Glossary

Abduction Inference to a hypothesis: reasoning from a surprising fact to a conjecture that would explain or exploit it. Named by Charles Sanders Peirce, abduction is creative, experimental and *non-monotonic*; its conclusions can be overturned as new information arrives. Negarestani uses it to describe how the practical elaboration of "human" yields results its premises did not anticipate. *p. 9*

#Accelerate Manifesto Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams's 2013 "Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics," which argues that the left should repurpose technology, planning and complex organization rather than retreat into localism. Negarestani cites it as a Marxian project that is "updating its commitments." *p. 25*

Antihumanism The family of positions, from structuralism and post-structuralism to some strains of speculative realism, that deflate the significance of the human. On Negarestani's account antihumanism inherits a theological confusion of human *significance* with human *veneration*: in tearing down the glorified image of man it also gives up the real, functional content of being human. *p. 2*

Augmented rationality Negarestani's name for a rationality that sharpens, rather than softens, the gap between what *is* the case and what *ought* to be done. It is "augmented" as augmented reality is: not more real, but layered with demands that push agency toward new frontiers. *p. 30*

Automation of reason The claim that, because discursive practices can be decomposed into non-discursive ones, the abilities that make up reasoning can in principle be implemented elsewhere than in human beings. Negarestani treats this as the philosophical (not symbolic-AI) thesis of artificial general intelligence, and as the point where reason "disenchants thought" itself. *p. 28*

Autonomy of reason (functional autonomy) Reason is historical and social in its origins, yet its normative function can be assessed and revised only by reason itself. "Functional" marks that the autonomy concerns what reason does (its inferential and revisionary role), not a claim that reason arose spontaneously or stands outside nature. *p. 11*

Bootstrapping Building complex abilities out of simpler ones, so that each level of competence becomes the platform for the next. Negarestani borrows the idea from Brandom's account of how one set of practices can be elaborated from another. *p. 27*

Collateral commitments The further commitments one takes on, often unknowingly, by undertaking a given commitment. Following them through is what Negarestani calls navigating the "rational system of commitments." *p. 4*

Commitment In Brandom's normative pragmatics, the status one undertakes by asserting or acting: a responsibility to defend, act on, and accept the consequences of a claim. A commitment has *pragmatic content* (meaning through use) and ramifies into further commitments. Negarestani reads humanism as a commitment of this kind. *p. 1*

Conservative humanism A humanism that fixes the meaning of the human in a given nature, origin or tradition and requires every new prescription to preserve it. Negarestani pairs it with antihumanism as "two pathologies of history." *p. 20*

Consumption and production of norms Assessing norms (consumption) and creating new ones (production). Negarestani argues that the two cannot be separated: one cannot assess norms without producing them, and a critique that only consumes norms becomes "norm consumerism." *p. 10*

Critical reflexes Peter Wolfendale's phrase for prepackaged theoretical objections ("who decides?", "control," "authoritarianism") used to cut off argument in the name of critique. *p. 13*

Deontic ordeal Negarestani's term for the interactive testing of commitments in Jean-Yves Girard's ludics, where a proof is examined through its encounters with opposing moves rather than by an external referee. *p. 14*

Deontic scorekeeping Brandom's model of conversation in which each participant keeps track of the commitments and entitlements that the others have undertaken, and updates that "score" as claims are made. *p. 14*

Discursive practices Practices of using concepts: asserting, inferring, justifying, challenging. For Negarestani the capacity to engage in them is what functionally separates sapience from sentience. *p. 6*

Disenchantment Max Weber's term for the modern process by which the world is explained without appeal to spirits, purposes or mysteries. Negarestani extends it: thought disenchants nature, but only the automation of discursive practices disenchants thought. *p. 2*

Engineering epistemology William Wimsatt's view of knowledge as the practical, heuristic understanding needed to intervene in complex systems across their levels. Negarestani makes it the model for any politics that would change a system rather than merely denounce it. *p. 32*

Entitlement In Brandom's scorekeeping, the standing to make a claim or take an action, earned by reasons. Commitments and entitlements together make up one's "normative status." *p. 3*

"Fraught with oughts" Wilfrid Sellars's phrase, taken up by Brandom, for the normative character of concept use: to apply a concept is to bind oneself to rules for its use. Negarestani quotes it to show that even describing the human is already a prescriptive project. *p. 4*

Game of giving and asking for reasons Wilfrid Sellars's and Robert Brandom's image of language use as a rule-governed practice of offering reasons and demanding them from others. Negarestani stresses that it is a game played without a referee and tolerant of error. *p. 6*

Inhumanism The essay's central term: humanism pursued to its full consequences. To commit to being human is to commit to reason, and reason keeps revising what "human" means, until the self-portrait of man is erased like a face drawn in sand. Inhumanism is not anti-human; it is the labor that commitment to humanity demands. *p. 1*

Intervening attitude A stance toward norms that both assesses them and constructs new ones. It is the attitude of the engineer rather than the spectator, and the precondition for revising what it means to be human. *p. 3*

Is and ought The distinction, going back to Hume, between descriptive facts about what is the case and normative claims about what ought to be done. For Negarestani, natural laws bind by causal necessity, whereas norms bind only when acknowledged, which makes them revisable. "Description without prescription is the germ of resignation, and prescription without description is whim." *p. 9*

Kitsch Marxism Negarestani's polemical name for a contemporary critical theory that has given up constructing anything and survives on "militant negativity" and critical reflexes. He distinguishes it from Marxism as such and from class struggle, which he calls an indispensable historical project. *p. 11*

Knowing-how and knowing-that Gilbert Ryle's distinction between practical ability and propositional knowledge. Pragmatic functionalism decomposes explicit knowing-that into implicit knowing-how. *p. 28*

Manifest and scientific images Sellars's names for two pictures of "man-in-the-world": the everyday image of persons with intentions, and the image built by the sciences. Sellars asked philosophy to fuse them into one "stereoscopic" view. *p. 33*

Manipulation conditional A conditional that says what a system would do if one of its variables were intervened upon ("if x were manipulated under parameters W, it would behave as y"). From James Woodward's interventionist account of causation. *p. 32*

Near-decomposability Herbert Simon's term for systems whose parts interact strongly within modules and weakly between them, so they can be analyzed and rebuilt piece by piece. *p. 27*

Nested hierarchies The layered organization of complex systems, in which structures and functions at one level depend on and constrain those at others. Negarestani argues that any political project must work across these levels. *p. 32*

Non-monotonic inference Reasoning in which adding a premise can defeat a conclusion previously drawn. Deductive logic is monotonic; practical, defeasible and abductive reasoning is not. *p. 9*

Pancomputationalism The thesis that every physical system computes, or can implement every computation. Negarestani names it as one of the myths that unrestricted functionalism risks. *p. 27*

Pragmatic (rationalist) functionalism The view that the mind is defined by what it does in discursive practice, and that these doings can be decomposed into simpler practices. It is distinct from classical symbolic AI and from behaviorism, and is opposed to vitalism. *p. 27*

Regress argument Wittgenstein's argument that if every rule-following required an explicit rule for applying the rule, an infinite regress would follow; so norms must ultimately be implicit in practice. *p. 27*

Revisionary catastrophe Negarestani's image of a commitment that works "backward from the future": its ramifications return to overturn the assumptions that started it, erasing the canonical portrait of the human. *p. 22*

Sapience and sentience Sentience is the biological capacity to feel and respond to stimuli; sapience is the capacity to take part in the space of reasons, acknowledging rules rather than merely being governed by them. Negarestani calls the relation between them "a continuum that is not differentiable everywhere": the difference is functional, not a difference of substance. *p. 5*

Space of reasons Sellars's phrase for the domain of justification, where states are placed by their role in giving and asking for reasons rather than by their causes. *p. 7*

Vitalism and ineffabilism The belief that life or thought harbors some essential ingredient that can be neither constructed nor explained. Negarestani warns that rejecting functionalism outright leads straight to it. *p. 27*