

W LIENIST



USES FOR A DEAD
POLITICS

THE ANTHROPOCENE IS CAPITALISM'S "HUMAN HYPOTHESIS"

Between the Anthropocene & the approaching Technological Singularity a stark predicament comes into view: that those cultural formations so far modelled on "Western democracy" are unable on their own to produce the social, political & economic transformations necessary to survive the conditions likely to prevail in the coming century.

It's virtually impossible (despite every effort in the media to do so) to evade the awareness that we inhabit an era whose commodified politics is completely at odds both with the global consequences of its actions & with the alternative possibilities opened up by a counter-tradition of *experimentation* in art & technology. So-called progress has come at the price of the renunciation of any mode of experimentation that doesn't immediately consolidate those socially-engineered forms of the Corporate-State Apparatus into which modernity has congealed.

Yet we know a different End-of-the-World is possible to the one prepared for us by the Corporate-State.

REALISM IS INFORMATION WITH NO OTHER PURPOSE THAN TO SIGNIFY "REALITY" WHERE NONE EXISTS

The period from 1989 until the turn of the millennium produced what was represented as a drastic decline in revolutionary thought – which is to say, the practical critique of political economy. This was attributed to a lack of possibilities for theoretical renewal & the apparent exhaustion & corruption of revolutionary principles encapsulated in the Soviet Union's collapse & the "triumph" of neoliberal mysticism. Yet the end of Cold War merely prefigured the return of a more insidious commodified false consciousness under the mantle of the New World Order.

For over half-a-century, market ideology has renounced "a strict hierarchy of factitious values" & openly advanced an appeal to irrationalism. The irrationalism of a neo-liberal *perpetuum mobile*: unlimited market expansion, unending consumption, inexhaustible profit potential, the autonomous power of the Free Market. From its position of serene omnipotence, Capital caused to trickle-down to the "masses" a subtle defeatism that still insists, after decades of neoliberal asset-stripping, that the "Free World" no longer has a taste for politics – as if in answer to a collective wish that the Free Market might finally have lost its taste for profit.

Yet it is precisely a measure of politics' potential to signify the contrary that its devaluation has been taken to ever-lower depths in the avowal of the "Free World's" diminished interest. For it is the greatest accomplishment of Power to have perfected the art of the *fait accompli*, whose repudiation would thus also represent the greatest threat to it. History teaches that such a "point of view" is an illness, for which there's no cure that isn't more dangerous than it is.

POLITICS OF THE UNPRESENTABLE

"Silence," wrote Juan Goytisolo, "has been, is, & will be the greatest accomplice of the abuses & crimes of dictatorships." Not because repudiation is impossible, or simply dangerous, or merely difficult. But because "society" allows itself to be persuaded that – like everything else supernumerary to this freest of all possible Free Worlds – it has run its course, served its purpose, expended its reason for being. Having "abolished" class struggle, successive generations of Thatcherjugend have taken every opportunity to instruct society that it DOES NOT EXIST.

That democratic systems, in their present throws of decadence, have with a disturbing sense of inevitability tended towards Ubu-esque convulsions of totalitarian grotesk is a "truth universally acknowledged." Yet this truth remains held in check by a soporific counter-belief that, in democracy, everything "balances out in the end." The "end," however, is a stingy paymaster.

This deluded belief in a homeostatic system of self-regulation in which the "balance" of the Free World consists, doesn't derive from any historical indifference towards politics on the part of the "masses," but from a systemically inculcated fatalism that politics itself is *a matter of indifference*. Yet at the same time, whenever the impetus for violence arises in the face of such an overwhelming "indifference" (at the moment it is finally unmasked as an *ideologically control force*), barely has it acquired a popular form than it is co-opted by the system itself, which – at the slightest disturbance to its "democratic" rites – flies from the cultivation of ennui to a rabid nihilism.

Thus are the "forces of progress" always prepared to volunteer "the conquest of freedom & justice" in a great act of self-sacrifice.

UNDER WHAT GUISE DOES POWER RE-EMERGE FROM THE THEATRE OF ITS NEGATION, IF NOT AS NEGATION ITSELF?

The Doomsday Clock may read 2-minutes-to-midnight, but in reality time has run out. The option of gaining greater knowledge, of "re-educating," is no longer on the proverbial table. The Anthropocene has brought into view, in its naked political reality, the fact that a complacent belief in a "geological timescale" with no bearing on human affairs is critically, catastrophically false.

The Anthropocene is not simply an abstraction reified as the latest "concrete situation" in an ongoing rhetoric of crisis. It is the critical mass of the entire history of colonist-corporate violence imploding upon the so-called "real" of the Free Market Consumer Paradise – taking the rest of the world with it. It is the ultimate China Syndrome. There is no poetic justice in this picture.

To speak of alternatives, therefore, isn't about "building a consensus" to change course, or to change the stakes. Nor is it about "opposition," which merely restores the very logic it presumes to contest. It is about planning & undertaking the effective NEUTRALISATION of a World Order whose apocalyptic mission is to go down with the spaceship.

There is no point whatsoever appealing to the Corporate-State with sentimental morality. The Anthropocene is to the evangelists of neoliberalism what Manifest Destiny was to the Yanqui founding fathers. The simple fact is, for the Powers-That-Be, the world is a zero sum game.

A PSYCHOSIS OF AESTHETIC GRATIFICATION

Meanwhile, with blithe unconcern, techno-mystics & academic Marxists alike instruct us that so-called liberal democracy will collapse, not through the revolutionary struggle of the masses, but as the consequence of a corporate-technological dynamic which has emptied itself of any substance. That is to say, into the form of it's own ideal commodification.

Yet it is precisely in the form of the commodity that the Corporate-State Apparatus is able to go on adapting to any contingency & incorporating every negation, since it itself is nothing but a signifier of it's own seemingly unlimited expropriative capacity. In doing so, it holds up a mirror to the political domain, in which the "consciousness of the masses" is reflected as hollow shell, echoing with its own sound & fury, etc.

The power of a mere reflection to produce the reality it supposedly represents, is the political lesson consumerism has drawn from Mao's "mass line" ("from the masses, to the masses").

Mao: "Take the ideas of the masses (scattered & unsystematic ideas) & concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated & systematic ideas), then go to the masses & propagate & explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own."

The emancipatory promise of transcendental post-capitalism is no different from this. In realising the mass line's potential for expanded production of Corporate-State power, via the enchantment of a seemingly endless line of credit, the commodity transforms itself into the true medium of the *political*. Thus the spectre of an interminably conjured "to come" leads through the mirror-maze of subjective emancipation to an ideal self-validating hyperconsumption: the pathological *desirability* of the Anthropocene.

"ONE LAW FOR THE LION & OX IS OPPRESSION"

The anointed philanthropists of post-capitalism, with all the unctuousness of hand-wringing priests, inquire after the spiritual & mental health of those who've fallen prey to the idea that "material well-being & progress can be disassociated from the conquest of freedom & justice."

Nevertheless, it is impossible to address the question of the Anthropocene without first addressing the legacy of a market ideology that presumes a status equal in effect to that of a "natural order." The eliding of the "world" with the *thought of the Anthropocene* is inherent to the very logic of the marketplace, not a crisis that has befallen it or a deviation from a correct path. The Anthropocene is *bound* to a logic of capital's *immanence*, as both self-evident & as that *which cannot be held to account*. This asymmetry is its very premise & the very reason why the so-called free market has no investment whatsoever in fundamentally redressing the "crisis" of the Anthropocene, which it views as a "natural" evolutionary process & which it is incapable of not perpetuating.

Thus is the valuation of the "world," like every other commodity, subordinated to the market. And thus, too, the freedom of the market produces greater & greater levels of material inequality. This gives the lie to the meretricious dogma of "first among equals," as much as to the self-advancing rhetoric of "one world."

That the idea of freedom has degenerated into mere advocacy for free enterprise, is no revelation. Nor that, while resisting the regulation of its own interests, the market should seek to constrain those upon whom its free operations depend. Yet to accede to the idea that "value is fixed by whatever price is realized in the market," is equivalent to abetting the market in dictating the terms of economic bondage for those over whom it asserts power, while refusing collective responsibility for the *execution* of that power.

In this, the market is permitted to behave as if it is a natural law, on the pretence that the struggle of the marketplace is (natural) evolutionary struggle, & that nature (by definition) is unaccountable. Yet where in nature unaccountability is symbiotic with disinterestedness, no such relation obtains in the marketplace. Under conditions of Corporate-Statism, there is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals.*

* For example, the often-mooted 10% flat tax, which for a subsistence wage-earner has a qualitatively far greater impact than a tithe on corporate profits. Yet even this version of *égalité* would represent a kind of utopia in an "advanced liberal society" like France, where – in a climate of continuing austerity overseen by the former Rothschilds investment banker Macron – those lowest on the economic rung are expected to bear the burden of the Corporate-State's climate catastrophe through *additional taxation* (a so-called "eco-tax") while those at the top of the ladder receive ever-greater "tax-relief" (including the scrapping of the "Solidarity Tax" on wealth & a flat rate on capital gains). In a farcical repetition of Reaganomic "trickle down" mystification, it's still only the poorest "polluters" who pay, not those who profit from pollution, who instead are rewarded "in order to stimulate the economy." The corporations, meanwhile, indulge in public relations stunts like concocting a "global task-force" to "combat" the toxic waste they themselves continue to produce on an expanding scale (the so-called "Alliance to End Plastic Waste," which includes ExxonMobil, Saudi state oil, Dow Chemical, Proctor&Gamble...).

COLLECTIVE CEREMONIES OF ABNEGATION?

To Ricardo's "iron-clad laws," then, we must add the inevitable passage from liberal democracy to fascism, as the teleological counterpart to that inflated Marxian projection (a marginal note magnified into a pillar of truth) of capital's ultimate self-supersession in the service of a transcendental apocalypticism. Yet, as with all dystopian futures, this too already exists, as that sadomasochistic spectacle of Corporate-State autoeroticism called the Anthropocene. This parody of a social contract goes a long way to explaining how apparently localised *economic* protests have "spontaneously" transformed itself into a global *political* movement on a scale unseen since Mai '68. For those who demand a critical theory to fit the "facts" & not vice versa, the "facts" have been laid bare. There's no concealing the *telos* of this fissile econosphere or passing the countdown routine off as a rogue operation in arithmetic. In an age of robotics & AI, it is no longer possible to separate a "labour theory of value" from politics as such. Between surplus & obsolescence, the one is constantly being recuperated in the production of the other, under the false appearance of a "subjectivity" capable of perpetuating itself even "in a world from which all life has vanished." Extinction, therefore, must not be confused with a mere status of environmental habitat, since – in its most radical (& increasingly imminent) formulation – it defines the *condition* of a future defined as techno-capital singularity.

ONLY THE IMPOSSIBLE HAS NOTHING TO LOSE

"As we drift past the tipping point," says Stiegler, "the Anthropocene discloses itself as a dead-end trap..." But the Anthropocene isn't simply a trap, it's the mansion with many rooms the god of Capital promised all along! It is the prize of a collective Will-to-Alienation that stuffs itself on the exorbitant plastic fruit of a Faustian contract whose enforcers are meanwhile kicking the door down.

In a world still solemnly possessed by the most absurd beliefs & false enlightenments, the "omniscient narrative" of the Anthropocene cannot even claim the allure of tautology. Its causalities have from the very outset been despairingly obvious & of an Eichmannesque banality. The trick was merely to seduce the people into hating themselves more than they hate their oppressors – synchronising that self-hate with the nihilism of an industrial juggernaut centred entirely within itself.

Haunted by the spectre of its dead futures, what superstition wouldn't seize the opportunity to proffer all the comforts of the Next World before the onerous task of averting the end of this one? An end which it itself has so assiduously cultivated.

And if in such impoverished "cultures" the poorest means of expression are inevitably those left to the greatest number, then it is equally true that these are also the more easily turned to the work of apocalyptic reason – since their only register runs directly from the barest minimum to the all-in: from a lit match to a conflagration: from nothing to everything.

ART ISN'T THE MEANS OF EMANCIPATION, BUT THE PRODUCT OF AN EMANCIPATIVE STRUGGLE

Every expiation requires a sacrifice, but the first sacrifice must be of the dangerous superstitions themselves. Yet culture's like a scapegoat that only wants to die prettily.

It is a measure of its pathological condition, that a culture so impoverished is willing to believe the most flagrant lies about itself. In this we must conclude that "the society of the spectacle" is no less "the showtrial of society." Even its eruptions into protest assume the form of a self-impeachment. No sooner does it smash its imaginary idols than it hysterically rebuilds them – in an ever more elaborate & paradoxical ritual of self-abasement. Such are the funeral re-enactments of a dead politics whose spectre has never been laid to rest, cleverly caused to haunt the collective "guilty conscience."

What distinguishes the Corporate-State from those forms of totalitarianism that preceded it, is precisely this. For it's enough that a spectre be *sufficiently* believable to a culture *desirous of belief*, yet a culture that is itself of *insufficient means to satisfy its desires*. It's enough, in other words, for this spectre to subsist from hand-to-mouth. Not for eternity, nor even a thousand years. But from one moment to the next. One compromise to the next. One submission to the next. One distracted desperation to the next. All constellated into an infinite relay.

This frisson of precarious beliefs is the *non plus ultra* of an ideology that lays flowers on its own grave, while preparing of its mausoleum a veritable doomsday box. It is the highest form of a culture that perceives itself only in hologram. A fractured image reflecting itself in perpetuity. The holy cybernated corpse. The one true god of the Anthropocene.

The task of *art* is not to come to praise it in its house, but to bury it once & for all.

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