knowledge of the dynamics of social communication" as a "knowledge of domination" (*Transparent* 12), indicating that epistemic access to patterns of interaction is inseparable from new forms of control. It signals a mutation of biopolitics in which life is abstracted, discretized, and reassembled as data, subjected to predictive modelling and optimization. The emergent configuration sets the stage for theorizing algorithmic flesh, where embodiment is refigured as a site of extraction, calculation, and control under digital biopower.

Surveillance Capitalism and the Datafication of Life

Ascendance of surveillance capitalism includes amplification of imbrication between digital apparatuses and political economy, inducting a socio-economic order in which life is rendered the paradigmatic raw material for capital's continuous accumulation. While classical industrial capitalism centralized the exploitation of productive labor, surveillance capitalism operates through the infrastructural appropriation, codification, and commodification of lived experience as data. The transformation defines a neo-colonial frontier defined by the enclosure of subjectivity. "Just as historical colonialism's appropriation of land, labor, and resources was necessary for the growth of industrial capitalism, so today's appropriation of human life through data is necessary for the next stage of capitalist development" (Couldry & Mejias 12). Extractive dispositif surpasses liberal models of exchange, reciprocity, or consent. Experience ceases to be an attribute possessed by subjects and instead becomes an ontological resource expropriated by algorithmic infrastructures. Extraction becomes ubiquitous, embedded in the mundane operations of everyday life. "Extraction does not only happen in the mines; it happens in the city, through the capturing of data that are produced by the simple fact of living" (Mezzadra & Neilson 45).

If classical political economy situated the human body as the locus of productive power, advent of surveillance capitalism displaces it by instituting the *data body* as the contemporary site of value generation, a body whose worth derives from its incessant production of informational

traces. “Data body is a body decomposed into strings of symbols... It is a body that is not only represented by data but is also increasingly constituted by them” (28). Data body emerges as a post-biological modality of embodiment, an ontological derivative of computational abstraction. Conversion of the corporeal into the digital entails a profound rearticulation of the biological. “Biometrics involves a process of digitalization of the body... the body is translated into a code that is subsequently used to define and ‘know’ that body within a specific functional system” (Ploeg 57). In this process, living body engenders a machinic simulacrum that circulates autonomously within the networks of data capitalism. Surveillance no longer seeks dialogic engagement with the subject but instead seeks anticipatory control over the organism. “The goal is not to understand the subject, but to bypass the subject in order to predict the body's future movements and affects” (Andrejevic 72).

A defining mutation of surveillance capitalism lies in the algorithmic delegation of decision-making processes, an alteration through which capital attains a quasi-autonomous agency. Market rationality becomes recursively instantiated within machinic architectures, reifying computation as an operational ontology. “Computation is no longer a tool for representing the world; it is an environment for the production of new realities... where algorithms are the new architecture of power” (14). Autonomization precipitates both a displacement of accountability and an obfuscation of political intentionality. “Decisions that used to be based on human judgment are now made by automated systems, which hide their normative preferences behind a veil of technical complexity” (Pasquale 3). Within machinic dispensation, power exerts its force through infrastructural default rather than through discursive persuasion. Algorithmic apparatus functions as “the new manager of the digital factory, a silent governor that optimizes the flow of value without ever appearing as a person” (Pasquinelli 15), a post-human administrator that silently orchestrates capital’s cybernetic optimization.

Conventional critiques of surveillance capitalism frequently focus privacy violations. Nevertheless, liberal frameworks fail to account for the deeper ontological displacement wherein the subject is circumvented. “Algorithmic governmentality... bypasses the reflexive subject. It does not demand our consent; it simply reconfigures the environment in which we move” (Rouvroy 152). Under the hegemony of datafication, the concept of a discrete, self-possessed, and private subject becomes historically exhausted. Liberal subject is methodically hollowed out by the

infrastructures that sustain its digital existence. “Liberal subject, defined by autonomy and privacy, is being hollowed out by infrastructures that prioritize ‘modulability’ over self-determination” (Cohen 64). Invisibility is rendered structurally unachievable, and the juridical protections of individual autonomy disintegrate. Chun states that, “privacy is a historical anomaly... The digital age demands a move from 'sovereign individuals' to 'nodes in a network' where invisibility is no longer an option” (92).

Algorithmic Flesh

The figure of data body, while illuminating, remains insufficient to apprehend the material extremities of embodiment under digital capitalism. *Algorithmic flesh* is a configuration that acknowledges the persistence of the corporeal even amid its abstraction. “Life is no longer just biological; it is a set of protocols. ‘Flesh’ is now an operational substrate for the network” (Galloway & Thacker 129). The change exposes the violence underpinning datafication and the emergence of a new *vitalism* within computational capitalism. “The capture of the vital flows of the living, which are then transformed into data, is the new frontier of capital... a new form of ‘computational vitalism’” (Mbembe 165). Algorithmic flesh names the liminal zone in which corporeal vitality is subjected to algorithmic capture and modulation. Within the posthuman condition, biological embodiment is relegated to the status of an obsolescent residue. “In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation... the body is seen as a redundant obsolescence” (Hayles 3). Algorithmic flesh outlines the epochal moment wherein surveillance capitalism governs life at the threshold of its own potentiality.

The concept of *algorithmic flesh* is a theoretical intervention within contemporary discourses of posthuman embodiment. It does not signify a metaphorical extrapolation of the corporeal into digital domains, nor simply a transliteration of biological substance into informational form. Rather, algorithmic flesh names a historically contingent nexus where the living body is perpetually subjected to computational capture, operational modulation, and predictive modeling, without ever being exhaustively consumed by these processes. Flesh is not a substance but a “texture” of the world (Merleau-Ponty 39). To theorize flesh as algorithmic is to recognize the “texture” as irreversibly interwoven with code. It denotes the condition under which

flesh persists only insofar as it can be rendered algorithmically legible, while simultaneously exceeding any system of representation that attempts such capture.

Unlike *body*, which traditionally functions as the object of phenomenological apprehension or biological analysis, *flesh* foregrounds exposure, contingency, and affective vulnerability. Flesh is not a stable ontology but a zone of susceptibility, a permeable surface through which power inscribes. To conceptualize flesh as algorithmic is to acknowledge the violence of inscription inherent in every act of datafication. Algorithmic flesh is less an ontological category than a political condition, constituted through infrastructures that enforce the ceaseless translation of life into machinic syntax. It resists the reduction of embodiment to immaterial information, a gesture that would eclipse the "fleshly experience of the world that can never be fully captured by formal symbols" (Hayles 196).

To delineate the analytical force of algorithmic flesh, one must differentiate it from proximate constructs such as *body* and *data*. Body, in its classical philosophical connotations, presupposes coherence, boundary, and perceptual totality. *Data body*, by contrast, designates the abstraction generated through digital architectures. Computational systems attempt to bypass the body's mediatory function as the "medium of our being-in-the-world" through purely informational operations (Hansen, *Feed-forward* 12). Algorithmic flesh indexes the tension between corporeal experience and machinic representation: the coercive process through which living bodies are compelled to manifest as data, though they can never be reduced to their computational proxies. Flesh subsists as pain, fatigue, and vulnerability, those dense strata of existence that exceed algorithmic mapping. However, excess should not be romanticized as resistance. "Data derivative" does not signify a person but reassembles residual traces to forecast potential futures (Amoore 9). Within the epistemic regime, opacity becomes a variable to be problematized and optimized away. The distinction between flesh and data cannot ground a politics of exteriority. No transcendental outside remains. Algorithmic flesh instead marks the locus where capture falters but never fails entirely, where residues, errors, and affective excesses are recursively internalized as material for further acts of optimization.

Theorization of algorithmic flesh must be genealogically situated within the Derridean critique of logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence. Derrida's notion of *trace* destabilizes immediacy, asserting that "the trace is not a presence but rather the simulacrum of a presence that

dislocates" (47). Algorithmic infrastructures radicalize the Derridean logic of inscription. They do not record bodily activity but generate it as legible, actionable, and governable. Trace becomes no longer an abstract *différance* but a material operation embedded within apparatuses of capture and control. In this critical regime, flesh is preemptively written, anticipated before it acts. However, algorithmic inscription diverges fundamentally from traditional writing. It proceeds without address, interpretation, or hermeneutic delay. "To be is to be inscribed," yet the human is increasingly consigned to technical traces that function beyond the domain of selfhood (Stiegler 141). Meaning is displaced by operational efficacy, and signification gives way to correlation. Body is inscribed not for comprehension but for intervention. Such a shift reconfigures subjectivity. Algorithmic flesh enacts a condition of *unilateral inscription*, a mode of writing that exposes the body to machinic legibility without invoking its consent or recognition.

For Stiegler, *technics* constitutes the originary prosthesis of human temporality, the condition through which memory externalizes. Within algorithmic governance, however, technics no longer supports memory, it pre-empts it. "Digital tertiary retention... allows for the total control of time and the pre-emption of the future through the calculation of probabilities" (Stiegler 32). Anticipatory logic transforms the flesh into a site of temporal expropriation, where the future is continuously colonized in advance. Algorithmic flesh emerges within a regime where the temporal metabolism of the body is subordinated to predictive computation. The present moment is perpetually overwritten by algorithmically generated futures, displacing the human subject's agency over temporal experience. Stiegler recognizes the "destruction of the psyche," where the subject ceases to be the author of its own actions (84). What dissipates is the *interval*, the delay through which reflection and resistance might materialize. Under the aegis of surveillance capitalism, algorithmic flesh is pharmacological without pharmakon: exteriorization that no longer conditions individuation but hastens its disintegration.

Despite the algorithmic saturation of the contemporary milieu, flesh never coincides entirely with its computed representations. There always persists an irreducible remainder, noise, error, or excess, that evades perfect capture. However, the remainder does not escape power. It becomes a focal site of intensified intervention. Browne demonstrates how algorithmic "sorting" precipitates tangible corporeal violence when systemic misrecognition encounters marginalized bodies (16). Algorithmic flesh is both the target of algorithmic power and the locus of its

destabilization. Forms of pain or embodiment that resist quantification expose the limits of algorithmic rationality. The dialectic reveals the violence constituting algorithmic flesh. Life is "that which is constantly being separated from itself," a remainder engendered by the law that governs it (Agamben, *The Highest* 82). The algorithmic is inscribed within a governance of preemption. Corporeality is treated as a "site of extraction" even in its incapacitated or debilitated form (Puar 74). Algorithmic flesh titles an ontological condition of radical exposure, a mode of embodiment wherein vulnerability ceases to be episodic and becomes structural. Weakness functions not as failure but as the aperture through which governance penetrates; flesh is managed precisely by virtue of its unpredictability.

Algorithmic flesh compels a reconfiguration of posthuman embodiment beyond the techno-utopian rhetoric of enhancement and transcendence. Posthuman condition is defined not by transcendence of the body, but by an intensification of corporeal governance. The posthuman subject remains "embodied and embedded" within a techno-material assemblage (Braidotti 193). Body does not vanish. It is functionally rearticulated as a site of operational capture. Rethinking embodiment in these terms demands relinquishing the human/posthuman opposition as an ontological dualism. Posthumanism marks the dissolution of a particular *concept* of the human as autonomous, self-sovereign agent (Wolfe xv). Algorithmic flesh is posthuman because it exposes the instability of the liberal-humanist body as a political construct. What emerges is not the transcendence of the human, but the unveiling of a new regime of exposure and inscription. Algorithmic flesh confronts the coercive intelligibility of the body as data, to encounter life governed not by consciousness or labor, but by algorithmic anticipation.

Posthuman Embodiment and the Death of Experience

One of the ontological ramifications of algorithmic embodiment, a condition increasingly theorized as algorithmic flesh, is the systematic erosion of "lived experience" (*Erlebnis*) as a coherent epistemic and phenomenological category. The evolution signifies a shift where the subjective immediacy of human existence is no longer the primary site of meaning-making. Instead, the phenomenological richness of being is decomposed into discrete data points, subordinating the qualitative depth of the lifeworld to the quantitative requirements of computational legibility and predictive modeling. Historically, *Erlebnis* has denoted the irreducible site of subjectivity, temporal, embodied, and situated within the contingencies of

perception. Within algorithmic regimes, however, phenomenological locus is displaced by metrics that purport to measure, translate, and ultimately pre-empt it. "Datafication is the transformation of social action into online quantified data, allowing for real-time tracking and predictive analysis" (Dijck 198). Under the hegemony of datafication, experience ceases to be an interior horizon from which meaning emanates; it is externalized, operationalized, and rendered legible to machinic systems whose functioning is categorically devoid of experiential capacity. Dismantling of the experiential does not occur through the negation of experience, but through its instrumental transmutation into calculable information. Affect mutates into measurable engagement. Attention becomes quantifiable duration. Desire is captured as click-through rate. Temporal depth of lived experience collapses into the shallow seriality of data units, stripped of indeterminacy, contradiction, and difference. As Couldry and Mejias argue that, "the result of datafication is that the 'natural' world of human life is being turned into a new kind of 'resource' for capital" (xi). What vanishes is not the sensory or affective register, but its opacity, its obstinate refusal to coincide fully with instrumental rationality. Experience persists, but only in forms already formatted for algorithmic ingestion.

When experience is refashioned as metric, its capacity to interrupt, surprise, or exceed the systems that operationalize it is extinguished. Algorithmic infrastructures no longer reflect or record lived realities. They actively configure the horizon of the perceptible. What one encounters, desires, or feels is already conditioned by predictive protocols that pre-emptively model the subject's potential comportment. "The dream of the digital era is the elimination of the interval between the event and its representation—the fantasy of perfect transparency" (Massumi 22). Experience becomes recursive, folded back into the representational logics that claim to measure it. It marks a decisive rupture with the phenomenological supposition of a subject who engages the world prior to conceptual mediation. "Industrialization of memory leads to the automation of the mind, and consequently to the loss of the feeling of existence" (Stiegler 41). Algorithmic flesh perforates the pre-reflective strata of perception, producing a world encountered as it is already filtered, ranked, and optimized. Representation ceases to follow experience; it generates it.

Algorithmic appropriation of experience cannot be disentangled from the quantification of affect. Where affect theory has long valorized the pre-cognitive and non-representational dimensions of sensation, the irreducible excesses of intensity that escape symbolic capture,

computational capitalism transforms affect into a privileged site of extraction and prediction. "The target of control has shifted from the subject to the incorporeal dimension of the event, the affect" (Massumi 54). Emotional life is not expressed but deduced, not lived but inferred through behavioral proxies. Minute variations in facial expression, gesture, tone, or physiological signal become inputs within affective models that reformulate the ineffable as calculable. "Empathic" media do not strive to understand the subject, but to *read* it, to render the unarticulable legible through technoscientific translation (McStay 22).

Affective states marked by indeterminacy, contradictions, or oscillations are stabilized into discrete categories within statistical architectures. Sadness, anxiety, joy, or desire are re-inscribed as functional variables to be optimized according to metrics of efficiency or engagement. "The digital paradigm is one of transparency, eliminating the negativity of the hidden, the obscure, and the ambiguous" (Han 9). The ambivalence inherent to affect, its power to deviate and dislocate, becomes reclassified as informational noise, as error waiting to be algorithmically reduced. "The affective turn in the social sciences emerges precisely because power now operates at the level of the pre-individual and the pre-conscious" (Clough 15).

Consequence is not misrepresentation but preemptive foreclosure. Affect becomes anticipatory, managed before its manifestation. "Engagement is not a feeling, but a metric" (Karppi 43) captures the recursive logic of this condition. Feeling no longer unfolds as a spontaneous intensity. It functions as a regulatory mechanism aligned with the operational imperatives of the platform. Pleasure and attention are sustained insofar as they produce circulation, while perturbation is minimized where it threatens systemic continuity. The result is an affective economy of control in which sensation is not obliterated but governed, its indeterminacy domesticated. Algorithmic flesh outlines a new apparatus of affective modulation wherein emotion persists, but only as an infrastructural medium through which power directs behavior.

To speak of the "death of experience" is not to announce the evaporation of feeling or perception, but to mark the exhaustion of phenomenology as an epistemological project capable of addressing the contemporary condition. Classical phenomenology suggests a subject who constitutes meaning through intentional acts of perception and reflection. "Twenty-first-century media target the pre-specific dimension of experience, operating at scales inaccessible to human consciousness" (Hansen, *New Philosophy* 5). Algorithmic mediation intervenes before the moment

of intentionality, reorganizing the field of the perceptible prior to any conscious encounter. Perception ceases to designate a relation between subject and world. It becomes a relation between system and signal. "World" as encountered by the human subject is already composed through algorithmic filtration, where predictive analytics determine what may appear, what may attract attention, and what remains unseen. "Algorithmic reason is not reflective but generative; it constructs rather than mimics the real" (Parisi x). Intentionality, a cornerstone of phenomenology, is preempted. The subject orients not toward phenomena but toward algorithmically systematized stimuli. "We increasingly inhabit environments in which the human functions as a node in a larger, non-human cognitive assemblage" (Hayles, *Unthought* 11).

Phenomenological description becomes untenable under such conditions. There is no primordial experience to retrieve, no originary moment of unmediated perception. Experience has always been technical, but in algorithmic culture, technicity becomes totalizing: it no longer conditions access to the world, it *is* the world's mode of appearing. "Technicity does not follow the subject; it constitutes the field within which the subject comes into being" (Simondon, *Individuation* 162). World is experienced not as natural referent but as computational output. "The automation of perception marks the end of the horizon of meaning; we no longer see, we are seen" (Virilio 59) finds renewed urgency here. Algorithmic flesh thus annihilates phenomenology's privileged claim to describe lived immediacy. To speak "from experience" today is no longer to articulate resistance. It is to articulate from within the apparatus of capture that already formats subjectivity as data.

One of the ontologically disquieting effects of algorithmic flesh is the erosion of interiority as a site of meaning. Liberal humanism and classical phenomenology alike presuppose an interior domain of consciousness, intention, or reflection that mediates the subject's relation to the world. Algorithmic infrastructures disintegrate interiority by reconstructing inner states from exteriorized, machinically interpretable signals. The distinction between the inner and the outer collapses as affect, desire, and intention are *inferred* rather than confessed, *modeled* rather than narrated. The process engenders the *body without interior*, not a voided subject, but one whose inwardness becomes epistemologically superfluous. What counts is not what one feels or means but what one can be predicted to do. Posthuman subject is a "transversal entity, fully imbricated within technological networks" (Braidotti 188). Subjectivity, stripped of depth, is rendered as probability,

a statistical modulation of futurity. Agency becomes diffuse, responsibility disarticulated. Foucault's insight that "the soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body" (*Discipline* 30) re-emerges in algorithmic form, where an "algorithmic soul" regulates corporeal existence without recourse to consciousness. Transparency becomes the precondition of participation. "To be transparent is to be rendered as coordinates in a planetary matrix of surveillance and calculation" (Steyerl 164). Opacity, the prerequisite of individuality and freedom, is pathologized as resistance or error. "The User is not a person but a positional function within the Stack" (Bratton 251) captures the ontological reduction. Algorithmic flesh lays bare a new mode of domination without spectacle. The subject is illuminated everywhere yet recognized nowhere. Accordingly, existence supposes interpretability and action anticipatory.

Despite the totalizing ambition of algorithmic mediation, experience lingers as remainder, a spectral persistence of what cannot yet be quantified. Residue, rather than constituting a locus of resistance, becomes the privileged object of intensified algorithmic colonization. The unmeasurable emerges as the next frontier of optimization. Residual affect, deviation, or discomfort becomes grist for machine learning; anomalies are recoded as data for future capture. Resistance of experience is what propels the system's expansion. Experience persists only as managed excess, never subordinated entirely, yet perpetually folded back into processes of prediction. Recursive assimilation exposes the futility of nostalgic appeals to authenticity or immediacy. There is no unmediated experiential ground awaiting recovery. Death of experience unfolds not as evental rupture but as structural attrition, an ongoing erosion where the experiential loses its critical alterity. What remains is sensation divorced from sovereignty, affect divorced from agency: a post-experiential condition of perpetual modulation.

To diagnose the death of experience is neither to mourn anthropocentric loss nor to invoke metaphysical nostalgia. It is to define the reconfiguration of existence under algorithmic conditions. Algorithmic flesh does not abolish experience. It subjects to regimes of governance that render it predictable, actionable, and profitable. The lived becomes pre-formatted, its potentialities algorithmically anticipated. The change complicates celebratory strands of posthuman theory that acclaim the dissolution of the human subject without confronting the reterritorializations of power that accompany it. Erosion of experiential interiority demands a political rather than ontological critique. If experience no longer provides a ground for resistance,

critique must be redirected toward the infrastructural architectures that organize perceptibility. Resistance can no longer be articulated through appeals to authenticity, embodiment, or immediacy. It must operate infrastructurally, contesting the pre-emptive logic of computational governance. Death of experience does not signal closure, but a demand, to formulate the conditions of criticality under an order where perception, affect, and thought is algorithmically prefigured.

Algorithmic governance, control, and prediction

Algorithmic governance inaugurates a paradigmatic reconfiguration of the mechanisms of political rationality, It marks a shift in the topology of power that supplants the juridico-normative regulation of conduct with a logic of pre-emptive modulation. No longer confined to the disciplinary surveillance of realized deviation or the biopolitical management of aggregate populations, algorithmic power operates on the pre-ontological threshold of potentiality. It does not apprehend the subject *after* deviation is rendered legible, but anticipates the very conditions of emergence, affective intensities, inclinations, and probabilistic vectors that precede manifest intention. Displacement of governance from the domain of law and norm toward the modulation of futurity reconstitutes the ontology of power. "Preemption is when the future is felt as a present force, and the present is acted upon in the name of a future that has not yet happened" (Massumi, *Ontopower*, 5). Algorithmic governance collapses the relation between time and power. Governance becomes temporalization, the conversion of uncertainty into an operative field of intervention. Future ceases to be an indeterminate horizon; it is rendered calculable, governable, and exploitable.

Power no longer interpellates the subject as an external prohibition or disciplinary constraint. It imbricates within the affective and cognitive microtemporalities of life. Algorithmic apparatuses continuously compute risk, likelihood, and inclination, transubstantiating futures into manipulable presents. "Prediction is not a passive mirror of futurity but a technology of the present that materializes the very realities it purports to describe" (Mackenzie 68). In the recursive circuit, prediction and intervention coalesce; the act of predicting *is* an act of governance. Pre-emptive power signifies the obsolescence of the classical norm as a stable referent. The norm loses its prescriptive solidity and becomes a dynamic gradient, a "moving average," "against which we are continuously measured and recalibrated" (Pasquale 34). Rather than eliminating deviation, algorithmic power thrives on its potential, it converts indeterminacy into its operational substrate.

"Risk management no longer aims to prevent discrete events but to modulate conditions such that certain events become less probable" (Amoore 24). In machinic order, uncertainty is not a threat to control but its generative medium, a resource to be mined, modeled, and mobilized. Power, once juridical and prohibitive, is now infrastructural, anticipatory, and self-effacing, residing not in command but in calibration.

Algorithmic governance cannot be adequately conceived without acknowledging its fundamental investment in affective modulation. Where disciplinary institutions targeted visible behaviors and biopolitical regimes managed corporeal life, algorithmic infrastructures operate at the scalar and temporal registers of intensity. They govern not through prohibitions or sanctions but through the strategic calibration of affective fields. Affect is "the power to affect and be affected, the transition from one state of bodily potential to another" (Massumi, *Parables*, 15). Algorithmic systems weaponize transitivity: platforms architect experiential environments suffused with algorithmically mediated stimuli engineered to trigger specific affective responses, attention, curiosity, outrage, or desire.

The distinction between *emotion* and *affect*, the former conscious and linguistically qualified, the latter pre-personal and unformed, is politically decisive. Algorithmic systems no longer engage with emotion as expression. They intervene at the infra-conscious strata where bodily capacities are attuned and redirected. "Sensors do not simply record the world; they participate in its sensing, they are constitutive components of affective infrastructures that register the pre-conscious movements of bodies" (Gabrys 12). Affect is not captured. It is produced as part of a cybernetic loop between user and platform, stimuli and feedback, perception and monetization. Feedback relation is asymmetrical. While users generate vast reservoirs of affective data, they are excluded from the algorithmic architectures that analyze, recombine, and profit from their own pre-conscious states. Power is imperceptible, operating not through repression but through environmental modulation. The subject is neither coerced nor commanded but subtly steered by an environment whose contingencies are algorithmically orchestrated. "Enclosures were molds, while controls are modulations, like self-deforming casts that change continually from one moment to the next" (Deleuze 4) now takes on full resonance. Algorithmic governance transforms freedom into an instrument of control. Choices proliferate, but always within bounded horizons structured by predictive systems. What appears as autonomy is a controlled variability, a

simulation of agency staged within infrastructural parameters. Affective modulation thus marks the sophistication of twenty-first-century governance: the orchestration of sensation and attention as the primary vectors of command.

To comprehend the ontogenetic implications of algorithmic governance, one must turn to Simondon's philosophy of individuation. For, the individual is never a finished entity but a metastable configuration in continuous becoming: "The individual is not a substance but an operation of individuation, always in process, never complete" (Simondon, *Individuation*, 32). Subjectivity is co-constituted with its milieu, emerging through a transductive interplay of human, technical, and environmental elements. Algorithmic systems have become the dominant milieu of this contemporary individuation. However, rather than facilitating emergence, they foreclose it by subordinating potentiality to the predictive logic of computational management. Simondonian openness of becoming, the indeterminate interval where new forms of relation might arise, is closed down by predictive modeling, which transforms the subject into "data double": "not a person but a constellation of data points through which access to the world is managed" (Haggerty and Ericson 611).

The alteration results in a deeper ontological mutation, the replacement of individuation by *dividuation*. "Dividuation fragments the subject into discrete, marketable, and governable data traces" (Lazzarato 89). Algorithmic subject is not annihilated but dispersed, rendered operable through statistical decomposition. What once signified a psychical or ethical unfolding becomes a procedural optimization. Stiegler amplifies the diagnosis through his concept of *tertiary retention*: the technical object as a prosthetic support for memory and desire. "The technical object," he writes, "is not a tool but an extension of the biological and cognitive system, a tertiary retention that shapes the very temporality of consciousness" (Stiegler, *Technics* 142). Under capitalist capture, prosthesis becomes extractive, an industrial apparatus for the modulation of attention and desire. Algorithmic governance thereby substitutes technical individuation (with its openness to invention) with a programmed individuation that functions only within the predictive horizon of calculable futures. However, Simondon's counterpoint endures: "A purely functional machine is a dead machine; technicity lives only when it retains a margin of indeterminacy" (*Mode of Existence*, 18).

Algorithmic condition must be situated within the epochal transformation of perception inaugurated by technical reproducibility. "That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art—its unique presence in time and space" (Benjamin *Illuminations*, 221). Today, algorithmic governance generalizes withering beyond art to encompass the entire domain of lived experience. The singular "here and now" of existence, its unrepeatable opacity, is rendered derivative, reproducible, and strategically extractable as data. Benjamin's concept of *aura* finds its critical analogue in Glissant's insistence on *opacity*: "We must demand the right to opacity for everyone... Opacity is not enclosure but the preservation of irreducible singularity" (190). Algorithmic governance annihilates the right, replacing the ethics of opacity with the imperative of exposure. Life becomes a calculus of visibility, where meaning is equated with legibility. Benjaminian "optic unconscious," the revelatory potential of mechanical vision, returns in distorted form. "The camera introduces us to unconscious optics just as psychoanalysis introduces us to unconscious impulses" (Benjamin, *Work of Art*, 37). In contrast, algorithmic apparatus does not reveal the unconscious of perception, it operationalizes it for predictive ends. The transformation is not epistemological but deeply colonial in its logic of appropriation. "Datafication is a process of dispossession, where the intimate textures of human life are expropriated and transformed into assets for capital accumulation" (Couldry & Mejias 21). Opacity of lived life, its incompleteness and non-coincidence with itself, is dismantled piece by piece until all that remains is a mosaic of quantifiable instants. Experience, once the condition of subjectivity, is reduced to a pattern-recognition problem.

At the apex of transformation emerges prediction as the dominant *regime of truth*. In the epistemic architecture of algorithmic governance, truth is no longer discursive interpretation or correspondence, but correlation, a statistical operationality devoid of normativity. "A purely operational and a-normative governmentality based on automated data processing rather than the regulation of subjects" (Rouvroy & Berns 171). Future ceases to be open, it is retroactively colonized by the past. Esposito terms the condition as "past-future," a temporality determined by recursive patterning rather than emergence (112). The epistemological reordering transforms the foundations of political reason. Responsibility dissolves in the opacity of code, accountability migrates from decision to design. "Algorithms are not neutral; they are culture in code, embodiments of political assumptions and social priorities" (Seaver 5). Once prediction assumes

the mantle of truth, discrimination is rationalized as optimization, and exclusion reframed as efficiency. Bias becomes calculus. In the predictive regime, power acquires a performative dimension; by acting upon probabilistic projections, systems engender the very behaviors they claim to foresee. The predictive becomes constitutive. It no longer reflects the world but institutes it. Politics gives way to management, deliberation to automation, contingency to control. Knowledge and power collapse into one another, producing a social topology composed entirely of modulated futures, infinitely optimized yet existentially impoverished. Algorithmic governance represents not the perfection of reason but its terminal automation, a technocratic eschatology in which life, stripped of ambiguity and surprise, becomes servile to the logic of its own preemption.

Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford UP, 1998.

---. *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*. Translated by Adam Kotsko, Stanford UP, 2013.

Amoore, Louise. *The Politics of Possibility: Risk and Security beyond Probability*. Duke UP, 2013.

Andrejevic, Mark. *Infoglut: How Too Much Information Is Changing the Way We Think and Know*. Routledge, 2013.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, Schocken Books, 1968.

---. *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. Edited by Michael W. Jennings et al., Belknap Press, 2008.

Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Polity Press, 2013.

Bratton, Benjamin H. *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty*. MIT Press, 2016.

Browne, Simone. *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Duke UP, 2015.

Canetti, Elias. *Crowds and Power*. Translated by Carol Stewart, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1962.

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory*. MIT Press, 2011.

Clough, Patricia Ticineto, and Jean Halley, editors. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. Duke UP, 2007.

Cohen, Julie E. *Between Truth and Power: The Legal Constructions of Informational Capitalism*. Oxford UP, 2019.

Couldry, Nick, and Ulises A. Mejias. *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*. Stanford UP, 2019.

Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October*, vol. 59, 1992, pp. 3–7. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/778828.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Johns Hopkins UP, 1976.

Esposito, Elena. *The Future of Futures: The Time of Savings, Banks and Forward Transactions*. Mimesis International, 2011.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Pantheon Books, 1977.

---. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*. Edited by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, translated by David Macey, Picador, 2003.

---. *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Penguin Books, 1978.

Gabrys, Jennifer. *Program Earth: Environmental Sensing Technology and the Making of a Computational Planet*. U of Minnesota P, 2016.

Galloway, Alexander R. *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization*. MIT Press, 2004.

Galloway, Alexander R., and Eugene Thacker. *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*. U of Minnesota P, 2007.

Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing, U of Michigan P, 1997.

Haggerty, Kevin D., and Richard V. Ericson. "The Surveillant Assemblage." *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2000, pp. 605–22.

Han, Byung-Chul. *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Resistance*. Translated by Erik Butler, Verso, 2017.

---. *The Transparency Society*. Translated by Erik Butler, Stanford Briefs, 2015.

Hansen, Mark B. N. *Feed-Forward: On the Future of Twenty-First-Century Media*. U of Chicago P, 2015.

---. *New Philosophy for New Media*. MIT Press, 2004.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. U of Chicago P, 1999.

---. *Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious*. U of Chicago P, 2017.

Karppi, Tero. *Disconnect: Facebook's Affective Bonds*. U of Minnesota P, 2018.

Lazzarato, Maurizio. *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*. Semiotext(e), 2014.

Lupton, Deborah. *The Quantified Self*. Polity Press, 2016.

Mackenzie, Adrian. *Machine Learners: Archaeology of a Data Practice*. MIT Press, 2017.

Massumi, Brian. *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception*. Duke UP, 2015.

---. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Duke UP, 2002.

Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Translated by Steven Corcoran, Duke UP, 2019.

McStay, Andrew. *Emotional AI: The Rise of Empathic Media*. SAGE Publications, 2018.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis, Northwestern UP, 1968.

Mezzadra, Sandro, and Brett Neilson. *The Politics of Operations: Excavating Contemporary Capitalism*. Duke UP, 2019.

Parisi, Luciana. *Contagious Architecture: Computation, Aesthetics, and Space*. MIT Press, 2013.

Pasquale, Frank. *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*. Harvard UP, 2015.

Pasquinelli, Matteo. "Google's PageRank Algorithm: A Diagram of the Cognitive Capitalism." *The Architecture of Networks*, 2009, pp. 7–19.

Puar, Jasbir. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Duke UP, 2017.

Rose, Nikolas. *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton UP, 2007.

Rouvroy, Antoinette. "Algorithmic Governmentality and Prospects of Emancipation." *The Strategic Jurist*, Routledge, 2013, pp. 151–65.

Rouvroy, Antoinette, and Thomas Berns. "Algorithmic Governmentality and Prospects of Emancipation." *Réseaux*, no. 177, 2013, pp. 163–96.

Seaver, Nick. "Algorithms as Culture: Some Tactics for the Ethnography of Algorithmic Systems." *Big Data & Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2017, pp. 1–12.

Simondon, Gilbert. *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information*. Translated by Taylor Adkins, U of Minnesota P, 2020.

---. *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*. Translated by Cecile Malaspina and John Rogove, Univocal Publishing, 2017.

Stiegler, Bernard. *For a New Critique of Political Economy*. Polity Press, 2010.

---. *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*. Translated by Richard Beardsworth and George Collins, Stanford UP, 1998.

Steyerl, Hito. *The Wretched of the Screen*. Sternberg Press, 2012.

Van der Ploeg, Irma. "The Machine-Readable Body: Biometrics and the Construction of Identity." *Biometrics: Surveillance, Body, and Writing*, edited by Katja Franko Aas, Routledge, 2003, pp. 47–62.

Van Dijck, José. "Datafication, Dataism and Dataveillance: Big Data between Scientific Paradigm and Ideology." *Surveillance & Society*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2014, pp. 197–208.

Virilio, Paul. *The Vision Machine*. Translated by Julie Rose, Indiana UP, 1994.

Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* U of Minnesota P, 2010.

Zuboff, Shoshana. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. PublicAffairs, 2019.