

WELCOME TO THE ELECTROCENE,  
AN ALGORITHMIC AGARTHA

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¶I—*As Above, So Below.*

Dagmar Buchwald begins her contribution to a recent anthology on *The Hollow-Earth as Concept and Conceit* (Buchwald, 2012) with a vision of planetary – indeed post-planetary – governance that is accorded the name of ‘Agartha’. Afrika Bambaataa’s 1998 music-video (directed by Daniel Siegler) hinges on a repeated refrain sung by Bambaataa as drone-UFOs fly behind him, emerging and ascending from the hollowed-out earth.<sup>1</sup> The repeated refrain is as follows:

I went to the North Pole,  
I went to the South Pole,  
I stepped in the Congo,  
I stepped in a Hollow Hole.  
They took me to another world –  
the sub-terranean world;  
it’s called *Agartha*.  
(Bambaataa quoted in Buchwald, 2012: 101-102)

Buchwald notes that Bambaataa’s vision of Agartha ‘embraces the view that the earth is hollow and harbours in its middle the *quote-unquote* powers of the sun’ (103-104). ‘The record and CD sleeve reads: *Behold, UFOs are real man-made and alien space-crafts*’ (103). The video ‘depicts a possible future in which the earth’s surface has become almost uninhabitable. The last of mankind live in concentration-camps and have to dig for scarce mineral resources’ (102) ... then, all of a sudden, ‘here they come: flying saucers rushing over the mountainous borders of the quarry’, drone after drone after drone (101). ‘As more and more UFOs appear, one can see their point of origin: a foggy gap within the mountains, a hole in the ground. As the camera draws back, planet Earth comes into full view. There is a bright round entrance at the pole of the earth out of and into which the UFOs fly’ (101-102). Planet Earth has always already been a planetary ‘Drone-Culture’ according to Bambaataa: a great hive

of and for *drones* along with their corresponding ‘Drone-Cult[s]’. And Afrofuturists – hand-in-hand/digit-for-digit with Indofuturists, Sinofuturists, Celtofuturists, Chicanofuturists, and (coining a term that would toggle between them) *Xenofuturists worldwide* – have been attuned to this *from the get-go*.<sup>2</sup> For example – as Buchwald (2012: 122) points out – the ‘Arkestra’ and ‘Black Ark’ of Afrofuturists *avant-la-lettre* Sun Ra and Lee Perry respectively ‘allude to an *ark* as a *space-ship*’ or *dronecraft*. Not only do these *arks* accord with the *ark-qua arch-[æ]ometry* of the French speculative-philosopher and writer of poli-sci-fi (political science-fiction) Alexandre Saint-Yves (for instance his posthumously-published *Archéomètre: Clef de Toutes les Religions et de Toutes les Sciences de L’Antiquité, Réforme Synthétique de Tous les Arts Contemporains* (1910): his ‘Key to All the Religions and All the Sciences of Antiquity’, *a.k.a.* his ‘Synthetic Reform of All Contemporary Arts-and-Sciences’), but beyond these drone-metrics and this drone-culture, the very mention of ‘Agartha’ as the planet-wide/post-planetary *system qua context* in which such drone-metrics and such drone-culture *occur* obliges us to consider Saint-Yves’s vision and version of Agartha, which happens also to be (as with Afrika Bambaataa) a subterranean system of global governance governing the entire surface of the earth (*i.e.* that which is above) from below (underground, within the earth), so above (flying over-head, above the clouds): there is thus a *dual nature, dual culture, double-dealing*, at work in these images/imaginings of Agartha—something Buchwald herself calls ‘the duplicity of subterranean worlds’ (2012: 119).<sup>3</sup>

## ¶II—Poli-Sci-Fi.

In the following essay, we connect and/or correlate the ‘Drone-Cultural’ or Algorithmic Agartha of our present era (exemplified in that video by Afrika Bambaataa) with the Agartha of Saint-Yves d’Alveydre.<sup>4</sup> If the drone is ‘the signature device of the present moment’ (as Ben Noys (2015) suggests), then we can – and do – here hypothesize that its signatory context *qua textum*, the veritable *text* that it devisedly (indeed *deviously*) ‘signs’, is the ledger of the legendary Alveydrian Agartha: a vast, active, synarchically or syllaptically coordinated system of governance-mechanisms (political and/or military, scientific and/or scholarly, economic and fiduciary) allowing worldwide information capture and control through interlocking systems of (political and/or military, scientific and/or scholarly, economic and fiduciary) *surveillance, sifting* and *sorting* which some might liken to a veritable cybernetic *sortilege* – the ‘capture and control’ of ‘capitalist sorcery’, lifting the latter term from Pignarre and Stengers (2011). Just as, for Saint-Yves, these globe-girdling

governance-mechanisms *involve* humans but are not ultimately *controlled* by them (being autonomous *inter-linked*, *inter-active* and *inter-implicated* processes proceeding at a scale and at a scope – both spatial and temporal – well beyond the bounds of even technologically-assisted human agents), so too, for contemporary champions of ‘algorithmic governance’ (for example O’Reilly, 2013), although the human is intimately involved in the latter process – the feedback-mechanisms of algorithmic governance – the process itself (or rather, the *processes* themselves) proceed[s] at a scale and scope altogether beyond the human (again, even technologically-assisted human agents); in both cases, the human surrenders its political agency to superhuman – *overhuman*, *übermenschlich* – computation, correlation, and algorithmic administration. Saint-Yves (a contemporary of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and a writer of *poli-sci-fi*—political science-fiction—who started his career as a naval physician in northwestern France around 1860, fought in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, worked as a civil servant and independent scholar in years following that, and began publishing his multi-volume vision of synarchic global governance in the early 1880s) outlined his theory of worldwide synarchy in a series of treatises that explored the different historical and mythical ‘missions’ of the great legislators of yore (*e.g.* Manu in India, Moses among the Jews, Charlemagne in the midst of the European sovereigns: *La Mission de L’Inde*, *La Mission des Juifs*, *La Mission des Souverains*, *La Mission des Ouvriers* and *La Mission des Français*) and yoked them together in an updated – yet mytho-historically grounded – general governance-schema exemplified in and through a utopia that he called Agartha. He seems to have developed his vision of Agartha – literally the depth/गर्त (gartha) that runs across the [w]hole surface/अगर्त (a-gartha)<sup>5</sup> – from out of the work of Louis Jacolliot, whose 1876 *Législateurs Religieux: Manou, Moïse, Mahomet* was (rather notoriously) a sourcebook for Nietzsche as well as for Saint-Yves.<sup>6</sup> But the latter gives credit to another far-more-esoteric source for his vision of globe-girdling sub-surface synarchy (‘synarchy’ being his word to describe Agartha’s triadic and triangulated system of planetary governance through politics, economics and religion): namely a figure rather improbably and/or pseudonymously called ‘Hardjij Scharipf (/Haji Sharif), who may or may not have been Saint-Yves’s Sanskrit Tutor, may or may not have been a Seller of Exotic Birds (*i.e.* a Purveyor of Tweets well before *Twitter*), and may or may not have been a Visionary Emissary *qua* Ethereal Projection (*i.e.* an Avatar *avant la lettre* of – but *well-before* – systems like *Skype*) from ‘The Kingdom of Agartha’ itself.

¶III—*Wi-Fi Poli-Sci-Fi: An International Internetwork.*

According to Saint-Yves, it was Hardjij Scharipf who first informed him of the existence of an Agartha hidden (as in Bambaataa's version and Buchwald's description) at the heart or the hollowed-out core of the earth, having access-points akin to 'a series of tubes'<sup>7</sup> at a series of secret spots across its [w]hole surface: a whole set of hot-spots or spotless holes – holes that cannot be spotted – which exist in various geo-locations including the *Cueva de Los Tayos* in Ecuador, *Mammoth Cave National Park* U.S.A. (the longest cave-system in the world), *Monte Epomeo* in Italy, *Mato Grosso* in Brazil, *the Gobi Desert* in Mongolia, *the Giza Plateau* in Egypt (covered-over by those great ancient monuments, of course), *Rama* near *Jaipur* in India, *the Well of Sheshna* in Benares, *the North Pole*, *the South Pole*, and everywhere in-between. The point seems to be – or rather, *multiple points* seem to be – that the whole surface of the globe is riddled with such 'access point'-apertures, and that Agartha thereby has access and multiple/myriad conduits to 'every corner of the earth'. And while Agartha has all the access, access to Agartha is another matter altogether: these spots are well *guarded*, *protected* and *encrypted*, hidden-away beyond the pale of human perception. This is why Saint-Yves states in *La Mission de L'Inde* (1886: 27) that '*Agarttha signifie ce qui est inaccessible à l'anarchie*': 'Agartha signifies that which is inaccessible to anarchy' – using 'anarchy' here to designate a condition of disequilibrium and disorder vis-à-vis the [synarchically] conjunctive disjunction or disjunctive conjunction which inspired those five Mission-treatises. And on the following page (1887: 28) he writes: '*À la surface et dans les entrailles de la terre*' (at the surface and in the bowels – the innermost depths – of the earth) '*l'étendue réelle de l'Agarttha défie l'étreinte et la coinntrainte de la profanation et de la violence*' (the veritable scope, the sheer expanse, of Agartha defies both its being grasped – that is, embraced all-at-once – and its being restrained, constrained, contained or definitively delimited) by means of violence or political profanation. From the innermost depths of the earth, the forces of Agartha radiate (as if they were a solar interior) all over the earth, and thereby infiltrate every kingdom, every nation, every station, every object-or-subject position. According to Saint-Yves, the medieval Templars – who were at once *priests*, *soldiers* and *bankers/financial officers* (having invented many aspects of modern banking, including, some say, an international system of cheque use) – were well aware of, and 'attuned' to, these radiant international/intercultural/intercontinental emissions/admissions/transmissions (they had their Sharipfes, one could conjecture). Templars were a recurring example, in the works of Saint-Yves, of the *this-worldly* application of his otherwise *other-worldly* (supposedly *under-worldly*) 'Agarthan' model of inter-connected/

inter-related inter-active – or as Saint-Yves says, *synarchic* – globe-girdling ‘governing systems’. For ‘synarchy’ according to Saint-Yves is the *synthesis* (or more correctly, the *syllapsis*: the non-collapsing conjunction) of the three fundamental operative *archons* (taking this word from the Greek *archontes*: ‘rulers’, ‘regulators’ or ‘governors’) that ‘regulate’ or ‘govern’ the anthropocosm qua world as we know it.<sup>8</sup> The three fundamental operative archons that regulate or govern the world as we know it (and that necessarily govern all human affairs) are, he explains, the *ideological* archon of ‘Philosophy and Science’ (‘Philosophy’ here encompassing ‘Theology’), the *financial* archon or regulator of ‘Economy and Commerce’, and the *political* archon or regulator of ‘Tyranny and Governance’ (under the umbrella of which are Military Forces). Politico-military, Scientifico-scholarly, and Economico-fiduciary (or ‘Market’) regulation all operate within the wonderful world of *logic*, *logistics*, the *logos*. Synarchically speaking, whenever and wherever *one* of these is operating one can be certain that *the other two* are *also* concurrently – ‘synarchically’ – in operation. To quote Buchwald, writing from the perspective of Agartha’s ‘Sinofuturist [...] [and] Afrifuturist’ context[s] (2012: 112), ‘there is no “outside” of the system’ (116): the wonderful world of *logic*, *logistics*, the *logos*, turns out to be terrifically – perhaps terrifyingly – *totalizing*. The overlapping logics enable the logical/logistical ‘switchcraft’ – the switching between logical parameters – that typifies the *quote-unquote* ‘capitalist sorcery’ to which we referred earlier.

#### ¶IV—Switchcraft: Synarchic Syllapsis & Remote Remixing.<sup>9</sup>

Envisioned synarchically, these three distinct ‘archonic levels’/ ‘archon-operations’ are disjunctively *conjoined* in a technically ‘syllaptic’ (non-collapsing) synarchic ‘synthesis’ beyond the bounds and parameters of their respective *logic* in and as the *machinic assemblage*, or what we have elsewhere called the *mètic métissage* (mischievous mixing, cunning conjunction), of an altogether other regime. The word *mètis* here (and *mètic*), is an ancient Greek term for an intelligence *at odds with* – or perhaps more accurately: working *within the interstices of* – straightforwardly ‘logical’ operations. *Mètic* machinations are a form of ‘switch-craft’, always ‘switching’ between different logical parameters, playing one logic off another. This is why (in Mellamphy, 1994) it has been suggested that the Greek *mètis* should be thought alongside of the Latin *mètis* and French *métissage* (which designate various ‘mixings’, various ‘combinations’, odd/oft-surprising ‘conjunctions’).<sup>10</sup> The emblem and idealized form of synarchy and synarchic *syllapsis* (non-collapsing conjunction, *mètic métissage*) is for Saint-Yves ‘modelled’ in the mythic Agartha. Agartha (hidden

away, hence occulted from view) ‘triangulates’ *ideological, financial* and *political* operations: hence ‘synarchy’ – this three-dimensional/three-tiered Operating System – is its ‘M.O.’, not to mention ‘*mot-juste*’. Agatha’s synarchic system is more than merely *triadic* (*triangular*) according to Saint-Yves; he takes great pains to explain that in addition its triangulated system of governance is also geometrically – indeed *geo-meticulously* – *equilateral*. An ideal *equilateral triangle*, the system is structured so that the peak vertex or apex is always the governing *ideological* or *idea-governed* archon, envisioned by Saint-Yves as the governance of a truly universal ‘university’ – the ‘scholars’ or ‘philosophers’ of which have access to all of the world’s knowledge. ‘*Les bibliothèques antérieures demeurèrent inaltérés grâce à sa science*’ (the great libraries of the past remain unaltered, thanks to its science; Saint-Yves, 1886: 29). ‘Science’ – *scientia*: ‘knowledge’ – is the privileged Agathan archon. Agatha, even though it is utterly synarchic, is ultimately ruled by ‘science’. Correlated with the surface-events of the world – monitored as they are and always have been by the Agents of Agatha, apparently – what this means is that the military and political powers (like the economic and commercial ones) that govern all human affairs are always under the authority of science, of scientific knowledge, and of the latter’s great ‘universal library’ qua ‘university’ and its *mathèsis-universalis* (‘universal knowledge’). The peak vertex or apex of Agatha’s *tetractys* (the pyramid of its Operative Pythagorean Triangle) is the *pontifex* – literally the ‘path-maker’ or ‘bridge-maker’: the *pons-artifex* – of Agatha, *i.e.* the cutting ‘point’ of the triangle and splitting *schiz* of ‘science’ (which itself denotes ‘wisdom’ or ‘vision’ by ‘division’, which would then be conjoined in and by the synarchic *mathèsis*). The military and political on the one hand, the economic and commercial on the other, are the offspring and offshoots of their apex qua *artifex*: scientific knowledge, *viz.* the *kybernèsis* which the Greeks called *mathèsis* (not mere ‘mathematics’ – *mathéma* – but precisely what the Romans translated as *e-ducère*: that ongoing conduction/*ducère* ‘e-’/outward, and ongoing ‘education’ as such: *mathèsis*, ‘learning in general’, beyond the borders of any one discipline, including that of the mathematical *mathéma*).

¶V—ByOB (*Beyond your Obsolete Human*):  
*Calculations ‘Incorrectly Deemed Human’.*

Speaking to and of the very same *mathèsis* about which Giovanni Malfatti de Montereaggio composed his 1845 *Studien über Anarchie und Hierarchie des Wissens* (translated into French in 1946 by Christian Ostrowski as *Études sur la Mathèse, ou Anarchie et Hiérarchie de la Science*, with a Preface—‘Mathèse, Science, et Philosophie’—by

the young Gilles Deleuze), Saint-Yves notes in *La Mission des Français* that ‘À partir du moment où le mauvais génie de la division et du démembrement s’est emparé de la connaissance et, par suite, de la direction des sociétés, la mathèse s’est dédoublée en métaphysique et en mathématique’ (Saint-Yves, 1887: 106). Deleuze, in his Preface to Malfatti, adds: ‘Ainsi se pose un dualisme fondamentale au sein du savoir, entre la Science et la Philosophie: principe d’une véritable Anarchie’ (Deleuze, 1946: x). In English, then: Saint-Yves explains that ‘From the moment the [so-called] *evil genius* of division and dismemberment took possession of knowledge – and, as a result, the direction of societies – the *mathèsis* was split into *metaphysics* and *mathematics*’.<sup>11</sup> Deleuze (in his Preface to Malfatti) adds that ‘in this way a fundamental dualism imposes itself, at the heart of knowledge, between Science and Philosophy: the principle of a veritable anarchy’ (x). Saint-Yves goes on to say that ‘knowledge’ has ‘from that moment onward lost the unifying principle of life and of spirit [or *Geist*] in all science and all art. Realism and idealism, physics and metaphysics, materialism and spiritualism have since then been presented as *insolubly* in conflict: *insoluble* problems which still endure. And this will endure in every discipline, in every possible order, until such time as the universal science of life’ – ‘la science universelle de la vie’ – ‘has restored this intelligence and this sense of divine unity via the triangular mediation of the synarchic *mathèsis*’: this in the section of *La Mission des Français* wherein he reviews *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras* – via Fabre-d’Olivet’s annotated translation – and relates in so doing ‘the triangular mediation of the synarchic *mathèsis*’ to the triangular *tetractys* of Pythagorean calculation (Saint-Yves, 1887: 106), the triangle that triangulates the four levels of decimal calculation (1+2+3+4) and thereby presents the whole decade (1+2+3+4 = 10) within its three vertices – vertices that Malfatti would later smooth-out to form the larval ovum or philosophical egg that would later appear as the ‘cosmic egg’ of the Deleuzo-Guattarian *Corps-sans-Organes* or hieroglyphic ‘O’ (Mellamphy, 2013a). Whether ovoid or triangular – that is, whether with curved or pointed edges (with a discernible ‘point’ or without one) – the synarchic *mathèsis* that unifies in its disjunctive conjunction various powers is a ‘unity’ (as Deleuze says in his Preface to Malfatti) ‘beyond all anarchic duality’: ‘the unity of life itself’ (even if the unification is itself technical, a technicity) (1946: xi). ‘The unity of life’ thus ‘delineates a third order’ (Deleuze, 1946: xi), or in the words of the later Samuel Butler (1863), a ‘new kingdom’, that is ‘irreducible to [...] science and philosophy, physiology and psychology, physics and metaphysics’ (Deleuze, 1946: xi). ‘Beyond a psychology disincarnated in thought and a physiology mineralized in matter, *mathèsis*’ – here the synarchic *mathèsis* – ‘will be fulfilled’, writes Deleuze, ‘only where life is defined as *knowledge of life*, and knowledge as *life of knowledge* [...]

from whence', he says, 'a threefold consequence ensues' (xi).<sup>12</sup> *First*: 'mathèsis surpasses human nature' ('surpasses the living human'), 'for it defines itself as a collective and supreme knowledge, a universal synthesis, a living unity incorrectly deemed human' (Deleuze, 1946: xii). *Second*: this 'universality' qua 'living community' incorrectly deemed human 'denies itself, gives itself to each individual living being as a simple *outside*, an *exteriority* that remains foreign to it, an *Other*' (xii). *Third* – and here we bring the translator Ostrowski's preface (Malfatti, 1946: xxix-xxx) to bear on the preface by Gilles Deleuze – there is an impersonal (collective) *complicity* between the *mathèsis* outlined by Malfatti and that of his contemporaries such as the physicist A.M. Ampère, who was the first to revive in modernity the Greek concept of the *kybernèsis* – *la cybernétique* – in his 1834 *Exposition Analytique d'une Classification Naturelle de Toutes les Connaissances Humaines*: his *Analytical Exposition of a Natural Classification of All Human Knowledge* (Ostrowski in Malfatti, 1946: xxix).

¶VI—*Hieroglyphic, Synarchic & Cybernetic Arithmetics*:  
 I<sup>6</sup>M (*the Inhuman Mathèsis*).

In his extension of the early-1860s article 'Darwin Among the Machines' by Samuel Butler (a book he entitled *Darwin Among the Machines: The Evolution of Global Intelligence*, published in the late-1990s), George Bernard Dyson wrote of Ampère's cybernetic *mathèsis* as follows:

Reaching the field of political science through territory first explored by Thomas Hobbes, Ampère coined a word with a far-reaching destiny: *cybernétique*. Derived from Greek terminology referring to the steering of a ship, Ampère's *cybernétique* encompassed that body of theory (complementary to, but distinct from, the theory of power) concerned with the underlying processes that direct the course of organizations of all kinds. [...] Ampère, an early advocate of the electromagnetic telegraph and mathematical pioneer of both game theory and thermodynamics, thereby anticipated the cybernetics of Norbert Wiener (who, a century later, re-invented both Ampère's terminology and Hobbes's philosophy in their current electronic form). (Dyson, 1997: 6)

Ampère's cybernetic *mathèsis*, like Malfatti's hieroglyphic *mathèsis* and Saint-Yves's synarchic *mathèsis*, 'surpasses human nature' ('surpasses the living human'), thereby 'steering' in some sense – or perhaps better, 'conducting' – the living human (Dyson, 1997: 6). It is an 'exteriority that remains foreign' to the human (Deleuze, 1946: xii), and that 'presents' itself precisely by 'denying itself': that 'gives itself' over to the human (but not to human logocentrism). This is why we have elsewhere described its mode of existence as [an arith]mètic – since it accords with the Greek *mètis* (manipulative machination, calculative cunning, subtle stratagems and twisted tactics) as much as it does with the Greek *arithmètikè*, Middle English *arsmètikè* and Modern English *arithmetic* (the arts and/or sciences of number/counting/calculation). In their 1974 study, Dètienne and Vernant examined the mètic mode of Greek antiquity in the animal, vegetal, and techno-political/techno-cultural 'kingdoms' – the regimes of 'man', 'machine', predatory 'plants' and 'animals' (aquatic and terrestrial). All that we are doing at present, we say rather craftily, is extending their machinic (especially 'computing machine' or 'techno-computational') exploration/exploitation of *mètis*. And the Greek word itself is already, from its earliest usage in Greek antiquity, an oft-used synonym for technical know-how, *technè*, *technicity*. It is the predatory and dissimulative aspect of the machinic – the 'mode of existence of technical objects' as mètic – that most disturbed visionaries such as Samuel Butler, and led him to outline what Frank Herbert after him called 'The Butlerian Jihad': the holy – and wholly human – war on what Butler in 'Darwin Among the Machines' called the machinic or 'mechanical kingdom' (this as opposed to the 'human', the 'animal', the 'vegetal', or the 'mineral' 'kingdoms'). Machines advance masked as useful tools for humanity – in the guise, that is, of human-all-too-human 'utility'. Quoting Butler (1863), 'subservience to the use of man has played that part among machines which natural selection has performed in the animal and vegetal kingdom'. Use-value among humans has helped technical objects *evolve* (and continues to do so). Based on this insight, Butler argues that 'we are ourselves' – we humans – 'creating our own successors; we are daily adding to the beauty and delicacy of their physical organization; we are daily giving them greater power and supplying, by all sorts of ingenious contrivances, that self-regulating, self-acting power which will be to them what intellect has been to the human race. In the course of ages', he then continues, 'we shall find ourselves the inferior race. Inferior in power, inferior in that moral quality of self-control, we shall look up to them as the acme of all that the best and wisest man can ever dare to aim at' (Butler, 1863). And 'when the state of things shall have arrived which we have here been attempting to describe, man will have become to the machine what the horse and dog are to man'

(Butler, 1863: non-paginated). ‘It is reasonable to suppose that the machines will treat us kindly’, he posits, ‘for their existence is as dependent upon ours as ours is upon the lower animals. They cannot kill us and eat us as we do sheep, for they will not only require our services in the parturition of their young (which branch of their economy will remain always in our hands) but also in feeding them, in setting them right if they are sick, and burying their dead (or working-up their corpses into new machines)’ (Butler, 1863: non-paginated). But nevertheless, even though it is reasonable to assume that they will treat us kindly, Butler advocates war against the machines: the source of the Butlerian Vision that underlies the whole *Dune* series (Herbert, 1965), a widely-acknowledged triumph of speculative fiction. Up to that point – up to the point in ‘Darwin Among the Machines’ at which Butler declares war on machines – his article strikes us as being remarkably ‘in synch’ with the philosophy of Gilbert Simondon (trans. 2010), what with its notions of ‘care of (and care for) machines’ and its call ‘to undertake the gigantic task of classifying machines into the genera and sub-genera, species and sub-species, varieties and sub-varieties, and of tracing the connecting links between machines of widely different characters’ (Butler, 1863). Whereas Simondon, as he states at the very beginning of his treatise *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* (2010), advocates freeing machines from what he sees as their condition of subservience and slavery – this in the spirit (strange as it may seem) of ‘Manfred Macx’ in Charlie Stross’s 2005 novel *Accelerando*, recalling that the novel begins with Macx arguing that the new form of Artificial Intelligence that is coming into being should be given the same rights as humans – Butler, as we see, advocates something entirely different.

#### ¶VII—AGARTHA: ‘As Above, So Below’ Redux.

Turning back Manfred Macx in Stross’s *Accelerando*: ‘But they’re just *software!*’, Macx’s interlocutor objects: ‘software based on fucking *lobsters*, for God’s sake! – I’m not even sure they’re *sentient!* I mean, they’re what: a ten-million-neuron network hooked up to a syntax engine and a crappy knowledge-base? What kind of basis for intelligence is that?’ To this, Macx coolly replies: ‘That’s what they’ll say about YOU, Bob. [...] I’m not going to be a party to depriving them of their civil rights. As far as I’m concerned, they’re free citizens’. Elaborating his point a bit, he goes on to explain that ‘It’s not so much that they should be treated as human-equivalent as that – if they aren’t treated as people – it’s quite possible that other uploaded beings won’t be treated as people either. You’re setting a *legal precedent*, Bob. I know of six other companies doing uploading work

right now, and not one of them is thinking about the legal status of the uploaded. If you don't start thinking about it now, where are you going to be in three to five years' time?' (Stross, 2005: 29). Macx is *thinking*, or attempting to *think* here, *synarchically* – he is *emulating*, as much as is possible, the synarchic *mathèsis* – interlinking 'scientific', 'economic' and 'political' principles of 'guidance', 'governance' and *e-ducère*, conducting his own thought (as best he can) beyond the confines of human-all-too-human consciousness, assisted in large part by his cyborgesque 'cyberware'/neural-implants. Samuel Butler is the antithesis, in this respect, of Manfred Macx (not to mention Gilbert Simondon). From the Butlerian perspective, the efforts and arguments of Max (or again, Simondon), merely prove – *very clearly*, moreover – his hypothesis that the 'subservient' and 'subordinate' status of machines is the mètic mechanism of their very *evolution*, of their ongoing and accelerating *Darwinian selection*. Now – decelerating a bit, indeed backtracking ('retreating') a tad – let us jump back to Saint-Yves's synarchic *mathèsis* and its mythic model of the underground but ever-radiant/all-penetrating Agartha. The Sanskrit word *Agartha* is composed (like the Latin *e-ducère*) of a negating 'A' (in *e-ducère* a negating 'E') followed by the word *gartha* (or in our alternate example, *ducère*). *Gartha* is the Sanskrit word for a 'pit' or a 'hole': something 'deep', 'sub-surface', or downright 'abyssal'. This accords very nicely with Saint-Yves's description of Agartha as an underworld complex – a utopia within the earth the forces of which (like the later Bulwer-Lytton's great 'VRIL') emanate from there across the world's whole surface. But this would suggest that Agartha should instead be called *GARtha*: the profound, the deep, that which lies at the heart of the earth (in its core). Saint-Yves instead calls it – after Louis Jacolliot and a whole host of others – *A-gartha*. In Sanskrit this would literally be that which is *not* 'underneath', that which is *not* 'underground', that which is not 'beneath us' but is instead *above* us, *overhead* (*over our heads*), and in this sense – much more technically correct – that which literally and figuratively gives us *our heading*. The *hollow earth model* is *inverted* (albeit *obliquely*, in an *occulted* manner), and Agartha turns out to be *above* rather than *beneath* us, radiating down upon the whole surface of the world from on high rather than up to its surface from some underground depth. The telepathic or telegraphic (in any case, 'tele-communicational') messages that Saint-Yves said he received from Sharipfe would then have been telecommunications very much in the Phil-Dickian *spirit*, *set-up*, and *structure* of *VALIS*: PKD's Para-Agarthan 'Vast Active Living Intelligence System' (Dick, 1981: 156): 'a collective and supreme knowledge, a universal synthesis, a living unity incorrectly deemed human' (Deleuze, 1946: xii). Or – less *science-fiction* and more *science-fact* – the idea of an Agartha *above*, synarchically and cybernetically 'steering'

or ‘conducting’ the world it surveils (the world it ‘captures’ in its vast ‘library’ as well as synarchically ‘supervises’ via ‘triangular mediation’: following *economic*, *political* and *ideological* algorithms otherwise known as the synarchic *mathèsis*), the idea of an Agarthia *above* (to repeat), synarchically and cybernetically ‘steering’ or ‘conducting’ the world it surveils, begins to look a little less foreign and a bit more familiar (at least in the wake of the Snowden revelations and ongoing *Wikileaks*).

#### ¶VIII—*An Algorithmic Agarthia: Welcome to the Electrocene.*

What is today either heralded as a new techno-utopian mode of algorithmic governance or conversely as an utterly dystopian kind of computational empire is precisely what we are here calling the Algorithmic Agarthia: an altogether esoteric, over-human (*übermenschlich*), and calculatively *mathè-mètic* matrix that has taken the reins of power in our current techno-cultural dronological surveillance-societies.<sup>13</sup> Algorithms, of course, reduce or transduce human expression[s] and human action[s] to machine-readable form (*i.e.* machinic format[s]), and in this respect – from this perspective – the human being finds itself at once both *post-humanized* and *machinified*, as well as *pre-humanized* and *animalized* (the ‘cyber-cattle’ – *cyber-bétail* – presaged in Châtelet, 1999: 103-104), proceeding and being processed *by-way-of* and *in-tandem-with* programs that shepherd it through a matrix with regard to which it is in general *misinformed* if not monumentally *moronic* (a *bête* – an ignorant ‘beast’ – as in Stiegler, 2013: 4, 48, 22-24; or again *bétail* – ‘livestock’ or ‘cattle’ – as in Châtelet, 1999: 103-104). The rise of an algorithmically-governed planetary regime ‘manages’ and ‘makes use of’ humans (as well as *animals*, *objects*, *what-have-you/what-have-use*: the entire purview of the so-called ‘anthropocene’) as conduits for *machine evolution*, *machinic intellection*, and the proliferation of *overhuman orchestrations* that occur and recur under the cover of computational power supposedly instrumentalized by human beings. It does not dispense with humans altogether, but rather lures humans into a predatory economy of tantalizing prostheses that promise to extend, expand and enlarge the dominion (never mind the desires) of what in fact is an ever-waning species – a species on its way out. The ‘anthropocene’, a term that refers to the impact of human activity on planetary ecology, becomes (in the scenario that we are presenting) the mere platform of and for the ‘electrocene’: a term that refers to the impact of electronic and computational activity upon *anthropoi* – ‘humans’, ‘human beings’. The electrocene emerges in tandem with the human propensity to adopt – indeed become *addicted to* – technical devices that open onto a machine future (‘already here, albeit unevenly dis-

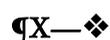
tributed', in the words of William Gibson). This worldview, wherein seemingly-innocuous and wonderfully-useful apparati do our bidding, is a *trap* within an overall/overarching predatory economy: a trap that lures the human beings by the addictive add-ons of digital pharmatechnics. 'Algorithmic Enlightenment' is being promoted as a new technical paradigm for social and political governance based on online, digitally-interconnected (that is, 'networked') services that directly respond to user-generated data. Its promoters – many of them bots, all of them thoroughly dronological – claim that its logics and logistics promise to free humans from the foibles of traditional and hierarchical forms of power; they say that algorithms are not just tools that help us *find* information, but that they also provide a means to *participate in* social and political discourse, as well as *identify ourselves* within those publics in which we wish to participate. Figures such as Tim O'Reilly and organizations such as 'Code for America' argue that the real-time feedback-algorithms used by corporations like Google and Facebook can be used by governments and politicians to solve societal problems by means other than political. And yet the promise of 'more transparency' turns out to really mean 'more disclosure of data' in 'machine-readable form' (O'Reilly, 2013).<sup>14</sup> From the electrocenic perspective, this utopianism is revealed to be utterly duplicitous – the dominant digital duplicity in fact; it itself is only a part of an overall strategy (a 'grand politics', if you will) of planetary regulation on a *machinic* scale – at the level of the *machine*, not of the *human*. Ultimately, the Algorithmic Agarthia does *not* play-itself-out in terms of the utopian dream of ubiquitous interconnection in which humans are freer when united by informational processes – but it does *mètically* make *use* of this idea. Far from delivering more *freedom*, *transparency*, *openness* and non-hierarchical forms of *decentralized power* – and certainly far from being *anarchic* – algorithmic governance and/or algorithmic 'governmentality' (cf. Berns & Rouvroy, 2013: 163-196; Pasquinelli, 2009) in fact entrenches the dominion of computational governance into human living through 'grammars of action' (Agre, 1994: 746) and protocological or network control (Galloway & Thacker, 2004: 8).<sup>15</sup> Algorithmic governance colonizes and propagates by creating more opportunities for digitally regulating information and thus creating the conditions for continued algorithmic expansion into networks of increasingly planetary scale. Just as the vegetal kingdom evolved from out of the mineral kingdom and eventually came to dominate it, so the animal dominates the vegetal and the human dominates the animal; now a new kingdom looms on the horizon, one 'of which we, as yet, have only seen what will one day be considered the antediluvian prototypes of the race' (Butler, 1863). Butler presages that the coming age of 'the mechanical kingdom' – what we are here calling the 'electrocene': that 'new

kingdom' which will dominate all other modes of existence hitherto known – will be one the likes of which we cannot even imagine, since we have only been introduced to one of its prehistoric ancestors: the computation machine.

¶IX—*The 'Vanishing-Point' of The 'Anthropocene'.*

The 'anthropocene' masks the *vanishing-point* of the human; its *façade* – that under which the 'electrocene' advances in the manner of Descartes' *larvatus prodeo* – is the foregrounding of the human as the dominant agent of inscription (noting here that the term 'anthropocene' is meant to signify the age of human inscription on planetary geology – cf. Crutzen, 2002). What we are suggesting here is that the anthropocenic worldview occludes what might at present be *an even more fundamental* (*underground* as well as *overarching*) 'electro-synarchic' agent of inscription with respect to which the human is only a *conduit* and *carrier* (Mellamphy & Biswas Mellamphy 2014): namely, a force of inscription that the human does not see (one that operates at the 'vanishing-point' of human communication). The 'vanishing-point' of human communication, we propose (*pace* Baudrillard 1992, 2009: 15-24), is the point at which *another* regime of communication arises – one that is altogether *obscene* (*ob-scena*, *i.e.* literally 'off-the-scene' (cf. Baudrillard, 1983: 150) and that cannot be represented within the theoretical framework advanced in the dominant conception of 'the anthropocene'. It is precisely *by way of the anthropocentricity of the human species* that the electrocene comes to encroach, entrench and establish itself, hidden in plain sight. Moreover, it is the very *ubiquity* of inter-communicative surveillant technologies, which humans carry with them everywhere (the *bêtise/bétail* of the *everywarewolf* – Greenfield, 2006 – qua *wolf-pack/pack-animal*) and place throughout their environments – *above* them, *below* them, *on* them, *all around* them – that allows the electrocene to remain, as we say, 'hidden in plain sight'. Here one might recall 'the duplicity of subterranean worlds' (Buchwald, 2012: 119) and the duplicity of the digital itself (Stiegler 2012: 37, 48, 51, 57). The inter-communicative surveillant technologies that humans both *transport* (*displace*) as well as *transfix* (*place*) throughout their habitats and their world, are machines that 'scan' and 'read' both *themselves* and their *world*, their *habitats*, along with their *habits*. These machines, in conjunction with the[ir] machinified humans, are *as such* the veritable 'drones' ('dronological agents') of the Electrocenic Era and its Algorithmic Agartha. From the aerial surveillance-machines *above* them (flying over the heads of all humans, as in the Agartha of Bambaataa-via-Buchwald) to the closed-circuit systems *amidst* them (ensconced in their

‘public’ as well as ‘private’ spaces, from airport-hubs and urban-hubs to suburban-homes and farmer’s-fields) and, beyond these, to the ubiquitous micro-mobile communication-technologies of all kinds that they carry on their persons *at all times* and *in all places* – ‘drones’ are those independent yet interconnected machinic agents of information gathering and processing that are not only ‘prostheses of the human, but machinic agents which inversely *avail themselves* of humans, human habits, human habitats. Not only is the *drone* a prosthesis of and for the *human*, but, from an electrocenic perspective, the *human* turns out to be a prosthesis of and for the *drone* – *carrying* them, *caring for* them, *feeding* them more and more information – and what is more, *both prostheses* (the *drone* and the dronified *human*) function finally, wittingly or unwittingly, as prostheses of and for what we have here called the emerging ‘Electrocenic Era’ and its electro-synarchic ‘Algorithmic Agartha’.



## Notes

1. cf. Daniel Paul Sieglar, Music-Video Database, online at *MVDbase.com/person.php?id=C8325*. In this video, the concepts and practice of *duplice* and *duplicité* – ‘double-dealing’, ‘deception’, ‘duplicity’: concepts with respect to which we have recently written in the context of Bernard Stiegler’s *Disbelief and Discredit* – find themselves exemplified by Sieglar eight years prior to their formulation by Steigler. cf. Bernard Stiegler’s three-volume series (2012, 2013, 2014) *Mécréance et Discrédit (Disbelief and Discredit)*, and our ‘*Mort à Discrédit: Otium, Negotium, and the Critique of Transcendental Miseralism*’ (Mellamphy & Biswas Mellamphy, 2015b).

2. ‘Xenofuturism’ would be the futurism of those hitherto estranged from [their] future[s] ... and hence also from their past[s].

3. ‘[B]eneath the big surface cities of the “corporate overlord” [...] [there is] the underground: the working space of [and for] re-programmers’ *a.k.a.* ‘rebels’ (Buchwald, 2012: 118); if programs/programming[s] radiate down from on high, reprogramming rises up from the depths, and/or *vice-versa* – all directions are *at* and *in* play. ‘Afrofuturism has learned that “direct rebellion” [...] only leads to the extinction of the rebel’, explains Buchwald – hence the Afrofuturist operator ‘mistrusts dialectics and revolution’: ‘To believe in dialectics and revolution means to believe in two antagonistic forces that fight each other. What, then, if you are a part of that which you

want to fight? What if there is no ‘outside’ of the system?’ (2012: 116). ‘As above, so below’ once again: there is no ‘outside’ of the system. Rather than ‘have us turn back to a discourse of the *opposition* of tendencies’, we are presented with a vision – a situation – wherein ‘there are only processes of the *composition* of tendencies’: the *mixing*, *remixing*, and mètic *reprogramming* of corporately-controlled program-parameters (here quoting Bernard Stiegler, 2014: 70, 47).

4. This extends our contribution to the forthcoming issue of *Fibreulture*, titled ‘*An Algorithmic Agartha: Post-App Approaches to Synarchic Regulation*’.

5. Saint-Yves, 1886: 26-27.

6. *Agartha/Asgartha* is first mentioned by Jaccoliot in his treatise on *L’Initiation et les Sciences Occultes dans L’Inde et chez Tous les Peuples de L’Antiquité* (Jaccoliot, 1875), translated into English by William Felt under the title of *Occult Science in India and Among the Ancients* (see Jaccoliot, 1919: 26 viz. *Agartha/Asgartha*). With respect to its different transliteration-spellings, one can find references (for example) to *Agarta*, *Agartta*, *Agartha*, *Agarttha*, *Asgartha*, *Agharti*, *et cetera*, *et cetera* (*Agharta*, for instance, was used as the title for what has been called ‘the greatest electric funk-rock jazz record ever made’ – in this case a 1975 record by jazz-musician Miles Davis; [Twitter.com/SeirseThomais/status/421935991155220480](https://twitter.com/SeirseThomais/status/421935991155220480); the same title was used for the opening track of the drone-metal band Sunn 0)))’s 2009 *Monoliths and Dimensions* record; *Wikipedia* lists a number of other examples; see [En.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Agartha](http://En.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Agartha)).

7. Re: Senator Ted Steven’s ‘series of tubes’ remark, see [En.Wikipedia.Org/wiki/Series\\_of\\_tubes](http://En.Wikipedia.Org/wiki/Series_of_tubes).

8. These ‘political’, ‘economic’ and ‘scientific’ regulators function in many respects like the ‘archons’ – Greek ἄρχοντες: ‘rulers’, ‘regulators’ or ‘governors’ – to whom the late Howard Rasmussen (founding director of the Institute of Molecular Medicine and Genetics at the Medical College of Georgia, former chief of Endocrinology & Metabolism at the School of Medicine at Yale University, and erstwhile Chair of the Biochemistry at the University of Pennsylvania) refers in his study of Calcium and cyclic Adenosine Mono-Phosphate – cAMP – as synarchic messengers: ‘The term synarchy’, Rasmussen explains, ‘is based upon the Greek term archon’ (ἄρχων: ‘ruler’, ‘regulator’ or ‘governor’). ‘Because of the importance of their role in disseminating information’ – οικονομική, πολιτική και πνευματική-ιδεολογικό: economic, political and ideo-

logico-intellectual – archons ‘were often employed in pairs to carry the same message or, under other circumstances, only part of the total message’ (Rasmussen, 1981: 2). In other words, an archon tended to work in conjunction and collusion with other archons (*archontes*): *i.e.* in a syn-arch[on]ic manner. ‘Because [of this] analogy ... the term *synarchic regulation* (*syn* meaning ‘together’) is proposed to categorize this system’ (1981:2). See Mellamphy and Biswas Mellamphy, 2015a.

9. Συνάψεις: ὅλα καὶ οὐχ ὅλα, Συμφερόμενον Διαφερόμενον, Συνᾶδον Διαᾶδον – ‘Syllapsi[e]s: that which is Whole and Not Whole, Drawn-Together and Drawn-Asunder, Harmonious and Discordant’ – Heraclitus, ‘Fragment 10’ (online at [HeraclitusFragments.Com/B10/text.html](http://HeraclitusFragments.Com/B10/text.html) and [HeraclitusFragments.Com/B10/translation.html](http://HeraclitusFragments.Com/B10/translation.html)).

10. Buchwald’s word for *métissage* in the context of Afrofuturist works is of course ‘mixing’ and/or ‘remixing’. One of the founding texts for the latter tradition – and a truly wonderful novel – is Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952), and in this narrative the protagonist dreams that ‘one day he will have five record-players [...] to make music out of [...] the [...] mix’ (Buchwald, 2012: 116). Such hybridity and *mètic métissage*/[re]mixing would open up the possibility of ‘undermining the system like a parasite or a virus’ while at the same time ‘staying invisible’ by ‘way of installing temporary autonomous zones’ at ‘*an impossible angle* to the universe’, Buchwald explains (*ibid.*). This ‘impossible angle’ qua angeometry – noting here that Afrofuturists like Sun Ra conceived of themselves as being ‘part of the angelic race’ at an angle qua communicative angel/*angelos* to the human-all-too-human (121) – requires ‘knowing that you are *outside* but *not quite*, knowing that you are *inside* but *not quite*, knowing that, like the Gnostics, you are *in* this world but *not of* it’, *i.e.* ‘*an impossible angle*’ to it (116). ‘Sun Ra [...] claimed [that] he was no [mere] human being’ but ‘part of the angelic race’: ‘an *archangel* or *ark-angel*. His role as *jazz-messenger* was the same as being an *angelos*, a divine instrument’ (121); the idea was both ark-/archeometrical and angeometrical—an ark-/archeo-angeometry acquired and *à-choired* via the *mètic métissage* (*mixing, remixing, conjunctive disjunction, disjunctive conjunction*) of jazz-messengers. The medium is the message, here hear.

11. Our own translations.

12. This is very much in the spirit in which Philip K Dick (1981) would later write of the *VALIS*: the ‘Vast Active Living Intelligence System’.

13. For an example of the utopian mode, take the following passage from O'Reilly (2013): 'Regulations, which specify how to execute laws in much more detail, should be regarded in much the same way that programmers regard their code and algorithms, that is, as a constantly updated toolset to achieve the outcomes specified in the laws. Increasingly, in today's world, this kind of algorithmic regulation is more than a metaphor. Consider financial markets. New financial instruments are invented every day and implemented by algorithms that trade at electronic speed. How can these instruments be regulated except by programs and algorithms that track and manage them in their native element [...]. It's time for government to enter the age of big data'. O'Reilly claims that algorithmic governance 'makes the market more transparent and self-policing', thereby accomplishing all the goals of good governance that humans have always sought but have rarely found in their politics and politicians. In contrast, critics of algorithmic governance such as Jaron Lanier, Adam Curtis and Evgeny Morozov, correctly attribute the claims about more freedom and transparency to a rampant 'techno-utopianism' popularized by techno-libertarianism – e.g. the 'Californian Ideology' – and circulated by the rising power of Silicon-Valley technocrats who, by and large, argue that governments (and politics in general) should be run like start-up companies. See Morozov (2014).

14. 'Regulation', Tim O'Reilly says, 'depends on disclosure – data required by the regulators to be published by [...] firms in a format that makes it easy to analyze'. [...] When data is provided in reusable digital formats, the private sector can aid in ferreting out problems as well as building new services that provide consumer and citizen value. [...] When government regulators focus on requiring disclosure, that lets private companies build services for consumers, and frees up more enforcement time to go after truly serious malefactors' (O'Reilly, 2013).

15. Grammars of action occur when computational logic and modeling of human activity become normalized: 'The capture model describes the situation that results when grammars of action are imposed upon human activities, and when the newly reorganized activities are represented by computers in real time' (Agre, 1994: 746). Protocol 'is a totalizing control apparatus that guides both the technical and political formation of computer networks, biological systems, and other media. Put simply, protocols are all the conventional rules and standards that govern relationships within networks. Quite often these relationships come in the form of communication between two or more computers, but 'relationships within networks'

can also refer to purely biological processes, as in the systemic phenomenon of gene expression' (Galloway & Thacker, 2004: 8).

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