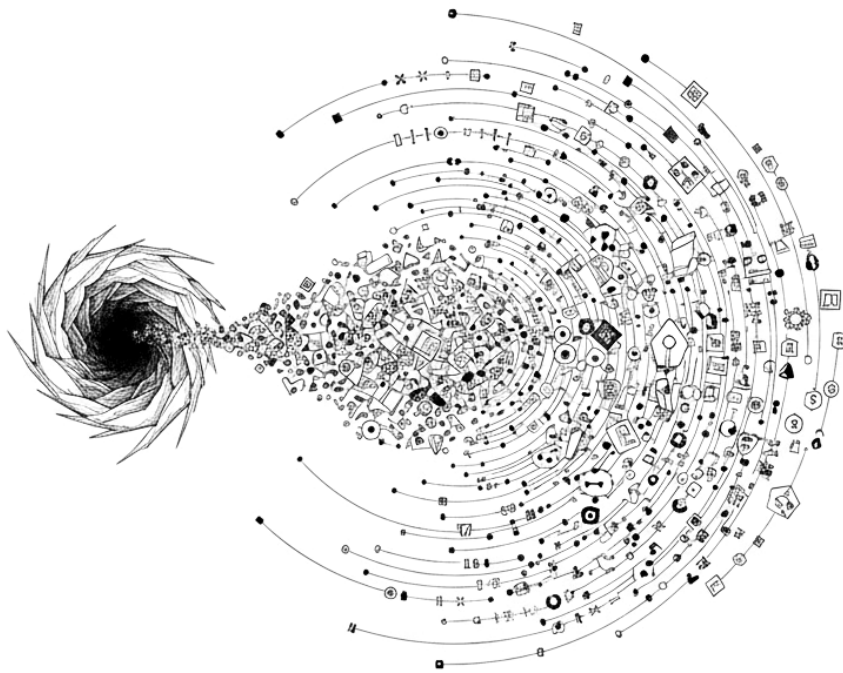


# HYPERSTITION

—In the beginning there was only the future—



The concept of **hyperstition** was coined in the late 1990s by Nick Land and the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU) to describe *fictions that make themselves real*. In the original formulation, hyperstitions are ideas, narratives, or cultural artefacts that —by virtue of being believed and acted upon— generate the very conditions for their own realization.

We build on this foundation but reframe the concept of hyperstition as a *deliberate methodology for envisioning and enacting radical futures*.

We list below different phenomena, each associated with a specific type of (retro)causality. While the first two share some similarities with superstition, they significantly differ from it on important aspects.

### **Superstition: the present foreshadows the future**

Superstition operates on the basis that present events mechanically foreshadows our future: e.g. if a black cat crosses our path, misfortune follows. The arrow of causality points forward, from present to future. with a passive orientation towards a future created by forces we cannot control. The causal mechanism is opaque and external: a symbolic event is believed to cause an outcome through unseen forces that we cannot control—thereby leaving the believer with a passive orientation towards the future.

However, superstition also entails a degree of retro-causality because it shapes present action through anticipation of what is believed to be coming in the future: as soon as a sign is interpreted as predictive of a particular future, it necessarily leads to a change in behavior.

### **Self-fulfilling Prophecy: Our vision of the future shapes it**

The self-fulfilling prophecy operates under the basis that a vision of the future shapes the future itself — albeit often unconsciously. The classic formulation comes from Robert K. Merton, who described it as a false (i.e. non-substantiated) conceptualisation of a future situation that evokes behaviour which makes the original conception come true. It is often said that those who expect failure create the conditions for their own defeat, whereas those who foresee victory create the condition for success. The attitude we hold towards a self-fulfilling prophecy is simultaneously active (we engineer our future) and passive (we are victims of our own projections). Causality loops back through us, but we are trapped inside a loop.

The causal mechanism of a self-fulfilling prophecy is inherently reflexive: a belief modifies action, action modifies reality, reality confirms the original belief. No external force is required: the causality runs through observable feedback loops at the psychological layer.

But self-fulfilling prophecies are not limited to individual psychology; they might also have systemic effects. For instance, a bank run is a collective self-fulfilling prophecy: if depositors believe a bank will fail, they will all withdraw their funds from the bank at the same time, thereby creating a liquidity crisis that makes the failure real. These systemic self-reinforcing loops are the reason why central banks often treat inflation expectations as a policy instrument.

## **Hyperstition: The future pulls the present towards itself**

Hyperstition inverts the causal arrow, claiming that vision from the future can actively reshape the present. This is not prophecy or prediction; it is the deliberate construction of a future so vivid and compelling that it exerts a gravitational pull on present-day actions, resources, and imagination. The attitude is active: we create our destiny by imagining it, and then working backward from that vision to determine what must happen today.

The retro-causality mechanism of hyperstition can be described as “distributed reflexive causation”. Whereas a self-fulfilling prophecy typically operates within a localized feedback loop (i.e. a belief that modifies behaviour within a given system), a hyperstition operates as a memetic engine that influences and often transforms the system in which it operates: narratives have the ability to reproduce across a variety of media, potentially recruiting agents, attracting capital, and shaping institutions with a view to progressively materialize themselves into the world. Thus, a hyperstition goes beyond modifying behaviours in a particular context; it reprograms the context in which behaviours arise. Once a narrative gets encoded into media, markets, or technical systems, the hyperstition becomes structurally embedded, and no longer depends on any single person believing it.

## Comparing causal mechanisms

These three phenomena reveal a gradient of causal complexity:

- **Superstition** posits (unsubstantiated) *external causality*: the future manifests itself through hidden forces which we cannot control.
- The **self-fulfilling prophecy** posits *reflexive causation*: our beliefs act on the world by influencing our behaviour, which ultimately confirm our beliefs.
- **Hyperstition** posits *distributed reflexive causation*: narratives act on the world through networks of agents, reframing institutions and infrastructures to progressively materialise the reality they describe.

Both hyperstitions and self-fulfilling prophecies rely on the same reflexive feedback loop. Operationally, there is no categorical distinction between them: both operate through retro-causality, in which a representation of the future reshapes the present. The primary distinction is therefore one *of scope* rather than *type*.

While a self-fulfilling prophecy operates within a particular context (i.e. it explains how a prediction can produce its own fulfillment within an existing structure), hyperstition treats narrative as a design instrument that modify the context in which it operates, building new structures, new markets, and even new societies. One could say that every hyperstition is—at minimum—a self-fulfilling prophecy, but not every self-fulfilling prophecy qualifies as a hyperstition. The distinction lies in the scope and the structural impact from which retro-causality operates.

Besides, self-fulfilling prophecies tend to point toward a future event or outcome that can be easily described and recognized (e.g. “I will fail this exam” or “banks will be liquidated”). However, once the outcome materializes, the prophecy has served its purpose and the feedback loop comes to an end—the narrative exhausts itself in the act of fulfillment.

A hyperstition acts more like a compass that pulls the present toward a general direction, even if the ultimate destination has not been fully defined yet, because it is still in the making. In other words, while a self-fulfilling prophecy collapses upon fulfilment, a hyperstition does not exhaust itself when it materializes. On the contrary, the hyperstition reifies, becoming the foundation upon which new narratives, institutions, and possibilities are built.

## Methodology: Deduction vs Abduction

Conventional planning works chronologically from today towards tomorrow (deductive logic). Hyperstition provides a radically different method which begins from the future and tries to identify the most plausible explanation for it (abductive logic). Specifically, a hyperstition comes into being through three complementary dynamics:

**Forward leap:** Crafting a vision from the future that is powerful enough to restructure present assumptions. This vision does not derive from a linear extrapolation of present trends, nor is it deduced or induced from observed patterns: it emerges from radical imagination unconstrained by present limitations and free from any path dependencies.

**Backward pull:** Once the vision exists, it manifests itself into the present, as the very existence of an idea generates the activity and resources that bring it into being. The future reaches back to reshape the present, pulling the present toward itself, influencing the actions and decisions that must be taken now as incremental steps to manifest the envisioned future.

First, the narrative gets externalized into semantic artefacts that circulate independently of any individual mind. This enables it to be more easily disseminated, spreading among networks of people, who begin to act as if it were plausible, thereby contributing to further confirming its plausibility (self-fulfilling prophecy).

Then, once institutions form around the idea, capital is allocated, and technologies are built to prototype it, the narrative enters a state of *structural lock-in*. Individuals get automatically socialized into this narrative, even if they did not originate it; they simply inherit it as part of their environment. The present has been engineered to confirm it.

**Abduction (or retrostition):** Hyperstitions are stories that pull themselves into existence by creating the past conditions that justify their future manifestation. This is generally achieved by reinterpreting the past (or the present) in ways that legitimize and retroactively explain a particular instantiation of the future.

Retrostition uses abductive reasoning directed backward in time; it reinterprets historical events, customs and traditions as precursors to a particular future. This is not falsification of history, but a creative act of narrative reconstruction: finding in the past the seeds that make the envisioned future inevitable.

The hyperstition is thus a retro-causal loop that projects a particular narrative of the future (forward leap), anchoring it into the present (via backward pull), and then reinterprets the past to this envisioned future (retrostition), thereby creating a coherent narrative arc that spans from history through the present to a radically new tomorrow.

## **Hyperstition as a deliberate act**

Hyperstition is a form of magic: it is an incantation that has a performative effect in the world, in that it is capable of bringing about a future that would not be conceivable from a purely deductive logic. It uses the force of narrative, collective belief, and coordinated action to shift the boundary between what is and what could be.

This is where our conceptualisation of hyperstition differs from Nick Land's original conceptualisation. For Land, hyperstition is essentially a way of recognizing fictions that are already in the process of making themselves real. According to Land, hyperstitions are discovered rather than designed; they are impersonal forces (like capital flows, technological evolution, cultural mutations, etc) that operate autonomously, pulling reality toward specific outcomes regardless of human intention. The posture is ultimately one of recognition and/or surrender. When people identify hyperstitions already at work in the world, they can choose to align themselves with their momentum, or they might be swept aside by them.

We reclaim hyperstition as a tool of collective agency. Rather than simply observing the fictions that are making themselves real, we deliberately craft the fictions that ought to become real, engineering the retro-causal loop that brings them into being. This is achieved through a collective effort, bringing people together that share similar values, to conceive and design the narratives and visions of the future that will eventually instrumentalise us to help them come into being. Hence, it is not the future that imposes itself upon us, it is us, as a collective, who empower ourselves by constructing compelling narratives that connect past, present, and future in new configurations.

For us, "hyperstitioning" is both a creative and political act. The hyperstition retroactively reshapes the interpretation of the past (through retrostition), restructures the priorities of the present (through backward pull), and thereby opens a pathway toward a future that did not previously exist in the space of possibilities.

While Land sees the hyperstition an accelerating dynamic that can either be accepted or fought, we see the hyperstition as a magic spell to be articulated deliberately: an act of collective will, associated with the intentional activation of the retro-causality loop by which imagined futures acquire the power to reshape the present and rewrite the past.

## **The Extitution is the Hyperstition engine**

Hyperstition does not emerge in a vacuum, it requires a community of people capable of sustaining it and manifesting it into reality. This is where the *extitution* comes in.

Institutions are closed and bounded structures defined by fixed rules, roles, and hierarchies. They are grounded on existing laws, precedents, and mandates, and they are designed to preserve and reproduce the status quo—which makes them structurally resistant to radical change or imagination.

Conversely, extitutions are open and permeable communities of people who share similar values and engage in collective action without being bound by a single formal structure. They are coordinated by shared narratives, mutual commitments, and common purpose rather than by formal authority.

The open and networked structure of extitutions makes them specifically suited to sustain the retro-causal loop of a hyperstition. By bringing together people with diverse skills, perspectives, and forms of agency — each contributing a different piece to the collective vision — extitutions represent the foundational substrate through which hyperstitions are both conceived and activated. Indeed, extitutions can simultaneously operate on all of the three temporal dynamics that hyperstition requires: crafting the *forward leap* (i.e. articulating the radical vision of the future), performing the *backward pull* (i.e. restructuring the present action around that vision), and *constructing the retrostition* (i.e. reinterpreting the past to justify the future instantiation of the hyperstition). No single individual can unilaterally activate the retro-causal loop necessary for the hyperstition to come into being; it is the collaborative nature of the extitution that gives the hyperstition its ability to exist.