



### Autism Without a Body: The Mental Disorder of the Vectoral Age

Every age, characterized by a particular mode of production, begets its own mental disorder typical within the constraints of its superstructure -- the system of social relations by which the mode of production reproduces itself.

The postmodernists aptly described the schizophrenic nature of the subject under late-capitalism, with its turn from essences, centers, and grand narratives to the perpetual rupture of symbolic codes. They observed how these qualities are mirrored by “innovative” capital and its emulation of schizophrenia in its persistent transgression of its own limits, with the added capacity of momentary market stabilization after such a break. This *de-* and *re-*territorialization of systems, both symbolic and physical, was said to drive the economic regime of demographics-advertising and its production of the niche desires which ground conspicuous consumption.

Today we must ask, however, “Is this still capitalism or something worse?”

McKenzie Wark proposes that we find ourselves in a third stage of commodification: while feudalism abstracted the concept of property to land, and while capitalism abstracted the concept of property to physical goods, vectoralism today abstracts this concept to information. Though Wark’s seminal understanding of vectoralism encompasses a wide range of information commodities -- from patents on GMOs to financial products like exchangeable securities to the just-in-time logistics of WalMart -- one can also map this emerging economic form onto the more restricted set of practices exhibited by Web 2.0 firms. These Internet firms seek to extract rents

from advertisers, with the profitability of any particular piece of information correlating with the amount of traffic it generates. Thus it is the control of stocks of information -- e.g. news media or video content -- and high-traffic sites along common vectors of hyperspatial movement -- e.g. search engines, Web portals, and digital markets -- that are the primary means by which these firms accumulate surplus value.

With the vectoralist mode of production emerging as an increasingly competitive economic form, a new archetypal disorder is needed to conceptualize the subject of an economy wherein the need for information consumption becomes more important than the production of desire for physical goods. We are fortunate that the perennial vanguard of Web culture, the imageboard scene, has already proven -- through both self-description and a lived embodiment -- the applicability of one such mental state to this new economic reality: *vectoral society produces the autist and it is the autist who reproduces the necessary conditions for vectoralism.*

Like the postmodern play with the term schizophrenia, there is a need here for an "anexact" philology -- that is, a representation of the disorder which is "essentially and not accidentally inexact." Schizophrenia, of course, has little to do with the splitting of the ego into a multiplicity of subjectivities or the proliferation of fragmented desire. Though *schiz-* does mean "split," it refers, clinically, to a rupture between rational and emotional response; only rarely does the schizophrenic also exhibit signs of a dissociative identity disorder.

Similarly, autism is divisible into *autos-*, Greek for "self," and *-ismos*, a suffix which designates an action or state of being; "The notion is of 'morbid self-absorption.'" This self-absorption is meant to describe a distinct unconcern for social norms arising out of an impairment in understanding interpersonal relationships and the reciprocity of emotions (particularly in their manifestation as nonverbal cues).

This is not, however, what we see in the greentext terror of spilled-spaghetti, wherein the source of drama is produced by the conjuncture of the subject's recognition of the existence of social norms and concurrent inability to adhere to them in real-time.

The colloquial usage of autism is centered around an inability that stems not from an innate lack of concern but, instead, a voluntary hyperfocus on some restricted set of interests. One might thus twist the philology from the absorption *in* oneself to the absorption *of* oneself: the autist as the subject which loses itself in the accumulation of some esoteric body of knowledge.

Is this not the vectoral subject *par excellence*?

The vectoralist firm holds stocks of information and profits when they are accessed. The autist takes in the whole niche, the whole fandom, the whole scene until it's known by heart. It is thus the autist, hungry for content, who generates the most monetizable activity. The vectoralist firm does not produce its own content, however, instead relying on a multitude of autists each with their own catalog of information to share. These content producers and curators -- these *petit*

*vectoralists* -- labor for vectoralist firms and themselves profit by the presentation of their esoteric knowledge sets; "Like and Subscribe!" In both consumption and production, it is the autistic relation to information which best serves the interests of the vectoralist class.

Indeed, for the vectoralist mode of production to survive, the desire to lose oneself in trivia must become widespread. Though late-capitalism managed to stave off Marx's prediction of a falling rate of profit by instituting a generalized reduction in wages and furthering the real subsumption of life to capital, vectoralism has few such counter-tendencies to rely on. As more platforms allow for the monetization of content, the competitive attraction of autistic consumers and producers will require an ever-increasing share of ad-revenue to be doled out to this new petit vectoralist class.

During the current period of growth, Internet access is becoming evermore widespread and thus consumption and production are increasing. One can see a recognition of the need for such expansion in, for example, Google's offering of broadband for a one-time installation fee or the free access which Facebook offers to poorer nations. When the development of the network reaches its limits, however, it will only be a decrease in the fixed-costs of data transfer and storage which might offset the rising cost of content -- and such technological improvements have atomic limitations which we are rapidly approaching.

Vectoralism may be doomed... unless, of course, we all catch autism.

The accelerated consumption and production of content, driven by the increasing self-absorption of the vectoral subject, might be precisely what is needed to maintain a high ratio between the vectoralist firm's revenue and wages: as consumption increases, so too do revenues; as niche-content is made redundant by similarly-oriented autists, wages can be depressed.

Yet there is a serious question as to whether or not autism *must* reinforce vectoral structures. Like the postmodern understanding of schizophrenia, autism may lack a process which its economic backdrop requires. Is this property form inherent to the autistic mind?

Vectoralism demands that its prosumer class adopt a strict adherence to identity-based attribution, wherein content is always sourced to its maker. It demands that petit vectoralists assert exclusive ownership of that which they create or curate -- property claims which are transferred to vectoralist firms to allow for their alchemical reconstitution: information into monetizable web traffic.

If Anon has taught us anything, it is that the autist's love of information transcends such ownership. After all, "information wants to be free." As a decentralized cultural commons, the hivemind possesses (and is) every meme -- no watermarks -- and Anon always knows the best sites on which to distribute copyrighted content.

Just as the schizophrenic is unable to understand metaphor, and thus cannot comprehend the universal equivalent of money, the autistic is unable to understand the social reciprocity that is a constitutive prerequisite of property rights. Content, in the autistic mind, does not exist as the product of an individual, but rather as a thing-of-itself. The “absorption of oneself” into a set of information implies not only the loss of the interpersonal, but also an unconstitution of identity. Anon’s ignorance of genius and celebrity renders the property form impossible.

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While “normies” mark memes with instagram handles and leave angry replies to those who repost without attribution, the autistic knows: the meme *must* be reposted -- that is how it propagates, reproduces, and evolves. Copy-pasta is how the catalog of esoteria grows.

As vectorialism continues towards its fullest development, it will attempt to graft to the autistic an alien persona of *authentic individuality*. This hijacking of the mental (dis)order of our economic age can be prevented only through revolutionary counter-action.

The hivemind must defend its collective multiplicity.

