NEITHER MEANING NOR FINALITY

Nature is not the primitive or the simple, and certainly not the rustic, the organic, or the innocent. The colloquial human notion of nature, of nature as separate from humanity, from culture, from technology, is not nature. Our noise, our impact, our lives are not above or separate from the rest of existence, from nonhuman life forms, or inanimate objects. In attending to our noise, we might better recognize our connections with the nonhuman, with so-called “nature.” One way or another, it is vibration, after all, that connects every separate entity in the cosmos, organic or nonorganic. We must attend to these vibrations, even as they take on an active disorganization of expression and, by reaction, of content itself. That is to say, we must let ourselves be recognized though these vibrations, through these connections, recognized in our being-as-noise, perceived within a relationship of noise, and of aporia, complete with ghost minglings, unprecedented grafts, and insane translations.

This text has cycled through several apparently different topics, but, in fact, they are related to each other, are all facets of noise, of being-as-noise, and of noise. Noise has neither meaning nor finality. When searching for meaning, when striving for teleological purpose, this is endlessly frustrating, and will mark a dead end of thought. This frustration is high-
lighted by the fact that incurable disgust, pure negativity, and absolute refusal are the only discernible political forces of the moment. These are not, however, the aspects of noise that this work pursues. Instead, this text advocates the abandonment of projects based solely upon a consequentialist projection of their ends and the exploration of interruptive and emancipatory means of breaking open conventional politics and political struggle. This is not to say that the ends and consequences of political actions within a thorybological project would be considered or considered important. Some results are certainly preferable to others; disorder for the sake of disorder is, at best, childish. However, surveying a century in which experience has taught us that man is capable of inventing ever more atrocious forms of violence and horror, it is yet necessary to remark that much of modern thought offers little to soothe, and much to exacerbate our disquiet. What this experiment is asking is: Are their means of exacerbating our disquiet along productive and progressive lines of thought, of flight, of action? Are there means of interrupting the violence and horror to offer a new way of situating the human? As opposed to disruption, which shocks a system and breaks wholes into pieces, interruption suspends continuous processes. It is not smashing, but sitting with. Not blockage, but reflection. Noise can be both interruption and disruption and it is not always possible to distinguish the two in advance. This is, indeed, a threat of actions based on noise politics and reason that noise politics should not be the sole means used to pursue a better world.

Without noise, all we do is repeat. Without noise, there is no information in a signal. Without noise there is no

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1 Information is used here metaphorically, adapted from the sense employed by Information Theory and articulated by Claude Shannon as a measure of change or entropy in a communication system. More information is categorized as having more change or higher entropy. Without noise, a signal is just repetition and thus has no change and no information. See Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998).
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change, no progress, no invention. A progressive noise politics tied to an ethics of coexistence and mutual responsibility, on the other hand, requires a perpetual discordance or interruption, a collaboration between participant and apparatus, in which expression is more important than accuracy. Indeed, the unfettered pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, as if everything worth knowing is equally and supremely valuable, leads inevitably to the realization that knowledge is finally unattainable, the whole riddled with holes, haunted by noise. The drive to knowledge thus undermines itself and its result is a pessimistic resignation from the pointlessness of life. The pursuit of noise, though, does not demand purity, completion, or holism. Thorybology understands that any achieved concept or presentation of noise will be merely noise and it does not run from this realization but embraces it. Thorybology is a theory all the more total for being fragmented. It does not pretend or need to have the final word.

There are many pressing concerns in the world today. One of the most significant, as related to thorybology, is the breakdown of the planetary climatic system. The breakdown in climate is directly traceable to the disruption caused by the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial agriculture, that is, to the (disruptive, noisy, excessive, wasteful) activities of humankind. To alter this path, to remedy this situation (if such a thing remains a possibility), we must seek an alienation from our established patterns, a reframing of our normal thoughts, a dark, negative, profane reimagining of coexistence on and with this planet. This text seeks to achieve this via an aesthetics and politics of repetition, digression, and interruption, an aesthetics and politics of noise. The text keeps asking that the issue of noise politics be left open (keeps leaving the issue open, cycling back and repeating it), such that any presupposed distinction of noise as valueless is rejected. Noise is not valuable if it cannot be used and it cannot be used unless, as noise, it is understood and recontextualized. The weed only exists to fill the waste spaces left by cultivated areas. It grows between and among other things. Thorybology must act as the weed.
Repeating: No longer what does it mean? but: How does it spread? The specter of noise is traced as it spreads, as it infects thought, as it interrupts discourse networks, and networks of power creating little holes, little bits missing, things nibbled away here and there. Yet it is through thought’s confrontation with chaos, with absence, with noise, with nonknowledge, that we break the constraints on our imagination and intuition.

To loop and wander is human. To repeat, to repeat as noise, and to repeat with noise and with difference, is the basis of human communication. All knowledge is the process of measuring by a standard. Without a standard (i.e., without any limitation), there is no knowledge. But with only standards, with the exact repetition of standards, there is no knowledge or information either. This noise is not nothing. It is a deconstructive figure hovering between life and death, presence and absence. It rejects the logics of systems that are either theoretically reductive or pragmatically disconnected in regard to their objects. Instead, it asks how one should go about reading such a collection of semi-independent texts, which shift abruptly from one subject to another, try different takes only to abandon them, and do not generally aim to establish a clear conclusion. And answers: We must make connections, establish new lines of thought from previously disparate realms of knowledge. To do otherwise is to remain silent in confrontation with the nature of human knowledge. Remaining silent is grimmer; all truths that are kept silent become toxic.

We are in an ecology of noise, where small effects distort and expand to take form(lessness). Noise is first that which interrupts, inducing a change in relations. Noise is feared, or labeled dangerous and unwanted because it is a transitional and transformative force. Noise is a question of a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again. Thus, concern with subject and concern with form are complementary.