### Student Handout: Sample Capitalism Critique Shell (1/6) Handout #3

**The “fear of China” is rooted in capitalism- America’s fear of losing control over capital markets drives the theory that China is a threat.**

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However, it can be argued that the inclusion of China into the architecture of the global economy (through bodies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). and investment by global corporations in China) will lessen the chances of conflict (through bodies declares that China’s rulers “want to do business, and their highest priorities, by far, are economic their adhesion to the World Trade Organization is the surest indication that the want to be integrated into a capitalist world economy 20 From this perspective, it could he argued that a China included into the space of “globalization” will present less danger than non-state actors, such as deterritorialized and flexible terrorist networks. Although the Realist could point out that such a line of argument is exactly what an intellectual such as Mearsheimer is trying to protect us from as the sense of fear that people feel after 9/I I—with its violent immediacy and visceral power—may lead politicians to focus on sources of insecurity that are really not that dangerous for the long term security of the state. A terrorist network could not have access to the type of weapons of mass destruction that China has access to states—by definition of their military capability—are still the main agents of destruction on the geopolitical scene. Of course the Realist may argue that China plays by the rules of the capitalist system because they are means to an end—but what happens when it becomes a peer competitor. From the Offensive Realist perspective, this is the underworld to the “optimistic” vision of liberal theorists who argue that enlargement of the spaces of economy and democracy will lead to order and progress in international affairs. Fear of China is not unique to Mearsheimer’s work on Offensive Realism and it is a discourse of danger that circulates in many areas where the future of security and the global economy are debated, This fear of China in the contemporary political imaginary of Europe and the United States appears to stem from an awareness by the “developed” of the power of capitalism and technology to unleash huge changes in society (creating a condition of “everlasting uncertainty.” as Marx and Engels put it). It stems from the view that in Europe and the United States there are moral limits imposed on the market civilization of liberal democracy (although these moral limits may become flexible outside of the “core”). As Max Weber put it the “inner attitude of the adventurer that laughs at all ethical limitation is universal”2’ the fear of China emerges from the sense that a capitalist China competing in a global economy will unleash the power of the market without an sense of ethical limitation. In this sense, commentators from both Left and Right fear a territory where 1.3 billion individuals are willing to work for low pay as in a zone where “even thing is permitted” The Economist comments that China has an “inexhaustible supply of workers, willing to work long hours for pitifully low pay.” In November 2002 Wired, a magazine that celebrates—some would say fetishizes—the vision of an information age driven by free markets and a borderless economy, published an article on “The I lot zone” “An untamed technology boom is sweeping through China’s Pearl River Delta, where cheap labor, mass production, police thugs and get-rich-quick dreams rule. It’s a terrible, Horrible, lawless frontier. And it works.” The fear of China is combined with a perverse fascination—and maybe even admiration—for the ‘unrefined” market free from liberal concerns and maybe this is what scares Mearsheimer: a population that does not hold the “deep-seated” optimism and liberalism of the United States. This fear of “unrefined” capitalism is what lies at the core of these views of China, a fear that “unthinking hordes.” used only to totalitarian governance, will threaten the decadent tame zones of liberal democracy. A similar fear drove the imaginary of the Cold War, articulated through Holly wood fantasies of immoral scientists and unthinking robot armies or zombies attacking the free communities of 1950s America.

**Capitalism ignores oppression, produces violence, and causes wars.**

Vattimo and Zabala 11 Gianni Vattimo, emeritus professor of philosophy at the University of Turin and a member of the European Parliament, and Santiago Zabala, ICREA Research Professor of Philosophy at the Pompue Fabra University, Hermeneutic Communism*,* Columbia: New York, NY (2011), pg 47-54

Both Fukuyama and Kagan, who are among the establishment's most respected political scientists, have given an account of the current world order where democracy has prevailed over history and must conserve that victory. Against many interpreters of this debate, we do not believe Kagan was contradicting Fukuyama's thesis but confirming it. Kagan's call for a "league of democracies" to "legitimate" their interests against foreign states indicates his fear of change, that is, of the return of history. As we can see, more than in a debate over the end or return of history, Fukuyama and Kagan have engaged in an attempt to present framed democracy as the only legitimate and legitimizing force, regardless of the administration in the White House. What is most interesting about their argument is not the political scenario they present (at the service of framed democracy) but rather what they leave out, that is, what in the previous chapter we called defeated, weak, or other history. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, the politics of descriptions, in order to impose and justify framed democracy, must eliminate everything that does not submit to its ordering of facts, norms, and institutions. Having said this, it should not be a surprise that Fukuyama and Kagan, together with other establishment intellectuals, forget, neglect, or ignore the oppression caused by neoliberal capitalism. And if they ignore such economic oppression, it is because they themselves sustain it: their condition is also an effect of such oppression. Just as Searle was indifferent to Derrida's arguments, so are Fukuyama and Kagan indifferent to the history of the oppressed, because the priority, in both cases, is always to submit to the scientific or democratic realm of metaphysics. It must be for this reason that when Derrida commented on Fukuyama's thesis in Specters of Marx (1993), a great deal of space was given to what he left out of his analysis: For it must be cried out, at a time when some have the audacity to neo-evangelize in the name of the ideal of a liberal democracy that has finally realized itself as the ideal of human history: never have violence, inequality, exclusion, famine, and thus economic oppression affected as many human beings in the history of the earth and of humanity. Instead of singing the advent of the ideal of liberal democracy and of the capitalist market in the euphoria of the end of history, instead of celebrating the "end of ideologies" and the end of the great emancipatory discourses,

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let us never neglect this obvious macroscopic fact, made up of innumerable singular sites of suffering: no degree of progress allows one to ignore that never before, in absolute figures, have so many men, women and children been subjugated, starved or exterminated on the earth.14 The "inequality, exclusion, famine, and economic oppression" that Fukuyama and Kagan leave out of their analysis represent framed democracy's effects and also its greatest threat. Although, since the fall of the Soviet Union, democracies have expanded to the point of achieving a condition of "lack of emergencies"—that is, of political, financial, and social emergencies—it does not mean they are not ready for such events. As we have seen in the past decades, the establishment of democratic free-market capitalist states was not only violent15 but also ineffective, considering the dissatisfaction that most Western citizens declare today.16 These dissatisfactions have reached such levels that the institutions designed to detect social discontent are no longer limited to the United Nations (International Labour Organization, World Trade Organization, or the Food and Agriculture Organization) but have expanded to states' ministries of defense. These ministries have been producing reports that not only confirm this situation but also prepare to confront it. As Mike Davis explained in Planet of Slums, the Pentagon war-fighting doctrine "is being reshaped accordingly to support a low- intensity world war of unlimited duration against criminalized segments of the urban poor."17 And Rear Admiral C. J. Parry (the director general of a recent UK Ministry of Defense report) has indirectly explained why: Differentials in material well-being will be more explicit through globalization and increased access to more readily and cheaply available telecommunications. Disparities in wealth and advantage will therefore become more obvious, with their associated grievances and resentments, even among the growing numbers of people who are likely to be materially more prosperous than their parents and grandparents. Absolute poverty and comparative dis-advantage will fuel perceptions of injustice among those whose expectations are not met, increasing tension and instability, both within and between societies and resulting in expressions of violence such as disorder, criminality, terrorism and insurgency. They may also lead to the resurgence of not only anti-capitalist ideologies, possibly linked to religious, anarchist or nihilist movements, but also to populism and the revival of Marxism.18 Although reports from many other states also warn of a future rife with wars (over water, immigration, and infectious diseases),19 the fact that "absolute poverty" and "comparative disadvantage" are now also considered threats for the security of framed democracies inevitably poses "other" alarms than the ones indicated by Fukuyama and Kagan. As we can see, the coming threats are not limited to Russia, China, and India, which, as Kagan explains, have become "responsible shareholders," but rather come from everyone who is not part of framed democracy's neoliberal capitalism. This is why we do not believe the next wars will primarily be against other states20 but rather against those "useless shareholders," who, for the most part, are the weak, poor, and oppressed citizens, as highlighted in the defense reports. As we argue, the weak do not possess a different history but rather exist at history's margins; that is, they represent the discharge of capitalism and are present not only in the Third World but also in the slums of Western metropolises. These slums are not only becoming larger as we write but also are where the majority of the population is forced to live because of the concentration of capital. While in the West the slums are becoming battlegrounds, in some South American states, as we will see in chapter 4, they have become territories for social improvement through communist initiatives. In sum, the conflicts of the twenty-first century will not be caused by the return of history, as Fukuyama and Kagan predict, but rather by its own ends: liberal states. The fact that framed democracy is already preparing to fight and win such urban wars indicates how within our democratic system change is almost impossible and also how the oppressive effects of capitalism are predicted to increase. As Meiksins Wood explained, whether "national or global, [capitalism] is driven by a certain systemic imperatives, the imperatives of competition, profit-maximization and accumulation, which inevitably require putting 'exchange-value' before 'use-value' and profit before people."21 These are systemic imperatives of dominion, supremacy, and control over others, and they result in such metaphysical systems as liberalism, where the power of the individual becomes the only substance. Our goal in this chapter is to demonstrate how framed democracy's liberal, financial, and security measures regulate one another in order both to conserve our current "lack of emergencies" and to impose necessary emergencies. If the democracies' chief priority is to conserve what Heidegger called the "lack of emergencies," that is, the neutrality achieved through science's liberal essence, modern states still have an essential function, contrary to the opinion of many contemporary thinkers.22 This function is not limited to the historical, racial, or linguistic identification of a state's citizens but extends to other states: "liberal states" are also "liberating states"; that is, they liberate other states from undemocratic regimes. The recent imposed liberalization of Iraq and Afghanistan (also called "state building") occurred under the orders of other liberal states and as a consequence of the essence of liberalism. It is also in the name of this essence that democracy is imposed today as the best system of government even when it becomes corrupt. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, the "liberal essence" of science consists in its ideal of objectivity, that is, establishing "truth" or "freedom" as only what legally enters within the established, recognized, and framed democratic order. It must be for these reasons that Carl Schmitt viewed "liberalism as a coherent, all-embracing, metaphysical system"23 and that Heidegger viewed it as another product, with fascism, capitalism, and communism, of subjectivist metaphysics.24 This is why within metaphysically framed democracies liberalism avoids change: while democratic elections are procedures for possible change, liberalism is the realm within which such change presents itself through elections, finance, and institutions. Liberal electoral results represent humanity's unconditional self-legislation, in other words, the focus on "the I"25 from which stems liberalism.

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But this vision from a pure "I," according to Heidegger, is impossible to achieve, because there are no experiences that ever set man beyond himself into an unentered domain from within which man as he is up to now could become questionable. That is—namely, that self-security— that innermost essence of "liberalism," which precisely for this rea-son has the appearance of being able to freely unfold and to sub-scribe to progress for all eternity. . . . Thus, it now took only a few years for "science" to realize that its "liberal" essence and its "ideal of objectivity" are not only compatible with the political-national "orientation" but also indispensable to it. And hence "science" as well as "worldview" must now unanimously agree that the talk of a "crisis" of science was actually only a prattle.26 As we saw in the previous chapter, such self-security is a consequence of the "unconditional relationship" of metaphysics, where "the present that is present to itself becomes the measure for all beingness."27 This is why, as Richard Polt pointed out, "liberalism [for Heidegger] can go on 'progressing' forever precisely because its basis is static."28 Having said this, if the liberal worldview, capitalism's systemic imperatives, and states' identification measures are unified by static desires of progress, control, and domination, they must also be unified in the fear of possible foreign shocks, disruptions, or emergencies, which Searle, Smith, Fukuyama, and Kagan express in their politics of descriptions.

**The alternative is to reject capitalism to carve out opportunities for critical space**

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Although I would risk the claim that the capitalist view of the productivity of violence, destruction, and catastrophe may be shaken by accidents that threaten the coherence of the socio-economic system or certainly the environmental life support system itself, it is not at all clear that this is the case and that capitalism will reform its practices when it looks like the world is about to end. This is because the high priest of neo-liberal economics, Milton Friedman [17], would regard the total collapse of the socio-economic system in apocalyptic terms, as an opportunity to re-boot the system in a more successful, more efficient form, rather than as a wake up to reform the mode of production in a general sense. In this respect, I think we must remain cautious of Virilio's [18] Augustinian theory of apocalyptic hope, which parallels Girard's [19] view that the contemporary world is balanced somewhere between the mimetic war of all against all and an apocalyptic turn that will usher in a new mode of being together. As Žižek [20], Badiou [21], and Kroker [22] explain, and Virilio knows all too well, contemporary capitalism is itself an apocalyptic world-less form rooted in metaphysics, science fiction, and the kind of quasi-theological mysticism that Der Derian [23] finds at the heart of the American military-industrial-media-entertainment network and the related project of virtuous war. As such, and because we must understand that post-modern capitalism may well not only survive, but also profit from the end of the world, we should recognise the importance of Virilio's [24] notions of critical space. What this idea captures is the possibility that we are currently balanced on the apocalyptic edge of the socio-economic system, on the line between violent destruction and the extinction of humanity as being-in-the world, and the turn to a new ecological mode of living able to reconcile our identity as natural, social, and technological beings. Given this concern for the apocalyptic nature of hyper-modernity, and Drew Burk's [25] account of Virilio as the apocalyptic thinker of revelation, critical distance, and the scenic imagination par excellence, I want to claim that we should emphasise the link between Virilio's concept of critical space and his ideas of the museum of accidents [26] and more recently the university of disaster. [27] Through these notions he suggests the need to reveal the catastrophic nature of the empire of speed, to open up a space for critical engagement with our culture of disaster that is otherwise prohibited by the collapse of knowledge and thought into the ecstasy of communication and information [28], and ultimately to enable the turning or transformation of global society to a more humane form. I want to suggest that we should regard Virilio's ideas of the museum of accidents [29] and the university of disaster [30] as attempts to present a theory of the institutionalisation of the critique of the globalised empire of speed that may tip the apocalyptic balance against the world-less mysticism of neo-liberal post-modern capitalism and towards the humanitarian demand for a more liveable world where technology works for humans, rather than the other way around. Against what he calls the twilight of place [31], which condemns humanity to, at best, a life on the move and, at worst, the living death of a disembodied and spectral existence, Virilio shifts into reverse through the idea of critical space that can institutionalise the Ancient Socratic call to 'Know Thyself'; such a call has been disappeared by the culture of speed that leaves no time for reflection, but remains hidden, a kind of unconscious supplement in our world of light speed trajectories and velocities, awaiting the moment when time seems to stop and critical thought is possible once more. Akin to the Freudian logic of unearthing the hidden unconscious other side of psychic life, Virilio's [32] notions of the critical space of the museum of accidents and the university of disaster seeks to reveal the other side of the

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modern commitment to progress and development. Following Aristotle, who suggested that the accident reveals the substance and in doing so inspired western thinkers from Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud, Deleuze, and Derrida to think through a theory contrasting the system and its others, Virilio explicitly takes the case of the accident and suggests that it has the potential to reveal the substance or truth of the modern temptation to progress, speed, and totality [33]. Apart from revealing this substance, as the violence and destructiveness of modernity, especially in its hyper-active phase, it may be that what Virilio's [34] apocalypse would also reveal would be the need for humanity to learn a sense of humility. To accept that it is not divine, but rather a limited earthbound species that cannot live without resistance or gravity. The paradox of this situation is, of course, that it is precisely humanity's limited nature, the fact that we are not Gods, that has led us to reach for the skies only to plunge back down to earth like Icarus, the tragic figure par excellence of Greek mythology. Like Nietzsche [35], who was well aware of humanity's tragic nature, Virilio knows that we will always try to touch the sky. In this respect I do not see him in any way as anti-modern, even though it is possible that his critique of the excessive nature of the empire of speed may express itself in a form of social and cultural conservatism that is not easily reconciled with his radical critique of technology. Instead I believe that his problematic resides in the hubristic forgetting of tragedy that has evolved through hyper-modernity and the need to rehabilitate the Ancient idea of humanity as a tragic creature of the limit that is made necessary and possible by the apocalyptic culture of post-modernism. This culture simultaneously and paradoxically marks the moment when we run into the limit of terrestrial time and space and forget about our earthbound limited nature. In this respect my focus is less on Virilio's conservatism or his desire to restrict humanity; rather I am interested in what I perceive to be his concern to maintain the experience of the limit in a global age where we simultaneously inhabit a state of global fullness and completion and precisely for that reason have no sense of that truth. It is this paradox, this conflation of the destructive potential of completed modernity and the total inability of humanity to understand this condition as a sign of the limitation and potential end of its own existence, primarily because of its location or immersion in a vortex of information that screens out critical thought and knowledge, that forms the basis of Virilio's apocalypse and necessitates the creation of institutions able to think through the end times in order to pull us back from the brink. Herein resides the meaning of Virilio's [36] idea of a politics of the very worst and his notion of the accident as an inverted miracle able to radically re-orient our relation to the world and technology. Virilio's Notion of Catastrophic Modernity For Virilio [37] modernity must be understood as a catastrophic epoch which has led to what he calls a 'toposcopical disaster' characterised by humanity's inability to properly perceive the phenomenological reality of the environment that functions as its life support system. Against this catastrophic condition - which he tells us leads to the psychopathological condition of the planet man who falls into megalomania by virtue of his inability to understand his relation to the totally mediated virtual world that has been condensed to the infinite density of a singularity by the light speeds of new media technology - Virilio explains that we need to find a new form of art suitable for illustrating our condition and illuminating our apocalyptic situation. [38] From this insight I think we can make two points. First, it is methodologically significant that Virilio discusses the redemptive quality of art, rather than critical theory, because what this illustrates is his view that complex theoretical constructions are unlikely to impact upon a high speed society where knowledge and thought have been more or less destroyed by an excess of information and communication. The value of art is, therefore, that it makes an emotional, rather than cognitive, impression upon the audience and causes them to feel, rather than necessarily theoretically comprehend their situation in an epoch where theoretical comprehension has been, at best, marginalised, and at worst, foreclosed by the light speeds of new technology. We know that Virilio [39] foregrounds this methodological approach in his work because he has the tendency to explain the ways in which his own work leaps from idea to idea without necessarily working out the connections between theories and concepts. The effect of this procedure is, therefore, to give the reader first, an impression and second, an invitation to work backwards through the theoretical connections present in his work. We can, of course, find a precedent for this approach to critical writing, which is perfectly symmetrical with the trajectivity of the post-modern empire of speed, even if it does run the risk of collapsing into the vortex of information and communication that characterises our mediated world. We can compare Virilio's thought to the German critical theorists' notion of the thought-image, which was similarly meant to oppose the banality of the culture industry from the inside through the construction of media-friendly critical bombs. [40] In the case of both the German critical theorists, such as Adorno and Horkheimer (and to a lesser extent Benjamin), and Virilio, I think we can, therefore, pinpoint a notion of political activism, whereby critical writing is itself an artistic activity meant to oppose the banality of technology that simply works for the sake of working, and somehow to spark critical reflection in the minds of the disorientated and stupefied masses. As Virilio [41] knows very well, the potential problem of this strategy is that it is not possible to fight speed with speed. From the perspective of the Frankfurters, the threat is that Virilio's user friendly critiques may be transformed into commodities through the process of knowledge exchange on the open market, thus becoming little more than fantastical representations of radical critique in a globalised system that has no other. However, my view is that there is more to Virilio's [42] turn to critical art than the attempt to simply mimic the dynamism of the empire of speed, and that it is possible to understand this strategy in ways that render it perfectly symmetrical with his other major radical theory, grey ecology [43], or the concern with the speed limit. My view is that what Virilio's turn to critical art seeks to achieve is a connection to the masses caught under the sign of light speed that is able to lift them out of the endless passage of events and freeze time, creating a moment of solitude, concentration, contemplation, and reflection, which in other works he calls critical space. [44] My thesis is, therefore, that it is this critical space of reflection that Virilio wants to open up in order to create the possibility of apocalyptic transformation and that understanding this strategy is key to comprehending the meaning of his political activism. This point about Virilio's activism is important because it shows us that his apocalypse is never immediate, but rather relies on the recognition of the catastrophic nature of modernity that his work may produce in the audience. It is only at this point that Virilio's apocalypse, where apocalypse refers to a process of revelation, would truly appear. Herein resides the second point about the nature of Virilio's theory of the value of art for illuminating the catastrophic nature of contemporary processes of globalisation; although the catastrophe is always already present, and taking place as we speak, the apocalypse is not now, and can never be now, without the revelatory function of representation to tip the balance away from the unthinking catastrophe of modernity that is endlessly taking place and towards the critical ecological-phenomenological demand for a new relationship between humanity, the world, and technology. The apocalypse resides, therefore, in the moment of unveiling, in the moment or event when the catastrophe becomes so apparent that it is impossible for the audience or tele-viewer not to recognise its representation or presentation in critical art and act upon this recognition. Since this has not happened yet, and we remain caught up in the end times where catastrophe is everywhere and apocalypse nowhere, we might say that we live in the epoch of unrealised catastrophe. This is because the true realisation of catastrophe, not the basic media representation of catastrophic events that is fed to passive tele-viewers, but rather the existential realisation of the catastrophe taking place now, the endless catastrophe pushing humanity and the world to the very edge of existence, is the apocalypse. This is the true moment of revelation,

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that would change our relationship to both technology and the world forever, and demand us to actively reformulate our way of living in the world on the basis of that revelatory experience. If this revelatory experience, this apocalyptic moment, is the objective of Virilio's thought, I think that we should read his works as a history of the catastrophic nature of modernity, hyper-modernity, and the emergence of the post-modern moment of globalisation when time and space are exhausted and there is nowhere else to go. As catastrophe piles upon catastrophe in a totally mediated, totally inter-connected world where everything impacts upon everything else, Virilio's [45] wager is that we will wake up to the catastrophe of modernity realised or post-modernity and change our situation. Shifting into reverse, and considering his now classic Speed and Politics [46], Virilio shows how modernity and the obsession with speed and progress began with the French Revolution. In his view the Revolution destroyed the immobility of the feudal universe that had reigned more or less unchanged since Aristotle considered the idea of the great chain of being, and inaugurated a society and social form ordered by the principle of futurity and modernisation. This new society was formed on the basis of science, reason, technology, and democracy and was eventually meant to reach its final destination in a utopia of techno-scientific reasoned virtue. However, as Žižek [47] has shown in his essay on Robespierre's famous 'Virtue and Terror' speech, the revolutionaries, who Virilio calls dromomaniacs, knew that their new society of speed, movement, and progress could never succeed without overcoming or simply crashing through whatever obstacles lay in its path. In this respect Žižek highlights Robespierre's insight that virtue was always bound to terror, that virtue was in fact impossible without terror, in much the same way that Virilio foregrounds the terminal relationship between speed and war, to show how the history of modernity, the epoch of speed, has always been about the violent overcoming of obstacles and limits through terrorist ballistic technologies. This much is evident when we consider what Virilio [48] calls pure war, his term for explaining the thin or even invisible line separating war from peace in modern society. Consider the principal site of modernity, modernisation, and speed, the city, which Virilio [49] regards as a site of 'habitable circulation'. If we think about the city, which Mumford [50] tells us is the originary site of human sociability and civilization, through the works of the Italian Futurist artist Umberto Boccioni and the German sociologist Georg Simmel, we enter a completely different scene to the foundational city painted by Mumford. In Boccioni's The City Rises [51] or Simmel's The Metropolis and Mental Life [52] we are presented with the image of the city as a place of enormous energy and vitality, but also abstraction, alienation, and violence. In both cases Virilio's [53] view that the modern city is governed by a dictatorship of movement is appropriate. There is no resting place, or hiding place, in either Boccioni or Simmel. Moderns are fatally exposed to speed and must learn to adjust to the new epoch. While Simmel was, of course, critical of the new modern city of speed, because of the ways in which it fostered a culture of distance and estrangement, Boccioni, perhaps the master Futurist artist, thought that humanity had to evolve to live with the new speeds of modernity. Hence his classic sculpture, Unique Forms of Continuity in Space, can in many ways be seen as a prefiguration of the totalitarian man captured in the writings of Ernst Jünger [54], and critically discussed by Klaus Theweleit [55] in his two volume psychoanalytic study of the proto-Nazi Freikorps para-military group that terrorised Weimar Germany in the 1920s. We know that neither Boccioni or Simmel were concerned with war in any conventional sense; yet that they clearly relate to the modern prophets of technological war, Marinetti, Jünger, and later the totalitarians, Hitler and Stalin, whom Arendt [56] characterised by their obsession with movement, dynamism, and the notion of violent progress towards a pre-defined ideological utopian conclusion, is of central importance. What this link illuminates is what Virilio [57] means by pure war as the collapse of the relationship between peace and war and the endo-colonisation of everyday life by the warrior ethos. Despite the rejection of the violent utopianism of the totalitarians in the wake of the discovery of the horrors of Auschwitz and the Gulag Archipelago, it would be wrong to imagine that pure war or the obsession with speed and movement has in any way left the scene of post-modern liberal society. As Virilio [58] explains, speed remains the hope or key utopian principle of the west. He tells us that movement is the only law of the modern, hyper-modern, or post-modern world and that the failure to move is a sign of decay, decline, and ultimately death. That the futurism of speed remains central to life in western liberal and neo-liberal society should not surprise us since the founder of the liberal tradition, Thomas Hobbes [59], was himself concerned with the movement and the progress of men through life. In his political science he imagined society as smooth Euclidean space populated by atomised men or precise 'subjectiles' bound by the rules of the road set out by the Leviathan and expected to follow these rules on pain of death. For Hobbes, life was a race, and a struggle for power, where power refers to the difference between the relative speeds of men. In the context of this situation, the rule of the Leviathan was meant to legislate against fatal collisions. These would, in the state of nature, lead to catastrophic accidents between men, resulting in the end of one of their trajectories through life, immobility, and as a consequence, death [60]. Beyond Virilio's [61] location of the emergence of modernity, the epoch of speed, in the event of the French Revolution, it may well be that we should also think about the ways in which Hobbes' theory of the state as traffic cop from the mid-17th century also contributed to the origin of the new society of movement, dynamism, and progress. Here, we may also consider how Hobbes' work built upon the new physics of Galileo and the theory of inertia that posited a universal law of movement and undermined the Aristotelian orthodoxy that imagined a universe of order, stasis, and organisation, and regarded all movement as progress towards this natural end point. Given the radical break between the ancient-medieval physics based upon Aristotle's thought and Galileo's new modern paradigm that Hobbes took as a model of the endless dynamism of early capitalist society, it is possible to see the French Revolutionary break, which ushered in the society of the epoch of totalitarianism, as an attempt to rediscover the ancient notion of a telos that the Spartans and Plato had sought to defend against Herodotus' [62] notion of history, and combat the revolutionary conditions later represented by Boccioni and Simmel. In this way, it is possible to construct an historical time-line explaining the emergence of the current catastrophic empire of speed that Virilio believes has reached its limit and started to burn out under conditions of globalisation. This time-line would run from the historical destruction of Sparta and Plato's related utopian city outlined in The Republic [63], evolve through Aristotle's theory of movement towards natural ends, take in the destruction of Aristotle's theory by Galileo and the new modern physics and Hobbes' political science of society as a race, before reaching Marx and the anti-capitalist reaction to the new violent society of speed. This anti-capitalist turn may in turn be related to the totalitarian attempts to re-discover a modernist version of the ancient utopia of stasis, leading finally to a consideration of the rise of post-modern neo-liberal capitalism in the wake of the collapse of the totalitarianisms that has liberated speed from all ideas of limitation. The central point about the end of this time-line is, of course, that the post-modern neo-liberal liberation of speed from all ideas of limitation, where ideas of limitation refer to either utopian ends or social speed limits such as trade regulations meant to govern the movement of capital, is evidence of the hubris and the forgetting of tragedy that Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Virilio all see as the core problematic of the modern society of nihilism, technology, and speed [64]. In each case I think it is possible to argue that Nietzsche and Heidegger, and now Virilio, recognise that the inability of humanity to appreciate the necessary phenomenological resistance of the world upon its movement and speed will produce catastrophic consequences in the form of the emergence of a last man bored by a technological world that he can no longer relate to and that completely prohibits his continued movement through space. This is, of course, the famous theory of inertia that Virilio [65] employs to show how the empire of speed has started to collapse into a society of immobility and stasis characterised by walls, borders, camps, and prisons that he generalises through the ideas of global foreclosure, incarceration, and lock down. In this new global crash culture, where the ideology of global capitalism talks about freedom of movement and works off the idea that increased proximity in a society where it is impossible to evade the other will lead to more love, sharing, and community, Virilio's [66] point is that reality is defined by surveillance, suspicion, paranoia, security, hatred, petty jealousy, revulsion towards the other, and ultimately pure war. This, then, is the catastrophe of the empire of speed without limits. This is the catastrophe awaiting a revelatory moment to transform it into an apocalyptic event that may enable us to enact radical, revolutionary, change. The challenge remains, of course, to find some way to produce this apocalyptic moment, to produce this moment of revelation, through artistic endeavour and critical thought in a society of speed where everything is reduced to the status of information, communication, and commodity to be exchanged and passed on. In other words, there is no apocalyptic moment in the empire of speed because the empire of speed is defined by what we might variously call following Kroker [67] and Wilson [68] post-modern, virtual, hyper, or supercapitalism. In the hyper-capitalist world, if we choose to adopt Kroker's name for the new form of high speed, high tech, totally virtual capitalism, there is no telos, there is no apocalyptic end, no fatal moment of collapse, since, as Wilson [69] points out, death is distributed across the system. In this vision of the new capitalist world, mortality invades every aspect of life in the form of a death drive that compares to Virilio's concept of pure war [70] which shows how war is no longer contained in a discrete event, but rather exists everywhere, nowhere, and is at the same time never and always on.

### Student Hand Out: Sample Capitalism Critique Shell (6/6)

Continued…

For Virilio [71] this death drive is explained by America's attachment to the idea of the frontier, or what he calls, citing Jackson, the frontier effect, which has led the land of the free towards a form of nihilism set on the destruction of the environment for the sake of development, modernisation, progress, and creation of what Deleuze and Guattari [72] call smooth space. That is to say that the American determination to conquer or overcome obstacles, to create smooth space suitable for the speed of movement for capital and human flows, in many respects reproduces Hobbes' capitalist metaphysics of legalised movement in real space. It is this innovation that transforms the phenomenological world of embodied experience into a metaphysical or virtual abstraction that humans, or perhaps we should say those post-humans plugged into the network society, experience through inter-face with technology. Virilio's [73] America, the land of Hobbesian materialist metaphysics realised, is for this reason comparable to Baudrillard's [74] Nietzschean land of fascinated banality. It exists as a land of deserts, a featureless landscape, a smooth Euclidean space, that has come to define post-modern globalisation as a catastrophic space awaiting the arrival of its apocalypse. What is more is that we know that the apocalypse is on the American mind. Consider the born again Christian fundamentalists. They understand the endless war in the Middle East, the lands of deserts, Iraq, the birth place of human culture and civilization, and Armageddon, the site of the final battle between the forces of good and evil, as the scene of the coming apocalypse where the saved will be separated from the damned and the world will learn what America already knows, that it is the land of God. Again we can discern the strange virtualisation of the world, which Virilio [75] understands as characteristic of the light speeds of globalisation, where metaphysics and theology stand in for politics, define the direction of our world, and set the scene for an apocalyptic moment that will transform the basic co-ordinates of human reality. Unfortunately, the contemporary American apocalypse, which updates Winthrop's theory of the city upon the hill in popular and official culture ranging from Tim LaHaye's Left Behind [76] books to the Bush regime's PNAC, is not the apocalypse imagined by Virilio [77]. Whereas his theory suggests creating speed limits or a 'political economy of speed' in order to enable humans to live together in the world, the American vision of the apocalypse is about destroying what little environmental resistance there is left in the world in order to completely liberate humanity from its reliance on natural life support systems. In practical terms this is, of course, about spreading the American way, and perhaps military, economic, and cultural imperialism, but what is important about Virilio's vision is that it enables us to understand that behind the commitment to practical principles of freedom, individualism, democracy, capitalism, and technology resides a metaphysical imperative to salvation through virtualisation. Paraphrasing Virilio paraphrasing Heidegger who noted that technology cannot be understood technologically but rather must be thought metaphysically, it may be the case that we cannot understand the American-led process of globalisation politically or economically, but instead must think about it metaphysically in terms of speed and the death drive towards virtuality. This view, which describes the way Virilio [78] understands processes of globalisation and the creation of the dromosphere is certainly supported by Der Derian's [79] theory of virtuous war. Der Derian's theory explains a mode of pure war, slimmed down in terms of its understanding of political complexity in order to meet the needs of speed, so that the world is divided along the lines of Carl Schmitt's [80] violent friend / foe dichotomy where the virtuous chosen people face off against the evil others who are set to burn in Hell in an apocalyptic fight to the death, and transformed into a media abstraction by high technology, which virtualises reality, making the environment subordinate to the smooth spaces of the map. For Der Derian [81], America, the land of apocalyptic virtuous war, the mode of pure war that fuses a theological belief in virtue with a high tech commitment to virtuality, was always fated to take this road. It was, after all, named after Amerigo Vespucci, the great cartographer-explorer, and has always been the land of maps and the refusal of the world.