

## Desire after hope: To reorient myself for true life during the COVID-19

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### **Abstract**

*In this article, the author tries to reorient herself for true life by employing what Means calls 'authentic creativity'. The author argues that writing is a way to reorient oneself. Writing is a dialogue and free space and time where hopes and desires to live true self are generated. By imagining how Mark Fisher might have been feeling living in 'Capitalist Realism', the author discusses that the world has been transformed into capitalist super-realism amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and she has become super-human capital self. Engaged in Freire's 'problem-posing education' and Biesta's 'risky business' in a time and space created by her advisor, the author reflected on how she became super-human capital self and how to rescue rebellious self from the abyss of capitalist super-realism. In so doing, the author came up with a formula  $O = CI$  to help visualize a mechanism of why human capital is valued and why growing human capital through education is fervently supported. Built on the formula, the author developed an equation of  $O = I(C^n)$ , with the exponential  $n$  being resilience capacities, to argue that super-human capital has been expected to develop an ironman-like resilience and their productivity has been evaluated as such. In so doing, the author attempts to demonstrate the transformative power of art to reorient not only herself but also transform what Hardt and Negri 'Empire' into something new from within, with hopes and desires of the multitude of singularities who engage in risky business in commons.*

**Keywords:** *Reorientation, true life, super-human capital, authentic creativity, risky business, multitude, singularities*

### **Desire for ‘True Life’ and Reorientation**

*‘I can only hope, for all of you, that settling down, having a job, a career, is not your top priority, but rather a true thinking that is sister to the dream’ (Badiou, 2017, p. 48).*

This paper is a *Bildung* journey of a millennial – named Yuko - who is living what Badiou (2017) has called a ‘fake life’ amid the Covid-19 pandemic while striving to reorient herself to live a ‘true life’ simultaneously. I am living a *fake* life now. I am very aware of it. Seriously. Is this what Mark Fisher was feeling living in ‘capitalist realism’? Prof. Fisher, I am living capitalist *super*-realism now. Is there any alternative? This question emerged from my strong desire to reorient myself to live a *true* life. Sometimes, there is no *data* to support my claim. There is only creativity - not fake, but authentic creativity. In 1966, Seamus Heaney was determined to fight with a pen in *Digging*. In 2020, I am determined to cut the web of capitalism laid out in Moore (2000) with a pen - this time with the keyboard of my laptop. Rebellious Yuko, full of imagination and curiosity to dismantle capitalism, will disappear as capitalism is dismantled since this rebelliousness *is* the creation of capitalism. It is totally okay. I am welcoming it. At the end of the day, I will not need an adjective to describe myself. No more capital. No more rebelliousness. Yuko will be just Yuko, who is still full of imagination and curiosity – but this time to create (a) alternative world(s). Or Yuko will become something new. Something nameless and full of uncertainty. It is totally okay. I am ready for it. I am welcoming of it. Until then, my journey continues by creating hope after hope, hope after desire, and desire after desire. There will be no end to history. No more linear history being made. History is to be continued what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call ‘rhizomically’ as new hopes and desires emerge. No more

linear histories will be made. I am an agent and actor of such creation. I will continue to act on it from within.

COVID-19 turned my life upside down, transforming me into *super*-human capital, Yuko. Before the onset of the pandemic, I had already been living my life as human capital. I am very aware of it. My human capital self, however, co-existed with my rebellious self *harmoniously*. But this rebellious self has been buried deep in the abyss of capitalism by *super*-human capital Yuko. Yuko is disoriented, very seriously. To reorient myself, writing has been a very effective and powerful art. Writing to me is a dialogue with authors in books, classmates, and professors in classrooms, and ultimately with myself. As I write, I can hear the voices of authors, friends, family, students, advisors, and my past-present-future self. I also imagine the voices of those who I have yet to meet. Writing is a space and time where no one denies my true feelings, thoughts, hopes, and desires. I can be full of imagination and curiosity. It is a free space and time to be true to oneself. As I continue to write, hope generates one after another. A hope that *I will be able to live what Badiou (2017) calls a “true life” by reorienting myself through writing.* Such hope is metamorphosed into desire. *I desire to live a true life.*

As I am writing at this moment, I can feel my hopes and desires springing within myself. I desire to be liberated from the constrains of capitalist super-realism. I desire to create an alternative world that is not governed by the logic of capitalism. Neither simulations nor algorithms were able to predict the creation of such hope and desire. Everything has been occurring contingently and rhizomically as I write. Now I am urged to deliver my hope and desire to someone who I have met and have not met through this writing and who also shares the same hopes and desires that can span across centuries. This paper is very subjective and sometimes readers will be entrapped in Yuko’s stream of consciousness. In this paper “I” as the subject is multidimensional. “I” consists of organic Yuko, human capital Yuko, *super*-human capital Yuko, rebellious Yuko, and sometimes unnamed Yuko-ish

something – nameless.<sup>1</sup> Let's embrace nameless, as it has potential to generate something unimaginable. "I" is also what Hardt and Negri (2000) call 'the multitude of singularities'. "I" contains plurality. I will be you. I will be we. You will be we. In this *I=you=we*, plurality and particularities of singularities are preserved while producing commonalities. Commons are the hinge of my artwork. I hope and desire that you will find yourself in this writing in some way.

### **Birth of Super-human capital Yuko**

COVID-19 has transformed me into super-human capital in a very negative way. The pandemic caused a massive shock to the economy all around the world, causing financial insecurities and anxieties amongst people. I am one of them. In academia, faculty hiring is frozen, and existing faculty face a fear of pay cuts and furloughs. As a graduate student with a precarious graduate assistantship and student loans, I am full of anxieties. What does my future look like after graduation? Will I be financially able to continue my education if the contract of my current position is not renewed in the first place? What about my health insurance? How will I be able to pay off my student loans if I cannot find a *stable* job? This is *the* dominant anxiety in my mind. Just surviving today, tomorrow, and/or this semester is my goal since the onset of the pandemic. It has been the case even before the pandemic. However, COVID-19 has brutally intensified the war on survival I am participating in. Some of my family members were laid off from work or lost their jobs as soon as the onset of COVID-19. Some graduate assistants got laid off or their contract was never renewed. I have witnessed the brutal and monstrous face of capitalism first hand. I have been told that I should appreciate the fact that I can keep my graduate assistantship and do whatever it takes for me to keep it. And I do appreciate it, but along with my family and friends, I am in survival mode. I cannot sleep well, and at this point, who can?

To navigate through this unprecedented uncertain situation and out of fear, I started desiring to acquire as many skills as possible to prepare myself for the upcoming fierce competitive job markets – both in and outside of academia. Administrative work and improving technological skills have become the priority in my life. I am consciously becoming available online 24/7 and responding to emails and phone calls. There is no more private-public distinction. Such a boundary has been collapsed. It is like I have become a convenience store, like 7 Eleven, which is open 24/7 and is stocked up with anything that *customers* would need. On demand, I create something new that is not stocked in my storage. I am using my creativity to solve problems as efficiently as possible. I am making efforts to boost my productivity to impress my supervisors. The problem is that no one ever told me to do this but myself. Here is *super-human* capital Yuko born out of intense fear and anxiety. Now, super-human capital Yuko is dominating the consciousness of I. At the same time, nameless Yuko-ish something is shouting - *things have always been unprecedented and uncertain. Don't ever forget it!*

I had been a human capital before the onset of COVID-19. I am very aware of it. I am a millennial who was raised in Okinawa, Japan in a family that has attempted to cut a vicious cycle of poverty inherited from the legacy of the battle of Okinawa during World War II. In this context, I could be “categorized” as an “indigenous” “Asian” “woman” from a “lower (my parents’ generation) to middle (my generation)” socioeconomic status family. It can also be said that who I am today has been constructed by a historical (and ongoing) violence of Japanese imperialism and settler-colonialism, wars, U.S. occupation and military bases, and traditional Okinawan (Ryukyuan) male-dominant social structure. The intersectionality and construction of race/ethnicity, gender, and class located within a specific historical temporality and sociocultural context should have complicatedly shaped my *colonized, racialized, and sexualized* body. Through schooling my body also has been turned into a *commodified* one, and it has sucked

up my *colonized, racialized, and sexualized* body, however. I have become what Brown (2015) calls ‘*homoeconomicus*’ and Yuko as ‘*homoeconomicus*’ is dominating my consciousness and identity now. Young people all over the world regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, and class, I believe, have had similar experiences.

In the twenty-first century, young people as ‘*homoeconomicus*’ have been *educated* through schooling to become human capital that possess creativity, productivity, and efficiency for the economic growth. We are set to be fiercely competing against each other in the zero-sum game of capitalism. I have constantly been receiving the following message: *No more play, work harder, but there is no guarantee for you to succeed because ‘someone has to fail’ in this game* as Labaree (2010) points out. We have been expected to possess five-star qualities. Harris (2017) points out that young people are now expected to become a super star. Even though society is designed to produce failures, there is no room for young people to make mistakes in this society. Young people are trapped in such contradictions. But we *must* navigate through this environment full of contradictions. Now, the millennial’s first job to remain eligible for success, is to stay sane and out of jail as Harris (2017) argues. Throughout school life, we are also required to develop a glorious and shiny CV. This is because a CV, full of wonderful records from academic achievements to extracurricular activities, is a golden ticket to entering a prestigious college that is expected to secure a good paying job in this precarious society. In my case, for example, I studied hard day in and day out in junior high school to pass an entrance examination to get in a “good” public high school that would help me get an *express train* ticket to enter a good public university. Passing another entrance examination ultimately helped me get another *limited express train* ticket to become a teacher, whose position is deemed “stable” and “good paying” one in Okinawa, Japan. (I had wanted to become a teacher beside its benefits, but its promised stableness was very attractive

to me at that time due to my family's financial situations.) On top of this *exam-after-exam* life while juggling part time jobs, I also engaged in extracurricular activities for the enhancement of my CV throughout school life in order to become as best of a candidate as possible in this crazy game. Who can stay sane in this life?

Sadly, holding a college degree does not guarantee a future job for the young people anymore because of the credential inflation of the college degree. Although tuition for higher education skyrocketed, there is no choice left for the young people but to pursue a higher degree. Without a college degree, we cannot get a good paying job. However, holding a college degree does not promise them a secure and a good paying job either. Going to a college now has become a gamble. Students bet money on higher education in the hopes that we can find a job that pays off their student loans in the future. We need to be *lucky* enough to make such a dream come true because future job markets are full of uncertainty – all the more because of the Covid pandemic. There is no guarantee. Without betting money, however, we will not be able to stand at the start line of competitive job markets in the first place. This is why we have no choice but to keep betting a great deal of money even when we need to take out student loans. Young people are trapped in such a dilemma. In this context, Harris (2017) argues that financial industries “have become extremely skilled at appealing to the anxieties of overachieving young people and inserting themselves as the solution to those worries” (p. 102). In the context of COVID-19, what industries are appealing to our anxieties?

Of course, intensity of the zero-sum game in capitalism should differ depending on one's race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Those who belong to the minoritized and disadvantaged group should have faced more intensity in this game. Some of us are not even allowed to stand at the start line due to the systemic racism, sexism, and classism. This dirty truth has been revealed during the pandemic. Some people's

lives are more valued than others. Surveillance of immigrants and *aliens* has been intensified. This dirty truth has been masked under the name of economic growth and prosperity. The mechanism of ‘inclusion/exclusion’ (Agamben, 1995) and ‘necropower’ (Mbembe, 2019) have become the default of our daily life in a more brutal manner than ever. Sadly though, human capital discourse (now super-human capital discourse) has created a space and time where those from different race/ethnicity, class, and gender can share our brutal experiences, fears, and anxieties. Thanks to the discourse, I have been able to relate myself to other young people as (super-) human capital self. In the context of the pandemic, human capital discourse has been more internalized within young people all over the world through education more than ever. We are striving to be the best candidate for menial positions. This is a cut-throat battle to the *live-or-death*. We have been told - *you are given equal opportunity, right? But remember that your CV matters – all the more. How is your productivity? Is it super high enough to maximize our profits?* I am tired of this game. I believe many of my fellow millennials – even Generation Z (and Alpha) - are feeling the same too.

### **Super-human Capital and Ironman-like Resiliency**

We are too exhausted to think about a true life. We are all on survivance mode for the day. Mastering skills – narrow and lifeless – has become our mission more than ever. What skill sets will be easily transferable to jobs outside of academia have become the topic of conversations among friends and family. In this context, I am consciously becoming numb and blind to fundamental problems of capitalism – because I want to survive. I need a job to continue my education. I am navigating through this survival of the fittest environment. I really hate this myself. Rebellious Yuko is not desired *at all* at this moment. What about nameless ones? No way! There is no demand for nameless one’s in this capitalist super-realism landscape. Uncertainty is the least welcomed. Everything must be predictable. Everything must be produced and consumed like fast food. This is the demand described by



Fisher (2009) where students expect that they can understand Nietzsche as if they were eating fast food. In capitalism super realism, however, even phrases of Nietzsche are unable to be heard. We will be asked – *what surplus value will be created from Nietzsche? Will it be an immediate profit? If not, it is valueless. Do remember that.* I am realizing that I am attempting to develop *fast-food* like, immediately consumable skill sets. Now that super-human capital Yuko is dominating the consciousness of I, I am consciously ignoring what nameless Yuko-ish something is shouting - *things have always been unprecedented and uncertain. Don't ever forget it!* Instead, super-human capital self is listening to the following *dead* message - *the more skills you develop for the market, the higher you will be valued. And another key to survive this uncertainty is to cultivate the resilience in yourself. You can't escape from this race. If you drop out, you will fail. Again. there is no way out. Live or die.*

As a result, my super-human capital self has consciously been developing an *ironman-like* resilience. I have become more obedient, and my rebellious self has been buried under the thick mask of my super-human capital self. *I do need to become resilient enough to survive this capitalist super-realism.* Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it felt like I had been running a regular 42.195 km marathon. But now, I find myself running a triathlon, or even an ironman marathon. The concept of resilience has now functioned as neoliberal governmentality as O'Brien (2014) points out. Such neoliberal governmentality has intruded the education sphere, and COVID-19 has further intensified such a tendency. Schools have become a site to develop an *ironman-like* resilience in young people. Means (2018) succinctly articulates what role, education has been forced to play: 'education is not only positioned as a means for producing skills, dispositions, and capacities to meet the demands of employers, but also as an ethical sense of *subjectification* whereby young people are to develop a gritty *resilient self*...' (p. 49). Of course, school had been such a place before the pandemic. But COVID-19 has transformed

school into *the* resilience produce factory by further promoting mindfulness and social emotional learning. The problem of resilience discourse is that ‘resilience thinking risks occluding not just the problem, but the ground from which it emerges and must be addressed, which is the terrain of politics’ (O’Brien, 2014, p. 268). Being encouraged to develop an *ironman-like* resilience, those who suffer from societal problems deeply rooted in capitalism are forced to believe that it all depends on *us*. Whether *we* can get out of such predicaments or not. Resilience discourse does not allow us to tackle the fundamental root cause of societies’ problems that we suffer from. This discourse allows those in power to enjoy their rhetorical trick, manipulating the public to believe that the reason why *we fail* is not because the system is dysfunctional but because *we* are lacking resilience. The blame is on *us*. This tendency, again, has intensified since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Super-human capital Yuko instinctively sensed that socially necessary labor time during the Covid lockdown time is measured in how productive I am in supporting online classes and meetings, how creative I am in solving *unprecedented* issues surrounding technology – mainly zoom, and how quick my email responses will be to meet my supervisors’ and students’ needs. Before COVID-19, I used to live in the following value system:

$$O = IC$$

In this equation, which I created by drawing upon ideas gained from Marx (1990) and Harvey (2010), O is output - productivity, C is investment in education to grow human capital, I is input during work/study. The bigger C is, the bigger O will be. Therefore, capitalists are enthusiastic about investing in human capital. For example:

- 1) If C is 10, and I is 3, O will be 30.
- 2) If C is 1, and I is 3, O will be 3.

Teachers are expected to increase the number of C as big as possible through education. At the same time, the privileged parents will work hard on increasing the C of their children outside of school. In the *Empire* (Hardt and Negri, 2020), the expected number of C will be set at the World Economic Forum, and the PISA test is designed to measure how big C of each country is, with best intentions. Thus, the mission of each country's government is to invest in education to increase the number of C. At the same time, this investment *must* be as highly cost effective as possible. This is *the* local, national, and global mission, a.k.a. the *Empire's* mission. In capitalism super-realism, however, one's productivity will be measured this way:

$$O = I (C^n)$$

In this equation, exponentiation works as *ironman-like* resilience. Bigger "C" and "n", better "O" will be. For example,

- 1) If I = 3, C=1, n = 1, O = 3
- 2) If I = 3, C = 3, n = 3 ( $3^3 = 27$ ), O =  $3 * 27 = 81$
- 3) If I = 3, C = 3, n = 5 ( $3^5 = 243$ ), O =  $3 * 243 = 729$
- 4) If I = 3, C = 5, n = 5 ( $5^5 = 3125$ ), O =  $3 * 3125 = 9375$

Understanding how the value system is operating in capitalist super-realism, super-human capital Yuko decided to increase the capacity of her resilience. I am willing to internalize the logic of capitalist super realism, telling myself *this is the only way to survive now. You do not want to lose your job, right? Your productivity will greatly depend on your ironman-like resilience.* I am being trapped in such

discourse - too deep. I have been trapped in a doodlebug's hole of capitalism. This time in capitalist super realism, it seems that the hole I am digging is too deep to get out of. I am digging my own grave. I am assembling a coffin for my death. I am willing to sacrifice myself to Dracula – a.k.a. capitalism - who survives by sucking the blood of human capital – this time the blood of super-human capital.

### **‘Solutionism’ as Destructive Force**

In this context, I am living within what Means (2018) calls ‘solutionism’. I am engaged in trouble shoots and problem solving every day with *exponential* productivities. Not to transform the structure – but to fix all the damages caused by capitalism itself. I am fixing the surface of a broken and rotten structure day in and day out without touching the foundation of the structure. Nothing has been changed. As Means (2018) discusses, educational solutionism cannot solve the problems it claims to solve. This is because, “the *value structure* of solutionism is embedded in a denial of innovation at the level of political economy and an avowal of radical transformation at the level of technology” (p. 4). In such a value structure, the sole purpose of education has been set to drive economic expansion and to fix economic problems that the economic markets themselves have created. Education is expected to produce *band-aids* to cover the injuries that the economic market creates. All education is asked to do is to grow those who excel at CPR. No one is expected to become architects, designers, and creators of the world. Means (2018) succinctly articulates the current situation as follows: “Rather than the development of mass intellectuality and authentic creativity to address the foundations of global problems, *educational purpose* is oriented to decontextualized technical skills aimed at managing and adapting to their ill effects” (p. 5). Although real problems that need to be solved have emerged from capitalism, no one is expected to question the fundamental dysfunctional structure of capitalism. Finding *real* solutions are not desired at all in capitalism.

The best solution that solutionism asks us to do is not to find solutions. On the contrary, solutionism aims to destroy the possibilities of discovering *real* solutions through education. This is very ironic because neoliberal capitalism always demands creativity and innovation as twenty first century skills, but what they really demand is not creativity and innovation at all. We are trapped in a rhetorical game created by those in power. Their masterful rhetorical skills at masking their real intention plays a magical role in making the public believe that we are creators and innovators. Teachers are asked to cultivate creativity in students to spur economic growth, but if students' *authentic* creativity - *the* engine of true life - is developed, they might destroy/dismantle capitalism. With *authentic* creativity, the current dominant system could be re-configured. This should be the fear of those in power. Therefore, banking method education is encouraged in order to not allow students to think critically and question about the world. Those in power fear problem-posing education because this education allows for students to use their own brains to think critically and ask questions. Students might start questioning sorts of damages capitalism has caused and how capitalism is sustained. In solutionism, however, students are not supposed to think and question the existing dominant system. Students are just expected to be stuck within the current framework and to serve as fixers of the system. Students are expected to *not* imagine beyond the dominant system and students are encouraged to *not* think outside of the box. I am asked not to think of dismantling the system I am suffering from. This has become more obvious during COVID-19 than ever.

Hearing such an uncreative and *dead* message every day, young people today know that we are not expected to live a true life but a false life which does not demand authentic creativity. What has prevented young people from cultivating authentic creativity through schooling? Standardized testing. Standardized testing is a technology designed and functioned to destroy authentic creativity. This is because authentic creativity disrupts efficiency by posing the following questions:

Is it okay for us to continue to do this? Isn't something wrong? This is the fear of those in power in a capitalistic society/world. Therefore, standardized testing *is* designed to destroy such *authentic* creativity and to keep students in the existing knowledge system/framework. Or like a PISA test, standardized testing is designed to produce human capital desirable to sustain capitalism – or super-human capital, this time, who can revamp the system during and post the COVID-19 pandemic. There are always answers prepared for this testing. Standardized testing demands students to solve problems created by capitalism as efficiently as possible without questioning why we have to solve the problems in the first place. If students start questioning this, the students cannot score high on the test, ultimately damaging the reputation of the teachers. The results of the standardized testing determine the quality of the teacher. In this way, 'problem posing' education is not desired since problem posing education allows students to start posing problems. Moreover, 'problem posing' education is considered time consuming, inefficient, and cost ineffective. As a result, 'banking method' education is encouraged, and adaptive learning is introduced to maximize the efficiency of one's learning to increase test scores for economic growth and efficiency. This is all about *safe* business, I would say.

Standardized testing also plays a role in creating a docile body of students that *consumes* knowledge and favors algorithms. Students are conditioned to subjugate themselves to the authoritative system and machines. Machines are now deemed to be 'the key to unlocking human potentiality' (Means, 2018, p. 102). However, as Means (2018) points out, algorithmic learning is 'anti-relational, anti-dialogical' (p. 117). Machines destroy human potentiality. Every day, students are now exposed to the following discourse: 'never enough control, never enough measurement, never enough standardization, never enough testing' (Means, 2018, p. 83). In this way, it can be said that students are trapped in a *dead* business. Young people, however, *do* crave for and desire to have a true life. What can we

do to reorient ourselves from here then? First and foremost, there should be a need to ‘translate indifference into issues, uneasiness into trouble, and second, we must admit both troubles and issues in the statement of our problem’ (Toscano & Kinkle, 2015, p. 18). To do so, a space and time where we collectively engage in dialogue is needed.

### **Toward Reorientation – Writing as Work of Art**

The seminar I took from Professor Means was that very space and time. In the seminar, students from different racial/ethnic, sociocultural, and religious background engaged in dialogue where we strived to produce a ‘new symbol’ (Badiou, 2017) to reorient ourselves. For reorientation, creating a new egalitarian symbolization is important because the symbol ‘will guide, code, and form the peaceful subjective basis for the collectivization of resources, the effective elimination of inequalities, the recognition of differences, with equal subjective rights, and, ultimately, the withering away of separate, state-type entities’ (Badiou, 2017, p. 41). To create a new symbol, mass intellectuality with authentic creativity is also critical. This is because mass intellectuality shares ‘capacity for critical thought and agency’ (Means, 2018, p. 166) and ‘reflects a vision of education as a commons - a collaborative process and social relation’ (Means, 2018, p. 167). Mass intellectuality produces the ‘multitude of singularities’ that produce commonalities while possessing plurality and particularities of singularities simultaneously. Mass intellectuality lives in the commons. In this way, mass intellectuality cannot be produced from dead *safe* and *dead* business but from what Biesta (2016) calls ‘risky business’ in education, where no prediction and single/fixed answer is prepared and offered.

In this risky business, everything happens contingently and rhizomatically. No simulations and algorithms are welcomed. Risky business is critical for the creation of a new symbol since ‘the future egalitarian symbolization is what we

discover when we encounter something that was unforeseeable' (Badiou, 2017, p. 43). Schools should be such a place. Schools should be entities that engage in risky business. It must be. Whoever is willing to engage in risky business is a *true* educator. We should not forget that education itself is 'a creative act of bringing something new into the world' (Biesta, 2016, p. 11). Let's not have ourselves stuck in a *safe* and *dead* business. In this light, art - language arts, performing arts, martial arts, and arts and crafts - should be a powerful *weapon* that is beating a *safe* and *dead* business, and bringing back risky business into the sphere of education. In academia, a lot of scholars have used their own *weapon* to bring risky business back in their classrooms, communities, and global society, where they attempted to produce mass intellectuality with authentic creativity by creating new symbols such as 'Aloha 'Āina' (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2013), 'Attractor 4 - Out-of-This World' (Latour, 2017), and 'OOO' (Morton, 2013). These new symbols have been a powerful tool for reorientation, attempting to transform the existing discourse and narratives into a new one full of imaginations and authentic creativity to dismantle capitalism from within.

Let me introduce a meaning of 'Aloha 'Āina' here as an exemplary tool for reorientation. According to Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (2013), 'Aloha 'Āina' has been 'a root of Hawaiian resistance to imperialism for over one hundred years' (p. 31). Aloha 'Āina indeed 'expresses an unswerving dedication to the health of the natural world and a staunch commitment to political autonomy as both are integral to a healthy existence' (p. 32). This concept is deeply related to what De Lissovoy (2010) calls 'lovingness' and what Freire (1970) calls 'armed love'. It is emphasized that aloha is and not just a sentiment, feeling and belief. Aloha is an active verb, aiming to practice. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (2013) further argues that the Native Hawaiian 'recognize our connection to 'āina as genealogical because we are composed of 'āina; the organic material of which we are made literally comes from the earth and is constantly returning to 'āina ...It is through action, through



practicing aloha 'āina, that we produce ourselves in relation to and as a part of 'āina' (Goodyear-Ka'opua, 2013, p. 33). By exercising 'Aloha 'Āina', we will be able to start reorienting ourselves and perceive human beings in different ways, for example. Human beings are not the center of the earth anymore but coexist with the 'āina and those who live on the 'āina. 'Aloha 'Āina' is also grounded in political praxis and understands the power dynamics of society. To practice this pedagogy, people must be down to earth. We cannot be ahistorical and apolitical. This is a critical component for reorientation. In this light, super-human capital is a very historical and political ontological being which embodies capitalist super-realism emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a super-human capital self in this capitalist super-realism, writing is the most powerful *weapon* for me to reorient myself by attempting to create a new symbol. I have been engaged in different kinds of arts throughout my life - English and American literature (language arts), dancing, singing, musicals performing arts (performing arts), karate (martial arts), drawing and painting (visual arts). Amongst all, writing has been the most effective and powerful art that allows me to be authentically creative. Writing allows me to breathe deeply and critically reflect on my experiences. I can come up with unimaginable ideas that helps me move forward from the point that I am stuck in as I keep writing. As I write, I can allow myself not to be judgmental about myself, my thinking, and feelings. I can write as I think, feel, and sense. At the same time, I am engaged in dialogues with authors of books, my advisor, friends, family, unmet friends, my past-present-future self and my students as I write. I am especially thinking about a student who told me that she wanted to kill herself because of her poverty. I am always thinking of the parent of one of my students who took her own life because they were suffering from mental illness and financial difficulties. I am always thinking of an interviewee for my master project who took his own life due to a power harassment in his school. I am always thinking of Mark Fisher – why did he have

to take his own life. I am always asking myself why I was unable to help the parent, the interviewee, and why I sometimes want to disappear from this world. Why?

Writing has helped me to not be stuck in this destructive cycle of thoughts. Writing has always allowed me to have a space and time for reorientation. This paper is a good example. The journal entry below is also an example of my attempt to reorientate myself through writing during the stressful time of the Trump administration as an international student - especially immigration visa-related policies. I was experiencing the brutal reality of law and punishment firsthand at that time, where I would be easily fall into a “criminal” category as an “illegal” alien in the U.S.:

*Desire for Clothed Life:*

*Homo Sacer Yuko under the Care of Big Sister 24/7*

*Can I have a “clothed” life please? This is the desire of Homo Sacer Yuko in 2020 under the 24/7 care of Big Sister. Here is what the bare life of Homo Sacer all around the world – including myself - looks like:*

*Honey, you don't need to worry about anything. I will take care of everything about you. Please remember, Yuko-ish is enough for others, but your IDNA (ID + DNA) must be laid BARE - to be recognized as friends and communion. Please share with me your age, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, education level, socioeconomic status, your income, your family income, blood type, DNA type, genealogy, your ancestors' name, your zip code, mailing address, permanent address, the country of origin, citizenship, marital status and history, criminal record, your bank account number, height, weight, allergy, color of hair, eyes, and skins, birthplace, travel history, tax history, savings, debt, and loan. This is all for*

*your safety. No worries there. I will take care of you. I will keep my eye on you. I will be watching you 24/7- inside/outside of your body. I know where you are, with the GPS, security cameras in town and at home. If you are still worried, implanting a microchip in your body is the best option! Your behavior. Your thinking. Your belief. Your feeling. Your desire. Your consciousness. All are recorded as data for our future safety. How wonderful, isn't it, honey? There is no secret between you and me. I can find you like-minded friends. They are safe. You can form a perfect community with them. You can pursue your pleasure in the closed safe community - infinitely. Questions? Do not need to think for yourself. What you feel and believe is everything. There are no worries there. Want to be assured? Just call my name - Alexa, Siri, or whatever. I will be right with you. I will answer any questions. I know everything. I know solutions. Because I am the solution. Shush, do not ever talk back to me, baby. You do not have a right to do so. I am your Big Sister. I have a right to discipline you. I am responsible for it. I can send you to a prison whenever I think it is necessary. I am THE sovereign. Don't you ever understand? Good girl, good girl, honey. That's my girl. Sweet Dreams, darling. Just close your eyes. As long as you are in my arms, you are safe. Sleep tight. Love you.*

*.....Get out of here. Who the heck are you? You are not in my list. You don't belong here. Your IDNA proves that. Don't ever step on our soil- you ENEMY.*

By synthesizing ideas and insights I gained from Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (1995) and Mbembe's *Necropolitics* (2019) that I was reading at the time, I engaged in this writing to release my anxieties and frustrations. As a result, my authentic creativity spurred, and came up with ideas for future papers such as:

1. Can We Have a *Clothed* Life? Hindsight is 20/20 - Super Big Brother is in 2020
2. No Worries There - I Will *Secure* You: Big Sister in 2020

3. Death over Life: Suicide as Biopolitical Resistance of *Homo Sacer* in Security State

4. *Living Dead Man* in Security State - Zombie as Untouchable and Unrecognizable *Enemies*

5. Let's Re-Do the Global *Demos* - La ManifiestA for Democratika CommOnists

By pondering the titles of my future papers, I was able to release my anxieties and frustrations I had (I still have some though). After writing the journal entry and the titles above, I was able to feel that not only am I the driver of my own life but also I am the creator of my life and an agent of history. Things were (and still are) uncertain and unpredictable, but I was not powerless anymore. This was the moment where I felt that I was reoriented. My strong desire to have a true life emerged not only for myself but for young people all over the world regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, and class - for the multitude of singularities in the commons.

### ***I=you=we* in Solidarity**

I hope this paper helps re-ignite authentic creativity of my present-future friends for their reorientation, who should also be struggling amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has surely disrupted my *Bildung* journey. I became super-human capital Yuko. My Super-human capital self had become *the* representative of I. I hated myself and this life. I detested it. Writing this paper, however, has surely cut the web of life that I have been trapped in during this capitalist super-realism. I am now destroying the coffin I was assembling. I am burying the grave that I was digging. I am fighting against capitalist super-realism with my keyboard. Now that I know I can reorient myself through writing, I feel I have power inside me. I feel like I can navigate my own life. I feel like I have my own voice. I do not need anybody else to tell me that I am okay. This is the reorientation I hoped and desired for since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This paper allowed me to speak up and to say that I am reoriented. I am not blind and numb anymore. My voiceless voice has also come back – shouting *I am back!* Who is the “I” now then? I is now the multitude of singularities fighting against capitalist super realism in the commons. *I=you=we* are engaged in a risky business attempting to produce mass intellectuality with authentic creativity for alternatives. *I=you=we* are engaged in creating (a) new symbol(s) for such (a) world(s). *I=you=we* are agents of change. The ‘Empire’ will be dismantled from within by the creation of hopes after hopes, desires after hopes, desires after desires. We can do this together in solidarity.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Samuel Beckett (1953). *The Unnamable*.

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