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# Spectacle at Play: Virtuosity in Online Game Streaming

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## Abstract

Of the many hallmarks of the neoliberal economy, the production of spectacle together with production of market-driven subjectivities stands out as activating concurrent flows of leisure and labor. This paper addresses how these productive capacities are actualized through Twitch, the online game streaming and social media platform. Following Paolo Virno's work on virtuosity, the author suggests a reading of play that functions similarly to general intellect. Machinic elements such as social media statistics, chat capabilities, and platform-driven monetary transactions, likewise, are recast both as a meta-game conjoining the algorithmic flows of videogaming with those of capital and as the mechanism through which player as subject is produced. Through games and the gamified interface of Twitch, surplus enjoyment becomes coupled to surplus value generation.

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## Interface as Spectacle

Since 2011, Twitch, the online game streaming platform, has become the premier destination for gamers. Twitch allows gamers to display their gaming prowess, to provide acute commentary, or to hone their internet personas for viewing audiences. Each month about 2 million players create live content on the Twitch platform. This paper examines Twitch as a case-study for understanding how interfaces associated with play are mobilized in the production of the neoliberal subject. If games themselves can be thought of as rewarding mastery through interactive feedback (scores, progress bars, unlocks), streaming interfaces provide social outlets through which gaming virtuosity coincides with productive self-valorization by the gaming community. Twitch doubles as both tool of algorithmic management and as a metagame that bridles surplus leisure directly to surplus value generation. The productivity elicited is twofold: on one hand, play enacts a process of social subjectivation and the shared experience of performance which undergird the labor process. On the other, it deploys the procedurality of interface as elements linked to the circulation of capital, both in the games themselves as well as on Twitch. In my examination of Twitch, I draw on Paolo Virno's work on virtuosity and Maurizio Lazzarato's work on machinic enslavement and the production of

subjectivity. In doing so, I suggest a reading of play as something that operates like Marx's concept of general intellect—productive force mobilized through the combination of machinery and social knowledge.

For every streamer engaged in content creation on Twitch, an ample audience of viewers awaits ready to praise, comment, instruct, spam emojis, and donate. The Twitch interface modulates this relationship between streamer and viewer and, thereby determines the productivity of this social network. The interface effects the correspondence of various kinds of immaterial labors as a tool of algorithmic management—software which assumes managerial function.<sup>1</sup> Through software and interface design, Twitch passes its directives to content creators and audiences alike without the need for human managers. Instead, the productivity of users on Twitch is dictated by technical elements such as chat systems, Amazon/Twitch prime exclusive content, moderation features, site-specific currency, page rankings based on viewership data, and subscription and donation privileges. All the while, Twitch would seem to promote self-determination through flexibility of play and social interaction.

In the typical Twitch experience, gameplay ostensibly becomes the primary site of dramatic

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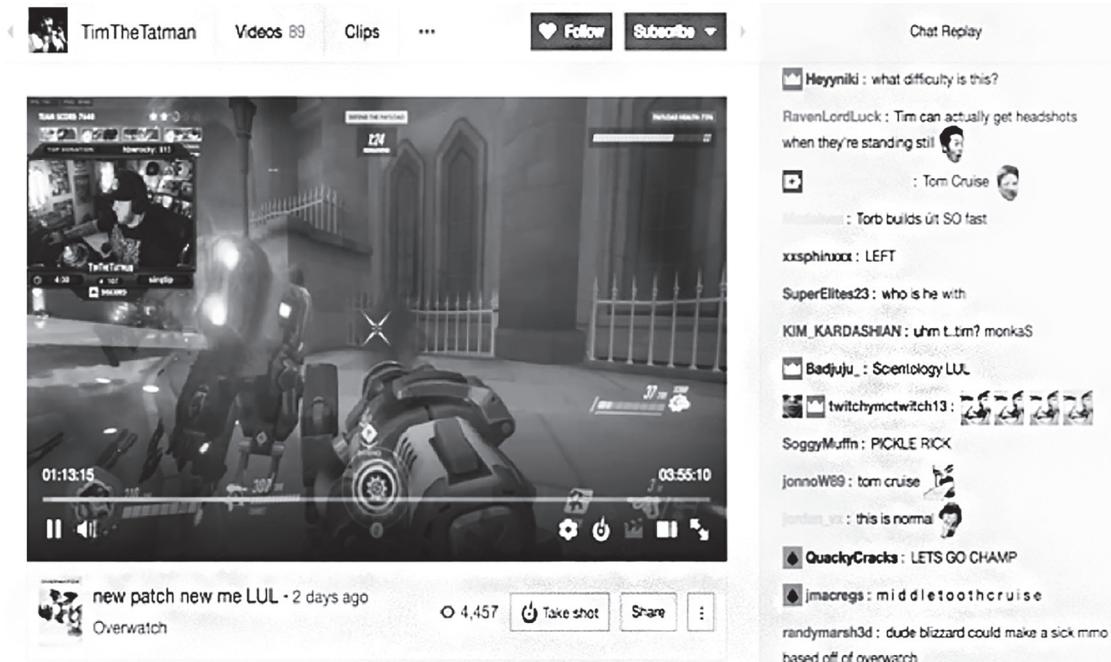


Fig.1: TimtheTatman, "new patch new me LUL" on Twitch.<sup>2</sup>

action. For instance, the user TimtheTatman's demonstration of the game *Overwatch* (See Fig.1) demonstrates the centrality of the gameplay as the host delves into an intense match. But a closer look around the flanks of the image reveal equally lively sites of interaction. A sizable portion of the screen on the right is dedicated to the chat feature. This design choice reflects the centrality of chat in the social economy of Twitch, as users interact with each other beyond the gameplay. The chat feeds directly into the gameplay as the host takes in volleys of text—questions, suggestions, commentary—and integrates these textual reactions into each deft mouse click and strategic shot. Below the gameplay, a series of numbers indicates live viewer count, total channel views, and number of followers. For the players, these numbers form a new kind of score *beyond the game itself*. Twitch then, functions as a metagame, remediating games within a gamified interface that codifies the social interaction of audiences as ludic elements. As active viewership extends the gamespace toward the playful spectator, the ability for users to subscribe at a fee of \$4.99/month (denoted by the small button under the gameplay) extends the rewards of gaming beyond the virtual and into the real economy. All of this

occurs under the auspices Twitch's mandate to "connect with friends and fans over a shared love of games and creative projects."<sup>3</sup>

Rather than contrasting the relationships fostered through Twitch with something genuine or real, I argue that relationships established through streaming are the "end products" of the kinds of production typical to neoliberal capitalism. Further, I suggest that these relational products are ones of spectacle. Guy Debord defines spectacle as "a social relationship between people that is mediated by images."<sup>4</sup> Twitch, by its own admission, is actively engaged in the creation and development of such relationships.<sup>5</sup> If labor, for Marx, produced workers who are alienated from products, the separation wrought from the globalized production of spectacle yields a "liberation from work," that is, increased leisure time, [that] is a liberation neither within labor itself nor from the world labor has brought into being."<sup>6</sup> The seemingly home-grown celebrity of streaming is always-already caught up in self-valorizing the act of play, in a cannibalizing of life for the economy. Moments of leisure-time purchased through daily labor transform into a new cache of surplus-value to be exploited through interface. Twitch hinges upon a commodification

of play and the promise of interactivity between broadcaster and fans. Spectacle, in this case, relies on enconcing social relationships within the technical rationality of Twitch's interface. At the level of code, Twitch's imperatives produce human-to-human connections only by first passing them through entire technological assemblages which objectively define how these relationships may emerge.

### Virtuosos of the Virtual

In *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Paulo Virno claims that virtuosity has become the crux of contemporary production. Virtuosity is most readily associated with the arts and creative endeavors. Virno tactically places virtuosity exclusively in the realm of the performance arts and defines it as activity "which finds its own fulfillment (that is, its own purpose) in itself, without objectifying itself into an end product, without settling into a 'finished product,' or into an object which would survive the performance" and as that "which requires the presence of other, which exists only in the presence of an audience."<sup>7</sup> Making virtuosity productive, however, requires establishing a point of connection between machines, interfaces, and other forms of fixed capital devoted to the capture and accrual of value and the individuated and social activities which constitute living labor.

In Marx's critique of capital, surplus value, as exploited from living labor in the form of the worker, is basis for the generation of capital. Even as machinery takes upon the physical demands of most labor, living labor remains the repository from which the further development of capital is extracted. But if the strength of productivity is found in the machine, what agency is left for living labor? A simple answer would be in relegating human sentience to the function of regulating, modulating, and further developing machinic power. Virno, on the other hand, asks what might be gained in infusing this regulatory activity with a creative verve—not so much in the fabrication of material means of production itself but rather in the facilitation of the social sphere that allows for that creation and continued production. Virtuosity demands action-without-end and an audience as witness. The second component, i.e. the audience, provides the social basis for production. The audience acts as guarantor of a performance in the

stead of an end product. Although the virtuoso references and plays against the background of some script or score, the performance itself is not reducible to its textual predicate. Improvisational elements are needed to bring the performance to fruition.

This paradigm has manifested itself in features such as the informal workplace, participatory management and ceaseless training regimes. Work now encapsulates a litany of bureaucratic and administrative mechanisms as well as the cognitive, emotional, linguistic, behavioral, and social acumen of the laborer. Proper management is not limited to directly optimizing productivity. It includes the management of the social elements of industry to untap the potentialities of machinic force by creating the social grounds and ultimately subjectivity through which productivity can happen. The virtuosic element prizes participation in which feedback is directed towards both the continued performance and the act of production.

This tendency toward flexible yet pervasive work environments can be seen operating in Twitch, where the interface manages leisure space, play and free association between individuals. The interface translates the organizational demands to play, stream, chat, and donate from abstract commands to technical affordances. Social convention (reaction emojis, text spam, donation gems) is grounded in the possibilities of interface. Players or audiences do not lack agency; instead their agency as social beings is guided by the interface and put to work through it. The informality of these spaces is created by design, and sustains Twitch's business objectives. Whereas traditionally leisure time offers a reprieve from the demands of the office, the autonomy presented through Twitch's interface functions as a hybridization of work imperatives with creativity and the enjoyment of play environments.

Virno's aim is not an analysis of politics itself but rather the development of labor with respect to the political. But he sees the trajectory of labor as increasingly encroaching upon the space of politics, not by disregarding it directly but by emulating its functioning within the space of labor. For Virno, the political is characterized by contingency and continual action (as opposed to externalized production) directed through speech. The replication of the political within the workplace masks how

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control is articulated through production. At the same time, it seemingly renders politics functioning elsewhere as superfluous. As industry invests in bureaucratic mechanisms verging on the political, it does so with the goal of increasing productivity and adapting the cooperative energies and output of this political element toward production. The focus turns to the development of workers as fully actualized individuals only inasmuch as this actualization yields new productivity.

Three points about play, video games, and streaming stand out as facilitating their exploitation impinging on the political spheres. Firstly, play requires the cordoning off of a space in which play can occur. While these spaces may exist as either physical or virtual sites created for play, they persist according to their contingency as playgrounds. Through an act of deliberate circumscription and manipulation, play emerges as “the work of operating a subset of the work, one separated from itself via the circumscription of the magic circle.”<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, play’s virtuality allows for the abatement of the normal flow of activity and amplifying alternative structures of regulation. These regulatory structures take the form of rules and guidelines as well as scripts, the physical affordances of equipment and instruments. Generically, Virno calls this referential resource the score. It is the background from which the play-act emerges and against which we understand creativity, innovation, and improvisation. For Virno, the score is abstracted from any physical finalized product. It functions within labor as a manifestation of general intellect, a term borrowed from Marx to designate the correspondence between human intellect as a set of skills and capacity in relation to the technical and scientific apparatuses as fixed capital: the concretization of human knowledge. Virno, however, directs his discussion of general intellect toward human communicational capacities as they exist in excess of materialized human scientific knowledge. Linguistic, cognitive, and semiotic powers are the resources through which capitalist exploitation operates according to his analysis of post-Fordist labor. Within the semiotic space created by a language, the individual possesses language only inasmuch as language first possesses the individual. This priority of language over the individual, nevertheless, grounds the individual in a

shared generic capacity for speech. By contrast the score of play is not so much manifested in language but in the combination of human agency with the rules and interfaces of games.

Finally, while the virtual space established in games is governed by code, play is enacted through the interactions between users and algorithms. Thus, even if the totality of actions afforded to a player is delimited by code, the system is not autonomous or independent of the players. However, a player cannot casually shirk the rules imposed by the gamespace, its interfaces, or the hardware being used. Although options may exist to tune the game HUD (heads up display) or interface visualization to the specifications of the player’s liking, to set a difficulty that is tolerable, to optimize the graphics to the bleeding edge of photorealism, the gameplay that occurs on screen for the user is always secondary to the algorithmic flows that catalyze user input into output. The gamer’s performance experiments with the black box of game code to understand its ebbs and flows; the gamer turned streamer is Deleuze’s “man of control” *par excellence* surfing the underlying algorithmic waves.<sup>9</sup> In this Deleuzian understanding, Twitch exerts power through near constant contact between the player and its services. At every point of contact, (whether webcam or user profile) the Twitch streamer should experience the service as naturally as layer of skin, albeit one whose feedback mechanisms loop between interface and player. To use Twitch effectively is to become responsive to and integrated the media platform as integument.

The abstract capacity to play in relation to the systems of the game is what counts in the conceptualization of play as a form of labor. On Twitch and other streaming services, broadcasters do not merely rely upon button presses to gather a subscription base. For every seasoned player that competes at an international level, there are thousands of average, amateur gamers who remain anonymous. Regardless of the level of game mastery involved, the Twitch platform ekes out the virtuosic elements of play by rendering activity done for itself visible to an audience. In doing so, a player’s strategy, creativity, reflex, adaptability, and emotional capacities manifest themselves through the cybernetic system linking player and game but also as concretized labor.

Defining virtuosity in streaming as an abstract capacity to play, rather than in relation to mastery requires us to return to Virno's understanding of general intellect and score. Given that post-Fordist labor is characterized as lacking the finality of an end product, it manifests itself in capacities of general intellect. The general intellect from which surplus value is generated, is nothing more than a generalized faculty of thought. Virno seems to hold the act of speaking as attaining a status equivalent to thought: speech, however, is public. As intellect, *speech* becomes a principal productive force, it hybridizes pure thought (usually held to sequestered to life of the mind) with public activities of labor and politics. Only now labor has subsumed much of what constitutes the public sphere of politics. The virtuoso of post-Fordism relies on "the infinite potential of one's own linguistic faculty as the only 'score'."<sup>10</sup> Virno's fear, however, is that these abilities will only be increasingly co-opted by the administrative, organizational tendency of modern capital and governance without providing for their realization as political discourse and activity determined by the multitude.

Virno's definition explicates that the power of "the faculty of language is the opposite of a determined script, of an end product with these or those unmistakable characteristics."<sup>11</sup> Likewise, he positions speech as the primary driver of contemporary labor activity. How does speech contribute to the productivity of online game streaming? Certainly broadcasters depend upon their ability to corral an audience through speech. It is this generic capacity for speech which undergirds the feelings of shared space and interaction in streams. The performance builds upon the gameplay in correspondence with a broadcaster's ability to translate the action on screen into talking points, explanations, witty replies, and casual banter. Speech provides a narrative to the manual dexterity of play and the machinic processes which make it possible. Thus, while speech is necessary to establish dialogue between broadcasters and audiences, it has to be introduced parallel to the act of play itself and secondary to the technical apparatuses of streaming, so as to make the performance one based on interaction. Although play as interpolated by computer-based games is not primarily linguistic, I argue that it constitutes a

kind of generalized intellect: one that is functional and operational rather than primarily discursive. Hence, my suggestion that the abstract capacity for play represents a form of general intellect. The worry that "nobody is as poor as those who see their own relation to the presence of others...reduced to wage labor"<sup>12</sup> is a frighteningly legitimate one if we follow Virno's thoughts on contemporary labor. Yet it also begs the question of whether one's relations to the presence of others is exhausted by one's communicative engagement with others. What other gauges of presence parallel to or prior to language have also become reduced to wage labor under its modern configuration? What is lost by typifying general intellect as speech at the expense of Marx's focus on general intellect as congealment of human intellect in machinic forms? Virno's line of thought preferences cognitive-linguistic power over pre-linguistic capacities such as gesture, affect, reflex, and drives. Likewise, its sphere of influence extends only so far as the human element. To address these questions I turn to Maurizio Lazzarato's work on machinic enslavement.

#### Of a Piece With Machines

Although immaterial labor is embedded in machinic flows, its chief commodity is social relationships which are primarily capital relations. If the industrial factory produced hard material products, the neoliberal factory takes the atmosphere through which workers move, breathe, and function as its primary product. Lazzarato signals this expansion of immaterial labor to the purview of capital when he writes: "The particularity of the commodity produced through immaterial labor (its essential use-value being given by its value as informational and cultural content) consists in the fact that it is not destroyed in the act of consumption, but rather it enlarges, transforms, and creates the "ideological" and cultural environment of the consumer."<sup>13</sup> In other words, the commodity transforms the user and their capacity for labor. For Lazzarato, immaterial labor produces "a "social relationship" (a relationship of innovation, production, and consumption)."<sup>14</sup> While capital produces the ideological environment of the consumer, it does not do this solely by activating ideological mechanisms. Rather we must consider the dual mode through which subject formation

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occurs according to Lazzarato.

On one hand, Lazzarato suggests that subject formation occurs at the level of individuated subjects through the process of social subjection. The process is effected through language and the internalization of one's assignment within the social milieu. When a subject adapts themselves to and comes to embody social dichotomies (man/woman, producer/consumer, teacher/student, player/audience), they are within the realm of social subjection. Through social subjection, individuals inhabit and enact the roles which they assume as social, political, and economic subjects. Under the regime of neoliberalism, the ideal subject is that of "human capital" and the "entrepreneur of the self."<sup>15</sup> As such, subjects direct their productive capacities toward the expansion of capital through activities in keeping with neoliberal values such as intellectually and creatively fulfilling work and entrepreneurial control. The personification of capital in the form of the neoliberal subject allows for the mediation of social relations through tools of algorithmic management, which simultaneously promote entrepreneurial behavior while also allowing for the exploitation of their labor activity. In the case of Twitch, interface produces this dual effect.

Adjusting to a world authorized by capital, however, requires processes of subject formation beyond the realm of language and human agency. Lazzarato proposes that the second mode of subject formation proceeds through machinic enslavement according to the functional operations and asignifying semiotics bound up in human-machine interactions. Machinic enslavement is constitutive of the individuated subject in that it inscribes the individual into systems of command and control governed by non-human elements. This regime of regulation automatically invokes processes prior to the individuated subject (gesture, affect, reflex, and drives) as mere components—inputs and outputs. It should be noted here that the term machinic enslavement is one borrowed from Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze who, in turn, adapted the concept of *enslavement* from cybernetics. Lazzarato explains that enslavement "means the 'management' or 'government' of the components of a system. A technological system enslaves ('governs' or 'manages') variables (temperature, pressure, forces, speed, output, etc.), ensuring the cohesions

and equilibrium of the functioning of the whole. Enslavement is the mode of control and regulation ('government') of a technical or social machine such as a factory, business, or communications system."<sup>16</sup>

In a technological system's consistency and insistence, machinic enslavement modulates and governs human subjects according to the same channels of force as non-human components such as cogs, gears, algorithmic functions. Thinking of human elements as cybernetic components, we bypass attribution to individuated subjects and begin to see how intelligence, affects, drives, and reflexes become functional pieces within machinic assemblages. Deleuze considers this rendering of the subject into its functional capacities as a shift from the individual to the "dividual."

One might wonder, however, how a process that bypasses individuated subjects could be considered part of the process of subject formation. Lazzarato offers one possible explanation. He writes: "If subjection calls on consciousness and the representation of the subject, machinic enslavement activates both much more and much less than consciousness and representation, in other words, much more and much less than the person, individual, and intersubjectivity."<sup>17</sup> The impersonal demands imposed by machines comprise specifications at varying levels of scale ranging from the granular level of mouse clicks and keystrokes to the molar level of global banking and fluctuations of the corporate surplus. Twitch aligns these flows through its interface, which regulates human workers as streamers and audiences, in conjunction with the technical elements such as gaming consoles and Twitch accounts. As such, Twitch is not a smooth conduit between streamer and viewers, but an agent of transduction whereby the affective and bodily capacities of players function not only within the game loop established between player and algorithm but also correspond to the entertainment and response of audiences. The actions of any individuated streamer or audience member are dissolved in the communicatory flow which constitutes the entirety of Twitch's business model as viewers "channel surf" between streams donating, subscribing, and participating in chats and as streamers repurpose and distribute content for fellow streamers and vie for top viewership numbers. Through each act of this kind, Twitch



Fig.2: The “Kappa” meme (Digital image).<sup>18</sup>

users emerge as ideal subjects projecting forward not only social norms for Twitch usage but also enacting the very transactions of network traffic and monetary exchange which make Twitch profitable.

Internet chat relay (IRC) systems (services which log text chat) can illustrate how the functional imperatives of code override and then reconstitute attempts at linguistic expression on Twitch. Through IRC systems, speech acts are essentially stripped of their signifying status upon entering machinic flows to become purely functional objects at first. However, meaning is later re-inscribed upon them through text or the images of characters and broadcasters. On Twitch, many users have IRC-based chatbots installed with their stream to help manage information and their audience base. Any text that users enter into the Twitch stream is also pulled into an IRC channel. Using an IRC client program, broadcasters can automate chat interactions through the client’s own scripting language. Broadcasters can specify any string of text to become a command which influences the chat. For instance, typing “!faq” might cause the bot to supply a link to an FAQ page. Just as easily typing “shit” might be programmed to trigger a profanity filter which blocks the user’s communication.

Similarly, commands such as “Kappa” render the string of text into a graphical emoticon—in this case, the smirking greyscale image of Josh Steno (See Fig.2), who was instrumental in the development of the chat services used on Twitch.<sup>19</sup>

Users are fond of inserting the Kappa emote into situations to connote slyness or ironic distancing. Although the Kappa emoticon is a staple of Twitch culture garnering well over a million usages a day, each “utterance” of this sort stemming from keyboard to pixels, requires technical apparatuses whose functioning conditions their possibility of meaning.<sup>20</sup> In the case of text management tools, human and non-human elements become entangled. At their most superficial level, streaming services such as Twitch bring players and fans into interaction with each other. Yet “under the hood” this interaction also occurs at a technical, granular level which is deindividuated from the personality of either streamer or fans.

For every revision of best practices and statements of purpose, a litany of changes must also occur through which player and worker are informed, monitored, and made accountable for their duties—readme documentation, new feature patch notes, changes of ToS agreements. Yet, as Lazzarato puts it: “Linguistic imperatives (‘you must’) or exhortations (‘you should), meetings, ‘ideological’ speeches, and so on, would have little hold over subjectivity were they not supported by asignifying semiotics (diagram, programs, budget, management indicators, accounting figures, etc.) which do not speak but function.”<sup>21</sup> The policies and directives issued from management are scaffolded by technological and organizational tools which both connect workers and tend to concretize abstract commands into work flows which link physical and digital operations. These tools take a variety of shapes as interface, both at the level of hardware and software. Although the tendency is to think of these machines as having specifications internal to their operation—specifications which determine their functioning—these specifications are, in turn, externalized through their coupling with other machines and workers. The processes of command and control operate at the level of user interface, programming, and networking which insist upon particular kinds of user interaction and preclude others by their very design. Yet interactivity also conceals the fact that the drives of workers and collectives are not identical with those of the company and how attempts at algorithmic management are pinioned to larger management goals and production.<sup>22</sup>

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What is crucial is that the relation between player and audience, however social it may be, is actualized in the case of Twitch through its coding and interface. The ostensible goal of interactivity between broadcasters and fans that manifests itself as playing, chatting, moderating, and subscribing within the stream cannot be reduced to the virtuosity of speech without first recognizing that the technical preconditions the possibility of speech and play on Twitch. The individuated subject experiences the spectacle of social interaction in the glow and aura of A/V equipment; but for the machine and its systems of display, its flows from bank accounts to user privileges, its linkages of game consoles to telecommunications networks, the distinction between the social and technical is functionally null. When the individuated subject encounters the machinic world they play by its rules. In other words, as Lazzarato says “In a machine-centric world, in order to speak, see, smell, and act, we are of a piece with machines and asignifying semiotics.”<sup>23</sup> The virtuosic aspects of play, the social environment in which play occurs, the bodily actions of players and viewers only exert themselves productively in the stream inasmuch as there are technical, functional, and algorithmic systems ready to transcode them into the digital space. Living labor as expressed in the creativity, reactions, or linguistic skill of the streaming community is a volatile fuel which becomes productive through its modulation and coupling with the demands of machines.

### Playing the Political

Twitch is exemplary of the neoliberal principles which foster the affective dimensions of our relation to technical systems (in Twitch’s case, the *fun* of games and streaming) by rendering the social energy of play productive while bypassing play’s politicization. Simply put, the interface of Twitch affords players no immediate recourse to the decisional space managed by code. Through code, developers pre-produce the possibilities of social organization in games and streaming services with the political as a mere afterthought. This direct realization of play as productive without a political dimension disenfranchises players, exploits affect, and denies the political potentiality of play.

Yet the politics instituted through interface are not encountered at the level of ideological

persuasion. Instead we need to understand interface as political at a formal level. Twitch plays the political in exactly the same way that it plays the social and the economic—that is by directing these activities through the functioning of machinic assemblages. As such, interface’s inherent politics by design elides the question of ideology. Through interface, we bypass questions of contested space wherein power is partially a question of who has the right to speak exactly because interface, on the whole, equates usage not with the right to speech, but with the imperative to speak and the predetermination of what actions constitutes meaningful expression.

These problems trouble interface generally, yet on Twitch, the imperative is not solely directed toward speech or communication. Rather the act of play and excesses of enjoyment serve as the point of exploitation. As Alexander Galloway suggests: “Whenever a body speaks, it always already speaks as a body codified with an affective identity (gendered, ethnically typed, and so on), determined as such by various infrastructures both of and for identity formation. The difficulty is not simply that the bodies must always speak. The difficulty is that they must always speak *as*.”<sup>24</sup> The body identified here is that of the neoliberal subject, one which speaks through play. Indeed, the rhetoric of play has accompanied a host of practices based around gamification of the labor process; or as in the case of Twitch, the conversion of play spectacle into labor. This rhetoric relies both on conceptualizing play as depoliticized and liberating and on contrasting play to forms of immaterial labor seen as coercive such as gold farming and content flagging. Thus, the typically Western neoliberal subject plays while their global counterpart merely labors despite the fact that the activities and interface through which their productivity is channeled are the same.

Twitch employs this rhetoric of play by presenting its interface as a social media network rather than as a form of algorithmic management. All determinations of how a user will interact with an interface (or with other users through the interface) are predicated upon the existence of code to sustain those behaviors as functionally, and thereby representationally, meaningful. The worry here is not so much that code regiments and disciplines the body, but rather that choices of self-mastery at play in interfaces obfuscate social relations

between developers and users, as well as between players and underlying economics of streaming. Without tools to override such imperatives, speech and play are made to fully coincide with techniques of algorithmic management and neoliberal exploitation. If the political in terms of interface

is arbitrated by technical preconditions, practices which call into question the fundamental design rationales, functional imperatives, and economic exploitation are needed as an effective counter-politics at both technical and ludic-level interface interactions.

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#### Notes

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