

Strategy Without a Strategiser

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How can we understand the proper relationship between power and thought? This question is a core concern for any political *rationalism*, touching as it does on the nature of the social embodiment of reasoning (whether conceived individually or collectively), the limits to rationality imposed by structural power, and the issue of how particular modes of reasoning might effectively modify or enhance political action. Such that a politics of thought can find purchase upon the world, it must shift from a mere idealist assertion towards a grappling with means and methods, a movement from thinking to doing (and back).

Emerging in 2013 with the *Accelerationist Manifesto*, the political philosophy at least initially described as ‘left Accelerationism’ names a theoretical and political project broadly seeking to resuscitate a Marxian tradition of rationalistic hegemonic politics.¹ While much attention has been paid to its substantive normative claims and policy objectives, particularly the project of a post-work society as set out in *Inventing the Future*,² less consideration has been given to the crucial question of *means*. How is it that such a set of objectives might be brought into being? Beyond any particular strategies suitable for a given conjuncture, what is the general approach to strategy that makes sense within this political trajectory? To untie this particular knot we have to examine the basic threads from which it is constructed.

The key claims of a left Accelerationist politics are grounded upon a network of concepts. Crucial here have been the notions of hegemony, (the genesis of which exists within the work of Antonio Gramsci); strategy (a notably polyvalent concept); and rationality (which has strong roots in the contemporary analytic tradition but which has been widely critiqued within the continental one). Though the concepts of hegemony-strategy and strategy-rationality have received wide treatment, the pair of hegemony and rationality have received relatively minimal attention. To render the core arguments of left accelerationism explicable requires that these three ideas must be placed in some concrete relation.

This article will set out the case that to make sense of this relationship means understanding the mediator between structural power and collective reasoning—strategy—in a more complex fashion than it is usually conceived. That is to say, strategy should be understood as a fluid, eminently revisable, collective-self-reflexive process which encompasses means and ends, capable of generating both objectives and ideology, and which can be encompassed within relative loci of operation and broader and more diffuse milieus. In elaborating such a conception of what strategy is we aim to answer some perennial criticisms of an accelerationist politics, such as the claim that it is of necessity Leninist or otherwise vanguardist, that it implies a utopian socialism of the sort so acridly critiqued by Marx, or that it involves the exporting of pre-packaged solutions as political panaceas to passive populations.

Before we move towards the central topic of this paper, the matter of strategy, we must first sketch out how we understand power—the social milieu in which strategy operates, and reasoning, the process through which humans reflexively revise normative rules. Having delineated power as a complex form of hegemony, and rationality as a social reflexive process of re-engineering normative structures, we will then move towards defining how these two meet in the form of strategy, and the unique features that must be upheld on that basis.

1. Hegemony: Leadership and the Mechanics of Power

Power is the means and very medium of politics. Though a huge variety of different ways of understanding this idea have been proposed, we take as our basic foundation of understanding the concept of *hegemony*. Power-as-hegemony emerges into full clarity with the prison writings of Antonio Gramsci, developing to a new level of sophistication the Leninist problematic of what strategy revolutionaries should take in socio-political conditions which did not accord with the orthodox Marxist account. Hegemony has received its most significant development under conditions of strategic uncertainty, wherein the old narrative (for example the account from Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto* of increasing social simplification under capitalism into two classes, owners of capital and workers),³ was found wanting. While for Lenin this meant observing in pre-revolutionary Russia a basic ‘unripeness’ of a small industrial proletariat and large rural

peasantry,⁴ for Gramsci this entailed understanding the complexities of power in relatively advanced democracies. Power from the perspective of a Gramscian account of hegemony, is systematic, complex, and variegated. In this section we will define how power-as-hegemony works, developing some basic concepts from Gramsci in a fashion which places an emphasis upon the complexity of the idea. Then we will point towards the relative role for strategy and rationality within such a schema.

Power, from the hegemonic perspective, is grounded ultimately in a vision of a 'balance of forces'. This 'unstable equilibrium' arises as a result of all the different kinds of interactions and forces within a given system, over time, and in turn imparts a directionality or trajectory of change to a social system.⁵ The balance of forces constitutes the basic political ontology of power-as-hegemony, or as Joseph puts it: "the expression of hegemony [has] its own character and dynamics irreducible to that out of which it *emerges*."⁶ This characteristic is key, as hegemonic power's complexity relies in part upon it being relatively autonomous, or emergent, from the systems from which it is generated. Emergence is a term that has received its most clarifying analysis within the field of complexity science, generally indicating something akin to a system having collective characteristics that are not found in a mere sum of its component parts. In other words, that some sets of components and their interactions create dynamics, properties, or new structural wholes, that can in turn have their own effects. Hegemony is therefore an example of what philosophers of complexity describe as weak emergence: while ultimately capable of being tracked back to the actions of human beings and the environments they exist in hegemony is a kind of large-scaled pattern that has a *relative* autonomy from the elements which gave rise to it.⁷

For Gramsci, as for us, (as in the world) this balance of forces does not proceed across an even topology. Nor is it based upon a smooth distribution of power, but rather finds key loci, points, zones or institutions, which act as relative centres of power. Operating from such critical regions will tend to give the balance of political force disproportionate effects on the rest of the field of contention. For Gramsci, this uneven landscape of influence was largely explored through a concept of the 'integral state'. This term indicated the way in which complex developed democracies of the 1930s had civil society institutions, such as schools, universities, clubs, societies, mass media, and labour unions, in addition to political society (the state, executive, judiciary, parliament) and the economic sphere. An entire sub-section of work on Gramsci attempts to clarify precisely what the relationship between these differential components or functions are.⁸ Usually such debates either describe the political state and civil society as distinct locations within a superstructural element 'above' the economy⁹ or as distinct functions,¹⁰ with the latter being more convincing. In any case, what is crucial to note is that there are points of differential force and influence, and that even state power (whether conceived via electoral or revolutionary logics) depends in turn on already having accrued power within 'softer' less obviously political domains. A clear example of this might be the utility of having the media on side before an election, or of having large and powerful unions prior to attempting the revolutionary takeover of a state. Because power emerges from the interactions of different elements of a social system, there can be no absolute transcendental position from which it can be executed, and a political project can have state power without having hegemony.

What is the nature of power within hegemony? Is it a matter of brute force (economic or physical violence) or strong consent and alliance? The answer for Gramsci was that it consisted of a combination of coercive and consensual modes. In one of his more simple formulations, this is expressed in the form that a social group operating a successful hegemonic strategy will tend to "dominate antagonistic groups [and] lead kindred and allied groups."¹¹ In this way, the binary of coercion and consent can be understood as implying domination on the one hand, and intellectual and moral leadership on the other. At its furthest poles, absolute oppressive domination and totally enthusiastic alliance, this is relatively easy to understand. Part of a hegemonic apparatus will eventually require that those foes that cannot be persuaded to comply must be coerced into doing so. Alternatively, an element of hegemony retains that idea from Lenin of an alliance of classes and different social groups, under the leadership of one group. More complex, however, is the territory which lies between these two poles, one which might be best described as being minimally passive consent. Coercion, consent, and the grey expanse between the two, are all involved in the same ultimate process, the process of re-engineering social relations and the social environment as such in order to reinforce or contend a certain social group's power or influence. Let us think of the education system, a favoured example of Gramsci's and an important battleground for political influence today. Simple decisions on matters such as what types of topics are to be the focus of history teaching, for example, are

a matter of much political disagreement largely because of their ability to shape the way human beings conceive of themselves and their world. In so doing they alter perceptions of values and hence behaviours. If people are taught about the UK's pernicious and exploitative role in colonialism on a global scale, for example, this will likely give pupils a quite different perspective and receptivity to a variety of other issues (such as the moral status of nationalism, economic imperialism and exploitation, and the UK's contemporary foreign policy).

Leadership does not need to necessarily be in the form we are most familiar with – individual charismatic persons commanding larger groups. Instead it can operate in a more depersonalised fashion. One way to understand this is in the use of ideology. As Gramsci puts it, by creating ideological works, intellectuals and political activists can create a unity “through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world.”¹² Much of this proceeds, as with education, through a re-engineering of existing parts of the world into new shapes, altering salience of individual and collective interests and thereby changing the relationships between different social groups and forces. Predominantly for Gramsci, this meant changing ‘common sense’ – the set of frameworks that enable people to meaningfully place themselves in the world. It is through such framing devices that political projects can enable the recruitment of people with diverse and even conflicting interests towards collective political ends. As might be expected, the results of such shaping and framing cannot easily be accommodated within either a purely consensual (since they presume a power that precedes an ability to consent, given its manipulative character) or a coercive (since it does not necessarily involve punishment, threat, or arbitrary power). Instead through transformations of the environment in which people exist—which can mean everything from the media to technology, from urban design to education, as well as the more obvious political and economic surroundings—leadership can be applied in a more diffuse manner. Hegemonic power operating in this way works to change the conditions of possibility for self-organisation, a form of power that guides how relatively independent forces form and disperse, move and remain stationary, transform and remain static.

At larger scales of time and of space, hegemony takes on a more navigational role. Navigational leadership means directing or influencing the overall direction of travel for society—or even the world—at large. What characterises a given global or regional hegemony that is long-lasting? It is little more than the relatively stable *dynamic* (or directionality) which leading groups serve to impart. Let us take for example neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has expressed many different characters (liberal and conservative) and has taken shape in different ways in distinct places (for example the difference between Anglo-American neoliberalism and the more ordoliberal forms in continental Europe). However, it has a consistency at the level of the process of transformation that this system of power applies: the use of the state to increase the power of markets and market-like mechanisms to rule society. Through interventions at many different levels and scales, an overriding effect is produced, emergent from its component parts and coming to have a relatively autonomous ability to effect the system from which it arose in turn. The process of guiding a macro-system from one such long-lasting hegemony to another is that of hegemonic navigation: changing the course, altering the direction of travel. To return to the example of neoliberalism, this is to try to understand the vast and complex process through which the crisis of the 1970s and the collapse of the authority and capacity to rule of post-World War II embedded liberalism and social democracy, was ultimately resolved into a new system of global hegemonic rule. Such a process is not merely arbitrary, and nor is it a matter of simply acquiring power-in-itself. Instead, we need to understand it on the one hand as discovering a set of interacting components—from technology, to state power, to the media, civil society, ideology, culture, economy, and finance—which enable a new relatively coherent and stable set-up to be created. This, for Gramsci, was described in the term ‘historic bloc’: where a whole set of diverse social elements, parts, and functions are harmonised to become mutually reinforcing, generating a stable vector of transformation for society at large.¹³ To get to this juncture involves navigation and indeed experimentation, guiding the development and co-evolution of multiple systems and strands of the *socius* towards a new harmonic accord that in turn develops and expresses the set of interests of the hegemonic social group or ideology.

In a compressed form we have sketched out some of the basic mechanisms and dynamics of power-as-hegemony. We have observed that this form of power emerges out of a balance of forces, having results and effects that are more than the mere sum of its parts. We have emphasised that hegemonic power operates on an uneven landscape of heterogenous (though non-exclusive) functional spheres (from culture

to politics to economics to technology and so on) and forms into hubs of power that confer disproportionate effects through their control or influence. We described how hegemonic power is really a form of abstracted and depersonalised leadership, operating through guiding pre-existing processes of self-organisation, through the re-engineering of diverse kinds of systems. At the largest scale this means shifting systems of systems towards new states of dynamic stability, a form of leadership as navigation.

2. Rationality: The Social Picture of Revisionary Normativity

Having delineated an account of power, we must now move to the other side of our story, the social picture of rationality and reasoning. Over the recent decades, this domain has received substantial development towards a view of rationality that is less individualistic and more complex and social in nature. First we will examine some of the basic ideas of the social picture of reasoning behaviour. Then we will examine some of the aporias in these accounts, and attempt to briefly explain how reasoning operates in relationship to power and existing environmental constraints.

One useful recent example of the more ‘social’ picture of reasoning comes in the work of Anthony Laden. In opposition to accounts which begin from a reified faculty of ‘reason’ which operates as a kind of judgmental criteria or yardstick on the ‘rationality’ or not of particular human discursive activities, Laden argues reasoning is simply any form of engaged conversational social interaction.¹⁴ For Laden, norms or rules governing the process of conversational interaction emerge out of the basic functional requirements of having such a discourse: mutual intelligibility, the construction of a shared ‘space’, and inviting others to share in that space. In these respects, amongst others, we can see a more sophisticated and socially informed account of what reasoning as a process actually is, when compared to previous proponents of social reason such as Robert Brandom, who end up relying on a conservative and legalistic, even punitive notion of sanctions and scorekeeping.¹⁵ Instead, an understanding of reasoning grounded more thoroughly in interaction can give us an account wherein the norms which govern the interaction emerge out of the interaction itself, a form of co-ordination without intentionality (or perhaps with a quasi-intentionality. Laden also advances in not having a substantive definition of what ‘a reason’ is, or any kind of fundamental ultimate ground for reasoning.¹⁶ Finally, Laden argues for reasoning as an ongoing process, one which is not limited by an aim at determinate conclusions or decisions.¹⁷ This kind of standpoint points towards a more complex understanding than the merely judgmental, competitive form of adjudication of different kinds of reasons between individually constructed agents.

Though Laden makes a number of advances on more traditional, individualistic, and reified accounts of rationality, especially towards a more processual, complex, an emergent understanding, he retains a certain blindness when it comes to power. Beyond the interactional horizon of a conversation, and its inherent potential to bootstrap into a normative revisionary structure, there exists society at large, and the world of power. The hegemonic perspective on power is precisely one which identifies the most significant, and often subtle modes of power as being ones that (invisibly) sculpt our spaces for action, thought, decision, and reasoning. Viewed from such a perspective, even the highly social, emergentist position of Laden’s social picture of reasoning appears to remain mute on the key issues that constitute its precondition—the ability of individual humans to enter viable communications with one another, and hence to begin the process of generating immanent conversational norms. Such a condition is effectively dependent on social, political, and economic conditions. For what crafts the conditions for convivial rational invitation more than the economic means to take part, the social codes and graces to be interpreted accurately, or the political conditions to be treated as a rational equal? As Trafford puts it: “these non-normative grounds of normativity embed local and global generative constraints upon the sorts of norms, relationships, and political actions that we can take”.¹⁸ Any fully social picture of reasoning must also have some account of how the very spaces in which reasoning occurs—and indeed and the individuals taking part—have been thoroughly sculpted and moulded by systems of power that inevitably must precede the rational encounter. In other words, we need to have some meaningful description of the interaction between the *rational* domain of interaction and emergent normativity, and the more traditionally causal spaces of *power* which shape them.

However, simultaneous to making such a correction it is also necessary to avoid the notion that rationality can be reduced in the final instance to the mere play of political or economic force. It is clear that rational deliberative processes can come to take on some kind of transformative role even within and against the

social conditions in which they were formed. The very existence of any kind of emancipatory politics, from historical communism to the post-war US black civil rights movement, point towards such a possibility.

One answer to this problematic is in considering the precise nature of how the hegemonic sculpting of social possibility spaces affects the conduct of processes of social reasoning. While there will be some forms of moulding which effectively rule out certain kinds of rationalities developing a priori, in many cases the kind of influence which they exert is less absolute: a set of tendencies within which reasoning occurs, which imposes a set of dynamics, rather than an absolute system of constraint. Perhaps the core example of this is resolutely Gramscian: common sense.

For Gramsci, common sense was one of the essential battlegrounds upon which hegemonic politics plays out, determining as an emergent effect the range of acceptable options for public debate. One basic way we can see this playing out is through the so-called Overton Window,¹⁹ a space in public discourse, predominantly constructed through the media, which determines which opinions are more or less amenable to open debate. This form of political common sense is a powerful force in public forms of political rationality, effectively a set of norms governing what can and cannot be reasonably said and debated. Tracing the material systems that serve to create such a set of norms and enables them to persist would lead us towards considering such systems as the laws on media ownership, or social class structures that strongly influence who can take on leading roles, or the technological systems which give certain forms of media immense power. Each of these constraints, which effectively sets the limits of acceptable discourse, is amenable to transformation (though at various different levels of political intensity and cost). Moreover, even within the ambit of the window itself, things are neither static nor without room for heresy. Indeed, moving the window, changing what is possible to be acceptably said, may often be a function of the ability to consistently breach it, testing the boundaries and potentially extending them over time. Yet in breaching the norms of acceptable speech, there will usually be a cost. This gives us a good idea of how some forms of hegemony work in practice: by modulating costs and benefits, not so much curtailing certain actions so much as rendering them unlikely without great effort, exertion, or consequence.²⁰

Collective reasoning as a social activity is structured through and by power relations, as well as being capable of modifying these relations in turn. One of the fundamental forms that such interchange between the function of reasoning and social change takes is in terms of political strategy, the point where rational deliberation and discourse emerge into political efficaciousness, capable of restructuring the conditions of possibility for reasoning itself.

3. Strategy without a Strategiser

Thus far we have laid out a basic understanding of power-as-hegemony, and examined how reasoning as a complex social process operates. But to fully bring these domains together requires us to understand how strategy operates, and indeed mediates, between these two. It is only in doing so that we can answer some of the charges claiming that accelerationist politics of necessity requires the establishment of utopian plans or hierarchical vanguards. To do so, we will first discuss the limitations that hegemonic projects operate under. Then we will analyse how hegemonic strategy *works* and the particular forms of rationality involved. Finally we will assess what the agency that strategises *is*.

Hegemony encompasses two distinct facets, one structural and the other agential and projective.²¹ Yet within the strategic dimension of hegemony-as-project there must be admitted a significant degree of limitation on the ability of any singular or collective political actor to strategise with *absolute* certainty. Theorists as politically diverse as Edgar Morin and Friedrich von Hayek have argued that the complexity of social systems mean that absolute knowledge of most emergent phenomena will be limited.²² While these claims towards inherent unknowability are often dubiously inflated, they carry a germ of truth. If we can never *fully know* the results of our actions, how is it that hegemonic strategy is possible at all? How is it that complex social, economic, political, and technological systems can apparently be controlled, and is it that reasoning fits into this picture?

To answer epistemological problematic of complexity, we should consider what strategy actually means. A commonplace understanding of 'strategy' is often interprets the term to mean the creation of strict, bullet-point plans to achieve a detailed and pre-conceived end point. Recent thinking, however, has shifted away

from such a stance.²³ Instead of a brittle and simplistic formulation, we need to think about strategy as a more complex process. In this sense, it should be identified as consisting of balancing between objectives and means, which also includes the process of identifying and settling upon objectives, as well as the analysis and assembling of the methods necessary to meet them.²⁴ A successful political strategy will likely require room for evolution, and for modification and improvement of itself as it proceeds towards actualisation. In a similar fashion to the account of reasoning as social process, strategy is necessarily an emergent, reviseable and self-correcting *process*.

Though complex in execution, strategy is also not simply arbitrary or a matter of trial and error. This is why hegemonic strategy is sometimes spoken of in terms of as operating partly through “spontaneous attraction”²⁵, or being a matter of “quasi-intentionality”,²⁶ or as being always partly independent of human intentionality.²⁷ What is being groped towards here is the nature of hegemony as a partially intentional (driven by human rationality and practice), yet also a partially autonomous process (possessing its own dynamics). Put simply, it is only by beginning to act that we can understand what it is we are acting within and against, testing the boundaries and limits of the system as we attempt to transform it. It is the process of strategy which captures this relationship between the collectively rational and political practice as they relate to the environments and systems they are operating in.

Such an understanding is already implicit in the basic characteristics of Gramscian hegemony. Hegemony and the strategy of hegemonic projects only evolve in complex societies which are too large in scale and differentiated in composition to rule through pure domination, authority, or cultural-religious tradition alone. Hence it is necessary to deploy an ensemble of tactics to ‘lead’, where leadership is a matter of guiding self-organising processes already at work within social systems. As hegemonic projects operate on key nexuses of power within the social, they seek to manipulate important parameters governing the ways in which social systems organise themselves. The epistemic limits of such practices are clear – the emergence of new forms of (self-)order cannot ever be entirely predicted—and utopian blueprints are therefore to be resisted. When engaged in more large-scaled processes of navigation, it will likely be impossible to perfectly predict in advance the nature of what will work in practice.

Hegemonic strategy, considered from this perspective, is a matter of experiment and craft, working to exploit dynamics in the systems it works with while correcting itself and adapting over time as the results of a given strategy play out. If we think of the actual strategy of the early neoliberals, we find that rather than setting out a complete plan, they engaged in experiments, sometimes figurative ideological ones, (within the network of think tanks they devised and established) but also literally in the case of Pinochet’s Chile,²⁸ and the financial crisis-stricken New York in 1975.²⁹ At the macro-level too, we find a broad set of navigational concepts (such as the need to restore capitalist profitability, the belief in markets as more efficient resource allocators, and liberal ideas of human freedom in terms of negative ‘freedoms from’) which can be flexibly implemented with different strategies being deployed in different national or regional scenarios.

In this process of self-correcting and flexible strategy, we can also locate a second answer to the epistemological problematic: hegemony implies a mode of strategy which is not necessarily tied to a singular strategist. The image of a political strategist as either a singular individual or unitary collective organisation, such as a political party, capable of processing information and devising plans for tactical action on that basis is challenged by the idea of a more complex kind of leadership. In other words, hegemonic projects might be effectuated across a distributed ecology of political organisations. Here we would not find a singular centralised strategist, a lone genius or inner council, but rather a dispersed (yet relatively localised) web of broadly aligned organisations, coordinating action through nodes rather than absolutised command hierarchies.³⁰ This is one way in which we can understand the notion of hegemonic projects as ‘strategy without a strategist’, in the sense of the absence of a unitary singular body to undertake such strategisation.

Strategy can accumulate *across* an ecology of organisations, rather than being vested in any singular actor. Here coordination would emerge partly from explicitly articulated propositions and plans, but also from non-intentional processes, those which Gramsci referred to as being a matter of “spontaneous attraction.”³¹ Again, we can consider the work of the neoliberals during the 1970s as emblematic of what this more

distributed strategy might look like in practice. The development of the Mont Pèlerin Society as the hub of a distributed network of think tanks, (such as the Adam Smith Institute, the Centre for Policy Studies, and the Institute of Economic Affairs in the UK), policy institutes, and associated journalists, corporate leaders, and other fellow travellers demonstrates the merits of such a distributed and flexible approach.³² Part of the role of ideology in such a distributed strategy is not just to provide ideological contents, such as specific conceptual articulations or policy propositions to induce social change, but also to serve as a kind of affective ‘probe’ working to recruit new acolytes and allies, capable of coordinating action even in the absence of direct communication. This also raises the question of appropriate organisational and institutional form. In other words, what particular social organisations are best tasked with particular local forms of social reasoning designed to develop aspects of a hegemonic project? The mode of organisation taken up by working class or other subaltern social groups contending hegemony, for example, would need to take a very different form to those utilised by the neoliberals, typically being the advocacy think tank.³³ Such organisational forms are appropriate for certain kinds of action: persuading right-leaning governments of the merits of neoliberal policy, for example. They also are likely to advance certain styles of reasoning. The calculating forms of neoliberal rationality both promoted by and put to work by the neoliberals will be very distinct from those deployed for different political ends.

There is also another sense in which we can understand complex hegemony as operating a ‘strategy without a strategist’, and this in the sense of the emergence of strategy itself. Just as with organisation, strategy too can emerge as partly the result of run-away auto-catalytic processes, developing their own momentum beyond an initial impetus. From this perspective, strategy continually emerges out of the interaction between the agents of a hegemonic project, their reasoning processes, and the social, political, economic, and technological systems within which they set to work. To return to our example of the neoliberals, key elements of their strategy, such as the need to confront and defeat organised labour, were not in place during the early phases of the movement in the 1940s and 50s, when a spectrum of views on the matter existed between Hayek and more corporatist German theorists who argued that productive collaboration with unions was a potentially useful option.³⁴ The determinedly anti-union stance only evolved in the course of processes of hegemonisation, in particular in relation to the need to secure material resources, such as funding streams, from key corporate leaders, whose absolute antithetical stance on union power meant a swing towards Hayek’s views on the issue.³⁵ As Jamie Peck puts it, the success of the neoliberal project “was not guided by some secret formula or determinant blueprint; its zigzagging course was improvised, and more often than not enabled by crisis.”³⁶ The particular contents of a given hegemonic strategy (objectives, means, plans of action) will of necessity evolve in time as it progresses, in the process of discovering ‘what works’. The normative contents of what neoliberalism *was* (what *is* the social good?) had to be assembled while the normative means (what *works*?) were also in process of being developed.

It is in the guise of strategy that we can observe most thoroughly the complex interrelationship and mutual co-conditioning of social reasoning and political power. Understanding power-as-hegemony, we can see that it operates through a logic of emergence, emerging out of the interlocking effects of many distinct component parts. In such a conception, leadership takes on a more abstracted role, being the result of the re-engineering of different systems to create distinct alterations to the dynamics of organisation and therefore the direction of political travel as whole. Strategy, the guiding force within any hegemonic project, is the result of collective and distributed human intelligences, in interaction with their environment, developing the means and ends partially in the process of action itself. In so doing, collective reasoning, in relationship with political action, is able to re-engineer its own conditions of extra-normative possibility. This expands the account of recursivity common to many contemporary accounts of reasoning from the merely normative domain, (the revisionary structure of normativity) and into a multi-layered heterogeneous universe where reasoning is one system amongst many others, each of which admitting to their own particular dynamics, and each capable of taking part within politics itself. Finally, this kind of picture of the interlocking geometry of hegemony, reasoning, and strategy enables us to dispel the common charges that accelerationist politics obligates static utopian plans or devilish elitism. Instead, akin to any ambitious political project, left accelerationism must advance through a continuous interchange between local rational systems and the broader environment. This is to construct itself not as a pre-imagined blueprint imposed from without, but as a complex reasoning organism, assembling strategy without any individual strategist.

notes

- 1 Srnicek and Williams, “Manifesto”; see also Srnicek; Williams.
- 2 Srnicek and Williams, *Inventing the Future*.
- 3 Marx and Engels.
- 4 Lenin.
- 5 Gramsci, 107–8, 132, 172.
- 6 Joseph, 39.
- 7 Bedau, 375–99.
- 8 Anderson.
- 9 Anderson; Bobbio.
- 10 Thomas, “The Gramscian Moment: An Interview with Peter Thomas”.
- 11 Gramsci, 57.
- 12 Ibid, 349.
- 13 Ibid, 279.
- 14 Laden.
- 15 Trafford, “Re-Engineering Common Sense”.
- 16 Laden, 206, 214.
- 17 Ibid, 84.
- 18 Trafford, “Reason and Power”.
- 19 Russell.
- 20 Young.
- 21 Joseph.
- 22 Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*; Hayek, “The Theory of Complex Phenomena”; Morin, “Restricted Complexity, General Complexity”; Morin, *On Complexity*.
- 23 Freedman.
- 24 Ibid, xi.
- 25 Gramsci, 60–61.
- 26 Gilbert, 22–23.
- 27 Joseph.
- 28 Fisher.
- 29 Harvey,
- 30 Nunes, 30.
- 31 Gramsci, 60–61.
- 32 Peck.
- 33 Mirowski and Plehwe.
- 34 Steiner.
- 35 Ibid, 190–92.
- 36 Peck, 4.

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