The Posthuman Turn in Dave Eggers' *The Circle*

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In this essay, I will discuss the "panpsychic" turn within posthumanism and situate it vis-à-vis Generative Anthropology by reading Dave Eggers' *The Circle* from 2013. I will roughly term these developments, after Brian Massumi, "the turn to affect" and trace it to his 2002 book *Parables for the Virtual*. These particular strands of thought take their provenance from some of the earlier philosophers' attempts to heal the Cartesian split by thinking in terms of *becoming* instead of *being*. Names that are frequently mentioned by these posthuman theorists are these of Deleuze, Alfred North Whitehead (the author of process philosophy), Gilbert Simondon (the philosopher of individuation), but also Baruch Spinoza and Leibniz. Another, independent, source of influence is Foucault, who appeals to these thinkers presumably by the fact that his ideas of power and biopower are conceived as delocalized forces. They also share his political engagement and critique of capitalism. What unites these thinkers is their commitment to thinking not only outside of the human subject but also outside of the subject-object-relationships paradigm. Can affect exist outside of the human or animal body? If so, how can it be conceived in an impersonal way?

In his interview with Mary Zourzani, Massumi explains what a wider understanding of affect implies by saying that affect is not an expression or experience of a particular emotion that belongs to a subject but a wave-front of energy associated with an individuated entity which has a potential to affect and be affected. "[W]hen we feel a particular emotion or think a particular thought, where have all the memories, habits, tendencies gone that might have come at the point? . . . There is no way they can all be expressed at any given point. But they are not totally absent either, because a different selection of them is sure to come up at the next step. They are still there, but virtually—in potential" (3).

Conceiving of affect and agency in impersonal ways invites a rethinking of the very notion of materiality and the matter-spirit separation. Thus, Jane Bennett argues for a vitalist conception of matter, writing that life and matter can no longer be separated, with matter being regarded as an inert and inactive substance serving the needs of and being shaped by human actors. Bennett explains that her "aspiration is to articulate a vibrant materiality that runs alongside and inside humans to see how analyses of political events might change if we gave the force of things more due. How, for example, would patterns of consumption change if we faced not litter, rubbish, trash, or "the recycling," but an accumulating pile of lively

and potentially dangerous matter?" (viii).

Similarly, Karen Barad has been arguing for expanding our notion of materiality. The disjunction between nature and culture, human and nonhuman, and material and discursive has been deepened, according to her, in the aftermath of the linguistic turn whereby language has been granted too much power. She also sees it as problematic that "matter is figured as passive and immutable" (132), proposing instead a model of discursive practices that are not human-based or language-derivative. Matter, in its broadest sense, is discursive because discourse, as she explains her position, "is not a synonym for language." Instead, "discursive practices are material conditions for making meaning" by staging "specific material configurings of the world through which determinations of boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted" such that "the world articulates itself differently" (335). The meaning that is extracted makes intelligible the causal operation of various components in a given configuration created by what she calls an *agential cut*. In contrast to the absolute Cartesian cut between the object and the subject, an agential cut divides the universe contingently into an*observer*, or the measurement apparatus, and an *observed*. Since the two parts of the system are not separate, the relationship in which they engage is not that of interaction but what Barad terms intra-action or a kind of action that illuminates or delineates a so-called "exteriority within phenomena" (135, 140). "'Observer' and 'observed,'" as she explains, "are nothing more than two physical systems intra-acting in the markings of the 'effect' by the 'cause'; no human observers are required (though humans may emerge as being part of practices)" (340). In other words, what Barad argues for is an expanded, non-localized view of agency that makes no separation between matter and meaning. This new understanding of the entangled nature of material-discursive practices has implications for political action. She writes that "we are responsible for the world of which we are a part, not because it is an arbitrary construction of our choosing but because reality is sedimented out of particular practices that we have a role in shaping and through which we are shaped" (390).

Both Barad's theorization of the intra-active agential cut and Massumi's broader concept of affect bear important similarities to Alfred North Whitehead's idea of prehension that underlies his process philosophy. For Whitehead, prehension is a form of grasping or apprehension that is non-anthropocentric, in that it does not have to originate from a human agent and have a symbolic component. Even unconscious or non-cognitive entities are capable of prehending other entities and phenomena in the sense of influencing them and being influenced in return. Prehensions display the property of space-time to make actual entities appear connected and coherent and form the perceptive glue that underlies our intuition of causes and effects. "The unity of a prehension," Whitehead writes, "defines itself as a *here* and a *now*, and the things so gathered into the grasped unity have essential reference to other places and other minds" (69). In using the concept of prehension, Whitehead articulates a teleological view of reality in which directionality and purposefulness do not arise from human consciousness, desire, and goals but are part of

metaphysical causal connectedness and flow of what is.

Another recent theorist (roughly in the same group) influenced by Whitehead's idea of prehension is the author of *Contagious Architecture*, a "humanistic" interpretation of algorithms and computation, Luciana Parisi. Similarly to Massumi's claim that affect is not tied to a human experiencer but exists in itself, Parisi's assertion is that computer algorithms give rise to so-called "soft thought" that should not be limited to the idea that "data become embodied in a structure (a neural net, a brain, or any other material implementation). . . . On the contrary, soft thought is an actuality: a thought event. . . . Modes of thought are, indeed, as real as any object of feeling" (255). The main thrust of Parisi's argument is to counter the model of controlled calculation that is dominating today's digital culture as being promoted by the capitalist paradigm of interactivity and control. Not only does she claim that our view of algorithms as sequences of simple instructions that produce predictable results is wrong, but even the more subtle, next-level view of computation that has gained popularity in recent years is inaccurate, namely the view of algorithms as dynamically evolving, biological, and biophysical models of order emerging out of deterministic chaos. Deterministic chaos defines the evolution of systems where each element behaves unpredictably, but the whole behaves according to predictable statistical probabilities. These kinds of algorithms apply to modeling biological forms, mathematical models of reproduction, biophysical interaction, and other second-order cybernetic systems with statistically predictable behavior. However, according to Parisi, algorithmic thought assumes the next order of uncertainty, the uncertainty of incomputability. On this level, incomputable algorithms are infected and reprogrammed by random data that is generated by random probabilities. Parisi appropriates the idea of prehension to describe the relationship between algorithms and data they are fed, explaining that "as actual occasions, algorithms prehend the formal system into which they are scripted, and also the external data inputs that they retrieve. Nevertheless, this activity of prehension does not simply amount to a reproduction of what is prehended. On the contrary, it can be described as a contagion. This is because to prehend data is to undergo an irreversible transformation defined by the way in which rules are immanent to the infinite varieties of quantities that they attempt to synthesize" (xiii). As uncomfortable as the idea of infinite, incomputable data sounds, it and its ability to infect algorithmic objects with new instructions and axioms is a source of novelty and unpredictability. One of Parisi's goals is to break free from the anthropocentric perspective and theorize thought as existing and evolving independently from human reason following its own logic of computational aesthetics that makes increasing ingression into culture. Unlike the other theorists among those already mentioned who consider the non-anthropocentric, posthuman perspective an unqualified improvement, Parisi makes a discrimination between the biological/autopoietic model of complexity (which she also identifies with second order cybernetics) and the digital one, cautioning that only the latter incomputable paradigm is capable of producing novelty while systems based on second order cybernetics can evolve and change but only within given parameters: "prediction of the future would remain a repetition of the past" (13).

Dave Eggers' 2013 novel *The Circle* reflects Parisi's ambivalence about self-organizing systems as templates for digital architecture. The novel, which is set in the near future, tells a dystopian tale of a company that is on the brink of taking over the world. The company, which is called The Circle, could be a thinly disguised version of either Microsoft or Google. In either case, the story's referentiality is not essential to its impact; it is merely a literary tool used to evoke the reader's familiarity with a situation, namely a type of company, a recent giant of technological innovation founded by young and hip new-economy wizards that is rapidly expanding to a point of becoming too big and powerful to be challenged by any government. What brings The Circle its first success is a universal login product, TruYou. TruYou is tied to a person's real identity, created for the purpose of integrating all passwords and user identities on various commercial and media sites, its creators reasoning that having one real identity would save internet users the inconvenience of memorizing multiple identities and passwords. "Overnight, all comment boards became civil, all posters held accountable. The trolls who had more or less overtaken the internet, were driven back into the darkness" (22). More than a convenience to customers, TruYou turns out to be a great boon to marketers: "the actual buying habits of actual people were now eminently mappable and measurable, and the marketing to those actual people could be done with surgical precision" (22). And in a sinister but not unexpected development at the end of the book, the company is hatching plans to join with the government in creating one unified system that will make a TruYou account the only way to pay taxes, vote, register a vehicle, and perform other social and civic services. Customers and citizens will thus merge into one entity.

Another Orwellian product that is launched by this company is a small surveillance camera with very high resolution, called SeaChange. These cameras are inexpensive and easy to hide and attach to surfaces. The company hails it as an innovation that is heralding the coming age of global openness, accountability, and democracy—an empowering tool for influencing global events and building grassroots international communities. It is predicted that people will reach out to each other on an unprecedented scale in a bid to recruit each other for various consciousness-raising activities—and this is, in fact, what happens, as the workers of the Circle start being deluged by requests to join their professional networks and sign political petitions by their customers and old contacts. Another important social change will occur in connection with crime and policing because having an extensive network of ubiquitous and communicating cameras would make it much easier to both prevent crime as well as identify and apprehend fugitives on wanted lists. Thus, one of the characters designs a universal child-tracking system, which would greatly reduce or even eliminate kidnapping. In another example, during a trial run of the SeaChange system, a criminal is located and arrested by fellow citizens only six minutes and thirty-three seconds after she is randomly picked from a wanted list and her picture is broadcast world-wide. Not only is law enforcement made infinitely more efficient, it can also be made more fair, as one employee suggests, proposing a system which would make racial profiling redundant because image-recognition software would be able to pick out individuals with a criminal record and

highlight them on video-feed monitors. In addition to these pragmatic concerns, around-the-world cameras will affect the quality-of-life intangibles, as people who cannot travel, for example, would be able to experience places they cannot visit physically, such as the summit of Machu Picchu or the dunes of Sahara.

The novel reminds us that new technologies have a revolutionary, radically transformative effect on all aspects of life. To be human in the near future will be a new, unfamiliar experience. One character likens this process to theosis: "Now we're all God. Every one of us will soon be able to see, and cast judgment upon, every other. We'll see what He sees" (395). The all-seeing collective camera eye will make the world and everyone in it transparent, transparency being one of the central themes in *The Circle*. The company tries to convince humanity that transparency is a force for progress because it brings knowledge, and knowledge is an unqualified good. Having necessary information at one's fingertips "would eliminate a lot of doubt and stress" (341), and being visible to everyone would endow one with "layers of self-awareness and a distinct sense of . . . power" (243). Eamon Bailey, one of the company's grounders, asks Mae Holland, the company's employee and the novel's protagonist, who gets caught by two SeaChange cameras when she takes a kayak for a paddle from a renting station illegally: "Do you behave better or worse when you're being watched?" "Better. Without a doubt," she answers (296). Transparency is also an important source of knowledge. As Bailey tells The Circle audience: "When you deprive . . . someone . . . of experience . . . you are basically stealing from them. You are depriving them of something they have a right to. Knowledge is a basic human right" (301). The slogan company adopts is "Privacy is theft" (303). This is because "You don't own the news, even if it happens to you" (236). This is doubtlessly a not so covert allusion to Sergey Brin, the founder of Google, who, according to Wikipedia, said that "knowledge is always good, and certainly always better than ignorance," a philosophy that is summed up by Google's mission statement "Organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."

Mae's misdeed serves as an excuse to coerce her to go "fully transparent," a newspeak for a person who wears a camera and microphone all the time and whose movements can be tracked by an audience worldwide. Not surprisingly, she notices about herself that "Since she'd gone transparent, she'd become more noble"—even about trivial things like making food choices or skipping meals: "Every day she'd gone without things she didn't want to want" (329). This is in addition to wearing a publicly readable health bracelet, which allows others to see her vital data, such as pulse, temperature, blood pressure, and so on, which leads to her doctor's admonition that she should stop eating salami. Becoming more accountable to herself, she becomes more accountable to her audience because "So many of her watchers . . . saw her as a role model and inspiration" (328).

Another, related, theme is a forced participation in social media circles. Mae is enjoined by her employer to participate actively in internal and external social media. Whatever social

event she attends (and she is increasingly pressured to attend events exclusively on campus, as they call company premises—an allusion to Microsoft), she is required to take pictures and make comments in her several social media accounts as well as read, comment, and send "likes" to other people's accounts. In addition to strengthening the communitarian aspects of being a company employee, with the word "community" being another corporate buzzword, active social participation has a more nefarious, commercial implication. Employees are ranked on their social media participation, their PartiRank, and this, in turn, leads to two more scores, their Conversion Rate and Retail Raw, which show how many purchases they have inspired in their internet followers and how much revenue these purchases have generated. Mae's ex-boyfriend, Mercer, who expresses the authorial perspective and the novel's conscience, warns her: "your company is scanning all of our messages for information they can monetize. Don't you think this is insane?" (134). But Mae remains oblivious to manipulation and gradual loss of privacy and dismisses Mercer's concerns, ridiculing his position: "Mercer, the Circle is a group of people like me. Are you saying that somehow we're all in a room somewhere, watching you, planning world domination?" (259).

With Mae standing for Everyman and given her perception of reality, the novel cannot have a happy ending. Towards the end of the book, the cameras become so commonplace that every corner of the earth is observable and audible. In connection with this, more and more people feel obligated to become transparent: "the pressure on those who hadn't gone transparent went from polite to oppressive" (239). Mae is gradually brainwashed into the corporate way of seeing things, and even though she is in a unique position to instigate a reversal of the Circle's policies, being egged on and aided by one of the company´s original founders who has since had a change of heart, she decides not to help him. It is suggested in the epilogue that The Circle takes over the world, fulfilling their slogan of "closing the circle." This devastating outcome is aesthetically punctuated by juxtaposing the metaphor of the octopus-like Circle closing its stranglehold on the world with the image of a "tear" (rupture) opening up in Mae psyche, which she sees "clearer" and "louder" (375) as the novel progresses. This symbolic abyss, which she intuits but is incapable of fully grasping, is meant to emphasize for the reader the uncompromising bleakness of the projected future developments conjured up by Eggers' pessimistic extrapolation of current trends.

Even though I agree with a number of reviewers who have criticized the novel's manifesto-like flatness as a consequence of its agenda-driven conception, it is hard to deny that its dark vision of surveillance society and human relations hollowed out by social media has a ring of truth to it, even more so now in 2015 than in 2013, the year of book's publication. What I want to focus on, however, is not how accurate the novel is in diagnosing the problems of our modern technological society or how prescient it is in outlining our near future, but the anthropological explanation of the type of paranoia to which the novel gives voice. Gilles Deleuze's name for this dystopia is the *Society of Control*. Building on Michel Foucault's theories in *Discipline and Punish*, Deleuze, in his article, "Postscript on the

Societies of Control," extrapolates the idea of Foucault's disciplinary society to the present, claiming that the disciplinary societies of the industrial revolution gave way to the new type of society that we observe today. Even though the remnants of the disciplinary society, which produces "the environment of enclosure" in the form of the prison, school, hospital, family, and factory are still alive, "these institutions are finished, whatever the length of their expiration periods" (4). According to Deleuze, disciplinary societies are analogical, while control societies are digital because "enclosures are molds, distinct castings, but controls are a modulation, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other" (4). It is logical that "disciplinary societies equipped themselves with machines involving energy, . . . [while] the societies of control operate with . . . computers," given that old-style capitalism owned the means of production, while the new capitalism is "no longer a capitalism for production but for the product, which is to say, for being sold and marketed"; "what it wants to sell is services and what it wants to buy is stocks." Thus "the family, the school, the army, the factory are no longer the distinct analogical spaces that converge toward an owner . . . but coded figures—deformable and transformable—of a single corporation that now has only stockholders" (6).

Deleuze's analysis has captured something essential about our technological present and the vision of the near future painted by Dave Eggers in *The Circle*. What is particularly interesting to me, as someone engaged in the project of Generative Anthropology, is the way both Foucault in his analysis of biopower as technologies of subjugation and Deleuze in his dissection of the basic features of control societies use metaphors of mastery. Thus, Deleuze states that "The operation of markets is now the instrument of social control and forms the impudent breed of our masters" (6). Language like this suggests to me that there might be some unexamined mimetic assumptions that are operative in the logic of the text that I would like to bring to light. By using *The Circle* to uncover them, I assume that Eggers' novel reflects a political perspective on mechanisms of social control that is compatible with Deleuze's and other contemporary critics' and philosophers' cautionary projections about the totalitarian future that is awaiting us (and may already be here).

The issue of control is thematized explicitly in *The Circle*. Mercer delivers the diagnosis of this modern condition under the guise of a "cult taking over the world" by explaining to Mae: "like everything you guys are pushing, it sounds perfect, sounds progressive, but it carries with it more control, more central tracking of everything we do" (258-259). In what way then would the society of control be a more threatening model of social organization than that of discipline? Presumably because manipulation within the former would be more insidious and offensive to human dignity and thus violate the inherent symmetry of the originary scene. And symmetry is ostensibly preserved within The Circle, as a company. Nothing signals social distance and class struggle. When Mae is hired, she is told that company's ethos emphasizes community-building: "We want this to be a workplace, sure, but it should also be a *human* place. And that means the fostering of community. In fact, it *must* be a community. This is one of our slogans" (47). Love of sloganeering as a ubiquitous

feature of contemporary business culture meant to obscure a self-serving pursuit of profit by an appearance of socially conscious concerns is one of the targets of the novel's satire. Slogans are constantly spouted by enthusiastic employees: "*community* and *communication* come from the same root word, *communis*"; "If you care about your fellow human beings, you share what you know with them"; "Privacy is theft"; "Secrets are lies"; etc… (95, 302-303). Moreover, solidarity and democratic atmosphere are signaled by the fact that the management of The Circle are young, hip, and energetic people, who not only look and sound the same as their subordinates but seem to share their political engagement and social concerns. The employees, for example, are encouraged, even pressured, to sign an unending flood of consciousness-raising petitions on such topics as environment and human rights and participate in various political and artistic events that take place on campus (the latter involving poetry slams, rock concerts, and stand-up comedy), provided that they take photos and post them in social media. Not only is the company trend-conscious, not only does it care about social and political issues, but is also presents a caring image of community-building, being concerned, for example, by the employees' physical well-being and thus giving them and their families (even elderly parents, as in Mae's case) free medical care. In addition to health, the company promotes an aesthetic education of its employees by organizing art events and performances and supporting artists in residence.

In what way would this model be control-driven and not democratic and/or voluntaristic? It would seem that the development and expansion of the company are not brought about by fiat but happen naturally, as if obeying some higher laws of self-organization. If everything is transparent, if openness is absolute, if information is complete and fully accessible, could we not see human beings that make up this kind of a fully transparent society as cells in one organism, acting in concert, cooperating harmoniously, making everything run smoothly and without wastage? As each cell loses its agentivity and individuality, would it make more sense to "zoom out" and declare an emergence of a higher level of description that deals with collective aggregates? In this sense, the posthuman analysis of nonanthropocentric and non-agential thought, affect, and materiality that follow their own logic of expansion and propagation seems applicable here. It is easy to see (and indeed happens in the novel) that each control-tightening turn of the screw takes place by itself, as if it were the next logical step, often proposed by the employees. And indeed, who can object to labor-saving implementations, such as the universal TruYou identity, which make life so much easier?

Would the real problem with such an arrangement be the existence of true puppeteers, who will stay behind the scenes and pull the strings of control in order to "monetize information"? Or would there arise some other problems, inherent in this new beehive-type of social organization? For people will certainly embrace these developments voluntarily, seeing them as welcome changes that promote convenience and that are aligned with natural human desires. What drives the innovation is an understandable human desire for instant gratification that aims to make the navigation of the world more seamless, fluid, and immediate, to bring it closer to one's fingertips. Heidegger associated this desire with the

existential human condition of being in the world, Dasein. To be in the world means to be in the state of caring about our worldly projects in a spatial and temporal way, which, in turn, implies a need to be surrounded by useful things, such as tools, with the help of which we achieve our objectives. Our kinesthetic awareness and orientation within a spatial region where useful things may or may not be handy, although implicit, forms the basis of the referential totality that underlies our goal-directed understanding of *being-in-the-world*. If useful things are far or not handy, we must bring them into our region. Heidegger uses the term *de-distancing* (in the sense of removing the distance between where I am and where I want to be). De-distancing is something we are constantly doing automatically without thinking about it. "Dasein [or being in the world]," he says, "is essentially de-distancing" (97). This is a useful way of understanding what technological development is all about: human civilization becoming increasingly more efficient and advanced at its essential mode of being, that of de-distancing.

In the computer age of algorithmic design, de-distancing takes the character of calculation. Instead of physical tools, we base our actions on automated expert systems and feedback-based interactive architecture as well as use calculation in the opposite direction by predicting and forestalling what Hans Blumenberg calls the "episodic tremenda of recurring world events" (26) and catastrophes. Both the action and counteraction of computational thinking are doing de-distancing with previously unseen facility, speed, and competence. The question of whether it is in principle possible to predict and calculate outcomes is at the heart of the branch of knowledge that deals with algorithms. According to Roger Penrose, instances of algorithmic thinking have been known to man since the ancient Greeks, for example Euclid's algorithm for finding the common factor of two numbers. To find the highest common factor we divide one of the two numbers by the other and take the remainder, and then repeat the step for the number we divided by and the remainder. If the final remainder is zero then the last number we divided by is the highest common factor. In other words, an algorithm is a systematic procedure that could be written as a sequence of steps. Can all problems be coded and solved by algorithms and is all human thinking algorithmizable? Alan Turing conceived of a thought experiment, an imaginary apparatus, later called the Turing machine, to answer this question. The Turing machine is represented by an infinite tape, which will be running back and forth through his hypothetical device as long as calculations need to be performed. When the calculation is completed, the tape will come to a stop with a final output. Turing asked whether we can determine in advance for any general case whether the tape would stop. The answer is that a general solution is impossible.

This does not mean, however, that we do not successfully solve many difficult computational problems with sophisticated, interactive, self-adapting digital architecture of increasing complexity, performing new, previously unimaginable tasks. How far will these developments go? Will computer systems escape our control and become our masters? Eggers' novel gives voice to our shared fear of runaway technology, although it is not clear

whether his dystopian vision concerns evil people who intentionally dupe the simple-minded majority into submitting to a totalitarian system by distracting them with technological toys or whether expansion and transformation come as a result of collective de-distancing by the posthuman, larger-than-human man-machine aggregate, and then enterprising and unscrupulous people see an opening and take control. What then does this fear of control stem from? I would like to connect it to what Klaus Krippendorf in *Communication and Control in Society* calls the double bind between determinism and freedom (20). De-distancing successfully is to have the most accurate algorithm for calculating and predicting the behavior of the system of which we are a part. Everything in the system must be logical, law-abiding, and programmable in order for us to calculate what steps we need to take to reach our goals—except for ourselves, who are teleological, goal-articulating beings. But that cannot be, as this reasoning goes, because, by the same token, we must also be calculable and predictable within the constraints of the algorithmizable system. Either we have to accept that we only think ourselves free but are, in reality, programmed and controlled or we have to give up on the paradigm of autopoiesis, self-organization, and second order cybernetics, which is so popular today and to which Parisi provides a corrective by saying that algorithmic (and, by extension, human) thought is incomputable and contagious.

Even though Parisi looks at contagion as an unforeseen and unavoidable side-effect of computation that infects virus-like the original algorithm, her choice of terminology might reflect an unacknowledged anthropological intuition—something that fears and fantasies of being controlled and manipulated lack. Modeling human behavior within the parameters of choice vs. deterministic calculation does not take into consideration the scenic structure of representation, where the differential relationship of the periphery to the sacred center stages various strategies of sublimating resentment. As Eric Gans explains in *Signs of Paradox*, "The problem of freedom versus determinism is . . . anthropological rather than cosmic, 'cultural' rather than 'natural.' To say that the future movement of a particle is 'determined' is to conceive a mind potentially aware of this determination. The simple anthropological test of determinism is the following: if after calculating the future state of a system, I can inform the system of my calculations without leading it to deviate from them, that system may be called determined. If, on the contrary, I must hide my calculations to avoid such deviation, then the system is free; for someone within the system could eventually perform the same calculations as I have" (26). In other words, framing the human condition as a dilemma between freedom and determinism disregards that "freedom is born with the sign" (24). Without factoring in language, without taking into the consideration the triangular, mimetic nature of communication, Deleuzian and Foucauldian analysis conceives of social organization as constraining, unchanging, and hopeless. Without explicitly recognizing the center-periphery structure of the scene, such resentful imagination perceives the center as closed (to use Gans's terminology in *Science and Faith*), permanently usurped by invisible controlling forces, and thus misses an opportunity to see the scene's adaptability, its creative power to change and open up in various ways. So far I

have not seen evidence that posthuman theories that have shifted focus from the subject or human agent to broader perspectives of reified abstractions or from being to becoming, partly in order, I believe, to avoid the pitfall of resentful closure, have been more successful.

This is not to deny that the free will vs. determinism conundrum contains a powerful albeit unacknowledged kernel of anthropological truth. I believe it to be a restatement of the pragmatic paradox sans the scenic configuration of triangular desire. Gans defines the pragmatic or mimetic paradox in *Signs of Paradox* as the "incompatibility of the two roles of subject and other in the mimetic process" (19). In other words, "the sign originates as the solution to the 'paradoxical state' or 'pragmatic paradox' engendered when the mimetic relation to the other-mediator requires the impossible task of maintaining the latter as model while imitating his appropriative action toward a unique object. Put in geometric terms, the parallel lines of imitation must converge toward a single point" (20). Similarly, freedom vs determinism conundrum arises from the same contradiction. As I quoted earlier, to say that the future is either determined or free is to conceive of another mind who either knows or does not know what I know. I must occupy two peripheral consciousness positions at the same time, with both of these positions attempting to de-distance the same appetitive object, which is an impossible situation. The symmetry of the questions of "do I control?" and "am I controlled?" can only be contemplated from within the mimetic representational paradigm. Even though I do believe that the novel by Dave Eggers touches upon some truly worrying technological and social developments, I also think that the powerful analytical tools of Generative Anthropology will help us achieve deeper insights into these problems.

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