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Autopoietic Free Improvisation vs. Technototalitarian Regulation of Consciousness

Abstract

The elusive nature and the function of art occupy a highly contested territory within aesthetic philosophy since its inception. The present article also engages with the question of the nature and the function of art, though in a more narrowed and specific domain. The claim that is going to be tackled here is whether improvisation in art, in general, makes a statement against empirical science? To corroborate this claim I will look at specific artworks that offer a way of considering the function of art as something that can stand in opposition to empirical science and as something that therefore can offer an alternative understanding of consciousness. The main question is, "where does improvisation stand against the radical evolutionary positivist objectivization of consciousness?" To answer, we look at the emancipatory role of art that challenges the empiricism of modern science via investigating several artworks as signposts. We examine different types of improvisation by analyzing Joe Wight's *Darkest Hour* (2017) and by drawing on the concept of autopoiesis, we define autopoietic improvisation as free improvisation. Then we draw on Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror* show (2011–present) to indicate that the idea of how indelible techno-totalitarianism, which envisages a dystopian future for mankind via the refinement and regulation of consciousness, offers a limited view of consciousness. Techno-totalitarianism stands as a key term to be defined and analyzed here as it is precisely the mechanism against and through which I will shape a new discourse of improvisation. Techno-totalitarianism is the state of digital rationalization and instrumentation of neuroscience in the regulation of human desire, choice, and behavior such as regulation and self-regulation are no longer distinguishable. We also discuss how finding a theory of everything and complete formula for consciousness means cutting new alleyways to utter annihilation of human will, improvisation or freedom in general.

Keywords

Anti-representational Art, Neuroscience, Improvisation, Self-objectivization, Consciousness, Technototalitarianism, Autopoiesis

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Introduction

What is the purpose of improvisation? If it is to produce the new, we should
ask what this new could be in the closed loop of causality and in a new world
where every act is reduced by neuroscientists to its positive causes? In this
paper, we will take a brief glance at the emancipatory role and stance of art
that challenge the empiricism of neuroscience that serve the infrastructure
of digital manipulation, that categorize, that produce by prediction, and en-
deavor to reduce the full phenomenal consciousness to some set formula
like the claims of neuroscientists like Hanna Critchlow and Ray Kurzweil.
The anti-representational merits of the chosen Science Fiction cinematic
works alongside paintings by Francis Bacon and Salvador Dali, Jackson
Pollock and René Magritte, are used as signposts for directing the reader to
the main argument, that is the assertion of improvisation as antithetical to
a rationalized consciousness system. Ideas such as the definition of 'art' by
Martin Heidegger, the 'unforeseeable nothing' by Henri Bergson, the concept
of 'event' by Alain Badiou, Gilles Deleuze, Heidegger and Slavoj Žižek will be
discussed as they are emblematic of the aforementioned obsessions and are
very similar to the pre-symbolic void. Central to my argument are *Parallax
View* (2009) by Žižek, *Event and Being* (2001) and *Cinema* (2002) by Badiou
as they provide the theoretical ground to discuss how obsessions with
a locus prior to being are entrenched in the minds of those who thirst for
free improvisation, a real freedom to produce new beginnings unfettered by
the givens.

By exploring Joe Wight's *Darkest Hour* (2017) in the second section we
probe the meaning of improvisation and discuss the positive and nega-
tive freedom as examined by Gary Peters in his *Philosophy of Improvisation*
(2009)*.* A significant question raised in this section is "from where might
an artist or a performer, whether an artist, or a politician like Winston
Churchill, draw the originary force for free improvisation?" To answer this
question, we draw on the Edgar Landgraf's idea of the autopoietic creation of
art to show how true improvisation is done in the continuous process of
creation.

In the third section, we examine the antihumanist attitude of modern
subjectivity in the second episode of Charlie Brooker's science fiction tele-
vision show *Black Mirror* (2011–present) called "Fifteen Million Merits."
In this section we delve into the way the portrayal of technototalitarianism
uses 'tech-noir' (also known as 'future-noir') in *Black Mirror* in order to envi-
sion a world where consciousness is being refined, and thought as radically

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objectivized. We will show how this episode can be illustrative of the hyper-capitalist long-lasting aspiration to find a theory of everything and to translate the entirety of human thought into set formulas. The conclusion we aim to reach is that such accomplishment means being capable of modulating human motivation and will, thus destroying any hopes for any true improvisational act. However, we will argue for the impossibility of such a grand and dark project, and by drawing partly on Denis Villeneuve's *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), we try to suggest some redemptive signs of freedom originating from machines themselves.

Emancipated Dystopias

The overarching framework of pessimism in some recent TV shows, such as *Twilight Zone* (1959–1964), *Black Mirror* (2011–present), *Westworld* (2016–present), present bleak images of highly regulated societies, which radically suppress spontaneity and improvisation. In the universe of these shows, acts which are imbued with improvisational substance are regarded as subversive threats that should be immediately neutralized. In the science-fictional dystopia of "Fifteen Million Merits," the second episode of the first season of *Black Mirror*, the improvisational attempt by Bing (protagonist) to rebel against the system is not only contained by the system, but also transformed into the anathema of the subversive force that breeds such improvisation.[1] The episode portrays a society where almost everyone must cycle on exercise bikes in order to power their habitat and earn a form of currency called "Merits." In the caste system of this fictional universe bike-riders are positioned at the lowest level, so that when Abi is faced with the dilemma of going back to biking or becoming a porn star, she prefers the latter option. The hidden mechanisms of predetermination ensure that people are either labor workers or sex workers in this universe and their only chance of

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[1] The narrative centers around the story of Bing, who meets Abi and convinces her to participate in a talent game, which blatantly parallels reality shows such as The X Factor, to escape the oppressive slavery that subjugates them. Though impressed by Abi's singing, the judges claim there is no more room left for singers but they propose a position on a pornography show called Wraith Babes to her which she accepts. Angered and disappointed Bing plans to rebel against the show by taking part in it. He starts his performance with some dancing, but suddenly half way through it he pulls out a shard of glass and threatens to slice his own neck. Bing rants about the oppressive system, the bike life, and exploitation they are suffering. The judges reaction comes as a surprise as they offer him his own regular show. The last scene displays Bing recording his show: holding the glass shard against his neck and ranting anti system babble.

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redemption lies in the hands of godlike figures (*Hotshot* judges) who, as the case of Bing suggests, not only stifle and suppress improvisation but also endeavor to assimilate it into the regulatory mechanisms of the system. The final outcome is a bleak new world empowered by technology and modern science which, according to Merleau-Ponty, "manipulates things and gives up dwelling in them" (Ponty, Johnson 1996, 351), with no hope of emancipation.

Such a dark reality illustrates how every single act of the human being is engineered and programmed, which leaves no old image of the autonomous human unscathed; however, in classical science as opposed to the empiricism of positive science in the art and paintings of the likes of Bacon and Dali, we hear the echo of 'the feeling of opaqueness' that characterizes the world. As Ponty notes, "classical science held unto the feeling of opaqueness of the world, and through its constructions it intended to join back up with the world" (1996, 351). For instance, in Jackson Pollock's "all-over" paintings, space is not deemed as chaotic but as chaosmosis or machinic heterogeneity. Pollock's paintings are neither confined externally by frame nor internally by reference points. "All-over" canvases like *Summertime* (Number 9) (1948), *Lavender Mist* (Number 1) (1950), and *Blue Poles* (Number 11) (1952) defy contour, express matter and, by executing an optical catastrophe, give birth to a pure appearance, a form of expression without image—Event (Judy 2000, 135). Thus, the emergence of the event means the emergence of non-being prior to the being, which causes the pseudo-wholeness of being (e.g. appearance of normality in a society) to break apart and its inconsistency be revealed. The Bing's improvisational act in "Fifteen Million Merits" (pulling out a shard of glass and threatening to slice his own neck while ranting about the oppressive system) constitutes a perfect example of an Event as it destabilizes the appearance of normality in the fictional universe of the episode.

Badiou argues that being as the order of situation is a pure multiplicity that finds its consistency through an operation he calls "count-as-one" (e.g. the dominant ideology). Thus, being does not precede its presentation and, in fact, it is the presentation (*appearance* in itself) that provides it with consistency. However, the excluded or unrepresented nature (event or void) haunts the situation with the danger of exploding the axioms that are the conditions of appearance (Badiou, Feltham 2006, 89–95).

Through Žižek we come to understand the three perspectives toward the concept of the Event by Heidegger, Deleuze, and Badiou:

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> In Heidegger, it is the Event as the epochal disclosure of a configuration of Being;
> in Deleuze, it is the Event as the desubstantialized pure becoming of Sense; in Badiou,
> it is the Event reference to which grounds a Truth-process. For all three, Event is irre-
> ducible to the order of being (in the sense of positive reality), to the set of its material
> (pre)conditions (Žižek 2009, 165).

Badiou offers us an explanation of how cinema acts as a truth procedure as well as a 'poetics of politics' against Capital's saturation of everything, disrupting the politics' meta-domain, whose measuring devices originate from themselves. Thus, the role of cinema is to open a path for an Event to emerge by stripping itself from the representational grammar of the dominant class so as to bring forth a new truth, 'a new image of collective' (2009, 336).

With Francis Bacon's portraits of his friends—George Dyer, David Sylvester, Michel Leiris, Isabel Rawsthornewe—we witness how the wholeness of the representational being is festered and distorted into naked multiplicity. In his analysis of Francis Bacon's paintings, Deleuze's distinction between face and head corresponds with Badiou's "count-as-one" and "void." Deleuze defines a face as having some distinguishing features such as ears, eyes, nose, old, young, woman, student, etc. that are the productions of society while he finds in Bacon's fleshy and meaty heads or head a state of non-signifying, a horror story as catastrophic as Pollock's "all-over" paintings.

A good example of a non-signifying face would be Rene Magritte's *Rape* (1945) which is the best example of a painting that vigorously features a non-signifying face composed of the torso and the pelvis of a woman. Susan Gubar mentions that this surrealistic painting illustrates how the image of the woman is humiliated, 2 structures for male sexual pleasure (1987, 215). In the same anti-representational vein illustrating an ideologically-wrought woman is Dali's *My Wife Nude Contemplating Her Own Flesh Becoming Stairs, Three Vertebra of a Column, Sky and Architecture*. This painting illustrates a picture of a woman sitting in a desert watching the structured reflection of herself—a mirage of who she is forged by masculine whims, imaginations, and misperceptions. This is what Dali names concrete irrationality: 'images which provisionally are neither explicable nor reducible by the systems of logical intuition or by the rational mechanisms' (Mcmahon, Dali 1936, 12).

In her *The Face is a Horror Story: The Affective Face of Horror*, Anne Powell examines Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* (1987), Carl Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1931), and Georges Franju's *Les Yeux Sans Visage* (Eyes without a Face)

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(1959) by discussing how all these horror movies illustrate "the face—subject to defacialization—as an affective locus of horror, or even as rendering the Deleuzo-Guattarian 'body without organs'" (Sinnerbrink 2008, 86).

For Bacon, the purpose of distorting appearance is to bring distortion back to the recording of appearance (Sinnerbrink 2008, 243). To put it in Badiou's term, in Bacon's paintings, what is not-counted-as-one is to haunt the face, the expressed one. Therefore, the dismantling face, shocking portraits, and bringing distortion to a recording of appearance is a "foregrounding of the 'abjection of the flesh and disintegration of subjective wholeness' by the violation and destruction of the body" (2008, 243) and this is what Žižek names as "Alien," which will be discussed in the second part of this paper.

In the following section we leave painting behind to focus on the main body of our argument that concerns cinematic works. What is central to our discussion on the aforementioned cinematic works is their refutation of cognitive-state-corporate regulation. As early as May 2002, it was reported that scientists had succeeded in attaching a microchip to a rat's brain which is able to receive signals directly, so that similar to a remote-controlled toy car the rat could be controlled, its "spontaneous" decisions for movements taken over by an external machine (Harder, Ben). If we assume that the rat experiences its condition as spontaneous (that it remains oblivious to the fact that it is being controlled by an unfathomable force) its condition precisely parallels the condition of human beings according to neuroscience. For neuroscientists, all our choices are determined by neuronal processes which effectively reduces all our lived experiences to illusory experiences in which 'the biological process that really runs the show' remains unrecognized (Žižek 2009, 177).

This approach basically reduces the human subject to a mere puppet which is steered by neuro-biological strings. In her book *Conscience: The Origins of Moral Intuition* (2019) the neurophilosopher Patricia Churchland ventures to even reduce 'morality' to the development of our brain over the course of our evolution. For Churchland morality is a set of norms that evolved because of their usefulness in keeping a social group together and even today our brain releases dopamine when our actions receive social approval. Thus even the most sublime human values are nothing more than a brain-construct that has formed through the course of our evolution. Churchland goes further to claim that even our political attitudes are also determined by our neurons and are open to engineering. The state-corporate-capitalist machinery also seems to regard the human subject in similar

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terms, i.e. as a set formula open to manipulation. Today, in the aftermath of the Cambridge Analytica-Facebook scandal, it is flagrant that the corporate--political power attempts to engineer and steer the desire of human subjects to achieve political and commercial goals. The outcome of the American 2016 election notoriously confirmed not only the validity of their stance regarding the nature of the human subject but also the efficiency of their methods in manipulating subjects. It appears that we are like rats trapped in the hands of neuro-biological and corporate-political forces, steered by their signals with no hope for freedom. As the director of engineering at Google, Ray Kurzweil is of the belief that the whole content of our brain will be uploaded on a computer:

> A more controversial application than the scanning-the-brain-to-understand-it scenario is *scanning the brain to upload it*. Uploading a human brain means scanning all of its salient details and then reinstantiating those details into a suitably powerful computational substrate. This process would capture a person's entire personality, memory, skills, and history (Kurzweil 2006, 138).

In the following section via examining three cinematic works it is explained how improvisation can act as an effective tool against such regulation and predetermination.

The Pre-Symbolic Site and the Free Improvisational

If improvisation had a name in the political history of the 20th century, it would be Winston Churchill, who had to face the darkest forces and decide on doing the unexpected. In Joe Wright's film *Darkest Hour* (2017), we are briefly introduced to the most important moments of Churchill's life. What we try to suggest here is that this movie portrays Churchill's emergence from the aforementioned unvarnished darkness or pre-symbolic depth, like the womb, from which the artist emerges to demonstrate what is unthought, to improvise and make novel decisions when everyone has abandoned all hope.

The biographical aspects of this movie are not of much significance in this paper as the heap of presupposed images with artistry dull the notion of newness offering us something no more than an expression of underlying historical processes. Yet, what is important in a work of art is to 'produce new *beginnings'* and that is through free-improvisation, as Gary Peters says in *The Philosophy of Improvisation*:

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> Clearly, all spaces are in reality marked by the presence of other works, not least the artist's own, which implies that the ingenuity of origination must find ways to erase or forget the presence of the given in order to both avoid imitation (including self-imitation, perhaps the most common form) and open up the path to be followed, the "Open" that Heidegger believes is created and preserved by art. As an ideal-type in this regard free-improvisation is able to achieve, or at least strive to achieve, a prior degree of aesthetic erasure beyond the reach of other art forms precisely because its primary aim is not to produce works. Its primary aim is to produce beginnings (2012, 37).

In this movie, the historical version of Churchill has turned into an artist creating a new beginning, a new portrayal of himself. The emergence of Churchill from the dark womb, like an artist, can be seen in four different scenes: first, when he is sparked for the first time out of darkness into the light of our vision by the match he strikes to light his cigar; the second time when he faces the 'gravest odds' and is in doubt whether to negotiate with Germans or not and in this moment of great self-doubt, we see a ponderous darkness engulfing the scene, pushing and creeping on him. The third moment is when he is alone at home, sunk in his thought in utter darkness, and is illuminated when his wife turns the light on. The fourth moment occurs when, at the end of the movie, in Parliament after he has made his last decision for not negotiating peace terms with Hitler, he walks right into us, into a dark scene and the movie finishes. These scenes show that each time Churchill heaves from the pre-symbolic darkness into light or from what Hegel calls 'Night of the World'[2] he strips himself of all the pang of the ultimate horizon of presupposed meanings weighing so much on his mind. It is like pushing itself agonizingly out of a womb which is untouched by the presupposition, it is like coming out of absolute nothingness.

When Churchill is born out of darkness or the pre-symbolic abyss, he makes the most important decision of his life, which is to save thousands of soldiers trapped in Dunkirk. The grave decisions he comes forth with in the face of every disaster defy predictions and presuppositions, making him a true improviser. The anti-representational artistry thus reverberates

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[2] Hegel describes 'Night of the World' as such: The human being is this night, this empty nothing, that contains everything in its simplicity—an unending wealth of many representations, images, of which none belongs to him—or which are not present. This night, the interior of nature, that exists here—pure self—in phantasmagorical representations, is night all around it, in which here shoots a bloody head—there another white ghastly apparition, suddenly here before it, and just so disappears. One catches sight of this night when one looks human beings in the eye—into a night that becomes awful. (Donald 1986, 7–8).

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in this movie as the pang of the ultimate horizon of meaning weighs on Churchill's mind every time he emerges from darkness to give meaning and hope to the lives of people who are a step from total annihilation. It can be said that the title of this movie, *Darkest Hour* symbolizes the moment of the unforeseeable nothing, the moment when he retreats back into the night of the world before he emerges as a new person, as an alien to face "an ordeal of the most grievous kind" (Wright 2017). Therefore, the Churchill we witness in this movie is near in definition to what Žižek defines as the Alien:

> The first association that this tension between presymbolic depth and the surface of events gives rise to in the domain of popular culture is, of course, the 'Alien' from the film of the same name. Our first response is to conceive of it as a creature of the chaotic depth of the maternal body, as the primordial Thing. However, the 'Alien's' incessant changing of its form, the utter 'plasticity' of its being, does it not point also in the very opposite direction: are we not dealing with a being whose entire consistency resides in the fantasmatic surface, with a series of pure events-effects devoid of any substantial support? (2013a, 157)

So, it is not strange to say that the character Joe Wright stages as Winston Churchill in *Darkest Hour* is but to show the power of the fantasmatic surface devoid of any substantial support in the life of this great politician. We see it time and again when Churchill pretends that the English are victorious against Germany, though the victory of the Germans is imminent and such pretension from Churchill's side is deemed to give spirit to the English soldiers, so they could stand with all their hearts against the enemy. This pretension, just like Alien's fantasmatic surface confers consistency on what is not truly consistent.

This is also what the art of cinema does, which is to make us think of appearance as appearance and, as Badiou points out in his essay *Dilaectics of the Fable: The Matrix A Philosophical Machine*, the power of cinema is "to render the certainty of the visible visibly uncertain" (Badiou, de Baecque 2013, 190). Thus, we can say that the sense of terrifying uncertainty is the life-blood of free improvisation in order to 'produce new beginnings' and to step away from mere representation. The cruelty of such uncertainty can be understood in the appearance-based reality of Television and Cinema which has framed the reality out there telling us how it is but an appearance from which various interpretations of reality can be grasped. Thus, it can be said that the screen is the best way for reality to be improvised. At the end of the aforementioned essay by Badiou, the author mentions the significance of appearance as appearance in cinema:

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> The principle of the art of cinema lies precisely in subtly showing that it is only cinema, that its images only testify to the real to the extent that they are *manifestly* images. It is not by turning away from appearance, or by lauding the virtual, that you will have the chance of attaining the idea. Rather, it is by thinking appearance as appearance, and thus as that aspect of being which, by coming to appear, gives itself to thought as a disappointment of seeing (2013, 201).

Churchill's solitary bestows him a remedy, so he could not be bound by the articulations of time and place. Just like the art of cinema, at those crucial moments that he is born out of the depth of darkness, he appears to us in a new way and makes us see him in a new light, thereby helping the viewers learn how to retreat into a dark-engulfed alcove untouched by regulation and not bound by representations. Still, in this movie, the pang and the uncertainty of Churchill's solitary-produced originality undergoes an initiatory odyssey which gives birth to the significance of public gaze. Thus, when he sneaks off to London subway with no pre-plan and interacts with people, Churchill makes his last decision through a collective improvisation and this action opens up a counterargument to singular improvisation.

In *Cinema 1*, Deleuze refers to Akira Kurosawa's fascination with Russian literature and the way he establishes a link between Japan and Russia. What Deleuze highlights is the entanglement of a hero with a pressing situation and the significance of tearing 'from a situation a question which it contains'. So, in both Kurosawa and Fyodor Dostoevsky, it is not the urgency of the situation that entails encountering but the urgency of the question. As Deleuze says: "Instead of absorbing a situation in order to produce a response which is merely an explosive action, it is necessary to absorb a question in order to produce an action which would truly be a considered response" (1986, 90).

According to Deleuze, in *The Seven Samurai*, the highest question is not if the village can be defended, but it is "what is a samurai today, at this particular moment of history?" The answer is that the samurai are but shadows and the real victors have been peasants in this movie (1986, 191).

In *Darkest Hour* (2017), there is no hope in all the givens of the situation, every step toward defending the country can be a grievous misstep and the highest question is not if England will be victorious against Nazis, the question is: on what basis can the old values, rules and strategies be relied upon when all the old bases are being annihilated? The answer is: this is where the new must emerge and forge its own bases. And, this newness is improvised by Churchill meeting Londoners in the subway to decide the biggest decision alongside them. This act is an act of collective improvisation in this context

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which is the harbinger of Churchill's ultimate success. Collective improvisation means giving into intersubjective experiences, submitting one's voice and thoughts to no more than audience's thoughts. Thus, the inevitable notion of non-singular improvisation opens up a counterargument to the singularity of improvisation.

So far, we expatiated on the significance of improvisation in producing new, avoiding being reduced to raw materiality and preserving the originality of the beginnings. Yet, the moral to this movie that could be fathomed within the boundary of our discussion, is the importance of collective improvisation by undergoing initiatory journey of destroying one's originality obtained through singular improvisation. To avoid falling into the ironic discourses of emancipation and elucidate different types of improvisation, first we should point out to freedom's duality: positive and negative freedom. By drawing on Isaiah Berlin, Gary Peters defines positive and negative freedom as follows:

> As Berlin demonstrates, in essence negative freedom is a collective ideal. It protects the collective by establishing a regime of noninterference that, in breaking with "men's constant tendency to conformity," allows the individual the scope and the space for "spontaneity, originality, genius [and] mental energy," all of which figure large in the world of improvisation. Positive freedom, on the other hand, is an ideal of singularity, and it has a rather more worrying vocabulary, one inescapably intertwined with a notion of mastery that has not worn well during the modern period (2012, 23).

Peters further links the duality of freedom to the duality of free improvisation: positive and negative improvisation. Being "unconcerned with respecting the sanctity of other's space," not being settled in the given, and preserving a singular autonomy is the positive side of singular improvisation. However, the negative side of singular improvisation or the negative side of positive freedom in general that Peters mentions is:

> "Negative liberty" […] seems to me a truer and more humane ideal than the goals of those who seek in the great, disciplined, authoritarian structures the ideal of "positive" self-mastery. […] It is true, because it recognizes the fact that human goals are many, not all of them commensurable, and in perpetual rivalry with one another (2012, 22).

We already mentioned the negative sides of collective improvisation, which is sacrificing the "I" for the "we." While Churchill's final decision with the subway people embodies the 'negative liberty' the self-mastery and the singularity of Hitler's actions embodies 'positive liberty.' The 'positive liberty' on the Hitler's part, driven by the wish 'to be his own master,' is em-

blematic of how self-mastery "threatens the diversity, spontaneity, and orig-
inality seen by the vast majority as essential to improvisation" (Peters 2012,
23–26). Notwithstanding the explanatory and enlightening power of these
paradoxes surrounding the concept of improvisation, drawing upon Edgar
Landgarf's reading of neocybernetic discourse completes our argument
about free improvisation and "allows us to understand the 'experience' cre-
ated by a person's cognitive engagement with art without having to assume
a representational or an interpretive stance toward the work of art or per-
formance" (Landgraf 2014, 150).

Landgraf's emphasizes improvisation as an autopoietic process rather
than aesthetics of autonomy in that "the artwork [must] emerge with and
according to a plan that it develops for itself only in the process of creation"
(2014, 79). Rather than specifying the inspiration to the artists, Landgraf
views it from the perspective of an "attentiveness that the artist lends to
the emerging artwork" (2014, 82).

Therefore, it can be said that Landgraf's improvisation as autopoietic
process and Peters's collaborative improvisation give improvisation the
power of being a self-supporting activity, as Humberto R. Maturana and
Francisco J. Varela, who have coined the term autopoiesis, point out:

> An autopoietic machine continuously generates and specifies its own organization
> through its own operation as a system of production of its own components, and does
> this in an endless turnover of components under conditions of continuous perturba-
> tions and compensation of perturbations (1980, 89).

Returning to *The Darkest Hour*, following the fall of France, the War Cabi-
net sticks with the idea of negotiating peace terms with Germany. Churchill
receives an unexpected visit from George VI who asks him to continue
the war. The biggest moment of uncertainty comes to Churchill when with
no preplan, he decides to ride the London subway and ask the passengers'
opinion about continuing the war and resisting the Nazi invasion. The civil-
ians want the war to be continued and they don't want Britain to capitulate
to Hitler. Even though this fictional scene is propped by pure melodrama like
Wright's *Anna Karenina* (2012), it still creates an impact in portraying the
significance of what Peters names as collaborative act of improvisation
(2012, 17).

To conclude, Churchill's resilience comes to fruition in two ways: through
an autopoietic act of active self-limitation or self-inclusion, and collaborative
improvisation. First, his being like an autopoietic machine allows him to
bootstrap himself into his darkness just like a cell that sets a boundary for

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itself, and from this loop emerges a self-distinguishing entity. To clarify, it would be better to say that Churchill sets the self-reflexive causes that will define him regardless of the external causes. Secondly, his improvisational decision to meet people might be derailed off into annihilation when he decides to meet people for their opinion, but it turns into a collaborative one when people weave their urge-to-resist with that of Churchill's. Thus, this is where his eventual attempt lies.

Indelible Techno-oppressions in *Black Mirror*
and Signs of Redemption in Blade Runner 2049 (2017)

Despite the disparity between *Darkest Hour* (2017) and *Black Mirror* (2011– present), we can locate the British people's freedom or freedom in general as a common theme. In *Black Mirror's* premier, "The National Anthem" (Dec 4th, 2011), Michael Callow, the British Prime Minister is forced to have sex with a pig on live national television on account of the demands of a madman who has abducted Susanna, the princess. The premier was a big hit in showing how techno-totalitarianism has shut all the avenues for formulating a policy. When an attempt to fake footage of the sex act fails, the kidnapper finds out and sends a severed finger of the princess. In short, this set of actions indicate the indelible technological oppression by various means such as mass scale surveillance which has overtaken personal privacy and the space that was the source of free improvisation for Churchill. Whereas in *Darkest Hour* we witness people's fervor in refusing to capitulate to the enemy and asking Churchill to continue the war, in "The National Anthem," people expect Callow to undergo the scandal, so in a word offering no possibility for freedom. To extend this analysis, we examine the second episode of the first season— "Fifteen Million Merits" (Dec. 11th, 2011).

In "Fifteen Million Merits," we witness the bleak life of the young protagonist (Daniel Kaluuya) in an enclosed subterranean cell, which is no more than a rebarbative prison and a digital hell whose walls are covered with video screens. Bing and so many other young people in these cells are forced to watch commercials. To mute or get rid of them, they have to pay credits that are earned by riding cycles in a space which is devoid of sun light, animal life and vegetation. Riding the stationary bikes provides them with merits which in turn are used to buy food and virtual items used for their entertainment.

Bing falls in love with Abi Khan (Jessica Brown Findlay) and when he hears her singing in the restroom, he encourages her to participate in *Hot Shot*, a contest whose winners would no longer need cycling to sustain

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themselves. The entrance fee is 15 million merits, so Bing gives his 15-million inheritance to Abi so she could enter the contest. When Abi goes on stage and sings, judges become very impressed with her singing, but they tell her that they don't have any room for another singer and Wraith, one of the judges, tells her that she is better suited for the pornography show *Wraithbabes.* Abi has no choice but to accept.

One day when Bing watches Abi's porn, he tries to skip it, but he does not have enough credit to do so. This makes him so furious that he breaks one of the screens. A large shard of glass catches his attentions and he comes up with the idea of working hard, being frugal and earning 15 million merits to take part in the talent contest. After 15 months, he takes part in the contest with the shard of glass hidden in his trousers. After impressing everyone with his dance, he suddenly takes out the glass shard and threatens to cut his neck. He goes on raving against the cold, heartless and dehumanized system and life they are leading. After some discussions among themselves, one of the judges comes forth with the idea of Bing's regular show on one of the channels. So Bing goes on recording his show of anger by holding the shard of glass to his neck and the prize he receives is a larger cell.

Notwithstanding the somewhat unrealistic aura of this episode, signs of the present can be traced that are cloaked in the future. These days the concerns regarding the fusion of human and machine are being felt more than ever and the theme of human mechanization has found its way in the movies such as *THX 1138* (1971), *Brave New World* (1980), *1984* (1984), *The Island* (2005) and more recently, *The Hunger Games* franchise (2012–2015). In the previous sections, we discussed the redemptive void which is untainted by language and the possibility of free improvisation rooted in the pre-symbolic void.

What is at stake more than ever is human spontaneity and free will caused by the total objectivization of the human mind by translating human thought into neuronal counterparts and the instrumentalization of that research into techno-totalitarianism. The prospective success of the scientific explanation of consciousness, envisaged by neuroscientists, helps the scientist to regulate the biological processes that generate pathological psychic phenomena. Therefore, it can be said that when the total formula of mind is accomplished, the consciousness of those who live an unwholesome life can be regulated and refined to the extent that they become nonchalant about their unsavory surroundings. Such scientific totalitarianism can be metaphorically seen in "Fifteen Millions Merits" to the extent that laborers are nonchalant to their own bondage.

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The glass through which Bing catches the judges off guard symbolizes consciousness itself, whose emergence at first cannot be schematized by any dominant principles (here, judges' expectations). However, the sharp glass is objectified by turning into a commodity when Bing uses it in his recordings. To put it another way, the glass, into which all the heroic values of Bing is concentrated, becomes totally stripped of any improvisational value that first stood for Bing's subjective experience of free will. The unsettling radicalism we are made to confront is that of unconditional acceptance of the fact that free will is but another fact to be transmitted under the dominance of science. Even though young people are not androids (or are they?), all their motivational inclinations seem to be regulated by all the scientific devices employed in the service of state/corporate control.

The bleakest moment is when we see how Bing's rage on the stage turns into a fictional suspense and when we witness his improvisational failing as he says:

> [...] I haven't got a speech. I didn't plan words. I didn't even try to. I just knew I had to get here, to stand here, and I wanted you to listen (Brooker, 2011).

Yet, the bleakest of all is to see how Bing capitulates to the judges' decision on stage and his heroic rage turns into a TV program. Even Bing's suicide after this misery could mean potential suicides of all those prisoners, and thus, the annihilation of the entirety of the system, but nothing happens.

Whereas all the shows and movies around the theme of androids versus human beings end either with human reality as a mere illusion or the inevitable dominion of machine over humans, *Blade Runner 2047* (2017) is a recent movie in this genre that ends with a hope rooted in a machinic miracle. Yes, it is contradictory and somewhat ridiculous to imagine how a miracle can emerge out of a machine, the entirety of whose existence does not surpass the closed loop of zero and one. This movie is the story of an android with the name of officer K, who as a Blade Runner, is in charge of hunting down rogue replicants. On one of his missions, after killing Sapper Morton, a replicant, one of his victim's claim that "you have never seen a miracle" (Villeneuve 2017) haunts officer K until the end. After killing Morton, K finds a box under a tree inside which there are the remains of a dead female replicant proving that replicants can become pregnant. Before grappling with Morton and killing him, Morton hints at the possibility of a miracle and it is actually the possibility of such a miracle that empowers the human race to step out of the shadow, on the verge of extinction to rise against Androids

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and retrieve what is real. The actuality of this miracle subverts the reigning Techno-capitalist discourse that Wallace Corporation embodies and thus retains the subversive force of an authentic improvisatory act. A child born by an Android negates the very regulatory system upon which the universe of the movie is based and that is precisely why K is missioned to eliminate this child. Its existence stands as an existential threat to the predetermined, highly regulated, caste constellation of the system and hence must be terminated.

Even though some philosophers like Chalmers resist the reductive approach toward consciousness, they take another avenue to reach total radical objectivization of mind by finding an answer to the inexplicable problem of consciousness by creating a link between physical processes and conscious experience:

> Once we have a fundamental theory of consciousness to accompany a fundamental theory in physics, we may truly have a theory of everything. Given the basic physical and psychophysical laws, and given the distribution of the fundamental properties, we can expect that all the facts about the world will follow (Chalmers 2007, 127).

If neuroscientists could find a theory to explicate the emergence of consciousness, they could regulate or even eliminate suicidal or any other pathological motivations. That would mean eliminating the facts that result in a conscious decision for suicide; thus, consciousness would lose its meaning. Some neuroscientists like Hanna Critchlow believe that "we can now artificially create consciousness (or at least produce machines that simulate certain characteristics of it)" (2018, 46).

The following questions by Žižek sheds a concluding light to this paper:

> […] after we have constructed an artificial intelligence machine which can solve even very complex problems, the questions crop up: "But if it can do it precisely as a machine, as a blind operating entity, why does it need (self-)awareness to do it? (2009, 177).

Conclusion

The main claim of this paper centers around the problem of representation *qua* representation and its ability via spectacle and scientific manipulation to eradicate the very terms of improvisation, and improvisation as a form of both emergence and resistance. We analyzed the possibility of free improvisation whose aim is to produce new beginnings by examining various types

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of improvisations—singular, collective, and collaborative. By considering Churchill's improvisatory acts in *Darkest hour*, we concluded that to be free from a representational stance and to produce new beginnings, improvisation should be autopoietic—a process through which the organization of an artwork is created through continuous operation under the continuous perturbations and compensation of perturbations. In the end, we illustrated an example of an autopoietic improvisation in Churchill's ultimate decision to continue war against Nazis.

As discussed, the unfolding of the new or the unforeseeable nothing is called an Event by some philosophers. It has been the eventual attempts of modern sciences to throw light on what has been left unrepresented in human consciousness. Such attempts might result in the final answer for the hard problem of consciousness. We drew upon Žižek to show that by translating the entirety of human consciousness into a positive formula by brain scientists and neuroscientists, there will be nothing concealed about the human mind and the source for an improvisational act will be foreclosed. We tried to show that having full access to every mental function and finding a theory of everything equals to the full objectivization of mind, thus regulating and refining one's motivations and will; however, we discussed the impossibility of such an entire objectivization. Even though art has clothed itself in namelessness, it gives birth to new names of hope for the bright future of mankind, in contrast with the hopelessly-illustrated darkness of mechanization and objectification in many sci-fi movies and shows.

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