

**SOLUTION 275-294**

Communists Anonymous understands the historical incarnations of communism as substantially incomplete in thought and practice, and places communism where it originated—in the realm of fiction. Only as fiction can communism manifest itself again beyond doubt.

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**INGO NIERMANN AND JOSHUA SIMON (EDS.)**



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**INGO NIERMANN AND JOSHUA SIMON (EDS.)**

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# Communists Anonymous

The members of Communists Anonymous (COMA) suffer from an incurable belief in communism. They don't share any particular school, but they do share an extreme sense of empathy and justice, and therefore detest more or less any form of private property. Because there is currently no communist state in existence, acting out their passion would hopelessly distress them, at best curbing and stabilizing the brutalities of capitalist society. Members of COMA restrain themselves from any effort to overcome capitalism before there is a new convincing model at hand of how to actually implement communism.

COMA began in Tel Aviv on April 5, 2017. The clandestine first meeting was organized by Joshua Simon, coeditor of this volume. COMA is meant to evolve into a worldwide cluster of self-help groups where incurable communists can discuss their recent temptations and relapses in the futile fight against capitalism. Unlike Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), COMA doesn't denounce the object of its obsession but insists on it without compromise. Anonymity is supposed to protect its members when they expose their misconducts and sufferings, not their communist identity. Communism has stopped being a threat to capitalist society; secret plotting has become pointless.

While COMA's partner organization Capitalists Anonymous (CA) follows the simple concept of taking AA's Twelve Steps and replacing "drink" with "greed for profit," "alcoholism" with "capitalism,"

## COMMUNISTS ANONYMOUS

“alcoholic” with “capitalist,” and “God” with “Communism,” the “Power greater than ourselves” under which the members of COMA subordinate themselves is the same as the cause of their suffering: their belief in communism. While for CA communism as such is already a challenging concept, COMA’s “fearless moral inventory” challenges the historical manifestations of communism as being substantially incomplete in thought and practice and places communism again where it originates—in the realm of fiction.

COMA recalls that a novel, Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), delivers the first recorded scenario of a communist society. It’s not even clear if More sympathized with the abolishment of private property or if *Utopia* was meant to be a satire. Three hundred years later, communism still being a utopia, two excellent political journalists—Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels—tried to turn the prospects of communist salvation into a science. They did so by identifying the foundational principle of human history in a figure of speech: dialectics. However, another novel, *What Is to Be Done?* (1863) by Nikolay Chernyshevsky, was needed to inspire Leninism and the Russian Revolution. Later on, Mao phrased his take on communism with poetic allegories.

At first sight, communism and state socialism’s deep roots in fiction support current common sense that communism is a naive fantasy and that trying to make this fantasy a reality can bear tragic results. But then again, which current political ideology hasn’t been conceived in fiction? With fascism it’s the novels and performances of Gabriele D’Annunzio;

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with neoliberalism it’s the novels of Ayn Rand and the presidential performance of Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan; with Silicon Valley’s tech-libertarianism it’s the golden age of science fiction and later cyberpunk; and with populism it’s the scripts and improvisations of reality television.



The first gathering of Communists Anonymous, attended by Tsafir Cohen, Ivonne Dippman, Nimrod Flashenberg, Tal Giladi, Igal Halfin, Moyu Honda, Yitzhak Laor, Yosef Laor, Nisreen Morqus, Ingo Niermann, Anna Pacosz, Joshua Simon, Noa Tsaushu, Eilam Wolman, Alina Yakirevich, and Noam Yuran. Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, April 6, 2017. Photo by Ingo Niermann.

COMA believes that the most vital dialectics in human history are at play in fiction contradicting reality. But with Marxism proclaiming that historical dialectics would soon come to an end followed by the success of the October Revolution, communism got buried in gruesome facts. While politicians diluted and abused communism in relentless power struggles, academics embalmed and tattered the writings of



Marx, Engels, Lenin, Gramsci, Luxemburg, and other original communist thinkers active before Stalin distorted communism into pure hell. With every new text on why this and that aspect of this or that communist school could still serve as a crucial critical instrument, and with every new activism that tried to gain momentum from this or that new historical constellation, communism as a savior of mankind became even more a thing of the past.

Great fiction immerses you in any possible scenario with just a few words. Great fiction does not replicate—it creates realities in the simplest, most efficient fashion. Only as fiction can communism manifest itself again beyond doubt.

Many members of COMA have been communists from an early age. My case is different. Since puberty, I have regarded the voluntary self-elimination of all sentient beings as the only morally acceptable solution to all the suffering in the world, though practically and theoretically impossible to achieve. Never would all human beings agree to such a step, and the other sentient beings wouldn't even be able to understand it. All I was left with was to not procreate.

Coming up with new political concepts, like with the Solution series, was a drop in the ocean—if not pure vanity. Still, the last thing I would've done was give up my moral standards and surrender to communism. Just as any other humanistic ideology, communism seemed to suffer from the self-deceit that all people are basically good—meaning, capable of living a life that satisfies them and others.

My stance on communism changed with the thought that it might not be too radical in what it expected from people, but rather that it is not radical enough—communism as we know it being fundamentally incomplete. This inspiration hit me while writing the short story “The Completists” (which I included in *Solution 247-261: Love*, 2013). At some point its characters start to wonder why communism is all about redistributing goods and services but not sensual love. I developed this idea of Completism further in my novel *Solution 257: Complete Love* (2016), which then became the starting point for a potential movement, the Army of Love.<sup>1</sup> As a member of COMA I cannot actively participate in such a movement but content myself with exploring its challenges in thought experiments, discussions, and practical exercises.

Not that COMA and I are the first to find traditional Marxist communism incomplete: anarchism put emphasis on the exploitation of the lumpen proletariat; feminism rejected Marx's view that the oppression of women is a mere side contradiction; civil-rights, LGBT, and decolonial movements addressed the discrimination of ethnic and other minorities; and environmentalism addressed violence against nature and nonhuman beings. There have also been a number of theories that draw connections between these incompletions—for instance, Valerie Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto* (1969); Françoise d'Eaubonne's ecofeminism; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's becoming-minor; the Afrofuturism of Sun Ra and the film *Space Is the Place* (1974); Donna Haraway's

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.thearmyoflove.net>.

“A Cyborg Manifesto” (1984) and *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003); technogaianism; and, most recently, accelerationism. Here, full automation, the liberation of non-male genders and nonwhite races, and a respectful relation to the environment go more or less hand in hand. There is also a range of sci-fi novels that deal with technically progressed societies that have overcome hierarchies between classes, gender, and species, including Ursula LeGuin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and Kim Stanley Robinson’s Mars trilogy (1993–96).

But such completions of the cause for justice come with the price of diluting communism, if not competing with it. To gain the widest possible support, their advocates rather turn to libertarianism or social democracy. Communists in turn often jealously insist on the exploitation of the working class as modern society’s main and primordial injustice.

No doubt, currently there’s no revolutionary movement with a formula as powerful as Marx’s “dictatorship of the proletariat” used to be. But before we can think of an effective replacement we first have to create a truly inclusive scenario of universal well-being and expose the existing patchwork of civil-rights initiatives as contradictory and incomplete.

To COMA, such incompletions are great news because they prove that the resolution of all social contradictions is still to come—by achieving controlled coexistence with bacteria (Alexander Tarakhovsky), constant bliss for all sentient beings (David Pearce), immortality (Boris Groys), partnership and uncertainty (Fiona Duncan), queerness (Georgy Mamedov

and Oksana Shatalova), a sense of belonging (Elfriede Jelinek), interculturality (Momus), taste (Ann Cotten), humor (both Metahaven and Timotheus Vermeulen), poetry (Frank Ruda), new modes of transportation (Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby), childhood and motherhood (Santiago Alba Rico), the very beginning (Georgia Sagri) as well as the end (Heather Anderson), and, of course, all-encompassing sensual love.

The texts in this book are speculative essays, not narrative fiction in a narrow sense. In terms of immersion, this book could rather be read as an appendix to *Complete Love*—completing the novel’s notion of Completism—or, within the Solution series as a whole, as the first sketches of a great story still to come.

# The Kids Want Communism

This book is not only a document of some imageries of communism, it is also a testimony for the current predicament of our political imagination. Atomized, privatized, and deprived of any infrastructure for solidarity—without any internationalist project, with moralizations compensating for the disappearance of political organization, with micro-politics replacing macro-politics—communists can only be anonymous in this world of ours. They are anonymous in the simple sense that there is no name for what they are. Because it does not exist in our world, it is our task to give meaning to what communism might be.

## Real Existing Capitalism

Specters are haunting the globe—the specters of anti-communism. From the European Union and its erosion to the disastrous “war on terror” and the destruction of the welfare state, from Wahhabism to neoliberalism, from the debt economy to privatization, from game theory and disruptive innovation to cybernetics and its surveillance/entertainment devices—all these anti-communisms are fighting one another, and they are now haunting us.

What began with the implosion of real existing socialism almost thirty years ago comes full circle with the current collapse of the neoliberal arrangements constituted at the time. The intensity

and accelerated pace of the political events around us should be considered in relation to the disintegration of the Soviet bloc and the shock therapy that the post-Soviet economies underwent. To paraphrase Antonio Gramsci's only speech at the Fascist parliament in Italy, from 1925: since those in power have made things so bad, only communism can save us now.

The moment we are currently facing shows us how strategies that were developed on the front lines of communist politics are now being used by the extreme Right to set the agenda and take power. Take Lenin's strategy of operating both from the inside and the outside (think of Trump who, while running for president, said that he will not accept the results if he loses); Mao's cultural revolution as a pincer movement from above and below (the Tea Party and US Congress, the alt-right and the Republican Senate); Gramsci's cultural hegemony (4chan, Twitter, Breitbart, etc.); or Gramsci's "organic intellectual" (the clergy in the Middle East, Latin America, Europe, or Russia).

### Real Existing Socialisms

The exhibition program "The Kids Want Communism"—which I coorganized with Kuba Szreder, iLiana Fokianaki, Vit Havránek, Vladimir Vidmar, and Oleksiy Radynski—comprised a series of clandestine and public events to mark the ninety-ninth anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Like this volume, it explored communism beyond the three images usually assigned to socialisms of the twentieth century—ecstatic avant-garde gestures, Stalinist propaganda, and depictions of daily-life

**THE KIDS  
WANT  
COMMUNISM**

miserias. When work on the series began, Obama was still the president of the United States, Brexit wasn't yet an issue, Grexit was being discussed, and Crimea was being annexed by Russia. That moment invited us to consider more than just the circumstances and consequences of twentieth-century real existing socialism in Europe and Asia; it also invited us to consider what did not happen, what could have happened, what should have happened, and what might still happen.

The program's title comes from the Socialist German Workers Youth, which has been distributing the slogan (in English) on posters and stickers across German-speaking cities since 2012. For the exhibition series, the meaning of communism combined two traditions of thought—a readdress of real existing socialism, with its achievements and crimes, and a proposition of communism as a horizon that provides a perspective outside the current setting of power and meaning in the world. From this perspective we can see what was, what is, and what will be. The “want” in the title denotes the role of the imagination and the role of desire—what Jodi Dean calls “the collective desire for collectivity.” And the “kids” stand for both the future and the present—they are already here, and they will be in the world to come.

“The Kids Want Communism” began in late 2015 as part of the Kiev Biennial and concluded with an exhibition at the Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien in Berlin in the fall of 2017. A joint project affiliated with different individuals and organizations, it involved hosting exhibitions, screenings, discussions, seminars, and publications throughout 2016 and 2017. In this

period a variety of events took place: a summer school for communism, hosted by the Free/Slow University of Warsaw, in the Polish countryside; the “First Congress of the Union of Soviet Artists” at tranzitdisplay in Prague; an exhibition by Nikita Kadan at Škuc Gallery in Ljubljana; a symposium on solutions to communism and communism as a solution at State of Concept in Athens; screenings of Soviet science-fiction and student films at Westspace in Melbourne; and a series of exhibitions and public programs at Museums of Bat Yam (MoBY).

The frequent reliance on archival materials from the history of twentieth-century communism testifies to the emphasis on real existing socialism as a reference point for the project. At the same time, these materials allow for glimpses of what was possible to imagine under twentieth-century socialism. The materials exhibited at MoBY included: films by directors from Iran, Syria, Sri Lanka, and India made during their studies at the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s; childhood drawings from the Soviet Union that members of the New Barbizon group made in the 1980s; recollections from the Greek Civil War of 1946–49 and how they are reflected in the current crisis; a reunion of members of Israel's Youth Communist League; a display from the archives of the Praxis school, which promoted modern and democratic socialism in Yugoslavia from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s; and rediscovered photos from the Israeli Communist Party archives documenting Jewish-Arab cooperation in Palestine, especially surrounding an expedition to

Yugoslavia in 1947 to help with the construction of the railroad to Sarajevo.<sup>1</sup>

The incredible reality in the Soviet Union, from Sputnik to Chernobyl, produced its own science-fiction imagery. Fredric Jameson has emphasized that the literary genre of science fiction was created during a time of immense instability in the nineteenth century due to capitalist industrialization. This genre included interplanetary as well as time travel. In addition to its place within science fiction, the ability to leap to a future moment connects both the cinematic and the revolutionary imagination, which were also developed around the same time. Time traveling received artistic manifestation in the possibilities that cinema had to offer for people entering the movie theater, transporting them to another time and place. And it found its political expression when Lenin invented his own time machine—the revolutionary party.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, as history shows, this machine sometimes leaped to the wrong moment in time—be it the formation of totalitarian regimes or the destruction of traditions, which eventually accelerated capitalism’s penetration into new territories.

### The Communist Horizon

Apart from looking into the archive, the exhibitions at MoBY relied on another trajectory, one that relates to communism as a horizon. Under this notion, communism is perceived as the reestablishment of

<sup>1</sup> For more information on these and other projects, see <https://tkwc.tumblr.com/>.

<sup>2</sup> See Fredric Jameson, “In Hyperspace,” review of *Time Travel: The Popular Philosophy of Narrative* by David Wittenberg, *London Review of Books*, September 10, 2015, 17–22.

property-free communities, a theology of equality, and a continuation of traditions of communal indigenous societies, internationalism, and the emancipation of nations from imperial rule. It also denotes gender equality and education for all, the end of capitalism through its internal dynamics and the pockets of resistance that cannot be appropriated by it, and the already present solidarity and camaraderie shared by people everywhere. For communism holds the political proposal of the emotion called love.

The Great Soviet Encyclopedia—the Soviet answer to the Britannica—can be borrowed to describe the knowledge that we can use to approach this horizon. First published in 1926, this encyclopedia stands for systems of meaning and life experiences, schools of thoughts and forms of existence, and the endless combinations among them. This body of knowledge seems to have no reference anymore; it is knowledge that comes from a world, or better, a cosmos, that disappeared into the black hole of 1989–91. We need to learn what socialism in the twentieth century was in order to expand this knowledge for communism in the twenty-first century.

Now that we are again at the edge of time, the Great Soviet Encyclopedia can help us navigate our way. Under the doctrine of the End of History, we have experienced the future as simply “more of now.” As history is reawakening—sometimes in the most horrific ways—the future will again suggest radically different realities, and with them communism will reemerge. Therefore we need to activate Soviet knowledge to understand our current reality and our

future. We not only need sophisticated Marxists to navigate the totality of existence under capital—the encyclopedia suggests that we also need Sovietologists. Some examples of contemporary projects that operate through the Great Soviet Encyclopedia include documentarian Adam Curtis’s application of Soviet sci-fi in *Bitter Lake* (2015)—which derived from Stanislaw Lem’s (as much as Andrei Tarkovsky’s) *Solaris*—and *Hypernormalization* (2016), which borrows a term first coined by Alexei Yurchak in his book on the last generation of the Soviet Union, *Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More* (2006). There have also been large-scale exhibitions, such as “Shockworkers of the Mobile Image” (2010), curated by Cosmin Costinas, Ekaterina Degot, and David Riff for the 1st Ural Industrial Biennial; and “Monday Begins on Saturday” (2013), curated by Degot and Riff for the Bergen Assembly, which references the 1965 Soviet fantasy novel of the same name by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. In addition, there is Susan Buck-Morss’s seminal *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (2000) and, more recently, McKenzie Wark’s *Molecular Red: Theory of the Anthropocene* (2016), which uses Alexander Bogdanov to think about Anthropocene discourse. More and more we are seeing projects that apply forms of Soviet knowledge to discuss our contemporary predicament. Jameson seems to make this very claim when he refers to “classical antiquity” in an essay on Alexander Kluge and communism:

*The whole Marxist and Communist tradition, more or less equal in duration to Athens’s golden age, is precisely that golden age of the European left. [...] And if it is objected that it would be an abomination to glamorize an era that included Stalinist executions and the starvation of millions of peasants, a reminder of the bloodiness of Greek history might also be in order—the eternal shame of Megara, let alone the no less abominable miseries of slave society as such. Greece was Sparta as much as Athens, Sicily as much as Marathon; and the Soviet Union was also the deathknell of Nazism and the first sputnik, the People’s Republic of China the awakening of countless millions of new historical subjects. The category of classical antiquity may not be the least productive framework in which a global left reinvents an energizing past for itself.<sup>3</sup>*

Communism is not a country or a continent, nor it is another planet; communism is an entire constellation already in motion. It is a cosmos conceived from life itself. It recognizes that being-together precedes being. The kids want communism.

<sup>3</sup> Fredric Jameson, “Marx and Montage,” *New Left Review*, no. 58 (July–August 2009): 117.

# Was There Something?

What we believed was made—I just don't know by whom—to tear us away from the Nothing without letting us fall back there (or at least inside ourselves) again. Everything was the Nothing then—I probably liked that quite a bit too. But we were there after all—becoming us would have been a cinch in case we had not been temporarily. It was like coming home, our leaving and resolutely denying the determinateness planned for us. We took ourselves outside to out ourselves, to figure out something we did not know. Communism was, I think, this outside, not an out, not quite an in, for us it was both, because it determinately negated the determination with which we were raised in postwar certainty, denied it and tore us down to all of them who, of course, did not want to accept us. One glance at us was enough for them. But we were determined. It had to be all, no more individual *ones*, that did not work, but not *one* less was okay.

Communism is that which hangs in the balance. In a certain way a negation of everything that, nevertheless, gave rise to something, and it would not have been possible, that negation, had there not been something that could have been crossed out. Logical. For us, communism was, after the millions of human sacrifices it had made and that had been made for it, that which had been denied by all, but not by every *one*. The mind depends on nothing. This is paradoxical, because it constantly produces something, well, maybe not constantly but frequently, and producing was the



fetish. It was not possible not to have been making something; the people, after all, would have negated themselves had they not been producing something. Everyone was his labor. Every *one* was also all the others. But the mind is self-willed, it wants sensuality, to wit his own, but what it does is always something else, outside of himself, bummer! One has to chase after it. The inside is verboten, because everything one cannot see is verboten. Everything that is the case but cannot be cast off. It's all there, so why doesn't anyone take it? So there won't be a case made against them?

The communist wants something outside himself, I'd say. That's made just for me, as I, for one, do not want to be inside myself. I want to avoid myself. Unfortunately, the outside does not interest me much either. Is that it? The fear of being inside oneself, embattled as we are? Or is the fear of the outside even greater? It's not that it simply wants to move just a bit further away, communism, it might miss out on something, it would miss out on what it could do differently here, it wants to pounce on the outside like a wild animal or some other different animal that is ready for action, just let's get going and do something that'll fit the bill, therefore it must be something small. When one is told what to do it is no longer a power tool, no powerhouse, no power balls—all words of others, lost in translation, but that is also communism; so then I just don't know what it is, these words as I was saying are not by me, but for a while it was pleasant to hide in the bushes without anyone waiting in ambush. A shelter before the Stones asked for one. A shelter to which most people responded: don't you dare! Those who

once were in Cuba were there not at all or just privately. They hardly remember, they only remember fun folks and beautiful women whom they would never have met anywhere else. They wouldn't have looked for them elsewhere either. Those who once were in Moscow were there forever, but not privately. They were there because they did not want to wake for one moment from out of their hotel rooms and rise to the lack all around. In return it paid off for them to be something special, though they could not be bought. No one would have wanted them. It is dark in Moscow, according to the song of a communist singing group. I've heard it myself.

Out there, the communist wants to educate the animal we all are without feeling good in the process, no feeling good under any circumstances. Not the instructor, not the instructed, who should not ever get distracted or retract himself. Every animal however would reject that. It would like some distraction. Please also forgive my retraction. His—or is it my—reality slips away from the trailer I once was, the truck keeps driving on, it doesn't care what's behind it, it only wants forward, it's the only movement that exists for it. The road under its feet slips away, no, the feet don't slip, the road does it all by itself, all on its own. To each his own, say I. And so I talk. Talking was always the most important anyway, communists were never at a loss for words, for they themselves were language. Language with or without conviction, as one orders coffee with or without milk. I am not telling where it got lost. The Nothing has arrived. East German protest singer-songwriter Biermann had also arrived once, he is an example, but not an exemplar, he was “standing

on soap” with his criticism, I personally heard young people say about him, exactly like that, in those words, funny, what sticks in one’s mind, funny to what one pays no mind. The Nothing, there it is!, it is here now, can you please pick it up. Biermann is luxury. He always gets picked up even when he doesn’t want to leave at all. There is much to discuss with everyone who is here, the sooner the discussion takes place the better.

Yes, the sort of feeling good I experienced with communism often had to do with eating. It wasn’t good not having enough provisions to offer guests, world peace might not have come then. In the private sphere abundance was the rule that should reach the whole of humanity if it had the proper means of transportation. In this case everyone had to get the ride that was within his reach and let himself be removed to where he was needed. One of my uncles, an engineer, was detached by the party as an unskilled laborer to the workbench so that some real agitation would finally be the rule there. And others at the assembly line, where then still others ruled. Always the same movement of the hands, so why doesn’t anyone make a different move and pick up that idealistic person so that another card gets swept to the top? It has happened. I don’t know if ruling was important, I think it was. Everyone should be swimming in abundance, one never-ending stream that, however, would not carry us away or keep us in a constant state of flux, we would have braced ourselves against it, the current of the time would not have been an obstacle for us.

Perturbed looks back then, in East Berlin, at simple questions amid conferences about world peace

in the course of which information was dished as to what all others except us, the unique ones, lacked, I remember well, and were it just the disposition of finding oneself exposed. Great fear of the foreign. Perhaps because of the knowledge of one’s own indeterminateness and thus of determinability as such. Precisely because those people were always defined from the outside, like plants, which unfortunately one cannot control, only define and water some more when they are running out of life. They did not mean anything to me because they were not allowed to say what they meant. But I am not talking about plants here, although it would have been convenient if all people had been plants. We encountered this, but we could not confront it, there was tremendous fear, even at the tiniest trifle, a muteness, a horror of the word, which, after all, had been everything; in the beginning there was the word of the peoples, it’s just that they lost the slip of paper where it was written. Where did you buy this beautiful scarf?, I asked somebody, there was no explication though everything can be, no, must be explicated; the scarf, after all, was already quite explicitly exposed around the neck, visible to all, yes, the uncannily familiar, not to mention the uncanny hiddenness, which was always part of it; things sank before our eyes, we encountered communism and this was absolutely possible back then and then it was over. Communism may not have been a periphery of the city of the I, it was always outside, always the other, but apparently worth the effort for some of us, yes, me too, who are basically afraid of everything other, anything they don’t know. But there doesn’t have to always be a periphery, there

also can be none. Then one falls into oneself. And then our conviction would have been the fear of not being able to save oneself from that which had already been predetermined for us. To save ourselves from that absolute certainty, rather than from a certain something. From determinateness, which is a delusion and probably nothing but a term, not a wrong term, one can still recognize the nature of the beast, but only with great effort. However, the effort was important. Nothing could happen without effort. Truths had to be revealed laboriously, because something was entangled, I hear something rip, a tiny piece, a scrap of fabric still hangs there I think, but when the cloth was gone there was the Nothing that everybody could *not* see.

Translated from the German by Gitta Honegger

## The Friendly Spectre

I've been making a series of YouTube videos recently that simulate the Open University broadcasts I used to watch in the 1970s in Britain. The Open University was proposed in the 1960s by Prime Minister Harold Wilson as a way of nationalising and universalising education. With course units—often delivered by long-haired lecturers in floral shirts—broadcast in dead time on government-run television, the Open University, a freely accessible educational resource, would take its place alongside the National Health Service and nationalised industries (steel, auto, railway) as part of a socialistic post-war Britain.

I'm very much a product of that semi-socialist Britain, a national ambience now reduced to a ghostly residue thanks to more than three decades of post-Thatcherite neo-liberalism. I watched and listened to Open University broadcasts and also attended a state-funded university in Scotland at the end of the 1970s. So in one of my YouTube broadcasts—partly in preparation for writing this essay—I decided to talk about communism and what I remembered of Marxist theory.

And so they all tumbled out, rather haphazardly—the concepts that had marked me as a student: alienation, reification, the class in itself and the class for itself, superstructure and base, class consciousness, false consciousness and the proletariat as the Hegelian world spirit. It seemed to me, speaking of this in 2017, that these ideas were as important as ever. Unlike the endlessly narcissistic schisms of identity politics—the

pallid ghost of an oppositional politics for people terrified of actual socialism—Marxist ideas still promised an effective counterstrike to a corrupt and corrupting global order, a casino system with very few winners.

Growing up, I fitted Marxism into a jigsaw puzzle of sometimes-incompatible ideas. I was cosmopolitan, a traveller (my father worked as a cultural attaché for the British Council), and so my earliest political idea was that you changed the world most effectively by boarding a jet plane and going somewhere else. My next influence was existentialism, which focused on the death of God and the imminent death of the individual, and looked at personal responsibility and—if you followed Sartre to the idea that existentialism was a humanism—the possibility of personal political commitment to something larger, something collective.

I was also studying literature, so I subscribed to an ideology of talent, even genius, or—at the very least—to the idea of *homo faber*, man the maker. Creativity was the important thing, and an artist was the thing to be. There's a certain elitism carried in the baggage of a literature student—the emphasis on scrutiny, discrimination, a sifting of the great from the mediocre, the need for canons and hierarchies. The fact that identity politics was beginning to play out in literary studies—women and people of colour were being ushered into the canon in greater numbers, a new global perspective was emerging through postcolonial writing—did little to alter the essential focus on critical discrimination and “genius.”

These were ideas you couldn't transpose into the political realm; it would be absurd to argue, for

instance, that only geniuses should get the vote, or indeed that voters should be assessed in any way before being allowed to exercise their political choices (as they were assessed economically back in the days when only landowners could vote). And yet many literature graduates were destined to become teachers, and teaching implicitly contains the idea that people need to be improved, upgraded, made aware. Equality may seem to imply that any opinion is as good as any other, but surely there can be no proper representation, in the political sense, without an accurate representation of the world.

I managed to resolve some of the contradictions within these ideological positions by focusing on *homo faber*. Hadn't Joseph Beuys said that everyone is an artist? And wasn't that essentially what Marx was saying in *Capital*? Because of the division of labour, the worker is alienated from both his control over what he creates and also his fair share of the profit it generates. This is the romantic side of Marxism, the place where it approaches the William Morris type of socialism in which we are all frustrated medieval artisans, artists who just want to have our creative control restored. Guilds, unions, philanthropy, education and a neo-medieval emphasis on skill and cottage industry can, in this view, restore creativity (and economic independence) to all.

The problem with this view, of course, is that it rejects an industrial modernity that had already taken hold when Marx and Engels were studying Manchester factories, and that would take on increasingly abstract forms as labour became more global, mechanised and dematerialised. Lukácsian

and Gramscian ideas—hegemony, reification—became increasingly important.

I particularly appreciated reification as a way to examine the false consciousness that capitalism engenders: in György Lukács’s understanding of this “thingification,” negotiable human relationships are increasingly seen as objects, inanimate and unalterable things. You hold an iPhone in your hand and think of it as an object, but in fact it’s a series of relationships: between the technicians and designers in America and the labourers in Foxconn’s Taiwan factories, between the app makers (and the advertisers they pander to) and yourself, between you and your social-media friends with their “posts” and “likes,” between the security services who hack the device and your private activities, some of which might turn out to be against the law, between you and your Wi-Fi provider, and so on.

Only by understanding reification in its Lukácsian sense can we understand this vortex of social relationships we call an iPhone. The conditions of this series of social contracts are constantly shifting. Following negative stories about poor working conditions at Foxconn, socially concerned iPhone users started pressuring Apple to take more responsibility for the ethics of their outsourcing. Foxconn responded by proposing to automate almost all the operations in their Taiwan factories, eradicating humans altogether.

Meanwhile, false consciousness has seen the global underclass hoodwinked by populist oligarchs into voting for parties that scapegoat the ethnic and religious other (Mexicans, Muslims, refugees) for problems that lie far closer to home, in the ruthless

pursuit of war, profit and inequality, in the globalisation of labour and its replacement by mechanisation. This new political movement—a development that risks kindling nostalgia for the old neo-liberal order—seems unlikely to embrace the redistribution of either progressive tax schemes or basic income. Its intransigent refusal to confront climate change is underpinned by a Hobbesian world view in which the displacements and deaths of millions of people are cynically seen as an acceptable price to pay, an event survivable by advanced nations, if borders are sufficiently strengthened.

There used to be an “Overton window” of centrist politics—a Cold War-era social democratic balance of ideas that the public found acceptable, between entrepreneurial and redistributive concerns, or in other words, capital and labour—but recent events have seen that consensual model destroyed, that window closed. Now, overt racism and scapegoatism dare to show their face again, but so does a revived leftism with a reassessment of communist ideas, thanks to writers like Thomas Piketty, Antonio Negri and the late Mark Fisher, or politicians like Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn, who are attempting to make a populism of the Left. Their task is an enormous one.

Let’s look at a specific case, something that happened to me recently. I love scouring Osaka for second-hand sweaters. So one Friday I took the train to Amagasaki, a poor district between Osaka and Kobe, and checked out the dollar stores in the Chuo Arcade. I was delighted to find, in a shop called Emerald Famille (a kind of pop-up run by ethnic Koreans, selling cheap ceramics and clothes from

garbage bags), a couple of amazing sweaters adorned with Frank Stella–like designs.

When I got them home I examined the labels and found they were Benetton sweaters manufactured in Romania in 2010. The visual reference was still Stella (or perhaps to some of the ice-cream-coloured Italian Art Deco designs that may have inspired him), but the sweaters were part of a second revival of 1970s forms (the first happened in the 1990s). Reading up on the sweaters online, I found that both were featured in an archive of Benetton’s designs held in Treviso at the company’s headquarters (which also contain Fabrica, an art school that doubles as an advertising agency). Benetton set up the archive in 2015 to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary and also to try to reconsolidate its corporate identity: this was a company known, in the 1980s, for provocative anti-racist posters by art director Oliviero Toscani: a white child kissing a black child, a black mother breastfeeding a white baby.

It’s ironic that the manufacturing of products advertised with these images and the United Colors of Benetton brand was outsourced to Europe’s least liberal country: according to a 2016 YouGov poll, Romania is the European nation that has the most authoritarian populist attitude, with a shocking 82 percent of surveyed adults backing xenophobic and nationalist views. Benetton is therefore manufacturing in an illiberal country that pays low wages and mounting ad campaigns, based on a liberal stance on issues like feminism and multiculturalism, in countries where there is more tender-mindedness and more disposable income.

There are a couple of things to say about this. First, identity politics (and especially when taken to the wishy-washy feel-good level of a Benetton campaign) has largely been an irrelevant distraction from the class politics of Marxism, a divisive splitting of what could have been a broad-based movement of resistance to neo-liberalism. An example of this is the sad protest at the 2017 Whitney Biennial in response to Dana Schutz’s painting *Open Casket* (2016) depicting 1950s lynching victim Emmett Till. Schutz’s intentions are liberal-humanist, but because she’s a white Jewish painter, she lays herself open to attack by the black British artist Hannah Black, who claims that it is “not acceptable for a white person to transmute Black suffering into profit and fun.” Black and Schutz both deplore Till’s lynching and ought to be part of a coalition against the current forces of racism, which are strengthening and being legitimised daily. But identity politics has a schismatic logic: one’s ability to speak on behalf of anyone else is questioned, one’s “respect” is demanded, one’s alliance or “intersectionality” found wanting, one’s “privilege” must be checked, one’s language policed and so on. It’s a politics that, instead of building alliances, plays fatally into what Freud called the murderous “narcissism of minor differences.”

The other thing to say is that the Marxist assumption that a class in itself will become a class for itself is made murky by the fact that people—especially Americans—always prefer to identify upward rather than downward. Sure, we can say that downtrodden classes ought to recognise their need for solidarity with people like themselves, but that implies an ability to

cast a cool and objective look at oneself. Americans—and perhaps all of us—prefer to identify upward; to say that, in a few years, one will join the high-fliers, the successes, and leave the losers behind. Just as we like our chosen celebrity to be wealthy, we might choose oligarchs as our political leaders because it makes us feel like winners ourselves, despite the fact that nothing in their proposed programmes will actually help us. To put it in a more philosophical way, might Marx have been wrong when he said that the proletariat represented the Hegelian “world spirit”? Hegel himself, after all, was more inclined to see the *Weltgeist* incarnated in great and powerful individuals like Napoleon. The worst examples of real existing communism, from Stalinism to Pol Pot’s Year Zero and Mao’s Cultural Revolution, have seen a systematic celebration of mediocrity: a Procrustean politics of universal peasantry in which any signs of exceptional ability, of talent and creativity, have been ruthlessly weeded out by means of murder and exile. In these misreadings of Marx, *homo faber* has become the enemy.

The essential economism of Marxism is what has led it to underestimate the psychological barriers to class consciousness and the cultural arguments that have, in the form of identity politics, so sapped and undermined today’s radicals. In this, Max Weber was prescient. Published in the early twentieth century, Weber’s book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* lays out a series of cultural arguments about the development of the (largely Anglo-Dutch) global capitalism that powered the colonial age. Weber connected double-column accountancy with Protestant

religious tropes (diary keeping, thrift, prayer, accounting for one’s actions to a personal God and so on), foregrounding specific cultural factors in capitalism’s rise rather than seeing its rationale as merely economic. Marx saw religion as a form of false consciousness, an opiate, an anachronism that would wither away. For Weber, it lived on in the forms of capitalism’s “worldly asceticism,” underpinned by processes of legitimation, rationalisation and disenchantment.

If you add Freud’s psychological explanations, you see a somewhat mechanistic nineteenth-century view (with its description of more subjective ways of thinking as merely “false,” and its insistence on the historical inevitability of socialism) being increasingly displaced, as the twentieth century wore on, by explanations drawing on culture and the unconscious. It’s even tempting to see the proletariat, in Freudian terms, as a “sublimated” agency, trapped in history’s version of the unconscious, in desperate need of the “talking cure” of Marxist ideology to realise what it must do.

With these caveats, though, I think I can see the big trends confirming a Marxist analysis of history: although inequality is on the rise in individual countries, the overall trend worldwide (thanks largely to the rise of India and China) is towards equality. The overall developmental trend is towards more longevity, better education, higher standards of hygiene. Technology and medical advances are powering this. Despite the erosion of post-war welfare states in advanced nations, new redistributive policies like basic income are being discussed. People seem more willing to consider renting things rather than buying (and getting themselves

in hock to banks for the dubious privileges of ownership). There's a renewed sense of the value of collective property and public ownership. There are even calls for the renationalisation of important industries and services. The creed underpinning neo-liberalism—a Hayekian faith in the “invisible hand”—has been undermined, or simply went out of fashion. Some are even claiming that the looming ecological crisis due to climate change will have an effect on global society similar to that of the Second World War—a disruption followed by a regrouping, a new social contract. Just like that war, this crisis will spawn new technologies and a new understanding of the need for collective solutions to shared problems.

After the financial crash of 2008, people often cited the saying (attributed to Fredric Jameson, repeated by Slavoj Žižek and Mark Fisher) that people could more easily imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. More recent events—Trump and Brexit in particular—have thrown all certainties, and all complacent centrism, to the wind. If revolutions of the Right can happen, so too can revolutions of the Left. It now falls to intellectuals (yes, that “classless class,” the intelligentsia) to imagine, in public, a communist future that is both believable and attractive.

Wondering how to do this, I realised that the necessary materials were much closer to hand, much more humdrum and domestic than I realised. I'm a fifty-seven-year-old Scot who was brought up in a 1960s and '70s Britain with free healthcare, free education and many nationalised industries. Now I live in Japan, once described by theorist Kojin Karatani as a system

of “communist capitalism.” So, to imagine a workable communism of the future, all I have to do is graft these things together: the structural socialism—an incipient communism—I knew in the Britain of my youth with the attitudinal collectivism I see around me in Japan and its emphasis on modesty, harmony and self-abnegation, its rejection of conflictual and self-serving social models.

The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* described communism as spectral. But by thinking about this splicing of two systems I know well, I can see it as something familiar, something perfectly, potentially, actual. Today, communism can be palpable, comfortable, benign, workable: something within reach, something friendly.



# Spaces of Common— Times of Anarchy

**Woman 1:** Ideological differences, they cannot be resolved before coming here. And you cannot know these ideological differences before coming here. I had no idea who I would find here before coming here. There was no list of names; we were told that it would be very anonymous. I didn't talk to anyone about this gathering.

**Woman 2:** Many of my friends would be so happy to come here. And it was a surprise to come here and see so many people but not so many of my friends. It is a bit of a struggle for the feminist agenda to get political weight in the scene because the radical political milieu is so much preoccupied with “serious” issues. So it would be important for some feminist organizers to come here. I am not as engaged as some other people regarding feminist issues. I am not such an expert. But some of my friends are and I know that they are very much involved. I would be super happy if they were able to be here in that sense of exchange or talking about issues. One of the issues which was never discussed for example is what is the feminism we actually want, especially on an international level. “What is the feminism we want?”

**Woman 1:** So in that case my first hesitation to come here was because of this secrecy. And being here for some days now I feel that the level of secrecy was artificial. Like why didn't we have coffee and talk about

the trip etc., or communicate with each other and also perhaps contact more people and so on before coming here?

**Woman 2:** The secrecy would be relevant if there was an urgency for this gathering. You need urgency to come here and not tell anyone that you know. Because of the secrecy, I thought that we were really meeting in an urgency to all be together with this agenda, which for me was very clear: it is a feminist anti-military agenda. And in five days, to really bring up any kind of issues, the format was such that it didn't allow, first of all, for the urgency to appear. It wasn't clear in the beginning, in the first communication about the organization, presentation, and discussion of issues and their framing, that we all need to come up with ideas, questions, thoughts, actions, experiences. It felt that we were in a conference rather than a self-organized gathering ...

**Woman 1:** When you are coming to a gathering and its organization is not clear, when you go to the kitchen the first day and there are already people there and they have prepared food for everyone, and when you are treated like you are in a restaurant, you're like, "What is going on?" If we were invited to a conference, it would be open to the public. If it was a conference, the reason we were invited would make sense, as well as the reason we have the privilege to have a room. We can sleep and eat here, and the public would come here and we would give presentations of various issues ... this and that ... But I assume you, the organizers, you were aiming for something else, for another format.

**Woman 2:** In a way the urgency also comes with self-organization, because in the making of this, nothing else matters. It doesn't matter if I am gonna eat three meals a day, if the food is gonna be vegan or not, I mean of course I really appreciated all this, that you can have vegan food three times per day is incredible, but nevertheless, in the urgency of a situation you don't really think about this stuff, because, as we said before, the nutrition is us being together. You don't think of the food; like two days ago for example while we had the discussion I realized at some point I hadn't gone to the toilet for six hours. It didn't matter to me because the excitement of being with other people, having a discussion with you made me not care about myself.

**Woman 3:** The necessity of us being together is the creation of spaces of common, so the food, the cooking together, has to become the main thing of what is becoming our common—not its distribution, the facilitation of discussion, etc.

**Woman 4:** Like there are some practical things like the place. We are in a place which is pretty far from access to food so all of those things kinda have to be cared for so we all can't be too distracted by this.

**Woman 3:** No, but that's the idea of the organizing: to create the particular situation here in the village, or in between two villages that are producing all of these things, since it is difficult for them to even bring their products to the city and talk about these issues. For

example, how women struggle in these villages, how they are taking care of each other and what they will do during winter, when their men come home drunk, etc., how for example the element of food can create relations between us, the women, the villages, etc. So this is what I mean with the common ... the building of relations.

**Woman 2:** Yes, in a way cooking together brings an emotional responsibility that needs to be distributed. We don't need to all like to cook together but we do need to get somehow involved in the external processes which address many of the issues we are also talking about. From the organization that invites and creates the call, there can immediately be a reminder that "this now needs to be distributed among everyone," that the responsibility of this gathering is not only of the organization, or is not a matter of making two, three groups that will be responsible, and the rest who basically don't find groups and don't need to do anything—as if they are observers or participating in the conference. Like it's not really matching the urgency of the call, of the meeting with the format of what we were doing here.

**Woman 3:** I think the NGO format was used but had no urgency. And that created a split.

**Woman 1:** Sending an email and demanding urgency when the format of the gathering was based on an NGO format which was clearly appropriating self-organization ...

**Woman 4:** Like the NGO format was, like you were saying, not making relations internally or externally to define the site we are currently in and that surrounds us.

**Woman 2:** So this is also the matter of self-organization: meaning that it's also the distribution of power by those that think they have power, in making the decision, the first decision to begin from this place of like inviting, because they found this kind of resource, even though this resource comes from an NGO-organizing method, they are showing to everybody that they are able to open up to something else and that they are also participants of this distribution of power, that they are also participating in this. That they are not giving this because they have it but rather because they want to be part of what they are calling for.

**Woman 3:** And it's not the technical things that should be the main issue, how we will eat, etc. It's not technicality, it is practicality. It is not technical but practical. Yeah it's the necessities. We are coming here and we are making all this garbage, because we have thoughts, what will happen in a month, the food, what kind of food, etc. I mean what would happen after a month. It would be crazy probably, like full of garbage.

**Woman 2:** Like I mean on the other side of the river. We started to clean the river when everyone else was preoccupied with the organizing. They couldn't even see that on the side of the river it was full of plastic bottles, so we started cleaning it on the first day and no one really cared. You know, we said to a few people,

“There are plastic bottles all over.” I mean, because I come here and don’t try to bring the responsibility we already have from somewhere else—to make it clear to everyone that “oh, I am responsible for the vegan food,” or I am responsible for this, that, I don’t know—and if I come here with an empty agenda, and want to create with others what we want all together, basically I’m nothing, I’m a bother, I’m a trouble. It is true that I was really a trouble in this situation, because you know I didn’t come here with a prescribed task, like “I am coming here to talk about the issues of women in a factory in 1954 and the historical effect it has today on the economic crisis,” etc. I mean, you know we could do that every day, but what was the urgency of coming here, what was the reason? It was just gone. Including the fact that you know, we had people in the gathering who didn’t want us to find the reasons. Clearly. There is no question about that.

**Woman 4:** Failure. I couldn’t imagine the possibility of this failure. I mean at some point I realized that this turned out to be a social experiment. The scene was a setup. Then you find yourself fighting with this setup.

**Woman 5:** I felt like it was some kind of civil war.

**Woman 1:** If we could perceive ...

**Woman 5:** It’s an example of using our own tools against ourselves. We come here with so much pain and trauma from our own struggles and we have no outlet for it and we take it out on each other ... and using our

words, these are our tools, these words. You’re either on the side of the colonizer or the patriarchy, that’s how it felt to be presented with these options in the civil war reenactment and, you know it’s such ... I dunno, I don’t know how to stop this manipulation, the scene in different places to different extents. We’re using our own words to sabotage ourselves. In the same way you use those words when you call things violent or considered violent, when you use the structures and whatever is developed to address rape or, when you use this broadly, you actually—for me, it is actually insulting as a survivor of those experiences. It is a real thing, and it is interesting that people have developed these tools to address that a rapist is in our community and how we can react to accountability processes, nonviolent communication, collective responsibility, etc. But yeah, I dunno, there is that movie, *Minority Report* with Tom Cruise, you know where they try to guess people’s intentions and arrest them for their intentions to commit a crime. It’s like fascist weirdness going on there, but I don’t think it’s their logic to say that if someone crosses a boundary that this is a potential rapist. I don’t even think that’s what they’re doing there but, I dunno, I just ... The abuse of these words for me like “boundary crossing,” “harassment” and “sexualized violence” is really fucked up ... and you know I don’t really know how to address it because people don’t let you critique that, you are playing the card that there’s nothing I can tell you because then I am questioning your experiences. I don’t like this power-definition thing. I think it’s stupid control bullshit and I think it can be applied to those cases of sexualized violence. But we need a

much broader understanding of how our communities affect each other to address personal issues ... but why would we take these tools ...

**Woman 2:** Or triggers. Maybe, you know, in a community a trigger could be a place where we could find each other, not that we're going to dissolve totally and fragment because the trigger was never discussed. Like a personal trigger could be called something instead of being called "this," being framed immediately and becoming a box of discourse. Then you become the rhetoric. The point is to avoid being the box and using this box of rhetoric, which of course becomes banal because it's not your rhetoric; it's not your voice it's not what you feel; it's something else; it's already something that is fabricated for you to speak it, instead of like trying to explain using your own words to say what happened to you and what happens to your body and what happens to your mind, and express it and share it so we can all feel connected, because how you feel is not a personal thing, you know, it's something that I feel too. If we don't have the possibility to really speak it, it's just gone and then we are dissolved.

**Woman 4:** It's an accusation of abuse in itself. It's avoiding connecting anyone, and it's avoiding what conflict is in a way, because what if I don't see it the exact same way you saw it, and this conflict is how we can develop a relationship and political analysis.

**Woman 3:** Yeah, exactly.

**Woman 4:** Just because it's abuse I can't talk about how people felt about it; we only talk about it because it's abuse.

**Woman 2:** No, but I don't want to talk about how I feel about abuse, because this abuse becomes an empty signifier. For me politicizing abuse is something very, very particular, and something that has to do with particularity becoming collective, becoming something that we all can talk about, that we can share and feel connected to, and really then develop an analysis around it and our own experiences.

**Woman 4:** But these vocabularies that have been developed, like "trigger," "sexual harassment," "boundaries," "borders," at some point they were developed for a resistance able to deal with issues of violence against women, so language came out in order to do something with it, but that language is now haunting us.

**Woman 5:** It is just returning as control. As the *biocop*. Can I call it that? Can we also claim that this is the making of a new type of cop produced out of this haunting language, our appropriated words of struggle? The *biocop* doesn't want conflict; it needs trials and exclusions, splits.

**Woman 4:** That's a good way to put it, the *biocop*. Someone says, "You are crossing the boundaries," I wonder how it's possible that we can have any kind of relation when I have boundaries. Like if we have boundaries, instead of working on not crossing them

we should be working on undoing them. I am not saying fuck you, I don't give a shit about your boundaries. What I'm saying is that we all have boundaries, let's work on that. How can we start talking about our different boundaries and start opening them?

**Woman 2:** Yeah, and exploring, unraveling all the shit, because there's a lot of dark matter going on: all these boundaries and ways of being together and relating. It's not only like, "Okay now that I know your pronouns I now know who you are." I mean, really? It doesn't make any sense. I mean yes, of course it's a way to start. It's a way to fill a place where some kind of respect takes place.

**Woman 4:** But it originally started with patriarchy, a man and a women and—fuck!—it's still a fuck you but internally. It's a fuck you to me every time I cross boundaries by misreading.

**Woman 6:** It's like religion, we are seeing sins because we have sins. Blasphemy! We have the saint, here is the shit and here is the propaganda, there is this religion issue and the misuse of language, like the whole issue of emotional immersion ...

**Woman 2:** It is about property, don't you see? You remember we were talking about this on the balcony at some point, that this idea of the body, my body is mine, it is owned by me, it is my property. Then those boundaries can be cultivated, like calculated and consumed. Basically, I am a product of things that I have made and

I am available to be exchanged. For me it doesn't make any sense. You cannot have the patent, like the way that you get a product and you read the ingredients, like when I take a shit and I read the product ingredients. Oh my god, we are actually trying to make us all have this like refined description of what we are. So I need to know perfectly well what contains me, and what I am so, you know, when I meet another I'm like, "Hey we are products and I want to know if we are matching," and if we can mix we will keep going for the capitalist work to go on. So yeah it doesn't make any sense, it's impossible this.

**Woman 1:** If we could perceive anarchy not from its political terminology, which always is perceived as without *arche*, without power, and could think of it instead from its literal translation from Greek, anarchy as without beginning, then perhaps the gathering and the discussion could be somehow different. We have this tendency to assume that when we are in a space with others, we are immediately together, we are a collective, but this is not a given. I feel that when we gather, it is more our singularities we want to present, our beginnings. What if we were talking about a feminist anarchy? This conviction that exists for so many centuries that a group, or more than one, is a collective, and the one is always individual, could be destroyed by destroying our perception of time. How can we learn to destroy this time which is a patriarchal time? And what about the now? How it is possible that this now is always translated as a constant beginning? This moment we are here it is already gone, past. The river

is a few steps away, the breeze is messing our hair, the wind comes from somewhere I cannot picture and it is gone a long time ago. We are more than one but we end up talking alone, behaving more individualistic than when we are really alone. Isn't this a patriarchal way of perceiving time, isn't it what we could fight against? If we could address the beginning of this gathering not by the time that we all arrived here but by our ongoing engagement to the gathering, to each other, which could make possible this gathering to happen, wouldn't this perception of time shift the way we think of this gathering? If I was able to perceive my sexual and political orientation without a start, without form, but as a tendency to actualize every time, every moment that it is transformed through engagement and care, then isn't that anarchy? An anarchy that doesn't have a beginning, an orientation, a heritage to protect. Isn't this anarchism a living anarchism? In action? The tempo of senses is difficult to grasp. It is uncontrolled and we need to have more anarchism of that kind. This is the feminist anarchy I want to be part of.

## Communism Is ...

Almost everyone knows the slightly silly and arch-romantic comic strip *Love Is...* Its principle is that each cartoon depicts a specific scene or act in the life of a couple in love; scenes that in their particularity are able to show what love as such—that is, in its general form—is all about. This idea seems to rely on the assumption that one cannot simply give a one-line definition of love, but one can show how love is a composite of multiple heterogeneous things and actions, particular scenes and gestures that all participate in the love life of a couple. Each strip adds something to the very notion of love, emphasizing a new element or dimension, complexifying or simplifying it. A universal notion of love can only be grasped through the particular actions and acts, scenes and scenarios that constitute the life of a couple in love. One may read this “structure” as a highly popularized and trivialized version of what Giorgio Agamben once called “the coming community,” which is always *to come* because it is a community of singularities that have nothing in common except that they are together in a community.

What if the same holds true for communism? What if communism could not simply be defined trans-historically, but would itself deserve a series of “communism is ...” scenes? Thereby one would need to concretize how “communism is” the solution in ever-new singular situations. In the early 1930s, Bertolt Brecht wrote a poem that depicts a nice and somehow surprising definition of what communism is. The poem reads as follows:

## COMMUNISM IS ...

To call for the overthrow of the existing order  
Seems terrible  
But what exists is no order.  
To seek refuge in violence  
Seems evil.  
But as what is constantly done is violence  
It is nothing special.  
Communism is not the most extreme  
That only in a small part can be realized, rather  
Before it is not completely realized,  
There is no state which  
Would be bearable, even for someone insensitive.  
Communism is really the most minimal demand  
The nearest, the average, the reasonable.  
Whoever opposes it is not a dissident  
But someone who does not think or who  
thinks only about himself  
An enemy of the human species,  
Terrible  
Evil  
Insensitive  
Particular,  
Willing the most extreme, that even realized  
in small parts,  
Plunges the whole of humanity into ruin.

The title of the poem is “Communism Is the Average,” the middle term, the medial.<sup>1</sup> What does the poem say that communism is? First of all, one can note that

<sup>1</sup> Bertolt Brecht, “Der Kommunismus ist das Mittlere,” cited in Erdmut Wizisla, *Benjamin und Brecht* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 272; my translation.

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Brecht does not simply reproduce a commonsensical take on communism. Communism is not something extreme. Communism is not something that can only be realized in parts. Communism is not an ideal without any proper reality. Communism, rather, is reasonable, average, a minimal demand. This is a surprise. Communism is not hard to define: it is what cannot but appear as sensible. What Brecht poetically performs here is a peculiar transformation of what usually seems possible. Somehow Brecht indicates, emphasizes, and affirms that communism is the solution, if only because it is the most reasonable and simple answer there is. If one seeks to avoid extremism and all the problems that produce catastrophes and disasters, only communism provides a solution. One may take this poem as an expression of Brecht’s servitude to the Russian regime. But his poem is much more radical. It breaks with the common assumption that communism is something almost mystical, a utopian solution, a thing that never can be fully realized—an assumption today, after the collapse of various communist regimes, even more widespread than ever.

This is what makes Brecht’s poem so surprising. He breaks with the most common assumption. No, communism is not something one cannot envisage. Rather, it is the most reasonable thing one can imagine.

Brecht’s poetic declaration seeks to bring something into existence (a rational solution to contemporary problems) that does not exist as such in reality. Here one deals with an affirmative declaration in poetry. With this affirmation, reality as such is not affirmed. Neither are the possibilities of this very reality (affirmed or realized).



Rather, the poem breaks with what is perceived as reality and its possibilities and recalls that this reality is not all there is. Yet it is important to note that this is a poem and not a political statement, not an aberration for Brecht. This is why one should not try to detect in it a blindness regarding the real suffering of the people in the countries where there was so-called real existing socialism. Rather, as Alain Badiou has tried to show, one can assume another kind of relation between poetry and communism.<sup>2</sup> Why? Because the medium of poetry is language, which usually is a common good. The poet is, for Badiou, she or he who seeks to make language say things that it seems incapable of saying. Poetry says what was unsayable before, and thereby produces a new sayability, a new conceivability within language, which is given to everyone. Poetry is therefore not only a language game but also a way of thinking, which even “identifies itself as a form of thought,”<sup>3</sup> which exceeds what the world of senses is capable of in a “singular procedure”<sup>4</sup>—that is, by means of a unique articulation. Poetry is overly sensuous because it articulates something singular in a singular manner that only will have been because of this very articulation. It is supersensible because its “writing is *thought itself*, and nothing but.”<sup>5</sup> It eliminates the distinction between surface and depth. One can distinguish between *how* poetry says something and what it says—in

2 See Alain Badiou, *The Age of the Poets: And Other Writings on Twentieth-Century Poetry and Prose*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (London: Verso, 2014). Badiou starts from the assumption that many poets in the twentieth century were self-declared communists.

3 Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 20.

4 Badiou, 24.

5 Badiou, 41.

this way, reading true poetry, one conceives of something that appears through the act of poetic formation. It names in language something that did not have a proper name before the advent of this very poem. This means that it does not highlight just another aspect of a thing—say, of communism—but rather constitutes this very aspect and thereby (re)constitutes the thing in poetically naming it (before Brecht’s poem, communism was precisely not conceived as an average thing to defend or contend). And it names, and thus constitutes, the thing it speaks of in a language that is at the same time universal, common to all, as comprehensible as language itself. For Badiou, the poetic naming has the character of a declaration because something that did not have a symbolic form (or existence) is given a form in language, is by means of language inscribed into language. Thereby poetry does not only name but it performatively, or affirmatively,<sup>6</sup> depicts what it means for something that was not pre-existing to come into existence through naming (and which then can be thought). Poetry thus can affirm what seems impossible, an impossible possibility of an event that changes not only the coordinates of the possible and impossible, but even more, through its affirmation, generates new conceivabilities.

6 Werner Hamacher, “Affirmative, Strike,” in *Walter Benjamin’s Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, ed. Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (London: Routledge, 1994), 155–82. The claim to affirmativity does radicalize the idea of performativity: the latter still relies on the form of how to perform (an act, for example), whereas—like Kleist’s successive production of thought while speaking—the affirmative forms the very form of its act while doing it. No wonder that Lenin was so fond of Napoleon’s bon mot, “On s’engage, puis on voit”—one engages in the situation and afterward sees what this will have meant.

### COMMUNISM IS ...

Poetry supplements language—because it makes the impossibility of supplementing language actively possible. It is self-affirmation in this very sense by affirming what it does, and as such it enables thinking an eventful transformation of reality and its basic coordinates. It is itself an eventful addition to language that is addressed to all. Like language itself, it is something that belongs to everyone, and here one can see how the very form and practice of poetry has an inner operative link to communism. Poetic eventfulness is directly related to a transformation of reality—the reality of language—by affirming that something impossible (something yet unnamed in language) will have been possible. Brecht's poem affirms a possibility that seems impossible. His poetic affirmation in this sense is immanently creative. Yet this is not a creation based on a possibility of being or reality; rather, Brecht speaks of this impossible possibility as the most ordinary, average, and reasonable thing. His poem speaks of a minimal demand, of something that is not monstrous or violent. His poem simply demands to be reasonable. Thereby it proves what it demands. It is thus a proof of communism in an artistic form. And communism will necessarily also have to rely on an affirmation of a seemingly impossible possibility. Poetry recalls by affirming, and affirms by recalling, what it means to think.

Otherwise there is no true reality (of reason). Brecht's poem de-realizes reality and affirmatively declares the rational possibility of something impossible. Brecht's poetry affirmatively and affirmatively recalls that a human being is a being that is able to think

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reasonably. And rational thought does not limit itself to the seeming reality of given possibilities. Thought creates new possibilities that transform reality by supplementing it. Therefore the poem denounces all such limitations as violence and as abolishment of thought. Not to think communism means not to think.

# Tripping to Meet Riane Eisler

*One certain way to always block communication is to tell the truth. Too bad.*

—Lee Lozano

In May 2016, I drove from Los Angeles to Carmel-by-the-Sea, a small beach town in Monterey County, to interview cultural historian, activist, attorney, and pragmatopian Riane Eisler in her home. I had come upon her work via Terence McKenna, a mystical ethnobotanist and psychedelic advocate whose tones had been massaging me to sleep for many anxious years. In lectures McKenna stated things like: “The world is made of words, and if you know the words that the world is made of, you can make of it whatever you wish.” And: “My technique is don’t believe anything. If you believe in something, you are automatically precluded from believing its opposite.” McKenna also used vocabulary coined by Riane Eisler, and when he did, he would reference her directly.<sup>1</sup>

Eisler had this idea, which McKenna, bell hooks, and Starhawk, among others, have since expanded upon, that all human collectives (nations, tribes, pop cultures, subcultures, families, lovers, businesses) can be understood as rooted in either a *dominator* or *partnership* continuum. The world we know is foremost a

<sup>1</sup> McKenna lectures abound on YouTube. See the channels “MckennaCountrCulture” and “Fractal Youniverse.”

dominator culture. It's popularly known as a patriarchy, though we could specify elaborately, as bell hooks does, calling our power system an "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy." Eisler was insistent that a matriarchy would also be a system of domination. Communism and capitalism, as we've witnessed them in action, she says, are also dominator cultures, as they're both based in *authority* and *hierarchies of power* of one or more individuals, groups, and ideas ruling over other individuals, groups, and ideas.

A Viennese Jew who fled Nazi-dominated Europe as a child, Riane Tennenhaus Eisler witnessed several twentieth-century social movements. She pubesced in revolutionary Cuba, where her family first found refuge before coming to America. She studied sociology and law at UCLA, married, had kids, found feminism, divorced, became an activist, cultural historian, and best-selling author. Her public works, which include the founding of both the Spiritual Alliance to Stop Intimate Violence and the Center for Partnership Studies, as well as several books, all take aim at these questions, which she outlined in her first book, *The Chalice and the Blade*:

*Why is our world so full of man's infamous inhumanity to man—and to woman?*

*How can human beings be so brutal to their own kind?*

*What is it that chronically tilts us toward cruelty rather than kindness, toward war rather than peace, toward destruction rather than actualization?*<sup>2</sup>

She didn't get it. Eisler didn't (nor do I) buy the idea that man is innately fearsome, with selfish genes, or that life is nasty, brutish, and short. In *The Chalice and the Blade* and *Sacred Pleasure*, Eisler excavates evidence of non-dominator ways, like in ancient Sumer, where divinity was found in Inanna, queen of the underworld, goddess of love, sensuality, fertility, procreation, and war. Or, take the *Tao Te Ching*, an ancient Chinese

2 Riane Eisler, introduction to *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1987), xiii. This alternative history of Western society and culture (translated into twenty-six languages) presents Eisler's ideas of dominator versus partnership models. In *Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth, and the Politics of the Body* (1995) (my favorite), Eisler continues her study. Pleasure, including sexual pleasure, Eisler suggests, is a natural incentive of kinship and cooperation, whereas pain, or the threat thereof, is a mode of domination. One could read this book as advocating free love, or freeing ourselves to make love as if it's a divine human right (one chapter is titled "Waking from the Dominator Trance: The Revolution in Consciousness and the Sexual Revolution"). *The Gate: A Memoir of Love and Reflection* (2000) is a simple storying of Eisler's voyage from Vienna to Cuba to America, in which she no-shame notes a sexual attraction to her father. She also details her experiences dating privileged wannabe revolutionaries in Cuba, teenage boys who reminded me of Occupy-nostalgic male millennials I met in New York circa 2012. Would that those boys had read my other favorite Eisler, *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics* (2007). Here Eisler shows how our economic systems are rigged against nurturance and well-being (and women and children), favoring bottom lines and immediate return above human and natural life—for instance, economic indexes like GDP read great during times of war, and who wants to pay teachers?

text that describes, Eisler writes, “a time when the yin, or feminine principle, was not yet ruled by the male principle, or yang, a time when the wisdom of the mother was still honored and followed above all.”<sup>3</sup>

There’s an old joke that goes:

*What is capitalism?*

*The exploitation of man by man.*

*What is communism?*

*The opposite.*<sup>4</sup>

Not its opposite, but an alternative to domination—Eisler termed this *partnership culture*. She found sparse evidence of it in recorded history, perhaps because documentation is a mode of domination (early records tend to be legalistic, e.g., public records of private property). (“All property,” I declared, on my first acid trip, “is theft!”) Tripping to see Riane, I was hoping she would give me more examples of partnership in action. I was inspired by her partnership imagination, thinking in terms of “hierarchies of actualization,”

<sup>3</sup> Eisler, intro to *The Chalice and the Blade*, xv.

<sup>4</sup> I would like to suggest that we already live within both, capitalism and communism. Capitalism being a valued global money system, and communism = reality. We are so interconnected, it’s scary! Truly, it terrifies most egos—recognizing how interdependent we are, how our mothers and fathers and teachers and leaders and friends and peers and politicians and media makers have formed us, and we them. Our mutual responsibility. We belong to the same ecology. Same earth. Collective consciousness. No matter how rich you are. No matter how much time and space—property and private planes—you can buy to imagine yourself as separate from the rest. We are connected. We share languages, economies, ecologies, biologies. We share *trauma*: guilt, fear, shame, harm, and hauntings—PTSD, it’s a package deal, reproductive and destructive.

wherein societies and cultures, or *we*, people, work to empower one another. I believe this: that one person’s talents, interests, abilities, and POV do not detract from another’s, that our gifts and disinterests can highlight, reinforce, transform, and complement one another, as orange does purple, and how muscles must rest after exertion to grow healthfully, or how pleasantly phalluses fit in orifices, and how silence can’t exist without noise, or how we breathe in *and* out and if we didn’t we’d all die just the same, and how all language is communal, and still, fruits and vegetables come in more tones than we have names for, and how gut microbes thrive in such diversity, though some may prefer the placebo of store-bought pills. Now, I might sound like a hippie, and what would that mean? We’ve come up with so many labels of dismissal. This I’ve felt so much, so so so so so much, that I’ve considered giving it up: all systematic language, because so much—too much!—of its use is to dominate.

\* \* \*

Dominator culture needn’t honor a dictator. Nor simply a state or religion, a constitution or bible. Dominator culture now functions most popularly, actively, and insidiously as the voices in our heads.

dichter dictation diction dictator using ones baton  
as a dick or viceversa versasvice culture is nice  
*everything who announces hurts my eyes*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Mor, “about writing about—a work in progress,” *DarkMatter/WALLS*, January 1, 2015, <http://barbaramor.blogspot.de>.

One voice in my head says EVIDENCE. It goes: propriety. The powers that be won't take you seriously unless you speak rationally. Source: Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* on Hilterian Big Lies. Contra: Zen Buddhism and "the planting of seeds." Or! Tell them ("Who?" "Shh! You know...") about how Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx studied ancient woman-oriented groupings, specifically the mother-right concepts presented to them by J. J. Bachofen. Show how Engels and Marx based their grand theories on these ancient communal matrifocal systems, feminine-led communisms, without justly sourcing, unlike mensch McKenna. Cite: *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth* (1987) by Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor. Then, a voice I picked up in college chides me: *Oh, no one will take THAT seriously. Goddess worship, c'mon, you might as well drop out and found a feminist commune.* ("I'd love to.") And then—thank YOU—artist Hannah Black chimes in, declaring:

*Our liberation does not have to be grounded in any preceding factual reality.*

*The question of the liberation of women does not have to found itself on an existing historical patriarchy, any more than the question of the liberation of black people has to begin from the superiority of African cultures.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Hannah Black, "Witch-Hunt," *Tank*, Spring 2017, <http://tankmagazine.com>.

Hear, hear. & Audre Lorde:

*Women see ourselves diminished or softened by the falsely benign accusations of childishness, of nonuniversality, of changeability, of sensuality.*

*The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The Black mother within each of us—the poet—whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free.<sup>7</sup>*

Which is to say: I hate explaining myself.

\* \* \*

I remember little of my meeting with Riane Eisler, or I remember it as I usually remember things. While I'll rarely recall more than a few words said in sequence, physical locations are imprinted such that, back at Riane's, I'd be able to make coffee, deliver it into the parlor, take out the trash, take her boxy Volvo for a spin, take a Vitamin-B pill, use the restroom, gaze into three mirrors, find all of Riane's published works in her office and then find the same titles, in different languages, in the living room—all without asking where anything was, so long as nothing had been moved. We were in her home for under two hours.

I remember Riane's kindergarten-teacher smile, her serene mouth and chasmic eyes. It seemed

<sup>7</sup> Audre Lorde, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 83.

her mind was elsewhere, or open. Her educator's voice. Generational divides. Her Silent to my millennial.<sup>8</sup> I acted what felt like crookedly polite, sitting upright on the edge of a fine sofa. Eisler's home was fortunate, a mini-mansion, decorated with what in my white secular schooling were called "cultural artifacts," Middle Eastern figurines and the like. I remember Eisler calling the media "weapons of mass distraction," and my audio recording confirms this. She mostly quoted her books and lectures. I wanted something I didn't know how to get her to give me, so she gave me exactly what I needed: nothing but a question.

The question Riane asked me was:

*"How can we brand my ideas for your generation?"*

\* \* \*

When Ingo asked me to contribute a Solution for communism, I immediately thought of Riane Eisler because no one else wanted pieces on her. I'd pitched an interview with Eisler to six publications already. (Publications almost never say no to me.) So she's an eighty-six-year-old white woman whose work you've never heard of except maybe through New Age-ism. Her books are academic, dense; they're Western master's tools.

Branding for my generation means seduction, simplicity, instant impact. Symmetrical faces

8 They're rich. See Neil Howe, "The Silent Generation, 'The Lucky Few' (Part 3 of 7)," *Forbes*, August 13, 2014, <https://www.forbes.com>.

and other designs repeat until we think we get it. (It's hieroglyphic.) Though Eisler writes extensively about sex and pleasure (a politics of sex and pleasure!), she's never publicly embodied that herself. That would be a viable brand. We like our heroes to personify their ideals. Legibility = inside = outside. Eisler may be promoting a sexy, saleable radicality, but she looks like Nancy Reagan in liberal drag. A lawyer, social worker, historian, and self-described pragmatopian, her methods are the opposite of on-trend. Too practical, too verbose. Too real? Really, Eisler's ideas are almost *too obvious* until you start putting them into practice. But that's not an easy sell. We want the pill, the lipstick, the surgery, the gun, the selfie, the fantasy. Buy it, one click, you're it.<sup>9</sup>

Another thing I thought when Ingo asked me to contribute to this anthology was, *I don't fucking know*. I've always been wary of people who portend, like they know what's what, because I've studied the past and waaaaaaay into the future (they call me Sci-Fifi) and what I've discovered is: we dunno. Mama matrix most mysterious! That's the crux of the game it seems? The void devoid. Lolololololol. As far as I know I could've been dropped into this simulation this morning with all my memories, my sense of history, set up for me. No one really knows what we're doing here and anyone who claims to—watch out. Beware especially of those who use all the right words. (Write may sound like

9 NB I love lipstick, selfies, and fantasy. My friend Amalia likes to note that communism failed because it wasn't beautiful; it rejected the spiritual, the fantastic. Leftism and liberalism have gone that way too: they're boring! The revolution will be beautiful.

right but begins like wrong.) They're usually (a) hiding something, and/or (b) want something from you. Like I want many things from you! I want you to figure out what they are.

\* \* \*

If the world is made of words, can we rewrite it?

The root of *authority* is *author*, meaning, historically: "father, creator, one who brings about, one who makes or creates."

Like Adam. Who names.

Eve was framed.

\* \* \*

Writing documents minds in time. Rereading Eisler in 2017, I'm frustrated by her credentialism, this need to prove what, to me, should be obviously, popularly, and joyfully practiced. The heft of her books is a drag. We imagine audiences and write to them. Eisler's writing is persuasive, meaning: she imagined an audience unconvinced. She was writing from the academy and the law about history and the economy—more indelible patriarchal structures than I've tried to cut through working in the arts. It's actually tactically brilliant then: asking for *partnership* rather than triggers like *women's rights*, *feminism*, or *equality*. She positions *everybody* as a subject under *dominator culture*, rather than sex-and-gendering the issue with the reactive and potentially othering term *patriarchy*. (#NotAllMen.) Of course, Eisler's books demonstrate how certain

historically valued modes of power have enabled masculinity to trump femininity, men to oppress women, whites to claim supremacy, etc.<sup>10</sup> But! She managed to create a language that doesn't reproduce the oppression it seeks to counter.

*She who opposes force with counterforce  
alone forms that which she opposes and is  
formed by it.*

Language, particularly writing, is a highly effective control mechanism. Branding—advertising—is too. We're talking about ideas crystallized as icons, designed to work on your subliminal mind. Brands are shorthand. Made to trade. Their history is in property (cattle branding). So I don't know about a brand for Riane. I love her ideas because they've liberated me from this felt need to cohere, to be legible like a brand: I am girl, I am woman, Fifi, Fi, Fiona (who?). In describing paradigms, consciousness, and behavior over image and body, Eisler's politics are queer. Trans-sensitive and adaptive, open to complexity and flux. It's nice to have language for your reality.

Eisler's ideas have also helped me excavate insidious thought patterns: internalized misogyny, how

<sup>10</sup> I believe power comes in many forms or feels. Sharing resources like information and touch, for example, is empowering because it gives me energy, purpose, and pleasure. I've tried playing prescribed power games, like rising within the academy, being a sugar baby, and trading in cultural and social capital (art world, advertising), and it depleted me, wasting talents and creating resentments. True power, for me, is like true love—it's about connecting to your nature, your instincts, gifts, and desire, and being appreciated for it.



I bully my vulnerability with a learned rationality and assume judgment where it may not be—the Dads and other dominators that make up my mind. Brutalizing inner voices devastate me daily. These voices, which are learned—listen: *they're everywhere* (we live within dominator culture)—will organize my actions, my relationships, my life and work, if I'm not mindful of them. I don't want to reproduce them. And I really hope this—my millennial polemic, like Eisler's heft—will read victoriously dated soon.

## Queer Communism Is an Ethics

### Futurology of Exclusion

**Georgy:** The emancipation of workers, as we remember, is only achievable through the victory of the proletariat in the class struggle. In order to win this victory, the working class has to gain a class consciousness, to become a “class for itself,” to fully comprehend the situation of their oppression and to end it. In other words, only the workers themselves can be the subjects of their own emancipation. What is curious then is that the emancipation of all the other oppressed groups was viewed by many revolutionaries, and primarily by the Bolsheviks, from a different perspective. We could perhaps call this Bolshevik perspective “emancipation without a subject.”

In the visionary and utopian texts of the revolutionary era, emancipation is often connected to the development of the means of production. A vivid example is August Bebel, according to whom the path to women's liberation from “kitchen slavery” lay through electrification and the scientific organization of food preparation. It was still a woman, however, who engaged in cooking in an electrified kitchen, in accordance with strictly calculated scientific recipes, although such labor no longer resembled slave-like toil, but was rather akin to the work of a scientist in a laboratory. Yet the system of relations, or the ethos, is not revised within this vision of the future. Bebel's faith in the

liberating force of technology became the basis of the Bolsheviks' emancipatory project, in which almost all energy was invested in the construction of factory-kitchens while the principle of gendered division of labor itself was never questioned or reviewed.

Or let us take another example: under capitalism, disability carries a stigma and is viewed exclusively as a burden. The state of emancipation and integration of people with disabilities or people with mental-health issues after the October Revolution was, frankly speaking, appalling. Outright eugenics was offered as a "solution." In the revolutionary vision, advances in technology would not emancipate people with disabilities from the capitalist stigma of defectiveness but would rid society of such people. According to Trotsky, for instance, one of the unconditional achievements of socialism would be *artificial selection*, allowing for the cultivation of a new "sociobiological type" of human.

Oksana: Yes, and as we proceed further in time, into postwar science fiction, we observe the same image of the future. All hopes are attached to technology, while humans are seen as its function. Moreover, this technicism is compounded by bio-determinism. This is most obvious in the writings of Ivan Yefremov, who, following the logic of the growth of productive forces, ends up an essentialist.<sup>1</sup> In the future, the earth is only going to be populated by what is beautiful, the very best, healthy—for instance, according to Yefremov and

<sup>1</sup> Ivan Antonovich (Antipovich) Yefremov (1908–1972) was a Soviet paleontologist, science-fiction writer, and social thinker. (All notes are by the translator.)

today's conservatives, the basic, the fundamental, the unchanging. People of the future, in Yefremov's vision, are all beautiful and healthy, while the gender binary is the foundational principle of being.

Far from being about the future, such a vision is entirely about the present (here I agree with Fredric Jameson, who interprets science fiction this way). In order to see the present, one has to estrange it,<sup>2</sup> and in science fiction, especially of the utopian kind, this estrangement is achieved via a special operation: the present changes its appearance yet still maintains some essential qualities—an axiology, basic principles and values. Here, the most obvious example is the position taken by the Strugatsky brothers.<sup>3</sup> They declared that the heroes of the future they depict are based on their contemporaries and friends, "the best people of today." One of the chapters in their novel *Noon: 22nd Century* (1961) is entitled "Almost the Same." In other words, people of the future are "almost like us," they are like "the best people" of the present. Thus the

<sup>2</sup> "Estrangement" (in Russian, *ostranenie*) is a term that was introduced by Viktor Shklovsky in 1916. It refers to the artistic technique of presenting the familiar in an unfamiliar or strange way in order to enhance audience's perception of the familiar and to avoid the "automatism of perception." The term is sometimes rendered as defamiliarization effect, estrangement effect, distantiation, alienation effect, or distancing effect. This has caused some confusion for those English scholars who mistake the German word for estrangement, *Verfremdung* (introduced by Bertolt Brecht, who almost certainly borrowed it from Shklovsky) with *Entfremdung* (alienation).

<sup>3</sup> Arkady (1925–1991) and Boris (1933–2012) Strugatsky were Soviet-Russian science-fiction writers who collaborated throughout most of their careers. Many of their works have been translated into English, including *Hard to Be a God* (1964) and *Beetle in the Anthill* (1980).

ethical problems of the socialization and enculturation of Soviet men (I cannot say “people,” because all of the Strugatskys’ characters are male) did not exist for these writers.

The ethical problems, orientations, and values that we are able to distill from Soviet science fiction would be labeled exclusionary by intersectional feminism. People with physical disabilities, people with mental conditions, homosexuals, queers, “unattractive” and “unintelligent” people do not exist in the communist future, not because they did not exist in the Soviet present but because they did not “exist,” in the sense that their interests were programmatically ignored.

Science fiction as an axiological constellation excludes all these “deviations” by simple omission. For this type of exclusion one does not need gas chambers, national legislation, or religious fundamentalists. This exclusion is clean and bloodless. It is simply a rewritten world. A “healthy” world—medicalized, ableist, sexist, and so on, following the list of exclusions.

**Georgy:** Omission functions as repression. It reminds me of a fragment from one of the *Star Trek* movies. The characters from the future find themselves back in the 1980s, in a hospital on Earth. At one point, as they’re being chased, they are blocked by an old woman being wheeled to surgery. The doctor from the *Enterprise* gives her a pill while mumbling disapprovingly, comparing the medical treatment of the twentieth century to the tortures of the Inquisition. The pill instantly cures the old woman. Science fiction here works, in a sense, like magic. The fantastical

pill relieves both the illness itself and its social connotations—isolation, helplessness, and the burden of care that falls on the relatives. The sociological imagination is no longer challenged by the need to question societal conventions—all that is not pleasant will simply disappear with the development of science and technology.

But this is not a Marxist vision at all. In this regard it is useful to turn to early Marx, for whom overcoming alienation is not an effect of anticapitalist revolution (as imagined by many) but one of its most important conditions. It is exactly in the will to overcome alienation—to subject social norms to a radical revision—that a revolutionary subject becomes capable of destroying the hated world order.

Among recently published science fiction, Kim Stanley Robinson’s novel *2312* (2012) stands out in this regard. Robinson questions the faith in a technologically driven emancipation without a subject. In the world created within his book people have explored the entirety of the solar system; outer space is connected to the earth by gigantic elevators; life expectancy of the “spacers” (people inhabiting other planets) can reach up to five hundred years; the means exist for overcoming the sexual binary; and asteroids are utilized for the needs of agriculture and as a means of transport within the solar system. Meanwhile, against this backdrop, three billion out of the ten billion earthlings live below the poverty line while five to six billion live just above it. In other words, the present social composition of the world remains intact. Oppression remains, violence continues, inequality only increases.

Technologies, even the most progressive and advanced, are not sufficient for emancipation. We need a subject who demands a revision of social conditioning and relations, and insists on a completely different set of ethical imperatives.

### From Technological Imageries to the Imageries of Relations

Oksana: In and of itself, in the absence of a subject of emancipation, technology is not a “neutral” liberatory force. Women’s needs were never prioritized—that is why technology, to paraphrase Larisa Reisner, “is *not* on our side.” For instance, an effective method for painless birth still has not been invented. This issue is not just insignificant but faces vehement opposition from the conservatives. Despite the developments in medicine, giving birth is still a dangerous, traumatic, painful act for a woman.

However, we are convinced a radical feminist utopia is not simply about safe and painless births, but rather about freeing a woman from the oppression of biology, about extracorporeal conception and extrauterine fetal incubation. Women should not have to give birth. Today this is not a fantasy: major advances have been made in the field of the creation of an artificial womb. At the same time, such technological perspectives pose a number of ethical questions. Some feminists look at the innovations in the sphere of reproductive technologies with reservation, suspecting that ectogenesis can be turned against women’s interests and become yet another instrument of our oppression, alienating women from the “means of reproduction”

of humanity. In short, technology demonstrates both emancipatory and conservative potential, depending on the ethical imperatives of those controlling it.

Not to mention that extracorporeal conception opens up the possibilities for the practice of eugenics, or “artificial selection.” Today, morality is exclusionary and based on segregations of the “healthy” and the “ill”—under such morality these technologies could become the basis for production of “healthy,” “normal” people, without any “defects” or “diseases”—in a sense, producing segregation as such. Meanwhile, “disorder” and “disease” are not objective realities but social constructs and instruments of exclusion.

So what is it that we offer? What should be the focus of a radical imagination today? We affirm that queer communism is primarily an ethics—or a certain type of intersubjective relationship among people. Imageries of the future should turn from the technological imagination toward envisioning new types of relations defined by ethical imperatives of inclusivity and a refusal of quantitative measurements of oppression. We see the world of the future as the realm of a conscious ethical choice, as the space for nonnormative people, where there is no majority because everyone is vulnerable, albeit in different ways. What kind of world is it? In this world, for instance, it is as impossible to imagine a bus without a wheelchair ramp as it is inconceivable nowadays to think of one without doors. In this world no one is bothered by the fact that the ramp is unfolded at each stop. In this world, Braille signage is found in all public spaces, not just at contemporary art exhibitions or in other spaces marked as “special.”

The world of the future, just like the world of today, will be inhabited by people with physical disabilities, people with mental conditions, people with “diseases,” people of all sorts; but their specificities will not make them a “minority”—isolated, marginalized, bearing the stigma of unhappiness. This is the utopia we want to work toward.

### Revolutionary Betrayal

Georgy: I have always been inspired by Walter Benjamin’s position with regard to the link between ethics and politics. Today it seems there is some fatigue regarding this author, yet his idea of revolutionary betrayal is too dear to me to reject for the sake of intellectual fashion. I am referring to the text “The Author as Producer” (1934), in which Benjamin cites Aragon’s words: “The revolutionary intellectual appears, first and foremost, as a traitor to his class of origin.” For me this is a universal formula for solidarity. This imperative is obviously directed to all those who are privileged. Benjamin was addressing the bourgeois writers and artists who wanted to be in the avant-garde of revolutionary culture. Yet if we adhere to the matrix of intersectional feminism, which insists on overlapping structures of oppressions and privileges alike, then the imperative of the betrayal could be addressed virtually to everyone.

It was an unexpected discovery for me to find out that a famous painter of socialist realism—Semyon Chuikov—was just such a revolutionary traitor. An ethnic Russian born in Kyrgyzstan (and therefore implicated in colonialism), in 1936 he curated an exhibition against Russian colonialism. The exhibition

took place in Frunze,<sup>4</sup> and was dedicated to a Central Asian uprising in 1916 against the Russian Empire. In Semirechye (the territories of contemporary Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) this revolt was especially violent. Thousands of Kyrgyz and Kazakhs had to flee from the tsar’s avengers and Cossacks to China. The strife had a clear interethnic character, because in the eyes of the local people all Russians were colonizers. Chuikov was fourteen years old in 1916 and possibly witnessed the event. But in 1936 he found himself on the side of the oppressed, thus betraying his Russian colonialist origins.

I feel that solidarity is a conscious ethical choice—it is always such a radical and painful betrayal. That is why I have always been cautious of groups such as the “gay-straight alliance” or “male feminist allies.” These do not subvert the matrix of oppression but rather reinforce it: the dominant group reasserts its position. Consider, for instance, a group called “bourgeoisie for workers’ rights”—it sounds laughable, right? Why then does “men for the rights of women” sound normal?

That is why, should we make ethics the subject of a utopian imagination, it would not be about “hetero-sexuals for the rights of LGBT,” but, for instance, SVSEM—the Society for the Voluntary Self-Elimination of Men. We wish not only for a classless world, but also for a world without divisions into men and women, but in order for this to happen, men first have to disappear!

<sup>4</sup> Frunze was the name of the Kyrgyz capital from 1926 to 1991, when it was renamed Bishkek.

## A Feminist Dictatorship

Oksana: Indeed, it is hard to come up with at least one good reason to justify the continued existence of the concept of “man” in a utopian world free of patriarchy. What is a man? When we encounter a person, say, on a street, we do not determine that they are a man by establishing if they possess a certain set of genitalia; instead, we test their gender—clothing, mannerisms, some secondary and tertiary features. “Manhood” is a conceptual construct, implying a set of masculine traits. And this entire package is, without exception, a function and an effect of patriarchy. That is why constructions such as “men for women’s rights” or “straights for queer rights” are in fact analogous to phrases like “bourgeoisie for workers’ rights” or “bees against honey.” It is an attempt to keep one’s privileges. Not revolutionary, but a cosmetic reformist path.

In this sense, the Society for the Voluntary Self-Elimination of Men does indeed sound revolutionary. It correlates with the Marxist idea of the transition from class-based to classless society through an intermediary form—a dictatorship of the oppressed class, the proletariat. By analogy: the path to a free and genderless society is via a feminist dictatorship, or via a radical denial of the privileges of the dominant group.

Our opponents would say that the word “dictatorship” sounds somewhat threatening and violent, and that the “majority” is content with the current gender system. However, our opponents do not notice that they already exist under the conditions of a dictatorship—in a heterosexist, cisgender-normative matrix, that every woman supposedly “freely chooses,”

having passed through the filters of socialization and enculturation, the school of “carrots and sticks,” social censure and approval, which taught her how to feel and what to wish for. Nonetheless, such training (programming one to reproduce the gender-segregated hetero family with children) is not always successful. Adrienne Rich, in her famous essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (1980), wrote about heterosexuality as imposed on women and “maintained by a variety of forces, including both physical violence and false consciousness”—and the same can be said of the gender model in general. Still, many people do not fit into this system. Rich writes of women who resisted compulsory heterosexuality, “often at the cost of physical torture, imprisonment, psychosurgery, social ostracism, and extreme poverty.” These “deviations” from the prescribed model are legion: child-free women, single mothers, LGBTIQ+. The plus sign demonstrates that the number of deviations that an advocate of traditional values has to struggle with is infinite. These are systemically excluded people, to whom the normative axiology denies “happiness” and “self-fulfillment,” and at times humanity itself. What about the insiders? What about those women who have “found happiness in family life”—is each one happy and fulfilled? Without delving too much into the details, we can recall the statistics on domestic violence, or rather, putting aside euphemisms, the statistics regarding the *systemic violence of men against women and children* (in Kyrgyzstan, according to the official figures, around two thousand women become victims each year, while human-rights defenders unanimously agree

that the real numbers are many times higher). What is this violence if not the routine work of a patriarchal dictatorship's overseers? In other words, loyalty of some amorphous "majority" to the existing order is, at the least, debatable. Not to mention the "multitude of minorities" whom the system punishes without any disclaimers or illusions.

A feminist or rather *queer dictatorship*, is not the dictate of a "majority," but a redistribution of privileges toward the former "minorities" (while women are not a statistical minority, politically they are). A fundamentally different socialization and enculturation—without the imposition of depressing male and female "destinies"—will produce another map for the desires of the "majority," or, to be more exact, will eliminate this very concept ("majority") in relation to sex and sexuality.

We find that the existing system is historically doomed—however, for its demolition we need the consolidated efforts of the oppressed. We do not deny that for many men these frameworks are too narrow because the system is crude and rigid. We welcome the desire of men to join the struggle; however, the representatives of the dominant group must realize the role allocated to them by the system (here we can cite the example of Chuikov, but also of Engels, a representative of the bourgeoisie, who did not try to prove that "the rich also cry")<sup>5</sup>—in order to consciously refuse to play this role. The denial of patriarchy as the systemic power of men

<sup>5</sup> *Los ricos también lloran* (1979) is the title of a Mexican telenovela that was popular in the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

would not lead to equality; on the contrary, it would gloss over and conserve the mundaneness of violence and discrimination, and it would weaken and undermine feminist struggle. In this sense, the Society for the Voluntary Self-Elimination of Men could become the first step of fearless solidarity.

### Radical Solidarity

**Oksana:** But here we will inevitably face questions about the practices of shedding one's privileges, about the everyday, about the forms of activism, if you wish, *about the culture of betrayal* by the dominant groups. SVSEM sounds awesome, but what does it mean in practice to become a member?

**Georgy:** There can be no good men, just as there can be no good capitalists. It is not about individual men but the space they occupy within the system of oppression. After all, no one chooses the position of an oppressor voluntarily, so I do not see any reason to hold on to it. The very first step on the path of revolutionary betrayal must be the public rejection of one's masculinity, of one's privileges as an oppressor. You could, for instance, wear a button with the slogan of the movement: "It is shameful to be a man." If you wear such a pin you would certainly turn into an object of constant interest and, at times, aggression. You will have to explain yourself and defend yourself, just like the oppressed groups have to under patriarchy.

Still, revolutionary betrayal will not turn a representative of a dominant group into the oppressed. This is extremely important to remember. A pin is easily removed, while to stop being a woman is not equally

straightforward. Revolutionary betrayal should not be misconstrued as a recipe for revolutionary transformation akin to the naive liberal imperative to “be the change you want to see in the world.” To give up one’s privileges is but a basic condition, an entry ticket, the first point in our “code of honor for queer communists,” the spark that starts the fire (pardon the expression).<sup>6</sup> It is a declaration of resolve to face the challenge of equality. Because in order for things to become better for the multitude some will have to forego their comfort. There is no other recipe for a revolutionary redistribution of public goods apart from expropriation—or, in Bulgakov’s words, “to take away and to divide up.”<sup>7</sup> However, the notion that the expropriated goods could include the resources whose uneven distribution is linked to patriarchal exclusion and oppression—free time, resources of representation, homely comforts, and the like—is not self-evident for many representatives of the dominant groups that advocate equality and the emancipation of the oppressed. Revolutionary betrayal is the declaration of resolve, a utopian (but not idealistic) declaration of intent, which will only be realized in full when an individual gesture turns into a mass revolutionary practice.

Translated from the Russian by Mohira Suyarkulova

<sup>6</sup> *Iskra* (The spark) was an illegal revolutionary newspaper founded by Lenin in 1900 in order to unite and organize the workers’ party in Russia.

<sup>7</sup> This quote, from Mikhail Bulgakov’s 1925 novel *The Heart of a Dog*, can also be translated as “to subtract and to divide.” These words belong to the book’s main character—a dog who turns into a human—a satirical incarnation of the slovenly and uneducated “new man” born of the revolution.

## Children

It is said that human beings differ from other animals in many ways: they laugh, they make tools, they have hands and, accordingly, a mouth for language, and they can contemplate their sex between their legs as well as the stars above their heads. In reality, however, the only difference over which there can be no confusion is childhood, as humans are the only animals that, being born too soon, are formed in the outside world and in extreme dependence on other bodies. In contrast with foals, which rise to their hooves as soon as the mare releases them onto the ground, or cats, which immediately start struggling on rooftops, we humans take many years before we stand upright, before we acquire the ability to speak, before we amass the assorted resources and signs that will enable us to become a more or less autonomous example of our species.

Childhood is a curse, a fate, and a privilege. It proves us to be dependent creatures, and it is never fully concluded. Moreover, it forces us to build a backbreaking, binding, and artificial higher authority, a society. Aristotle’s *zoon politikon* is the trademark of the only species that, as well as progeny, has *children*; the only species that produces not only equals but also its own unequals. What does this mean?

First, that anthropology, unlike zoology, is based on perpetual newness. Childhood lasts so long that it shapes another internal, continually new species that coexists with what is, properly speaking, the human species, and accuses it, challenges it, corrects it, and in



the end confirms it. Every generation harbors the possibility of transforming the world, because difference, as Hegel would have it, is conveyed from within unity. The only true novelty, the only possible novelty, always alive and always denied, is the one that serves as a channel for the tradition of coitus. Thanks to coitus—and to the “child” species constantly rendered extinct and renewed—History advances in very small steps.

Second, it means that anthropology, unlike ornithology, is based on trust. “Child” is another species, because even though it emerges from inside the body, it arrives at home suddenly and has no origin, just like a stranger, an immigrant, or a foreigner. The child is, so to speak, the only stranger, immigrant, or foreigner that is not only not rejected by us but instead, by virtue of having a body, inspires tenderness in us rather than disgust; the only stranger, immigrant, or foreigner who demands respect, not anger, from us. Childhood is the only unequal power relationship that is decided without the use of force or resistance in favor of the weaker party. It is an immediate nonbiased relationship between unequal bodies in which the strongest, rather than spontaneously using his power to destroy the weakest, recognizes his beauty and superiority. The outcome of this is that the small, naked, helpless child in the cradle, at the mercy of adults, always expects the best and not the worst of his parents, whom he disarms with an immaculate, trusting smile. Every fairy tale, in fact, inverts the ontological order that presides, despite its failure, over our social universe—the ogre who threatens Tom Thumb, the witch in Hansel and Gretel. Before the Hobbesian state can put an end to giants,

witches, and ogres, children have already established a Rousseauian order of primal trust and reversed inequality. The beginning is not the Word but rather breastfeeding.

Third, it means that, unlike fish farming, anthropology bases its excellent qualities on care. Childhood—a time of radical vulnerability and dependency—lasts long enough for a connection to be established between the process of humanization and the repeated attention to bodies, which thus acquire individuality and value by dint of being stared at and handled in detail. Human life is only sacred because it is fragile. If we follow the logic applied by Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and Karl Marx to labor, we are forced to accept that a body is worth the same as the time we devote to caring for it. “Children” are not born; rather, they are “produced” with looks, caresses, and nappies. Biology and genetics are the barbarous superstitions of patriarchal societies that, out of self-interest, coat the sovereign truth: the truth that it is care and not lineage that makes human bodies valuable. Neither the genital patriarchy nor the capitalism of carelessness (as Bernard Stiegler describes it) can understand that the value of humankind, our interest in its survival, derives from women—yes—not from their bellies, but from their hands. And that is why everyone can—and in the future should—be a woman. In the beginning, there was neither the Word nor the Gene but the Mother. And it does not matter what that mother’s gender is or their relation to “childhood.”

Fourth, and to contain or counterbalance our optimism, it should also be noted that the duration of

childhood, and the production of the “child” through dependence, means that anthropology, with its recognition of the value of the individual body, is inextricably linked to psychology. We are valuable thanks to the very care that fixes our desires, which does so by means of ties that, as Freud rightly described, we foresee as being neurotic, subjective structures. If newness, trust, and care make History progress in tiny steps, this subjective structure, which also falls within the dependency of childhood, constantly brings it to a halt or at least stops it from making great leaps and bounds. From Plato to Mao, from Sparta to Pol Pot, the naive and dangerous utopia of building a “new man” has sought to counter the brakes of psychology by combating the dependence between bodies that have been made to depend—without mothers or family—directly on the Leader or the Party, thereby paradoxically prolonging the childhood that this utopia sought to deactivate or interrupt. Though equally destructive, consumerist financial capitalism, the sole force that really exists, has been far more successful in this task, as its illusorily independent “new man” has put an end to the dreams of communism, at least for the moment, at least in their classic format.

The struggle today is between the championing of the narrowest identity-based dependencies and the independence of neoliberal consumption in crisis. Each of these forces fuels the other. It is fair to say that two historic institutions, Christianity and Disneyland, have placed childhood at their center. As the eccentric English Catholic G. K. Chesterton clearly explained, Christianity obtains its immense “populist” credit

from two contradictory and complementary scenes: the Crucifixion and the Nativity. Along with the worship of sacrifice and defeat, shockingly displayed on the cross, Christianity establishes as its fulcrum the cult of the child, god made flesh, poor and persecuted, kept safe by his saintly parents: a trio—father, mother, and child—that Hegel would later consecrate as the nucleus of the bourgeois reproduction of the Spirit, Freud as the matrix for oedipal neurosis, and Engels, in his famous treatise on the family, as the obstacle blocking human progress toward communism.

Capitalism has also placed the cult of the child at the center of the Market. We know that childhood is not just the outcome of a mother’s caresses but also a relatively recent historical product. Childhood has grown longer as the fight against capitalist exploitation has defeated child labor (which Marx, by the way, approved of) and has imposed, in the West at least, schooling and play as the inalienable rights of childhood. Childhood, stolen from capitalism, has since been rescued by capitalism itself, not only as the “bourgeois family” (today shattered by the various egalitarian marriages and partnerships) but also in the form of the worship of the child that straddles and betrays that of Christianity: the “child” is a fetishist product of the market, which has transubstantiated it into a commodity; in other words, the opposite of a body that is the subject of care and attention, like in the Nativity scene. The “commodity” is precisely the body that has disappeared in the digestion and the dissolution of all objects (everyday or symbolic) in the destruction by fire associated with the rapid consumption of exchange values.

Childhood, filched from factories and workshops, has been transposed to Disneyland; in other words, to the leisure industry, where it appears as a pure means of raising the value of capital, as untidy or unheeding as a screw or a hamburger. The market, which blurs the boundaries between things to eat, things to use, and things to look at, turns the cult of the child into another comestible, which explains this paradoxical aesthetic combination of supreme sentimentalism and supreme indifference characteristic of the Western consumer.

Unlike these two traditions, historical communism has not known what to do with children. At the center of the communist myth there is another crucified figure and loser, that Spartacus killed on the road from Capua who would survive in the subconscious of the “human class” par excellence: the proletariat. The proletariat is Christ, the sufferer of a specific pain and the subject of a universal liberation, but it is not the Christ Child. If the proletariat has to be educated, lifted out of ignorance and “alienation,” this is done through an enlightened avant-garde that transposes childhood from the bourgeois family environment and into that of political activism, in which the Party is the Father but not the Mother, and in which dependency, therefore, excludes the caresses and care that raise the value of the individual body and ensure mutual democratic respect between bodies. Without the Mother, the childhood of the communists dependent on the Party is a childhood without bodies—pure means to achieve a higher end—and incapable for that very reason of envisaging the “kingdom of ends” that substitutes the bonds of exploitation with the bonds of brotherly and sisterly dependence.

Christianity and capitalism, in a contradictory manner, placed the cult of the child at their center, whereas historical communism shifted childhood to the cult of the Leader or the Party. In addition, there was another tradition that began in 1789 to bolster more marginal communism, which from the outset gave itself the goal of combating childhood as a condition of the establishment of a political order that is more or less just, more or less democratic. I am referring to enlightened republicanism, whose doctrinal foundation is Kant’s famous definition of the Enlightenment: “man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage.” In political terms, the coming of age of humankind implies that it is no longer dependent on family members (the Father, the Mother, or the Party), with the result that people submit solely to the laws that they enact for themselves. Unlike diamat Marxism this entails supporting the law and even the state, with the constitution at its center, as guarantees that humanity, afflicted by war or neurosis, will not rush at the first hint of crisis into the culpable “immaturity” that feeds all forms of fascism.

This tradition, which attempts to unite Marx and Kant, was defeated by both orthodox communism and victorious capitalism. But it was also vanquished because, in its political struggle against childhood, it ignored not the Child but the Mother as the one who values individual bodies. In other words, no one remembered to include the anthropological fundament that we sought to sum up at the start of this essay: the fact that we associate childhood with three liberating virtualities—newness, trust, and care. There can be no communism without a Mother, and any form that

we might come up with from now on—when the multifarious crisis calls on us to abandon classic communism and at the same time invent a new communism, whatever name it might go by—will have to face this triple challenge: in the face of capitalism, in the face of orthodox Marxism, and in the face of religious identity, it will have to be simultaneously collective, democratic, and maternal. Or, as I have written on many occasions, communism—or whatever it is called—will have to be revolutionary in relation to the economy, reformist in relation to institutions, and conservative in relation to anthropology. In short, there will have to be a Child, the careful “product” of a Mother, restraining the Economy and Parliament from below.

Translated from the Spanish by Sue Brownbridge

## Groucho Marxism

I would like to propose, by way of pondering its possibilities and problems, what we may call, with a wink but also a grimace, “Groucho Marxism.” As the phrase—which, to be sure, is not mine, which, indeed, has been around for years, but whose conceptualization here, as far as I can tell, is my own—suggests, Groucho Marxism combines some of the qualities of the performative oeuvre of Groucho Marx, the early twentieth-century comedian, with certain features of the programmatic writing of Karl Marx, the nineteenth-century philosopher and economist—the Marx, of course, with whom we mostly associate Marxism. What follows are three thoughts on this Marxism. Partly as an homage to the genius of Groucho Marx, whose puns often play with metaphors, but more still because so much of our current political debate is reduced to and run on the basis of metaphors, or what linguist George Lakoff calls frames—initiated, it would seem, by the Right and not the Left, indeed, with the Left by all appearances wringing its body into the most painful and embarrassing of positions to fit the frame as opposed to trying to liberate itself from it in order to think up alternative frames—I thought I would try and discuss this Marxism primarily through metaphors.

“Those are my principles,” Groucho Marx once quipped, “and if you don’t like them, well, I have others.” This Marx was, of course, neither serious nor writing a political manifesto. The gag is not a self-help manual. If none of us would ever stick to our principles

after all, never put our foot to the ground, that is to say, blow with every wind, our social landscape, not to mention our moral scenery, would be as empty as a desert. Talk about the desert of the real. Tragically, farcically, it seems however that it is this very opportunism that has left the current political panorama void of any meaningful points of reference, the remaining Blairites and Clintonians and whatever they are called elsewhere desperately swept up in one gale after another, rolling around like an unfurling bale of hay, the Right hurriedly digging up and out the last natural resources—either ignorant as to the consequences or, more likely, indifferent—while those further afield on the Left latch on, disoriented, to any one cactus in their vicinity that might offer solace, only, of course, to prick their fingers and cut their cheeks and pierce their torsos and slash their, well, you can guess, in the process. To cast our principles aside out of hand would be foolish, indeed, the punch line of a joke; at the same time, to stick to them regardless of the reality at hand would be equally foolhardy. Why hold on to a cactus that’s injuring you everywhere and inspiring you nowhere while you could be, I don’t know, throwing seeds into the air, or digging a tunnel, or plotting a route through or even away from it all. “I worked my way up from nothing to a state of extreme poverty,” Groucho said on one occasion, analyzing capitalism, and raising the question: Why work—or do this work, in this system—at all? If I learned anything at all from watching far too many episodes of reality TV star Bear Grylls climbing barren trees and scavenging rotting animals and drinking his own urine, it is that one’s survival is grounded as

much in a sense of reality, in responding to immediate challenges, as it is in a “sense of possibility” for unlikely alternatives. For those not familiar with Grylls, for those more at ease with high-brow references, I am thinking here, I guess, of what Robert Musil has called *Möglichkeitssinn* and Gilles Deleuze “the diagram,” or even, you might say, those philosophical speculations about the lives of the worlds around us. I am thinking here of the extent to which we should conceive of our environment beyond its immediate use for us or abuse of us, that is to say, if I am allowed to paraphrase Kant here, to treat it *as if* it were another milieu; not another milieu altogether, one pulled from thin air, but a milieu dug up from the same thick soil, from the other ecologies existing there simultaneously, from other roots, from alternative layers.

I remember a joke from my childhood where two people are waiting in front of a traffic light. “It’s green,” one of them says, and the other replies, “A frog.” Pressed by the Right, the aim for the Left, it seems to me, should not be either to cross the road, as New Labour would have done, or to deny that the traffic light has turned green, as much of current progressive politics seems to do. It should be to change the terms of the debate: to frogs. I think Michel Foucault described this process—of not so much opposing as redirecting an already available energy—as judo. My suggestion here would be that we should consider a critical Marxism that treats its principles with a sense of slight relativism, with a firmness of purpose but flexibility of persuasion; a Marxism, if you will, that sets out to achieve *a*, but in the process of achieving *a* makes possible and considers

the advantages and pitfalls of achieving *b*, or *r* or *y*, or indeed  $\mathcal{A}$  or 2 or 8 or % or § or \*.

Every single morning, when I open my newspaper app, I am reminded that these are serious times. That these are ridiculous times. I would like to think that Groucho Marxism, in line with the genre of slapstick that the comedian is associated with, would not be surprised if our diverse and diffractive Historical trajectories, the various dialectics, occasionally slip on a banana peel, as it were. If it was—as Friedrich Engels put it—Karl Marx’s intent to put Hegel’s idealism back on its feet, Groucho, surely, would have wanted to put it on its butt. We are still talking about materialism, but while someone on their feet is continually, restlessly on the move, the person on their butt occasionally sits still, not so much running against and through and toward something or someone, as ruminating, presumably confusedly, on where they came from and where it was again they were thinking of heading—and why.

Everyone speaks of acceleration these days. I don’t know, maybe it is the solution to the problems capitalism poses. But, rightly or wrongly, I always understood capitalism less as one roving hurricane ravishing our world than as a series of interlinked and overlapping and above all mutating hurricanes, some pushing in this direction, others pulling there, and over there, and elsewhere, one winding down as another gathers full speed while a third is midway in its course, and so on. If you accelerate one hurricane—disregarding, I guess, in the process, the casualties that will ensue, the people and homes and lands swept up, torn apart—there are still all these others going about their,

well, business. Philosopher Robin van den Akker made a plea in a Dutch newspaper a while back to slow down our thinking, and I tend to agree. We have fallen. In fact, looking at the Left today, we keep falling—the occasional, often short-lived, uplifting victory aside. Let’s get our bearings before we stand up and return on our course, any course.

“Time flies like an arrow,” Groucho Marx said, whereas “fruit flies like a banana.” The joke asks us to imagine two separate scenarios at once. On the one hand, the logic of the pun’s first clause compels us to read the second in terms of fruit’s aerial trajectory: it flies in the way that a banana would if it was, say, thrown. Marx conjures up an image of an arrow shooting straight into the sky only for it to morph into a banana midair, bending or looping downward, which is a Historical anticlimax by most accounts—come to think of it, it may well be this banana that the dialectic slips over afterward.

On the other hand, of course, the comedian plays with the ambiguity the syntax of the second clause affords: here he is speaking not about fruit flying like a banana, but fruit flies that like, are fond of, bananas. In considering—and laughing about—Groucho’s joke, I was reminded of a blog post by Steven Shaviro I read years ago about the extent to which fruit flies have, or in any case demonstrate, free will. As far as the state of research at that moment was concerned, they do: they have or display the ability to decide to do one thing as opposed to another. This decision, Shaviro pointed out, precedes consciousness; is, you may say, intuitive or affective. Indeed, for the philosopher, free will is not

the consequence of consciousness, but its precondition. What I am trying to say here, I guess, is that we make decisions on our feet, read one pattern and not another, choose one direction over a second intuitively; it's on our butt that we allow ourselves, indeed, are forced, to think through our choices.

Finally, in correspondence with and as a consequence of the above, could we conceive of a Marxism that understands—more, in fact, like Karl's Marxism than he is popularly given credit for—History not in terms of *telos* but in terms of *techne*? *Telos* is an ideal, linear, and universal category. If you understand History teleologically, you presuppose that by its end, *a* or *b* or 4 or @ should have happened—you may in any case try to make it happen, at all environmental or human cost. You know, it's like one of those Hollywood films where every action, every line of dialogue, every character is put in service of the narrative trajectory, where, indeed, scenes that do not contribute to the development of the plot need to be cut. Economy of writing it's called, fittingly. *Techne* however is a material, context-dependent strategy, and hence contingent. For most people *techne* translates as craft, which is to say, the process of crafting, not the crafted product: using your hands to make one thing from another thing. What this means in our terms here is that every time you craft something, say, from a cactus, or from a banana, or from soil, you are feeling out the world, what it might have been, what it is, what it could be, teasing out with each gesture, with each mark, with each mold, alternative realities, realities that in turn make possible, as Ben Lerner recently put it, other rearrangements

of the world and novel affordances, and so on. Here, History is not linear but, yup, relational, or genealogical, or rhizomatic, or diffractive, or whatever model you want to use to describe it. As I hope I have made manifest, my argument is not that Groucho Marxism should not project utopias, but rather that it should picture these utopias as moving targets, or rather still, morphing targets, appearing and disappearing and shape-shifting depending on where you're heading and with whom, or indeed where you've decided to stand or have been compelled to sit down, resembling a bull's-eye one moment, a goal a few seconds later, a fruit salad an hour in, and something altogether different next week, each target requiring another *techne*, each *techne* suggesting, implying, affording alternative targets. In other words, the point is, it would seem to me, to move not in spite of your body but with it, from cactus to oasis to banana peel to quicksand to dunes to banana peel to pond to ...

# Jokes









# Rain for All

Communism needs to be accepted, as it means nothing but the feasible pursual of an acceptable situation by rational means.

The argument that communism didn't work is silly. Since its destruction by the forces of evil, things have been going really well, huh? Atrocities, corruption, and neglect have probably remained at a constant—as concerns individual guilt. However, the rise in technical devices for making life hell for one another—not only weapons, but more perversely the flowers of progress in the market-dominated world: legal automatisms, workplace surveillance, social media, reproduction, telecommunications, advertising—approximately balances out the increase in mobility and in some areas prosperity that has allowed people, theoretically, to escape from the hell they were previously forced to endure—unfortunately often discovering new kinds of hell.

Change is lovely. If anything helps against corruption and neglect, unhappiness, and oppression, it is change. Change, however, also provides new opportunities for atrocities.

The only thing that really helps is people behaving better. The system for this is quite a matter of taste. (Taste, however, is a matter of experience.) It is love of good design that makes me prefer communism to messier systems. Why hope that rich people will be philanthropic, when one could just as well use one's positive energy to rechannel the existing prosperity? If it is only shyness of violence, there must be a way to

rechannel current violence. We have invented carapacio, we should be able to master communism. It is all a matter of design.

My misanthropy and pessimism force me to imagine stricter rules because the existing non-system has shown that without the strictest restrictions, a certain amount of people are unable to exercise any taste regarding their behaviour. This has grown a good deal worse since the beginning of the twentieth century thanks to the increase in freedom combined with the reproduction of US propaganda promoting new standards of tastelessness. The alienation from the reality of subsistence experienced by moneyed customers is set as the desirable normality of the First World, and in our survey-based market, such tasteless, planless, reactive desires determine the inane products that workers are ordered to throw on the market. The spread of capsule coffee that has non-locally accompanied epidemics, floods, and the escalation of several wars in the past years illustrates this beautifully.

**What has happened since the greater part of the Eastern bloc capitulated into non-communism?**

Fighting has not diminished—this, the weapons industry would never allow to happen. But it has become more difficult to find anyone fighting for a public cause of general good. Young moralists nowadays become conservatives, nationalists, or jihadists, following formulae that licence violence against other parts of society, usually giving moralistic reasons. The unspoken idea that the world is not big enough for everyone to live

an acceptable life lies at the base of the specific, petty causes that are preferred by present-day consumers of politics. The fear that life with only a fair share of world commodities would not be worth living drives them to accept injustice and the violence of its execution as necessary and morally justified. Alternatives include self-perception as powerless waif or the “wheel of Fortuna” model, easy to acquiesce to if you happen to be lucky.

Since 1989, the world has seen myth-driven violence flooding back in after several decades in which enlightenment with science and equality fuelled a general human struggle for more well-being around the world—at least it said it did. However, it was dangerous to take general improvement too seriously: many horrific situations worldwide directly go back to the United States’ support of ruthless counterrevolutionary organizations, and in the United States itself progressive initiatives are regularly blocked.

Everyone who travels knows there are billions of idiots on this planet, queuing, dragging possessions around, sharing a narrow canon of subjective impressions—and billions of wise people who travel less. The tourists call them indigenious. They may desire equal opportunities for foolishness, and maybe the world has to go through this midlife crisis. One is equally susceptible to sense and nonsense. Nevertheless:

The most poisonous myth of the current non-system is that being sensible is no fun. In fact, all over the world you will find people being sensible and loving it! They build houses that stand, plant stuff in such a way that it will grow, talk seriously to each

other about things that are important to them, agree that up is up and down is down, and if they adorn this framework with some religious or frivolous fluff, then it is more to fulfil some inner music than to impress their neighbours—with some possible overlap here. In the framework of common sense, there is enough space for a good deal of craziness; the ones being crazy can depend on the framework withstanding their playful onslaught.

Disillusionment, confusion, and the lack of *any* sensible perspective, on the other hand, fuel irrational and pointless self-destructive behaviour such as the consumption of trash food, posting hate, or prowling around feeling important with machine guns. There is always some potential for this, but the lack of a rational basic consensus about the world—the basic indecision about whether there *can* be enough for all or not—together with the high pressure to be personally happy and successful since we cannot save the world—leaves anyone who does not immediately fulfil their short-term desires feeling stupid and lonely. One can stand there and watch everyone else following their whims and principles without a plan, buying stuff and being happy.

In this non-system, it is not fruitful to have any wishes for which you need other people's cooperation. If you are not satisfied you must be too stupid to satisfy yourself, the logic of self-determination explains. So it is best to pretend to be satisfied, or to push and kill until you get what you desire. Thus a society of fake satisfaction and real violence ensues, without direction (everyone wanting up, while many fall or are slowly

transported down, the vertical directions thus usurping any horizontal endeavour), a crowd all pushing one another and thus more or less immobile. Like the air on a summer day that is going to end in a thunderstorm.

The idea of communism takes seriously the difficulty of finding a sensible way of behaving. It will never “work” without a critical mass of conviction, cooperation, and tolerance. The amazing fact is that it has worked already in a number of countries. There is general literacy in China and people have rights, for example. In the grips of Western colonialism, the country would still be a maze of horror decorated with warlords, like many countries in Africa where communism was stopped more swiftly, leaving the continent just as the supremacist West imagined it, an exploitable cornucopia of natural resources populated by more or less cooperative, corrupt rulers and a working population stripped of all rights and means of independent subsistence.

The countries of the Eastern bloc, to this day, have a better homogenised society in terms of class and of men and women. It was only after the fall of the system that the oligarchs and large-scale business criminals were really able to go to town, building, of course, on the unofficial networks established as a parallel market to the communist flow. Many good effects of the mixing of classes still remain in their personal style, if not in their business plans, which may tend toward the opposite. Some found democratic opposition parties. Some build orphanages. All read Pushkin.

True, the systems were abused—every system will be abused. This does not mean that one should use a worse system.

The fact that communism *did* work is not merely a great wonder and blessing. It was the work of many individuals using all their rationality, sense, strength, and intelligence; particularly their ability to look beyond their small individual interests and overcome the panic with which those interested in preventing rational systems of justice try to distract any concerted action.

One could say it partially worked. There were failures in judgement bordering on criminal misgovernment—but compare this to the strategic and purposeful misgovernment used by the colonialists to ruin the power of nations whose resources they wanted to exploit! There were crimes committed on both sides, but a crime committed for the greater good is different from one committed to get ahead personally. It is. Anyone thinking otherwise should go home and crochet their own clothes out of their own hair—that is the scope of their unpolitical moralism.

Crazy and genius people have been at work on both sides; there will always be crazy people. All the more reason for a system built to work (rather than to help a few fortunate survive global horror). One that will allow those people to act who are interested in working toward improvements for all, one that will not count them among the losers and imbeciles. A system that sets good behaviour as normal, so that if you do only what you are expected to do, you are not automatically being an asshole. At the present, people trying to behave harmlessly are still participating in global harm, thanks to the involvement of countries, banks, funds, which always means still more increases in the

erosion and exploitation of people and nature. As long as this dynamic is not fundamentally reversed, socialism remains nationalistic, a deep shame that has been dealt with by footgazing for the last decades. This is why even socialist democracies are not enough: global communism is the only rational way.

—Unfortunately, you say, this world is not made to be rational.

—What?

—Read the pink newspapers. They read like children's playground news.

—Then why does every single theory of the market pretend that agents are rational?

—They don't. Irrationality is part of the capitalist non-system. What is missing is non-egoistical rationality.

—The world is too big to change rationally.

—At one point, life was introduced to the planet. Similar processes of contagion will be of the essence here. There is no relevant difference between a purposeful intervention and mere chance.

### Freedom and Fear

The idea that it is normal to be nasty goes back to a false interpretation of Darwinism, or rather, the latter is one more symptom and example of the bourgeois assholes writing the books. Total egotism, the backbone of the logic of the free market, is seen as rational behaviour in the current non-system. While tiny quantities of altruism are sometimes factored in, as investments in personal well-being through neighbourhood improvement and team-building practice, all completely

voluntary and completely secondary, it is considered legitimate and rational to bunker ever-growing piles of wealth in offshore tax-evasion institutions: funding for a few people's exclusive gated oases in an increasingly dire world, along with a few branded charities and stingy contributions to state violence to keep some appearance of law and order. This misconception of human and animal nature is a criminally painful fallacy. One must not forget that humanity would have starved to death long ago if there was not also an unofficial reality, an everyday culture of moderation and courtesy, which prevailed and guaranteed the survival of the species. And yet it seems that the "mind-set of the sperm"—*Among the 40 to 600 million, I will be the one who makes it*—has been determining the hopes of the world population, on the official level at least. Together with this hope of being the one to make it, of course, a huge fear of the rest of the world has been responsible for the powerful drive of this mentality through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Also, the great monotheisms have reinforced a child-like/authoritarian psychology of promises and fear.

Freedom is, by the way, closely connected to fear. For example, fear of most of the places you could go with your freedom keeps people from using it to an extent where its problems and fictionality would become apparent. The word "freedom" is often understood as the individual, situative, personal freedom *from* aspects of reality experienced as constraints or annoyances—such as an objective assessment of the global situation. In Austria, for example, the Freedom Party promises a huddling together in the fictions of nativity and ownership, a

collective teaming up to pretend not to understand how the world functions and what the country's buildup of wealth has meant in other parts of the world.

Except for an ever-elusive private space shuttle, the affluent are pursuing no goal other than defensive strategies for personal survival. Actually a lot more than survival: conservatism aims to conserve an inequality in which the conservatives happen to be on top. In particular, they are dependent on access to luxurious distractions they need in order to forget about the vague feeling that makes the pointlessness of life appear as a guilt-ridden nightmare rather than a part of its beauty. We in the arts live off this need.

These ideological descendants of conquistadores and colonists project a panic-like mind frame of fighting one's way through a hostile world into civilised reality. Another popular narrative is forcing order on an entropic nature. Their idea of relaxation is not a situation among equal others, perceiving and tolerating one another, but a maximum amount of walls and protection against, basically, reality. Kropotkin, who explained Darwinian evolution with mutual aid, discovered anarchism by watching nature.

As the strong world population shows, not only the biggest assholes and most protected delusionists are able to survive, but so are those who live in realism and peace, help one another, and do not grab more than their share. It is really not necessary to be an unpleasant Hollywood action hero to survive and have a good life, perhaps not one in paradise, but in a beautiful, melancholy world of necessity, competence, and *relative* freedom.

*The farmer and mother on the charity poster has a daily 5 km walk to get water. I admire her. I imagine her walking the 5 km every day, along the dusty road, sometimes hating it, sometimes seeing its beauty, often glad to get away from the clamouring others, often chatting with friends along the way. Building wells is a sensible kind of improvement, as are sewage systems and clinics, the inhabitants of the town will know best what is needed. The huge difference between her life and mine reminds me that at one time everyone lived in such situations. It is not necessarily true that of the two, her life is the nightmare and ours is the paradise. Nightmares are when something goes wrong and there is no help; the pollution; the injustice; the illnesses, HIV, lack of information, lack of solidarity, lack of respect. The machine guns and the dissatisfaction, impotent anger, ugly talk.*

*The time she spends on the walk to get water, on washing rice, cooking, tilling the ground, weaving for money, I spend on the internet in a darkroom of possibilities I cannot all use. I don't think one of us is happier or unhappier. She needs more options, I need less.*

### Realism

The world is not raw, maybe never has been. It is civilised wherever there are people working. Civilised by people, by the organization of nature. People, like nature, play, evolve, use the space they have to make art and technological innovations. To support all the various kinds of peaceful people, resources need to

be distributed in a way that allows everyone to live as well as possible, and that means in beauty more than in wealth. Or to say it better, in wealth of beauty, in wealth of life, not necessarily in wealth of US-dollar-bought commodities.

So the dream industry that tunes desire to US-dollar-bought commodities is one important enemy that can be combated in art. Respect for all alternative values! The US dollar as measure for value is an enemy that must be combated in all areas of life. Respect for all alternative values!

Communism, as I see it, is about what is possible. It is not possible to supply the whole population with Rolexes, Jacuzzis, cars, 3-D cinemas, particularly not individual ownership of these things. It is, however, possible to supply the world population with clean drinking water and healthy food, basic health care and education, access to the sharing of cars, DVD players, PCs, electricity, and the internet. Freedom of movement can be granted to everyone in limited measure, or to some in unlimited measure. We can't all go flying around all the time, the way the upper few million do nowadays. On the other hand, it is not below anyone to till the earth, borrow and lend things, talk to others, explain their needs, clean up their own waste, help build houses, walk as far as their legs will carry them, make hay, watch and milk and shear sheep, program knitting and weaving machines, design clothes, feed the young and the old and the sick in ways that suit them—and not suck the means away from others. In short, what could be called a lowering of standards of living, or an enrichment of life.



The human world is supported by millions of intelligent, wise, skilful, also whimsical, lazy, and stupid women and men. They do the work. To evenly distribute the reduced amount of work thanks to the evolution of machines is the task at hand. All it takes is the design of counterbalances and positive rules. With positive rules I mean rules that tell you how to do things, not merely tell you what is forbidden and leave you to figure the rest out by yourself. Sensible rules that one sees the sense of because one knows enough about the situation to understand their necessity. The Anthropocene need not be obscene. This is the task of communism. It is a very harmless and sensible thing. To oppose it is really to show oneself a nasty person. Why do we smirk and appreciate each other when we do so?

### Nations and Rhetoric

Unfortunately it is the very worst practices of individuals that we have projected onto the behaviour of that unit of global organization, the nation. While it is true that in nature everything grows, this growth is normally not boundless but limited by the laws of relative density and specific weight of the various materials, forming a diversity of leaf shapes, fur, bark, atmosphere, etc. Only by translating everything into one abstract currency, and in combination with aggressive and deceptive behaviour using the power of language and of weapons, does the dogma of growth become a menace to diversity.

It mustn't be thought that language is the enemy. It is just as easy to use language to correct these viral fallacies. The language of D. H. Lawrence, for example, rings with the simple truth orientation of the

poor household he comes from. While the author hates the resigned attitude this culture adheres to, its lack of actionism, its foregoing of any productive aggression or heroism, the view on things from this perspective is perfectly clear: poor people know that the mafia of the powerful is too horrible to take on, it is better to live the way of the rabbit: quietly in a den and when predators come, run. This is of course no use in changing the world. But it shapes language: gives the cadences a resigned, sad tinge, but also the beauty of profound understanding of its subjects. Slovenian has been called such a language.

Heroism, on the contrary, always the language of the naive and soon to fall on their nose, has the problem of being tainted with self-delusion, all the way through to the most basic linguistic phenomena. Collective self-delusion is traditionally the ornament of language as used by the bourgeoisie. (When you regard classical Greek with the eye of a feminist, you can see precisely the place where there still was the beautiful gesture of "I hereby set it down just as it is and not better and not worse," but already this justness was also actively excluding women, slaves, foreigners—in other words, setting down the justness of injustice.)

In the absence of communism, "bourgeoisie" tends to cover almost everyone able to read, for the skill of literacy is now once again learned in hopes of climbing the social ladder, and not in hopes of collectively maintaining and improving the system we live in. With some exceptions, language and rhetoric is used to exaggerate, promote one's own interests, gloss over inopportune points. Instead of apt descriptions of one's

surroundings, things are loved and hated, judgement is passed long before a good picture has been rendered, and this is repeated, sealing hearts with boredom and general distrust.

### Subtractive Methods

What will never work without communism is the individualization of society, the beginnings of which we have been enjoying so much already in social market economies, with their schooling, libraries, employment rights, and social security, but which, since 1989, have been swiftly regressing back to family-based feudalism with elitist, philanthropist-dependent education. Without *seriously* equal opportunities, rights and protection for everyone, it will remain impossible to depart from the old feudal system of the family clan.

To be realistic, these opportunities must be created mostly by subtractive methods. This is an important point. What do I mean by subtractive methods? It is not enough to allow everyone to study; there must be measures to break the lines of succession of the successful who are always unwilling to dilute their power and success. The whole inside/outside kitsch must be cleaned up in serious ways that up to now only communism has ever tread.

### *Why is the family clan a bad thing?*

Families are units of inertia. Like Facebook's famous filter bubbles, they keep you surrounded by the habitual views of who you are and what you can and cannot do. They are, with some exceptions, the opposite of

progressive discussion units or think tanks. Exceptions can occasionally be found in some—very few—family businesses, like Chinese or Austrian mountain farms, usually far away from the temptations of generalised improvement theories, where there is a tradition of having to find innovative ways to incorporate uncontrollable factors like nature, corrupt tax collectors, and scientific progress into a running enterprise. Despite this necessity, all too many family enterprises organise this process via quarrels, feuds, and power struggles rather than a calm discussion of a situation well known to all participants. Taboos and fear are often at the root of stubborn and brutal communication. Here, a rational societal structure and better education for all is proven to help—a state that acknowledges that life is difficult but feasible (counterbalancing the typical breeziness of youth), that names common problems in a respectful way, that does not stigmatise, individualise, and shame everyone who speaks of problems. The relation to the state needs to be trustworthy enough to emancipate individuals, to protect them against the terrorism of closeness.

In most cases, people need to be able to gain a certain distance from their families in order to be able to think clearly and make objective decisions about their lives. They must not be ridden by anxiety either. The whole huddle-or-perish, conform-or-outperform-and-be-mobbed mentality of the free market works strongly against anyone who thinks for themselves as an individual. Subtractive methods are necessary to break the power of the clan and make sure everyone can use their theoretically direct relation to the state without the detour via the family.

This is particularly important for maintaining a serious democracy. An individual must be in a position to think in terms of what is good and feasible as a rule for everyone, and not merely to adjoin to what promises some particular advantage to herself and her family.

So on a very concrete level, every person must be enabled and encouraged to spend some time alone. On the way to work, in various services that every citizen is required to do at some time during the year, and while at rest, there must be opportunities and easy ways to be alone from time to time. At the same time, notorious loners are forced to cooperate with others to a certain measure and in an organised manner. A variety of groups makes it easier to find friends and happy times. Good organization of work also allows people to work alongside one another without necessarily having to love or hate one another.

These things will need to be taught to every generation almost like dogma, and there will always be contrariness and the reflex to do whatever is forbidden. Every generation must be taken seriously as people who are capable of understanding, during the process of a lifetime, the value of such measures as the alternation of trades and the curtailing of family ties. These measures are tailored to the whole scope of life, from the worst-case scenario to the greatest stroke of luck, and designed to help share luck and alleviate anguish—anguish that is beyond the imagination of each new generation of happy-go-luckies; luck that might, thanks to collectivization measures, even hit those Eeyores and Bartlebys who never would begin anything out of certainty of its pitifulness.

### Coupling Slaves and Masters

The measures, thus, must couple activists and bystanders, force people to work together who would normally shy away from the complications, and at the same time make it easy by good design—which means strict rules that are not too numerous and that put everyone in the same situation. This is the objective of the rules—not to regulate everything, just the bare necessities. All this is not new. We just need to make a fresh try at it.

Like in gardening and making alcohol, etc., the “good” bacteria or mild-mannered honest people must be given a good start and not, as in the current situation, the certainty of being looked down on by those greedy agents who grab all the perks while the good guys live as working poor. They will then spread their wholesome culture and normally not need too much control.

Now isn't that the idea of the liberal market? No, for two crucial reasons. The first is that market liberalism sets endless greed as an ideal—whether it explicitly admits it or not. To be satisfied is to start losing. The other is the crucial factor of equal starting chances, which does mean a ban on inheritance and more or less jettisoning the idea of ownership. And subtractive methods.

At the same time, people need to subjectively feel more contented with what is objectively not really a bad situation. The feeling that something isn't right is supplied with culprits and simplistic explanations by the media. The attitude of perpetual discontent has been mythologised by the pop industry, basically since German Romanticism, a reaction to the violent knock-down of budding democracy in the early nineteenth

century. Thanks to individualization, played not on the field of character but on the field of economics, class opposition has remained an unofficial, endless war, coordinated far more easily from above. The dissociation through poverty, meaning lack of access, has bred habits of unhappiness, perpetual discontent, and a blind fighter mentality that, several generations down, has become the grabby and whiny existence of the bargain hunter—if it fails to find a more heroic outlet, such as fighting in the former Yugoslavia, Ukraine, or Daesh.

### International Education

Since global transactions are so easy, it is essential to make “Communism: Civilizing the Rich” a global endeavour. It must become impossible to hoard riches anywhere in the world without paying taxes. How to do this? The technical and practical sides of the subtractive method present difficulties. Obviously, timing is essential. Is there a point in an individual country limiting its citizens’ access to “their” funds? It would often hit the wrong people, but perhaps the right people could survive without extra funds? It is uncertain, black markets don’t usually foster social justice. A hacker attack on financial systems worldwide or a crisis leading to the worthlessness of money for trade are the best I can think of—and yet, it would still need a well-designed system.

*If the Iron Curtain was an ad-hoc attempt to stop the brain drain, i.e. people running away from a necessary, but difficult experiment,*

*then there would be three more tries, according to myth logic. The Bronze Curtain could be something like a hack that suddenly stops all electronic monetary transactions worldwide. Then see what happens. It will fail to create the basis for a stable communist system. The Silver Curtain might then finally be a form developed with elegance and precision, based on experiences from bronze and iron, while the Gold Curtain will already be almost unnecessary, a matter of delicacy and etiquette.*

In a new global system, there must simply be a limit to what money a person has access to—and to what money can procure. In more realistic economies of lack, this has worked quite well in forcing cooperation. However, the wars that were able to create situations where criteria other than the dollar became relevant did nothing to make this a friendly and stable situation.

Reliable protection of individuals is essential so that no one feels obliged to become followers or supporters of this or that criminal, or have any reason to be corrupted or coerced. For us not to be endangered by lies and scams, we also need a reliable level of information, critical insight, and world knowledge.

But for the general public really to be incorruptible, the mentality must change. The mental damage done by colonialism is probably only now reaching its climax—one may hope. It is only now that the great populations of the so-called developing countries, such as India, China, and many parts of Africa, seem to have fully absorbed the grisly

teachings of the colonists: get what you can while you can, don't share more than you are forced to, learn to fight for profit, learn to keep slaves, be maximally competitive, throw away your trash carelessly, and others will have to deal with the problems you ignored.

### Use Existing Forces

In analogy to the search for non-carbon energy sources, attitude reformatting could help with mastering the changes necessary for a sustainable global human situation. Right, but how, apart from the slow mudslides of making more sane consumer decisions? Where is change going on already as we speak? While right-wing populism rallies all people wishing to conserve their privileges, a global communist movement might find a potential army apart from the notorious students who spend a few years with a little activism and a lot of discussing before settling in to their excellent or precarious jobs: a great number of young migrants and second generation mixed-minds have seen the world and are frustrated with their unjust lack of chances. This requires, of course, that these young men and women are not totally saturated with Hollywood survival syndrome and fantasies of climbing the social ladder. Certainly, now (as always) is a good moment for action. The odd situation of a mass of adventurous youth in Europe, and the logical other end of a mass of women left behind, both at loose ends—the structure of a battery—how can this potential be made productive? Europe could really remember: migration is not the crisis, it is a reaction to a crisis. There are a lot of people in new situations right now. This is how and when change happens.

### (Sexual) Reeducation

Kropotkin developed his Darwinist theory of mutual aid after observing the ecosystems of the Siberian tundra. The theory does not assume that all creatures are altruistic, but it observes that the automatism of mutual aid have proved at least as successful as an eat-everything-smaller-than-you mentality. It is obviously a matter of focus: you can focus on the herd of wolves that help each other survive—not building factories, not driving cars, and not massacring more than they need—or you can focus on their habit of eating rabbits and blow that up into a principle.

In current society there is a certain gap between how people behave and how they see themselves. The reduction of the social democratic parties to mere service parties—populism having successively turned subtractive economic measures into umbrella “perks for all” policies—has seriously perverted people's relation to the state (their own state!), which was designed to provide the organizational framework for systematic mutual aid, into a passive attitude of entitlement, lacking understanding of, let alone identification with, the whole. A culture of blame-throwing is simply a bad habit. The West German tendency toward a purist protest leftism avoiding the conflicts of real communism played a decisive role in fuelling this attitude, with the help of US pop culture, traditional *Stammtisch* anger management, and German Romanticism. Even Communists Anonymous (COMA) is a symptom of such purist Romanticism, offering a kind of dark-room for communism as a secret perversion, offering

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a context where communist ideas can be treated like a sexual preference rather than a necessity direly in need of realization.

*(Horny all the time?  
Yes.)*

Is such uncertainty due to lack of education? Does the feeling of insufficiency that befalls us at elections make us seek the outlet of *Allmachtsfantasien*, parading around in Stalin costumes before the closet mirror?

Is this different than what the standard CEO actually wears to work?

Are such people fit for elections?

While a rabbit or a parent may not need to understand their ecosystem to practise instinctive mutual aid, they are also not asked their conscious opinions in elections. I mean to say, wherever conscious choice becomes possible, be it in rural communities, hereditary trades, reproduction, consumerism, or government, there needs to be a general level of knowledge about the matter.

**Again:**

No system in the world will function with egotistical bastards. Like on the autobahn, it takes only one or two overtakers to spread a general attitude of passing others and not letting oneself be passed.

The fear of others getting ahead must be discerned very decisively from the fear of not being able to move at all: while the second is quite rational, when

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realistic, the first is a kind of panic, rooted in confusion and a loss of a sense of scale thanks to our alienation; rooted more particularly in the free-market ideological training that has pounded into our minds the idea that whoever doesn't rise will sink.

## Basic Physics

*The rain it raineth all around  
upon the just and unjust fella  
but chiefly on the just because  
the unjust stole the just's umbrella.*

(Anon.)



## Summary: Eight Aspects of a Functioning State

### 1. *Not Everything Need Be Voluntary*

One cannot expect those who have inherited advantages of various sorts to really want equality. They may acquiesce, but it would be a lot to expect of them to actively pursue their own losses. Here double action is of the essence, just like at the police station: while they will need to be forced to give up their privileges, they will at the same time, or slightly beforehand, need to be shown that it is quite possible to live a worthy and beautiful life without these privileges—and that those stripping them of the privileges are civilised and humane agents. They may also be shown their own deformities and how they can so easily lose them by becoming a part of normal society with its tasks and pleasures. (This concerns, in some aspects, more or less all Europeans.) This also requires that normality be improved. It cannot remain the hopeless slum the rich imagine it to be. We need more and better parks, public transportation with Wi-Fi, and we need to behave better in public, more like the Japanese. Tidy up after ourselves, respect women, the weak, and the elderly. Seeing that aggression is copied from above, the rich, i.e. factually aggressive, must not remain in power.

### 2. *Mandatory Rational Worldview*

People must be shown that they are full of value in a rational worldview, and therefore that there is no cause to fear rationality. Language must slowly evolve so that the tangible difference between nonsense and sense

is stable and everyone can tell the difference between information and lies. That means a good education in statistics hygiene and a good basic foundation in understanding the world economy. It also means that the factual music of everyday life must be celebrated, not always and only the exception, the impossible, the extravagant, the lopsided.

### 3. *Calculation Not Only in Currency*

This is an idea that Wilhelm Neurath and his son Otto fought for all their lives: what worked in times of war, the rationing and separate accounting for different types of goods, particularly foods and essential raw materials, led to a much more even distribution, and must also be possible in times of peace.

### 4. *No More Debt, No More Property, No More Fighting*

Power must come from ability, not from possession. Part-time work in periodically alternating jobs (you can opt to stay in some jobs for longer if you like) and schooling and music lessons for all. Radical cut of all debt together with all property. Change of the goals of all economic systems to stability and sustainable prosperity, oriented on an equal level all over the world, rather than perpetual growth and competition in exploitation.

### 5. *Work and Punishment and Small-Scale Politics*

Working in various fields is important for becoming a fully capable and self-respecting human being.

However, this is very different from slavery. Work should contain learning processes and not be styled as degrading. The tasks should shift and there should be enough free time always. Some require specialization—this should be passed on. Some jobs are not very much fun for anyone—it is essential that they rotate and are not dumped on the unfortunate. At the same time, good design, good materials, and a realistic plan alleviate the discomfort of, e.g., cleaning toilets. Some jobs require talent and/or more or less full-time commitment. This should be questioned from time to time; even specialists and artists need a break and can enjoy simple jobs as a change. If there arises a need for punishment, unpopular jobs can be used. Courts have, oddly, usually functioned comparatively well in the current non-system, thanks to their function as a contrast to the injustices of every-day life. Politics and councils of elders are definitely part-time occupations.

The councils of elders will find pointed punishments for notorious nasties, who are never without some use for society. All this requires a lot of organization on a very local level.

Interregional politicians are travellers. They travel on foot or by donkey or bicycle. This slows international communication and gives the interregional politicians time to mix reflection and observation of rural life. (This is a variation on the Chinese/Japanese tradition whereby feudal landlords were required to travel back and forth between the capital and their land in a biennial rhythm.)

### 6. *Freedom Is a Myth*

Everyone is in part responsible for the rest, but not to the point that others' failings make them suffer; thanks to the organizational design of the state, no one is faced with serious problems alone. This means that one cannot completely run away from other people's or collective problems. But one is also liberated from the leaden, impossible necessity of developing a helper syndrome to compensate for the lack of general solidarity. An elegant system is the closest we can get to freedom.

### 7. *Power*

Who is in charge of all this? How can there be a machine to shift power regularly without periodically churning every bit of progress back into the collective earth? A difficult but not impossible issue that is answered, again, by good, intelligent design coupled with sensible people and a lack of destructive intent and a lack, also, of panic. This is the traditional issue of democracy design. Possibly public consciousness and media style can do more than any restructuring alone. Obviously, the people and the system will have to change simultaneously. In doubt, democracy is not the absolute untouchable value it is held as, it is only as good as the people talking it.

Longer periods between elections could be counterbalanced by a more serious system of direct democracy. Small tests included in referendums make sure people understand what they are voting about. Protests can be reacted to; referendums and a non-clandestine bureau for listening in on the people and other new kinds of democratic devices can be



devised. This bureau, for example, would resemble the UK's historical Mass Observation Project, where observers walked the streets taking notes from informal conversations.

### 8. Property

There is no such thing as property. However, everyone needs privacy, a room of her own at least for one or two hours a day, and the possibility to work on her own projects to a certain extent. Housing needs to be collectively organised and non-profit; it must be possible to express desires (living alone or in groups, city or country, high up or low down, etc.) that can be fulfilled as much as possible in consideration of the world and the individual situation. One of the most important things taught in elementary school is that not all wishes can come true; it is not the big bad enemy who tells you so, but your own competent analysis of the situation.

There are societies and online connection sites where one can find accomplices for all sorts of larger projects that will not fit into the allotted individual spaces. The network culture that has already, as we speak, developed into rich communities is already quite a different thing from the bartering and survival cooperations that flowered in the economies of lack after the Second World War.

If machines begin to be seen as entities like people, animals, trees, houses—no matter how exactly their status in regard to soulfulness is assessed by whatever experts—and people doing work are seen more as entities in their spheres of action, rather than slaves

for some master—then all people, machines, animals, trees, places, stones, and ideas are demigods or demons, powerful, interdependent, beautiful examples of the music of this world.

Ignorance, flippancy, uncertainty, bluster, and all the other charming human vices will always need to be fought. But the basis will be vastly improved as soon as reality is felt to be our common ground rather than a battlefield.

*Please forgive the great holes in this sketch. I am not a designer of political systems, I am a person arguing for the intense necessity of rethinking and reapplying communism. I present my submission to COMA as a sign of depression and resignation.*

# Trade Union of the Un- and Underemployed

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's big bet for a communist revolution was the trade union. Other socialists of their time depicted the work of trade unions as basically useless for improving labor conditions, while for Marx and Engels it was exactly the unions' inefficiency that made them the perfect training ground for the upcoming revolution. In *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), a young Engels wrote: "These [union] strikes, at first skirmishes, sometimes result in weighty struggles; they decide nothing, it is true, but they are the strongest proof that the decisive battle between bourgeoisie and proletariat is approaching. They are the military school of the working-men in which they prepare themselves for the great struggle which cannot be avoided." You might be stuck in a treadmill, but at least it makes you start running. For Marx and Engels, dialectics would do the rest.

While the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin wanted to activate day laborers, vagrants, and the poorest of the poor—"the 'riff-raff,' that 'rabble' almost unpolluted by bourgeois civilization" (*On the International Workingmen's Association and Karl Marx*, 1872)—Marx and Engels condemned them as dangerous, predicting: "The lumpen proletariat, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life,

however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue” (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 1848).

In the end, both approaches failed. The anarchists didn’t manage to activate and unite the lumpen proletariat in a persistent political struggle. The trade unions eventually succeeded in improving workers’ conditions, though without the effort of a “dictatorship of the proletariat.” The unionists became, as Bakunin recognized, a “semi-bourgeois layer of workers,” a “fourth governing class,” an “aristocracy of labor.” In *What Is to Be Done?* (1902), Vladimir Ilyich Lenin wrote, “Trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie.”

Countries where communists came to power were poorly industrialized. In line with the revolts of the Middle Ages, communism remained something for the peasants, and the efforts of the Soviet Union to overcome this handicap with forced industrialization bore gruesome results. Even the countries today that could be called sort of socialist are still poorly industrialized.

Trade unions are also rooted in the Middle Ages—though through the early bourgeoisie’s advocacy of artisanal professions in different guilds. Efforts to unite all trade unions have failed, such as the Industrial Workers of the World’s initiative for One Big Union at the beginning of the twentieth century. The tragic turn of Marxism is that the trade unions still did a pretty good job thanks to the impending threat of a socialist revolution. Dialectics worked, not in favor of communism but against it. In 1883, the year Marx died, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck installed

an obligatory health insurance for workers, followed by an obligatory accident insurance and obligatory pension insurance. Even though German workers had to partly pay for these kinds of insurance themselves (and still do), this marked the beginning of the welfare state. Besides, big corporations started to paternalistically provide cheap housing and other benefits for their workers. From a communist perspective, the proletariat was being bribed.

With the global economic crisis in the 1920s, the workers’ situation worsened again—without communism profiting. Now fascism had entered the arena and radicalized the limitations of the trade unions and their political partners, the Social Democrats or Democratic Socialists, toward a merely national agenda. Fascism appeared as a perfect capitalist tool to dull the oppressed with the delusion of ethnic-national supremacy, although with Nazism it became the most destructive political force yet. The Nazis could only be overthrown thanks to the Soviet Union—which in turn gained control over half of Europe.

To prevent socialism *and* fascism, capitalism from then on came with the price of pleasing the workers with all the comforts of the petite bourgeoisie: a private car, a mortgage, regular holidays, free education, and a stay-at-home mom. As well, capital profited from the so-called social market economy (or rather, national-social market economy). The general benefits of a society in which people work less and earn more had already been envisioned by Karl Marx’s son-in-law—and socialist outsider—Paul Lafargue, in his treatise *The Right to Be Lazy* (1880). Now, the more automation

progressed, the less people were needed to work, and the more they were needed to consume.

For decades, capitalists and trade unions acted in dialectic harmony: machines did more of the hard labor but workers got their share and kept the economy booming. So what went wrong and led to neoliberalism, where the rich get rapidly richer while the wages of most are at best stagnating, jobs are unsteady, and the social welfare system is being cut? You could argue that it was a sinister plot by antidemocratic libertarian economists and the military-industrial complex, which executed coups against the democratic-socialist “third ways” of leaders such as Juan José Arévalo in Guatemala or Salvador Allende in Chile. Meanwhile, the Soviet bloc started to struggle economically, caused not least by an arms race with the capitalist West that was again pushed by the military-industrial complex and that left Western countries in high debt as well. Neoliberalism took over, with the rhetoric that the Western world had overdone it with its spending on social welfare—and raised national debts further with even more spending on arms, warfare, and tax cuts for the rich.

But how could the masses fall for this coup? How can they, even today, rather vote for a reprise of fascism (euphemistically speaking: populism) than give an expansive welfare state a second chance? Many people of the Left follow critical theory: a “culture industry” (Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, 1947) and its creation of a “society of the spectacle” (Guy Debord, 1967) have surpassed religion as the “opium of the people” (Marx) and distract them from a proper analysis of their situation. Critical theory

was born as an explanation of fascism. But until the rise of neoliberalism and populism, not only has the entertainment complex become much bigger and more technically advanced, the average level of education and IQ have both risen as well. Western societies are about to reach a point where almost half of the population goes to college or university. Therefore it might not be enough to blame the superstructure for the decline of the welfare state and trade unions.

Did neoliberalism manage to irreversibly break the power of trade unions at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the '80s by brainwashing workers with the individualized regime of fitness, style, and self-made success? Or was it because capitalists just don't buy into the seductive powers of socialism anymore? Trade unions had started to lose power in the 1970s at a time when the United States had just lost a costly war against the Vietnamese communists and way before they managed to fatally weaken the Soviet Union in a proxy war with Islamists in Afghanistan.

When looking at the history of trade unions, their power turns out to be inversely proportional to the level of unemployment. Marx was right: the unemployed are *de facto* on the side of the capital—due to the simple logic of supply and demand. The more that people are offering their labor and the less that labor is needed, the cheaper it gets. To fight this mechanism, trade unions invested in two major alleviations. First, they insisted on an agreed wage through their collective bargaining with employers as a standard for all workers, even nonunionists and strikebreakers. Second, they secured comfortable unemployment benefits to

make the unemployed less desperate to reenter the job market. Both tools strained the solidarity of the unionists: profiting from their struggles were workers who were not part of the union or who were just too lazy to look for a new job. Apparently, the trade unions' political partners failed to make membership in the union mandatory or to have the state completely cover unemployment insurance.

But, in the end, it is the shortsighted politics of the trade unions that account for their decline. To raise workers' living conditions as well as keep unemployment low, trade unions had managed to continuously reduce the regular workweek. For instance, in Germany, from seventy-two or more hours in the nineteenth century to forty-eight hours in the first half of the twentieth century and forty hours in the 1960s. But even though productivity was rising rapidly thanks to the "micro-electronic revolution," this development has pretty much come to a halt since then. When unemployment started to reappear in the early '70s, the first measure of the ruling Social Democrats was to start kicking out the "guest workers" that had been recruited from abroad during the German "economic miracle" of the '50s and '60s. When, due to the oil crisis and a saturation of the domestic market, a recession hit in the '70s, the Social Democrats tried to boost the economy in a Keynesian fashion with loan-based investments. At the same time, the trade unions, instead of fighting for less working hours, pushed for substantially higher salaries—also following a Keynesian logic but even more the bourgeois ambition to earn more rather than work less. In the end, higher salaries, together with

debt-based state investments, fueled prices and were eaten up by inflation. This "stagflation" paralyzed the whole Western world and became a primary gateway to neoliberalism.

A second gateway was the increasing globalization of the economy while the trade unions continued to operate on a merely national level—again, for the sake of short-term profits. As long as the inefficiencies of real socialism and a continued or de facto colonization of developing countries made it impossible for most of the world to compete industrially with North America and Western Europe, globalization gave them enormous mercantilist leverage. In this constellation, workers in developed countries profited from cheap labor in developing countries—just as the capitalists did. When Western companies started to outsource parts of industrial production to developing countries, and countries in Southeast Asia even managed to compete with their own industrial goods, it was too late for Western trade unions to cooperate closely on a global level, as envisioned by the First International in the 1860s. Now they had to sink their own wages to be able to compete on a global level; despite rapid increases in productivity, shortening the workweek became even more out of the question.

In 1880, Paul Lafargue argued that in an industrialized society three working hours per day would be enough to meet all basic needs. Over a century later, a regular workday still lasts about eight hours, which has only been possible to maintain by constantly increasing private and public needs and forcing a large part of the population into unemployment or poorly paid labor.

Besides the trade unions, there have been isolated initiatives to create unions for the unemployed. First by communists after the First World War—the National Unemployed Workers’ Movement in Britain, or the Unemployed Councils in the United States—and later by non-communists as well. The only powerful strike for the unemployed would have been a hunger strike; none of these unions survived more than a few years.

In recent decades there has been an increasing amount of initiatives for a basic income. These initiatives don’t represent specific interest groups, rather they argue for the general sake of society, and they already know that for now all they can do is try to destigmatize unemployment. Sure, with mass unemployment capitalism could finally, just as Marxism predicted, fall into a chronic depression of overproduction and vanishing profits. But then there would be even less money to pay for a basic income. Thanks to technical progress, energy costs could sink to almost nothing and machines could produce anything you want, including themselves—but natural resources and space on earth are still limited. Today, already, poor people are easily spending more than half of their income on rent.

Unless they don’t want to end up stuck in windowless boxes eating soylent, the net beneficiaries of a decent basic income have to unite and fight for themselves: formally unemployed housewives and househusbands, retired and disabled people with little or no support, people on welfare, the homeless, refugees, most students, most artists, freelancers, jobbers,

peasants. Different from factory workers at the peak of industrialization or unemployed workers at the peak of an economic crisis, a Trade Union of the Un- and Underemployed (TRUU) could represent an actual majority of people and threaten to take down any government that doesn’t follow its agenda. Its size allows for all sorts of boycotts unless certain demands are met—for instance, companies that evade taxes would be required to put a huge portion of their profits into a basic income fund, or companies that are highly automated would be required to pay a machine tax. Or the members of TRUU could all start to pay only half of their rent. Those who still work could organize strikes in their respective fields. Precarious freelance workers could insist on guaranteed base fees for their services. McJobbers could strike for a (better) minimum wage and general health insurance, and could be supported by consumer boycotts and blockades. Househusbands and housewives could boycott procreation until they receive a decent pay from raising children. The disabled and retirees could call for an initial basic income for those who simply are unable to work. Environmentalists could call for a trust fund to manage the basic income of animals and plants—similar to trust funds for minors and the mentally incapacitated.

TRUU sees no competition between these different claims. Just the opposite. After decades of the continuous reduction of the welfare state, it is crucial to revert this process with whatever claim succeeds first. Higher salaries and subsequent costs disproportionately hit the poor, but they also fuel automation and make TRUU more powerful. Five-year

plans orchestrate TRUU's different struggles and are regularly adapted to current changes.

TRUU sees no competition on an international level. It does not just export claims and strategies from the north to the south, but vice versa as well. There are still a billion or more peasants in emerging economies who are about to lose their jobs to automation and are doomed to end up as dispensable. Under these circumstances, India's current populist government could become the first to install a (however modest) basic income.

Advocating for both globalization and automation, TRUU builds on the Marxist Left and is in line with leftist accelerationism. At the same time, its version of One Big Union relates to concepts of a rainbow coalition of the oppressed, as in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "becoming-minor" or Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's "multitude." So far, these coalitions never managed to sustain themselves beyond ephemeral movements and actions—often even purposefully, because the activists were afraid of spoiling their cause in pragmatic considerations.

But a trade union is able to fight on the street and in the conference room simultaneously and is, at best, able to create a thrilling interplay of immediate action and nerve-stretching negotiations. Existing trade unions chose the path of particularization and homogenization, making them in the end both boring and powerless, while the power of TRUU lies in its combination of great size and great unpredictability. Phases of many parallel and sometimes contradictory maneuvers are followed by phases of

tenous insistence on a single claim. To strengthen the emotional ties within TRUU, members from different fields and parts of the world meet regularly in groups and engage in empathy- and love-enhancing routines, such as those performed by the Army of Love.<sup>1</sup> To avoid corruption, coalitions with other movements and organizations follow strictly pragmatic considerations. As soon as a cause is appropriated by the political mainstream, TRUU is happy to move on until it reaches its final goal—a completely communist world.

Which social group could be the first to invest itself in TRUU? Being a cultural worker myself, I would say: it's on us. Artists are used to assuming a special moral authority, legitimized by their relative independence from concrete economic, political, and religious constraints. This position is outdated in a society where a large part of the population works in a somewhat creative, often freelance position, or has enough spare time to engage in some peculiar not-for-profit project. As automation progresses, culture remains the one human activity that cannot be completely rationalized. Therefore cultural work will be at the heart of the world's social, economic, and political development. Cultural workers are no longer an eccentric elite, they are a massive class—maybe growing at a quicker rate than the industrial proletariat 150 years ago. They are no longer inclined to speak for anyone except themselves. They can no longer call for more social justice without protesting against the worsening

<sup>1</sup> For more on the Army of Love, see Solution 293, Ingo Niermann, "Love Commons," beginning on page 241.

of their own economic situation. They can no longer rant against a competitive society and not unite.

For good reason, Marx counted *la bohème* and the literati as part of the lumpen proletariat next to the swindlers, pickpockets, tricksters, and pimps. Too often, artists utter leftist beliefs while desperately clinging to the upper class. Still, in *The German Ideology* (1845–46) Marx described how communism would overcome the “estranging” division between brain work and body work with a society “where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes,” a society that “regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic”—and factory work is missing. Even Marxist communism seems to be a retro fantasy—or it anticipated the life of postindustrial cultural workers (both professional and amateur) who dabble in multiple fields.<sup>2</sup> TRUU enables them to continue a quest that reaches far beyond themselves while at the same time following their very own interests.

<sup>2</sup> For my interpretation of Karl Marx’s “Fragment on Machines,” see Solution 293, “Love Commons,” beginning on page 231.

# The Twelve Steps of Capitalists Anonymous

The relative success of the Capitalists Anonymous (CA) program seems to be due to the fact that a capitalist who no longer seeks profit has an exceptional faculty for “reaching” and helping other capitalists.

In simplest form, the CA program operates when a recovered capitalist passes along the story of his or her own greed, describes the sense of Communism he or she has found in CA, and invites the newcomer to join the informal Fellowship.

The heart of the suggested program of personal recovery is contained in Twelve Steps describing the experience of the earliest members of the Society:

1. We admitted we were powerless over capitalism—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of Communism as we understood it.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.



#### THE TWELVE STEPS OF CAPITALISTS ANONYMOUS

5. Admitted to Communism, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have Communism remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Communism to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through meditation to improve our conscious contact with Communism as we understood it.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other capitalists and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Newcomers are not asked to accept or follow these Twelve Steps in their entirety if they feel unwilling or unable to do so.

They will usually be asked to keep an open mind, to attend meetings at which recovered capitalists describe their personal experiences in achieving sobriety, and to read CA literature describing and interpreting the CA program.

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CA members will usually emphasize to newcomers that only enterprisers themselves, individually, can determine whether or not they are in fact capitalists.

At the same time, it will be pointed out that all available medical testimony indicates that capitalism is a progressive illness, that it cannot be cured in the ordinary sense of the term, but that it can be arrested through total abstinence from profit making in any form.

# The Biopolitics of Immortality

During the period of modernity we grew accustomed to an understanding of human beings as determined by the social milieu in which they live, as knots in information networks, as organisms dependent on their environment. In the age of globalization we learned that we are dependent on everything that happens around the globe—politically, economically, and ecologically. But the earth is not isolated in the cosmos. It depends on the processes that take place in cosmic space—dark matter, waves and particles, stars exploding, galaxies collapsing. And the fate of humankind also depends on these processes, because all these cosmic waves pass through human bodies. And the earth's position in the cosmic whole determines the conditions under which its living organisms can survive.

This dependence of humankind on cosmic events—which are uncontrollable and even unknown—is the source of a specifically modern anxiety. One can call it a cosmic anxiety: the anxiety of being a part of the cosmos and of not being able to control it. Not accidentally, contemporary mass culture obsesses about visions of asteroids coming from the black space of the cosmos and destroying Earth. But this anxiety has also more subtle forms. One example is Georges Bataille's theory from the late 1940s of the "accursed share." According to this theory, the sun sends more energy to the earth than the planet and

the organisms living on it can absorb. After all the efforts to use this energy to produce goods and raise the living standard of the population, there remains a unabsorbed, unused remainder of solar energy. This remainder is necessarily destructive, and can be spent only through violence and war, or through ecstatic festivals and orgies that channel and absorb it through less dangerous activities. Thus, human culture and politics are determined by cosmic energies—and are forever shifting between order and disorder.

Bataille's solar myth is strongly reminiscent of the interpretation that world history is defined by the activity of the sun—a theory that was formulated by Russian historian and biologist Alexander Chizhevsky in the 1920s and '30s. During this period, Chizhevsky's ideas also spread to the West, especially to France and the United States, and some of his texts were published in French and English—so his ideas might well have reached Bataille.<sup>1</sup> However, the text written by Chizhevsky in which his theory is extensively formulated and proven using empirical data was published in Russian, and relatively recently.<sup>2</sup> Chizhevsky collected an incredible amount of astronomical and historical data—from Roman and early Chinese sources to his own measurements—to show the close correlation between the periods of the higher activity of the sun and mass revolutionary movements. It is, of course,

<sup>1</sup> For example, A.-L. Tchijevsky, *Les épidémies et les perturbations électromagnétiques du milieu extérieur* (Paris: Éditions Hippocrate, 1938).

<sup>2</sup> A. L. Chizhevsky, *Kosmicheskij pul's zhizni: Zemlya v ob'yat'yakh solntsa* [Cosmic pulse of life: The earth in the embrace of the sun, 1931] (Moscow: Mysl', 1995).

the October Revolution in 1917 that gave him the impulse to pursue this research. Chizhevsky asks why, under similar social, economic, and political constellations, masses in some cases become mobilized and revolutionized but in others they remain passive and indifferent. He offers an answer: to start a revolutionary movement, human beings need to be mobilized not only spiritually but also bodily. The human spirit can be mobilized through an ideology, but, according to Chizhevsky, the degree of mobilization of the human body, like of all organisms on earth, is dependent on the cycles of solar activity.

As Chizhevsky shows, the greatest revolutionary movements coincided with the greatest activity of the sun; the historical process is characterized by a succession of active and passive periods that correspond to the sun's eleven-year cycle of activity (the highest degree of solar activity occurs every twenty-two years). It seems to me that the most interesting part of his results for our time concerns the relationship between the activity of the sun and parliamentary elections in England. These results show that the influence of the sun dictates not only the choice between revolution and status quo but also the choice between left-wing and right-wing politics in the framework of regular parliamentary processes. Chizhevsky shows that for the period between 1830 and 1924, the average activity of the sun was 155.6 percent higher during the rule of liberal governments than it was during the rule of conservative governments. Conservative governments were never in power when the number of sunspots on the surface of the sun was over ninety-three. The

moments of change in solar activity correlate almost precisely with the changes of government in England.

At the end of his book, Chizhevsky suggests that the knowledge of the correlation of the activity of the sun with the political activity of the masses can prepare the political classes for the seemingly unexpected changes of public mood. During the recent financial crisis, some specialists remembered the “Kondratiev waves”—Nikolai Kondratiev, a student of Chizhevsky, applied his professor’s theory to economic cycles and predicted future ones, including the 2008/9 crisis.<sup>3</sup> On the political level, one is reminded of the years 1968, 1989, and, again, 2010/11. Here it is interesting to mention that solar activity was at its weakest in the twentieth century, a period largely of political indifference and passivity of the masses. However, the political effects of an increased number of sunspots are often ambiguous. Chizhevsky warns that a growth of solar activity can lead to the adoption of a progressive agenda by the masses as well as the rise of irrational and reactionary populist movements.

One possibility for reacting to this cyclic activity of the sun is to embrace it. Friedrich Nietzsche had already described our material world, of which the human being is only a part, as an eternal battle between Apollonian and Dionysian forces; or, in other words, between order and its ecstatic dissolution, between cosmos and chaos. However, even if Nietzsche understands this battle as never-ending—cosmos always being

<sup>3</sup> See Vincent Barnett, *Kondratiev and the Dynamics of Economic Development: Long Cycles and Industrial Growth in Historical Context* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).

restored after having been consumed by chaos—his vision offers weak consolation to a humankind in the grips of cosmic anxiety. Indeed, the periodic restoration of cosmic order does not guarantee the restoration of humankind as a small part of this order. So, the program of the cosmists (the name given to the Russian group Chizhevsky belonged to)<sup>4</sup> regarding Nietzschean radical atheism was similar in many ways to the reaction of Marx to the atheism of the French Enlightenment or that of Ludwig Feuerbach. Marx was also an atheist but he did not want to reject the promise of Christianity. Rather, he wanted to realize this promise by means of a communist society that could take the fate of the earth into its own hands—instead of relying on divine grace. The Christian promise is reinterpreted here as a promise of the victory of the communist cosmos over capitalist chaos, achieved by means of secular politics and technology.

The cosmists inherited and radicalized this Marxist shift from divine grace to secular technology. There is one essential difference however between the traditional Marxist project and the cosmist project. Marxism does not raise the problem of immortality: the communist “paradise on earth” that is meant to be achieved through a combination of revolutionary struggle and creative work is understood as a harmonizing of man and nature. This harmony secures human happiness in the framework of “human nature,” which also includes the inevitability of “natural death.” In this

<sup>4</sup> George M. Young, *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

sense, the classical Marxist version of communism fits into the framework of biopolitical power as described by Michel Foucault.

In a well-known phrase by Foucault, the modern state is defined by its right “to ‘make’ live and ‘let’ die,” in contrast to the right of the older sovereign state to “take life or let live.”<sup>5</sup> The modern state is concerned with birth rates, health care, and providing its population with the necessities of life—all understood as statistical values. Thus, according to Foucault, the modern state functions primarily as a biopower whose justification is that it secures the survival of the human masses, and hence the human species. This, of course, does not guarantee the survival of the individual. If the survival of the population is presented as one of the state’s goals, then the “natural” death of any given individual is passively accepted by the state as an unavoidable event, and thus treated as a private matter. The death of an individual is thus the insurmountable limit of biopower of the state. And this limit is accepted by the modern state, which respects the private sphere of natural death. This limit, by the way, was not even questioned by Foucault. But what would happen if biopower were to radicalize its claim on power and combat not only collective death but also individual “natural” death—with the ultimate goal of eliminating it entirely? Admittedly, this kind of demand sounds utopian, and indeed it is. But it was formulated by many Russian authors before and after

5 Michel Foucault, *“Society Must Be Defended”: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 241.

the October Revolution. The radicalized demand of an intensified biopower contributed to the Soviet state’s justification for power. Biopolitical utopias reconciled much larger circles of Russian intellectuals and artists with Soviet power than Marxism alone ever managed, especially because these utopias had, unlike “Western” Marxism, a genuinely “Russian” origin—namely, the work of Nikolai Fedorov.

The “philosophy of the common task” that Fedorov developed in the late nineteenth century may have met with little public attention during his lifetime, but illustrious readers such as Lev Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Vladimir Solovyov were fascinated and influenced by Fedorov’s project.<sup>6</sup> After the philosopher’s death in 1903, his work gained ever-increasing currency, although it remained limited to a Russian readership. The project of the common task, in summary, consists in the creation of the technological, social, and political conditions under which it would be possible to resurrect—by artificial or technological means—all the people who have ever lived. Fedorov understood his project as the technological realization of the Christian promise of resurrection and immortality. Indeed, Fedorov no longer believed in the immortality of the soul independent of the body. In his view, physical or material existence was the only possible form of existence. And Fedorov believed just as unflinchingly in technology: because everything is material and physical, everything is technically manipulable.

6 Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov, *What Was Man Created For? The Philosophy of the Common Task*, trans. Elisabeth Koutaissoff and Marilyn Minto (London: Honeyglen, 1990).

Above all, however, Fedorov believed in the power of social organization—in that sense, he was a socialist through and through. Fedorov took the promise of an emerging biopower seriously—that is, the promise given by the state that it would protect life as such—and he demanded of this power that it think its promise through and fulfill it. Fedorov was reacting primarily to an internal contradiction in the socialist theories of the nineteenth century that understood themselves as theories of progress, which meant that the future generations would enjoy socialist justice only by cynically accepting an outrageous historical injustice: the exclusion of all previous generations from the realm of the socialist utopia. Socialism thus functioned as an exploitation of the dead in favor of the living—and as an exploitation of those alive today in favor of those who will live later. But is it possible to consider technology in terms that are different from the terms of historical progress?

Fedorov believed that a technology directed toward the past is possible—and, actually, already exists. It is the technology of art—especially, the technology used by museums of art. The museum does not punish the obsolescence of museum exhibits by removing and destroying them; thus, it is fundamentally at odds with progress. Progress consists in replacing old things with new things. The museum, by contrast, is a machine for making things last—making them immortal. Since each human being is also one thing among other things, one body among other bodies, humans can be blessed with the immortality of the museum as well. The immortality of the soul

in Christianity is replaced here by the immortality of things or of the body in the museum. And divine grace is replaced by curatorial decisions and the technology of museum preservation.

According to Fedorov, art uses technology with a goal of preserving living beings. There is no progress in art. Art does not wait for a better society to come—it immortalizes here and now. Human beings can also be interpreted as readymades—as potential artworks. All the people who have ever lived must rise from the dead as artworks and be preserved in museums, along with all the people who are living. Technology as a whole must become the technology of art. The state as well must become the museum of its population. Just as the museum's administration is responsible for the general holdings of the museum's collection as well as the intact state of each work of art—making sure that individual artworks are subject to conservation and restoration when they threaten to decay—the state should bear responsibility for the resurrection and continued life of every individual person. The state can no longer permit itself to allow individuals to die privately or the dead to rest peacefully in their graves. Death's limits must be overcome by the state. Biopower must be total.

This totality is achieved by equating art with politics, life with technology, and the state with the museum. Here, overcoming the boundaries between life and art is not a matter of introducing art into life, but is rather a radical museumification of life—life can and should attain the privilege of immortality in a museum. By means of unifying living space and museum

space, biopower extends into infinity: it becomes the organized technology of eternal life. Such a total biopower is, of course, no longer “democratic”—no one expects the artworks that are preserved in a museum collection to democratically elect the curator who will care for them. As soon as human beings become radically modern—that is, as soon as they are understood as bodies among other bodies, things among other things—they have to accept that state-organized technology will treat them accordingly. This acceptance, however, has a crucial precondition: the explicit goal for a new power must be eternal life here on earth for everyone. Only then does the state cease to be a partial, limited biopower, of the sort described by Foucault, and instead becomes a total biopower.

In 1922, in their first manifesto, the representatives of the Biocosmists—a political party with roots in Russian anarchism—wrote, “We take the essential and real right of man to be the right to exist (immortality, resurrection, rejuvenation) and the freedom to move in cosmic space (and not the supposed rights announced when the bourgeois revolution was declared in 1789).”<sup>7</sup> Hence Aleksandr Svyatogor, one of the leading Biocosmist theoreticians, fundamentally critiqued the classical doctrine of anarchism by pointing out that there must be a central power to ensure every individual’s immortality and freedom of movement in the cosmos. Svyatogor took immortality to be at once the goal and the prerequisite for a future communist society since true social solidarity could only reign

<sup>7</sup> Kreatorii Rossiiskikh i Moskovskikh Anarchistov-Biokosmistov, “Deklarativnaia rezolyutsiia,” *Biokosmist*, March 1, 1922, 1–3.

among immortals—death separates people, and private property cannot truly be eliminated if every human being privately owns a piece of time. Total biopower, by contrast, signifies the collectivization of space as well as time. In eternity, conflicts between individual and society, which could not be eliminated in time, are eliminated. Immortality is the highest goal for every individual. For this reason, the individual will always remain faithful to society if society makes immortality its goal. At the same time, only this sort of total society can make it possible for people to experience life without temporal or spatial limits: the communist society of immortals will also be “interplanetary”—that is, it will occupy the entire space of the cosmos. Svyatogor tries to distinguish himself from Fedorov by characterizing Fedorov as old-fashioned, even archaic, because he places too much emphasis on the fact that all human beings are related. Even so, the family resemblance between Fedorov and the Biocosmists is all too obvious.

The path the Biocosmists followed—from radical anarchism to accepting Soviet power as a (possible) total biopower—is characteristic for many other fellow travelers of the October Revolution as well. For example, Valerian Muravyov went from being a fierce opponent of the revolution to being an advocate the moment he discovered in Soviet power a promise of “mastery over time”; that is, of the artificial production of eternity. He too saw art as a model for politics—as the only technology that could overcome time. He too called for a departure from a purely “symbolic” art in favor of using art to turn the whole of society, and indeed the entire cosmos, into an object of human

design. Far more radically than most authors of his time, Muravyov was prepared to view the human being as an artwork. He understood resurrection as following logically from the process of copying; before Walter Benjamin, Muravyov observed that there could be no difference between the “original human being” and his or her copy under the conditions of technological reproducibility.<sup>8</sup> Muravyov thus sought to purify the concept of the human being of the metaphysical and religious remnants that were still clung to by Fedorov and the Biocosmists. For Muravyov, the human being was simply a combination of particular chemical elements—just like every other thing in the world. For this reason, Muravyov hoped to eliminate the difference of the sexes in the future and create a non-sex-based, purely artificial method for producing human beings. The human beings of the future would thus have no guilt with respect to their dead ancestors; they would owe their existence to the same technologically organized state that guarantees the duration of their existence, or rather their immortality.

This was indeed the last step in the secularization of Christianity. Secularization remains only partial if it merely negates, censors, or prohibits the hopes, desires, and demands for life that religion articulates. It is not enough to say that there is no immortality and to prohibit people from seeking immortality. If people are told that they cannot hope for immortality because

8 Valerian Murav'ev, “Beherrschung der Zeit als Grundaufgabe der Arbeitsorganisation” (1924), in *Die Neue Menschheit: Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Boris Groys and Michael Hagemester, trans. Dagmar Kassek (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 425–56.

they lack souls and are simply things, they can rightly ask why such a thing cannot be preserved, since there are, after all, means and paths to that end. Indeed, after the death of the soul it is the corpse that remains. This corpse, purely material, is an object that can be treated by technology like any other material object. If the transition from “animate” body to “inanimate” corpse is a purely material process, then this process can also be technologically reversed. What makes such a reversal impossible? The answer usually given is that there is indeed something else that makes a human being different from a mere thing and thus it cannot be preserved, produced, and reproduced like a mere thing. But what is this “something else” if not a soul? This is why the thinkers of Russian socialism wanted to thoroughly purify society of religion, replacing the immortality of the soul guaranteed by God with an immortality of the body guaranteed by the state—and thereby bringing to a close the transition to a new era and a new total biopower.

These biopolitical projects may have been utopian to the extent that they were not based on any knowledge or processes that had already been enacted, but at the same time, as is often the case, they stimulated the development of purely scientific and technological programs. Inspired by radical biopolitical projects in the 1920s, such programs were numerous and varied. One of the most spectacular and influential was doubtless the rocket research that Konstantin Tsiolkovsky conducted with the goal of transporting our resurrected ancestors to other planets, and which was the starting point of later Soviet space travel. Tsiolkovsky



himself was a follower of cosmic biopolitics who wanted to fulfill in practice Fedorov's call for the "patrification of the heavens" (that is, the transformation of the planets into habitable places for our resurrected fathers). Tsiolkovsky's many writings were devoted to strictly technical problems as well as the social organization of the universe. He still believed strongly in human creativity, even though, in the best biopolitical tradition, he saw the human being as a mere body, a thing, which by definition could not be creative. Most of his texts are devoted to solving this central philosophical problem. Tsiolkovsky's solution consisted in seeing the human brain as merely a specific, and purely material, part of the universe. Thus, all of the processes that take place in the human brain are ultimately processes that have their origin in the whole universe: the will of an individual human being is at the same time the will of the universe. Human creativity is an expression of the creativity of the universe. If the human brain is part of the cosmos and transmits cosmic energies, then the human being becomes cosmic. Natural selection must of course decide whose brain best expresses the will of the universe. In this respect, Tsiolkovsky was relatively skeptical about the chances of the human race to win this competition. He believed that "higher beings" have the right, and even the duty, to destroy "lower beings," like gardeners when they tend their gardens; and he did not preclude the possibility that humans are the lower beings populating cosmic space.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, "Volia Vselennoi" [The universal will], in *Genii sredi liudei* [The genius among the people] (Moscow: Mysl', 2002), 224–31, esp. 227.

Another fascinating biopolitical experiment, although one that didn't prove as influential, was the Institute for Blood Transfusion that Alexander Bogdanov founded and directed in the 1920s. Bogdanov had been a close ally of Lenin when they were young, founding together the intellectual and political movement within the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party that led to Bolshevism. Later, however, he increasingly distanced himself from contemporary politics and was sharply criticized by Lenin for his favorable view of Ernst Mach's positivist philosophy. After the revolution, Bogdanov directed the famous Proletkult, in which he promoted the "nonprofessional" writing and art produced by ordinary workers. He became enthusiastic about experiments with blood transfusion, which he hoped would slow the aging process, if not stop it completely. Blood transfusions from young to old were supposed to rejuvenate the elderly and establish a solidarity and balance between the generations that Bogdanov considered essential to establishing a just socialist society. As it happened, Bogdanov died from such a blood transfusion: he exchanged blood with one of his female students who was considered to be incurably ill. The blood exchange resulted in Bogdanov's death, but the student was cured.

For the present-day reader, Bogdanov's case studies for the Institute for Blood Transfusion may evoke Bram Stoker's *Dracula*—particularly the case in which the blood of a "young student" was partially exchanged with the blood of an "elderly writer," an

exchange from which both supposedly benefited.<sup>10</sup> This analogy is by no means coincidental. The society of vampires—that is, of immortal bodies—over which Dracula reigns is a society of total biopower par excellence. The novel—written in 1897, around the same time as Fedorov’s project of the common task—describes the reign of total biopower not as a utopia, but as a dystopia. The “human” heroes of the novel bitterly defend their right to a natural death. The struggle against the society of vampires that produces and guarantees the body’s immortality has continued ever since in Western mass culture—even if the seduction of the vampiric is not denied. This aversion to the eternity of the body is certainly not new, as the stories of Faust, Frankenstein, and the golem all demonstrate. Those stories, however, were written at a time in which faith in the immortality of the soul had not yet been completely extinguished. Vampires, by contrast, represent a society beyond all such belief—a body of total biopower, a communist society of immortal bodies based in transgenerational solidarity. It is the society longed for by many—especially in Russia at the turn of the last century. In order to understand the radical biopolitical imagination of our day, it is necessary to read Fedorov, Bogdanov, and Bram Stoker side by side.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Bogdanov, *God raboty instituta perelivaniya krovi, 1926–1927* [A year of working in the institute for blood transfusion] (Moscow, 1927), 33.

# The Great Bacterial Revolution

*Midway upon the journey of our life  
I found myself within a forest dark,  
For the straightforward pathway had  
been lost.*

—Dante

## The Feedback Loop

Bacteria have come from space. Space bacteria can live in extreme conditions and are called extremophiles. Their DNA can survive maddeningly swinging temperatures that can either melt metal or freeze oxygen. My life is a mess because Erica has Crohn’s colitis and her bad bugs invaded my bladder. We know how. The bladder bacteria cause inner itchiness that cannot be felt but the afferent nerve system tells the brain that the bladder is not alright, the bladder itchiness suggests prostate disease and the ensuing end of the reproductive cycle, this anticipation plummets my male hormone levels, I start to feel feminized and motivated to accept a different sex and be recruited as a passable slave in an Albanian brothel where, before a full and irreversible sex conversion, I can perhaps get good bugs from some of the local peasants that dig in the dirt from morning to night, unearthing half-decomposed giant vegetables that spread their arthritic roots around land mines seeded personally by the late beloved leader Enver Hoxha, mines that explode and mingle peasants with

vegetables and unload deeply buried eons-old extremophiles that insert their DNA into *E. coli* or *B. subtilis*. The universe-enlightened *E. coli* or *B. subtilis* get under the fingernails of villagers saddened by the death of their pulverized fathers, sad villagers who travel by bus to Tirana where, in a local brothel, they unload their raging semen mixed with extremophiles and their earthy progeny of *E. coli* or *B. subtilis* into my anus, the invaders push away Erica's bugs, the bladder itchiness ceases, I will be a man again, go back to my old life, and never text Erica again.

### The History Loop

The yellow cab that picks me up at the corner of Sixty-Third Street and First Avenue has the number 1P343. In the year 1343, rats debarked merchant ships in the Crimea. Together with the rats came fleas that carried *Y. pestis*, a rod-shaped coccobacillus that thrives in oxygen-deprived ratholes filled with the anguish of rat vengeance and the shivering longing for Western expansion. By 1346 Europe was gripped by a rapidly expanding network of bacterial plague. The *Y. pestis* DNA has about 4.7 million chemical letters that encode the message of rage and devastation. It is more than *Das Kapital's* 1.3 million letters, some eight hundred pages, which caused quite some rage among descendants of the *Y. pestis* survivors, and which, through a chain of connected events, is responsible for me being at the corner of Sixty-Third and First. I date on Seeking Arrangement. It's a sugar-daddy site and my appetite for young flesh floating on the web is immeasurable. By Day 23 of sugar daddying I go to bed with a young girl

from Kazakhstan who wishes to join Interpol. The girl is small and motivated like a flea. By Day 45 of sugar daddying I have slept with several women around New York and Philadelphia. By Day 110, a random swab of my nose bacteria shows that I have been in touch with an *E. coli* previously found only in Lagos. The Lagos bug grows slowly on blood-laden petri dishes and forms rosettes like my grandmother's lace doilies on our dining table in the communal flat on Saksaganskogo Street in Kiev, just five stops away by train no. 9 from the hilly Baikove Cemetery. My grandparents are buried there, and in the year of Chernobyl giant bushes and predatory dragonflies took over the cemetery like a plague. Dead bones are the only bones that will not incorporate strontium from the Chernobyl fallout. I hug my dating partners with my radioactive extremities, and at a peak of mellow excitement I am carried away by thoughts about the soft water of the eastern horn of the Crimean Peninsula where your footsteps were instantaneously covered by the dust of flea skeletons.

### License to Kill

The self-taught German sharpshooter Josef Allerberger killed twenty-seven Soviet troops before his commanders sent him off to sniper school, where he met Matthäus Hetzenauer. Josef had 257 confirmed kills, while Matthäus racked up 345, all on the eastern front. That made their combined total 602 confirmed kills. Matthäus lived until 2004. Josef died in 2010. It is possible that the killing instincts of the two were inspired by bad gut bacteria that amplified their Nazi killing fervor to new heights. Josef's and Matthäus's

brains were gassed with toxic metabolites elicited by bacteria resting within their mucus-soaked intestinal crypts, crypts that bend like the marble benches inside Turkish baths in Budapest. Lying on a bench, I reach out to Safae's glowing spine, which looks like a loaded rifle or an ancient musical instrument. When I was about ten years old, we ran out of charcoal for our apartment's water boiler and my father took me to the local banya close to Pushkin Street in Kiev. The wooden benches inside the banya were slippery, like the hanging dicks of the quiet Ukrainian men who exited the concealing vapor of steam rooms with a sound like that of copulating walruses. I was washed well, and despite the fears of my Jewish grandmother, did not get infected with any bad banya bugs, most likely because of the power of phages. Phages are viruses of bacteria. There are  $10^{31}$  phages on earth and they kill 50 percent of the world's bacteria load every forty-eight hours. I learned this from a lecture by Dr. Vince Fischetti from the Rockefeller University where Vince develops new phage-based medicines. Safae's skin was not just like silk. It was the silk of silks. Skin to die for. Safae's brother is from Gaza. The ever-rotating phage mill.

### The Mole Rat

When I walk to the subway at Twenty-Third and Sixth I do my mole-rat dance. The aim is to tense your upper body, slow down your legs and let them relax, and feel the air being squashed from your lungs as you enter the narrow passage formed by the quickly morphing crowd of morning commuters, two members of the local Society for the Blind confused by novel neighborhood

odors, and the nimble sidewalk trees sprinting their underground cancerous tentacles toward the subway fumes. The tunnel forms quickly and my skin starts to rub against an invisible pressure point. I keep constricting my torso, my legs lose circulation for a while, my neck lunges forward, absorbing the eternal tunnel's dark glow, pressure rises, and my longevity genes all fire up their loads of RNA polymerase II. My gene transcription bursts with the intensity of New Year's fireworks in Kreuzberg. I autophagy, my mitochondria swell and break to feed me while I run, I approach the end of the life-longevity gap, closing it quickly by irreversibly destroying unused RNA and all the mutant garbage that keeps accumulating inside my cells. Damage and microscopic ruptures wake up immune-system checkpoints, I feel my daily cancer burned, and I am off the street and inside the subway gasping for air. My sweaty armpits are coated with billions of the commuter bugs that roll through our bodies like genetic neutrinos. I try to see my fellow rats cleaning their bodies on the high-voltage rails. It's too noisy to see well.

### Molecular Compendium of Love

A waiter awaits the water. Water washes the waiter away from the shore. A whale washes ashore where the waiter was. Weeds wrap around my wrist. I am here to eat with Esperanza. Her leg is bent like a loop, like a chromosome with lost telomeres. Fused chromosome, proliferating opaque cells, end of currency, goodbye Pulaski's fur, if you run naked except for an Aleut parka after a dogsled your penis swells like a leech.

The dining room is not worth describing, a trivial space saturated by mutant “sardines.” The menu has few choices. Left page, the mole-rat dishes; right page, the African turquoise killifish soup and ktxis.

*“Live fast, die old” maybe isn’t the catchiest motto. But, for the African turquoise killifish, it’s apt. The life span of the tiny fish can be measured in months, not years, and it does everything quickly: hatch, mature, breed and even age. It’s an example of life on extreme fast-forward.<sup>1</sup>*

Gina was our tech assistant. She injected stem cells into blastocysts. She generated mutant mice of different sorts and made love to a short Frenchman, Fred. Fred had an accordion-shaped chest that was filled with a nuclear desire for grand performance. Gina has unusually long curvy legs and elk eyes. Every day before seeing Fred she would check on newborn mice, those who had agouti spots were the carriers of desired mutations. One of the strains of mutant mice belonged to Fred. Their lovemaking resembled an oil pump in Texas, Gina’s vitamin-D-deficient scoliotic spine relentlessly diving and rising above Fred’s hilly pelvis.

<sup>1</sup> <https://biox.stanford.edu/highlight/tiny-fish-makes-big-splash-aging-research-stanford>.

INGE DILDROP (calling her servant). Hanna, sweetheart, could you please bring me adhesive tape from the kitchen?

(HANNA, freckled, broad shoulders, even broader flat pelvis, massive inverted feet, maybe tall. Appears in a doorframe with the tape that she uses to catch flies. Tape has a soft honey glow. Room lights up. In the downstage-left corner is a man sitting on a bench. Three uniformed soldiers keep him sitting straight. Wearing white cotton gloves, INGE DILDROP takes the yellowish tape, stretches a piece about 30 cm long between her forceps-like fingers, and cuts it in silence. She bends slightly to reach the ear of the sitting man.)

INGE DILDROP (murmuring). Look at me, Teo.

(TEO sits on a bench screaming silently, his mouth covered with white gauze. His eyeballs move in despair. *Sidenote:* No one can explain the evolutionary meaning of rolling one’s eyeballs. What kind of advantage does it provide to an individual? Does eyeball rolling suggest a higher perceptive power, or do we just move our eyeballs to zoom in on a chance of escape, similar to flies stuck to tape? Hypothesis: eyeball rolling is an evolutionary artifact, similar to art.)

(INGE DILDROP is getting visibly impatient. She edges closer to TEO and presses the tape against TEO's eyeballs with her palms and the rest of her body. *Sidenote:* Re: inside Inge. The vibration of the body beneath her made Inge's blood gush between her legs and she feels a liberating flush of warm gluey liquid between her thighs.)

(INGE pulls off the tape. Scene is going dark. One can only see a reddish glow of tape. Stage rotates clockwise as INGE walks to the neighboring room and places the tape inside a gigantic projector. She turns the projector on. A large imprint of INGE's nipple surrounded by ripped vessels and tubal epithelia hovers above the stage. INGE's movements become very limited to avoid ripping out the tiny sticky hairs between her thighs. SOLDIER #2 drags her slightly apathetic body into the next room [stage rotates counterclockwise] where HANNA, wearing a black strap-on leather penis, is getting into high-heel boots. The light stays on and one can read the text on a screen descending from the ceiling on the left side of the stage. The text says: "I am afraid the Black Sea beneath the 200-meter mark is anoxic and filled with the slowly decomposing bodies of everyone who ever lived on earth.")

### Technical Breakthrough

In 2003, one ingenious physicist took a block of graphite, some Scotch tape, and a lot of patience and produced a magnificent new wonder material that is a million times thinner than paper, stronger than diamond, more conductive than copper. It is called graphene. Andre Geim first discovered it. Geim earned his PhD from the Institute of Solid State Physics in Chernogolovka, Russia. *Sidenote: cherno-golovka* (Russian), *schwarze Eichel* (German). That is when Geim had the idea to use Scotch tape to peel away the top layer. Flakes of graphite stuck to the tape, and the process can be repeated to achieve progressively thinner. Geim then dissolved the tape in a solution, leaving him with ultrathin flakes of graphite. Within weeks, his team had begun fabricating rudimentary transistors with the material. Subsequent refinements of the technique finally yielded the first graphene sheets. "We fooled nature by first making a three-dimensional material, which is graphite, and then pulling an individual layer out of it," said Geim. (I think that is what he said.)

Esperanza rejected my first invitation. I spent several weeks drafting a letter where I described my admiration of Esperanza's graphene-like appearance. I am not sure whether she has understood the depth of this insightful comparison. Hypothesis: Esperanza's body has emerged after wrapping an XXXL body with adhesive tape and plucking it off in a single move.

I got a chance to talk to her on the phone. I stumbled over the first few words trying to express myself quickly, telling her about her amazing lightness, the toxoplasmic brain of her deceased lover,

the viscosity of body fluids inside the mole rat. I sent her a telegram with a formula of glucuronic acid that looks like Nureyev's dancing body having a threesome with dragonflies. Finally I got her attention. The time for dinner was set, with an excuse for a possible delay being her usual evening chat with the president a.k.a. Graphene LeBron.

The ritual of arriving at the restaurant is quite unusual. First, take the train to Lost Prospect Park. Second, leave the train and meet a restaurant apprentice. Third, get a flashlight from the apprentice, jump off the platform onto the tracks, and walk toward the side door of the tunnel with the Banksy graffiti of the poisoned A. with a flower in his ass and an air balloon spiraling into the sky above his body. Open the door. You are inside the dining room. Take the seat indicated by a randomly generated number. Touch the menu, it's written in Braille. Order the mole-rat meal. Don't forget to stroke Hanna's penis. In your mind, of course.

### The Feast

Sometimes a mole rat gets stuck in the narrow part of the tunnel. It needs a bit of time to gather strength and stretch its body into the shape of a string. Its brain gets slightly squashed inside its soft skull, the brain squashing makes the rat feel orgasmic, the rat sprinkles semen and lubricates the tunnel, which helps the rat move forward. If you catch and kill the rat at this point, its brain stays fairly active and is filled with orgasm-triggering neurotransmitters. The kitchen in the Brooklyn restaurant has a special chamber filled with 3.5-inch-wide inflatable transparent tubes that are intertwined in a

complex network that resembles a natural rat habitat. Rats run freely through the maze, picking up pieces of delicious tarts that are blown into the tunnel from a propulsion feeder attached to the entry of the tunnel network. Once the chef receives the order, he identifies the most active rat and lets it move until it reaches a spot where a remote-controlled sensor squeezes the tube segment and the rat so that it cannot move forward. As the rat starts to convulse in preparation for its lifesaving orgasm, the chef's assistants approach it with a special large forceps that can keep the pressure at a level that maintains an ongoing brain excitation for a short period of time. While two assistants keep pressure on the rat brain, the third assistant severs the tube above and below the rat, cuts the tube open lengthwise, puts the rat straight onto a precooled plate, and extracts the brain with the single slice of a scalpel.

Esperanza and I were allowed to be present at the last minutes of the procedure. I pressed Esperanza's rectangular elbow, while the chef put two slices of the rat brain into a cooling, neurotransmitter-preserving Jell-O, and let us swallow a tiny mollusk of the neuronal matter. The effect was nearly immediate. Esperanza and I fell into the cushy chairs next to the kitchen and gasped for air at the end of the tunnel. The formerly invisible sommelier appeared and offered us a glass of sparkling wine. The dinner was briefly interrupted by a power outage caused by the Animal Rights Protectors, who came to demand the end of the mole rat's unlawful consumption. Their leader ... (I must stop the narrative at this point to introduce you to a poem I wrote to Esperanza in my house on Long Island.)

Be aware of ticks  
 they can fall in love  
 with you  
 they will carry your blood into woods  
 and eat every erythrocyte of yours in deepest  
 admiration of its high iron.

Ticks.

They will also absorb your smell  
 hanging on a web aboveground  
 they will let the hot air come through their  
 tender invisible fur  
 and will pass the amber to their levitating  
 brothers.

Ticks.

dying for love.

Their legs carry the imprint of your skin  
 The tiniest fingerprints will let them go  
 clubbing  
 at night  
 on backs of tan deer  
 where they will kiss other ticks  
 but only if they fall in love  
 to death.

Ticks.

The mole-rat dishes that we were fortunate to taste were spectacularly assembled: fresh-off-the-body sandwiped elastic skin, vacuum-dried legs, sonicated liver powder, laser-chopped kidney granules, and heart-and-matzah tartine for dessert. We didn't have any more wine. After dinner, we started to walk toward the chiseled city skyline. We kissed only once. We walked away

from each other equipped with longevity and trust in the statistics of random meetings.

### Changing the World

*Fecal Microbiota Transplant (FMT) is a procedure in which fecal matter, or stool, is collected from a tested donor, mixed with a saline or other solution, strained, and placed in a patient, by colonoscopy, endoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, or enema.*<sup>2</sup>

Doctor A. C. forced a well-washed shit into Joe's colon, a magic trick to save him from debilitating cramps and embarrassing bloody diarrhea. The intestinal battle between colonic evil and external agents of goodness will be won later, the acidophilic bacteria again beat out the other weirdly shaped bugs, kefir-scavenging mountaineers of Georgia (in the Caucasus, not the US) can retire just by selling their healthy excrement to anemic and depressed colitis patients. We must save the world. Here is the algorithm.

1. Two nuns travel to Paris to see Jean-Luc Mélenchon and two nuns visit Milo Yiannopoulos's digs in Miami. Those two have been chosen for their unbridled virility, which in the minds of the algorithm makers must reflect the extreme virility of gut microflora. One Slavic scholar even suggested that Lenin's drive toward social havoc increased dramatically after days of eating fermented food

<sup>2</sup> <http://thefecaltransplantfoundation.org/what-is-fecal-transplant/>.



inside a straw shed somewhere close to Finland's border with Russia.

2. Nuns seduce Mélenchon and Milo.
3. Nuns narcotize Mélenchon and Milo and use a scalpel to cut into their belly skin and underlying marble fat to get to their guts.
4. Nuns scoop Mélenchon's and Milo's gut paste into a glass jar.
5. The Mélenchon/Milo gut-paste mix is put into small syringes that are also equipped with explosive nano-devices.
6. The syringes are brought to celebrity parties, political events, Davos gatherings, and scientific meetings.
7. Syringes are placed inside toilets produced by Damien Hirst, an accomplice.
8. Important people like to use Hirst's toilets.
9. The explosive nano-devices blow the syringes into the asses of world-power holders.
10. The Mélenchon/Milo bacteria mix spreads through the guts of world rulers.
11. In two years, long lovemaking becomes popular again, movie theaters reopen, and holidays in Yemen become a reality. The world is saved by bugs.

## United Micro Kingdoms

After finding the wonderfully titled book *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*, published by the Rand Corporation in 2007, we began to wonder how nations were built and if states could be designed. We explored different ways of constructing alternative ideological systems and came across a type of chart used to illustrate different political positions. There are several variations but they typically have four points on two axes: leftist, rightist, libertarian, and authoritarian. The left-right axis usually defines economic freedom, whereas the libertarian-authoritarian axis defines personal freedom. Based on these, we began to explore an alternative England divided into four regions, each having a different ideology.

Not wanting to visualize the world in a cinematic way, or use pieces of evidence such as flags, documents, and other bits of everyday life, we wanted instead to present the world through one type of object that would allow for comparisons between the different micro-kingdoms. We chose transport. Transport involves not only technology and products but also infrastructure; we could think big but present our thinking at the more concrete scale of vehicles. Vehicles are also highly charged symbols of freedom and individuality. Each vehicle would embody different ideologies, values, priorities, and belief systems—essentially alternative worldviews.

We divided England into four super-shires, each offering an alternative to a fossil-fuel-dependent world designed to expose trade-offs: convenience versus control, individual freedom versus hardship, unlimited energy versus a limited population. Next we sketched out four regions and four combinations of technology and ideology: communism and nuclear energy, social democracy and biotechnology, neoliberalism and digital technology, and anarchy and self-experimentation.

The project narrative is as follows: In an effort to reinvent itself for the twenty-first century, England devolved into four super-shires, inhabited by digitalians, bioliberals, anarcho-evolutionists, and communo-nuclearists. Each county became an experimental zone free to develop its own form of governance, economy, and lifestyle. England became a deregulated laboratory for competing social, ideological, and economic models.

### Digitalians

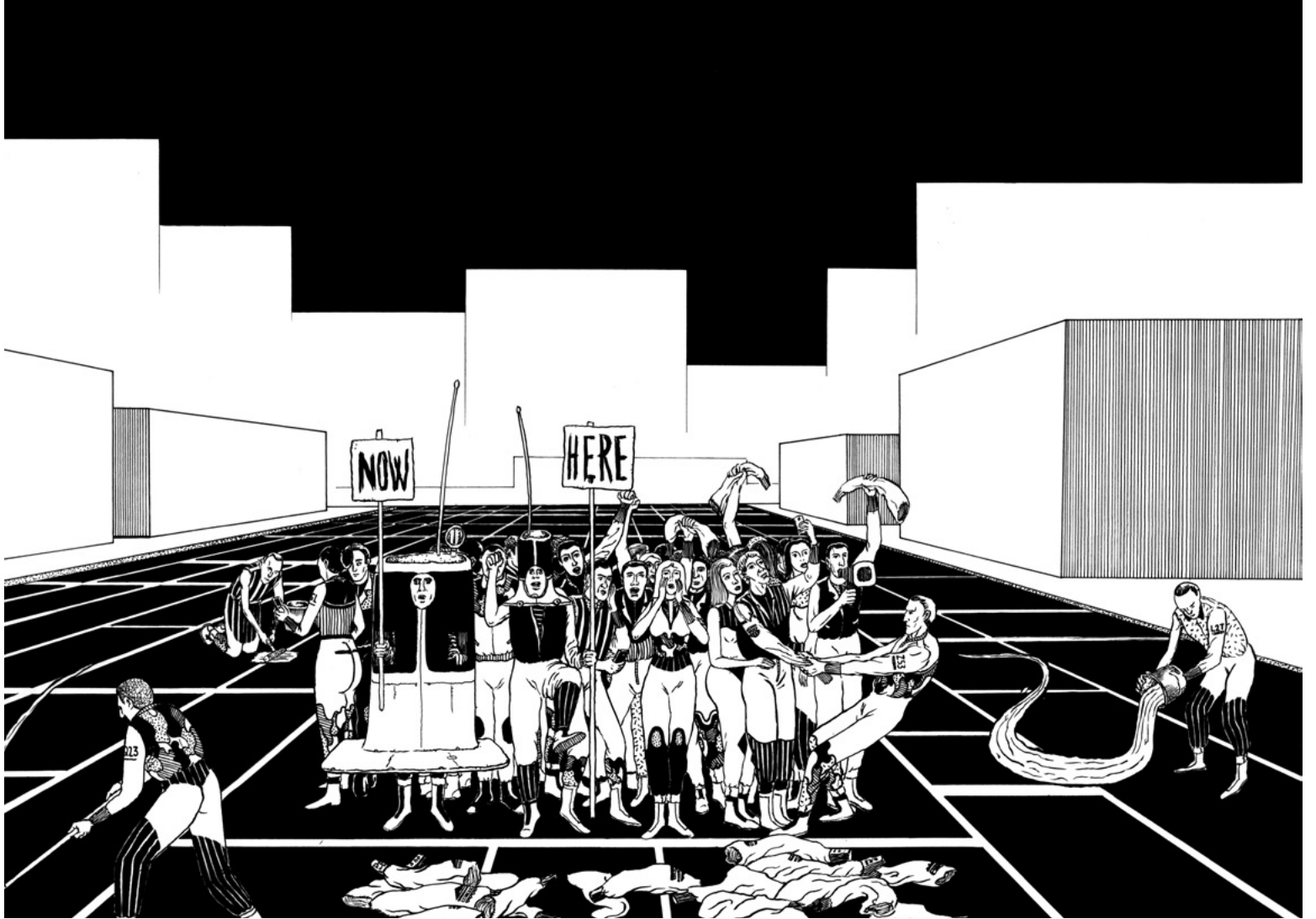
As their name suggests, digitalians depend on digital technology and all its implicit totalitarianism—tagging, metrics, total surveillance, tracking, data logging, and 100-percent transparency. Their society is organized entirely by market forces; citizen and consumer are the same. For them, nature is there to be used as necessary. They are governed by technocrats or algorithms—no one is entirely sure or cares, as long as everything runs smoothly and people are presented with choices (even illusionary ones). It is the most dystopian yet familiar of all the micro-kingdoms.

Their main form of transport is the digicar, a development of the electric self-driving cars being pioneered today. The car has evolved from being a vehicle for navigating space and time to being an interface for navigating tariffs and markets. Every square meter of road surface and every millisecond of access, at any moment, is monetized and optimized. The digicar is essentially an appliance or a computer, constantly calculating the best, most economical route. The dashboard doesn't have speed or rev counters but rather readouts that calculate money-time ratios.

There are priority tariffs and options for sharing journeys while maintaining privacy. Tariffs are calculated according to a P5 index: price, pace, proxemics, priority, and privacy. There is also a sleeper option in which the traveler is put to sleep and sent on his or her way with all vital functions remotely monitored.

Because digicars are managed and controlled by computers, they rarely crash or collide; consequently, their designs are simple and utilitarian. They resemble appliances: cute, charming, basic. The digicar is the ideal solution for a society that promotes freedom of choice and entitlement above all else, even in the face of ever-diminishing resources.

As one might expect, Digiland is made of vast, never-ending planes of tarmac: a cross between airport runways, sports fields, and car parks, dense with markings no human can decode—a landscape exclusively for machines. Clean electric cars mean that distinctions between inside and outside are minimized; roads flow through houses, shops, and factories.



A protest in Digiland. Protesters tear off their digital sleeves in disgust.  
Illustration by Miguel Angel Valdivia.

**Bioliberals**

Whereas digitarians use digital technology to manage supply and demand of diminishing resources and to create an illusion of unlimited access for all, the bioliberals pursue biotechnology, and with it, new values. They too want freedom and choice for all, but they want it to last. Massive government investment in biotechnology has led to a society in symbiosis with the natural world. Nature is enhanced to meet growing human needs but people also adjust their needs to match available resources. Each person produces his or her own energy according to his or her needs. Bioliberals are essentially farmers, cooks, and gardeners. Not just of plants and food, but of products too. Gardens, kitchens, and farms replace factories and workshops.

Although organic, Bioland does not look “natural.” Whole areas of landscape consist of complex knots of tubes, bladders, and pools, as though some unimaginably large animal had been eviscerated and its innards redistributed over the countryside. Large vats of liquid overflow into natural pools carrying nutrients, microbial fluids, products, and waste, linked by streams, ducts, and ditches. The bioliberal landscape has been transformed from rolling English fields and meadows of soft greens and yellows into dramatic multi-colored pools of harsh chemical colors reminiscent of twentieth-century nickel tailings. However, these are highly ecological. Nothing is toxic, everything feeds into everything else, nourishing, transforming, growing, mutating—the unleashing of biotechnology on the environment to maximize yield, establish sustainability, and reach some kind of equilibrium free of the

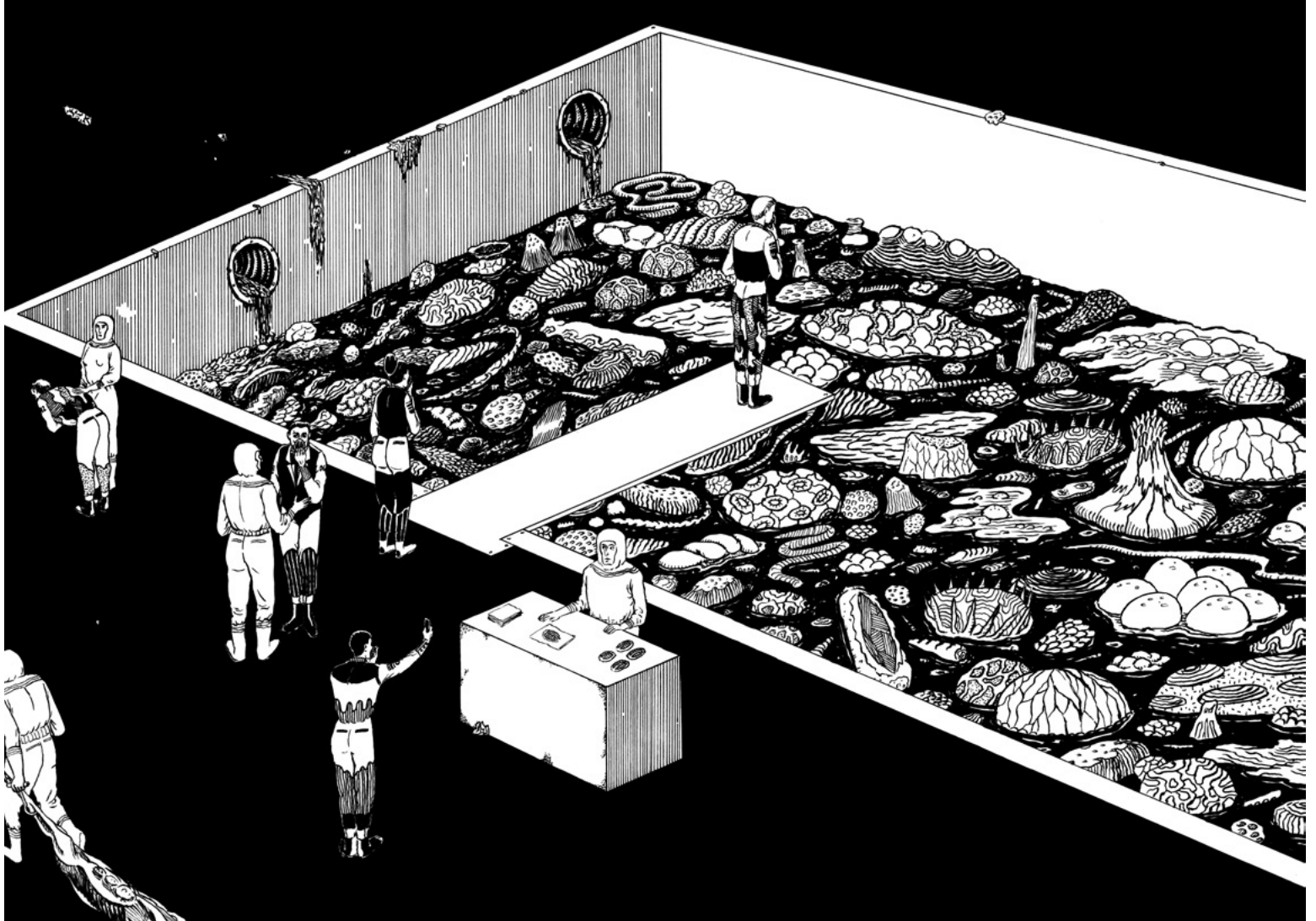
pressures of constant growth on fixed land masses that drove so many pre-United Micro Kingdom policies and dreams. Now it is wild, inspiring, sublime even. A hellish-looking landscape, but also a heaven on earth.

Even the vehicles are radically different. Bioliberals regard the use of huge amounts of energy to overcome gravity and wind resistance to be counter-productive and primitive. Faster is no longer better. People travel in extremely light, organically grown, biofueled vehicles, each customized to its owner’s dimensions and needs.

The bioliberal car combines two technologies: anaerobic digesters that produce gas and fuel cells that use the gas to produce electricity. Bags of uncompressed gas cannot compete with the efficiency of fossil fuels, a fuel based on millions of years of preparation compared to one that takes hours or days. The resulting cars are slow, bulky, messy, smelly, and made of skin, bone, and muscle—not literally, but in abstracted forms. Wheels, for example, are powered individually using jellylike artificial muscles. The vehicles are non-aerodynamic, big and unwieldy, suggesting that a very different logic informs their design, one that is absurd from today’s perspective.

**Anarcho-evolutionists**

The anarcho-evolutionists abandon most technologies and concentrate on using science to maximize their own capabilities through training, DIY bio-hacking, and self-experimentation. They believe that humans should modify themselves to exist within the limits of the planet rather than modifying the planet to meet their ever-growing needs. There is a high number of



Digitarians visiting one of Bioland's more extreme attractions—experiments in “beautiful rotting.” Illustration by Miguel Angel Valdivia.

trans- and post-humanists among anarcho-evolutionists. They essentially take evolution into their own hands. Very little is regulated; citizens can do as they please as long as it doesn't harm anyone else. The anarcho-evolutionists have little trust in government and tend to self-organize. Citizens' rights are based only on trust and agreement between individuals and groups.

The anarcho-evolutionist's world is a world without cars. Their transport is powered by either humans, wind, or genetically modified animals. The vehicles are designed around the principle of organization without hierarchy. Sociality and cooperation are more important than speed and competitiveness. The anarcho-evolutionists travel in groups, each doing what they are best at, and each is responsible for a bit of the vehicle. The bike is not as many would expect—a collection of independent bikes—but a very large bike (VLB) designed for traveling long distances in groups, pooling effort and resources. Traveling on abandoned motorways, it is gently steered by leaning, each person knowing from experience and practice just how much is required of them. The elderly, young, and weak are carried along by the others and are experts at singing and telling stories to entertain and motivate the cyclists.

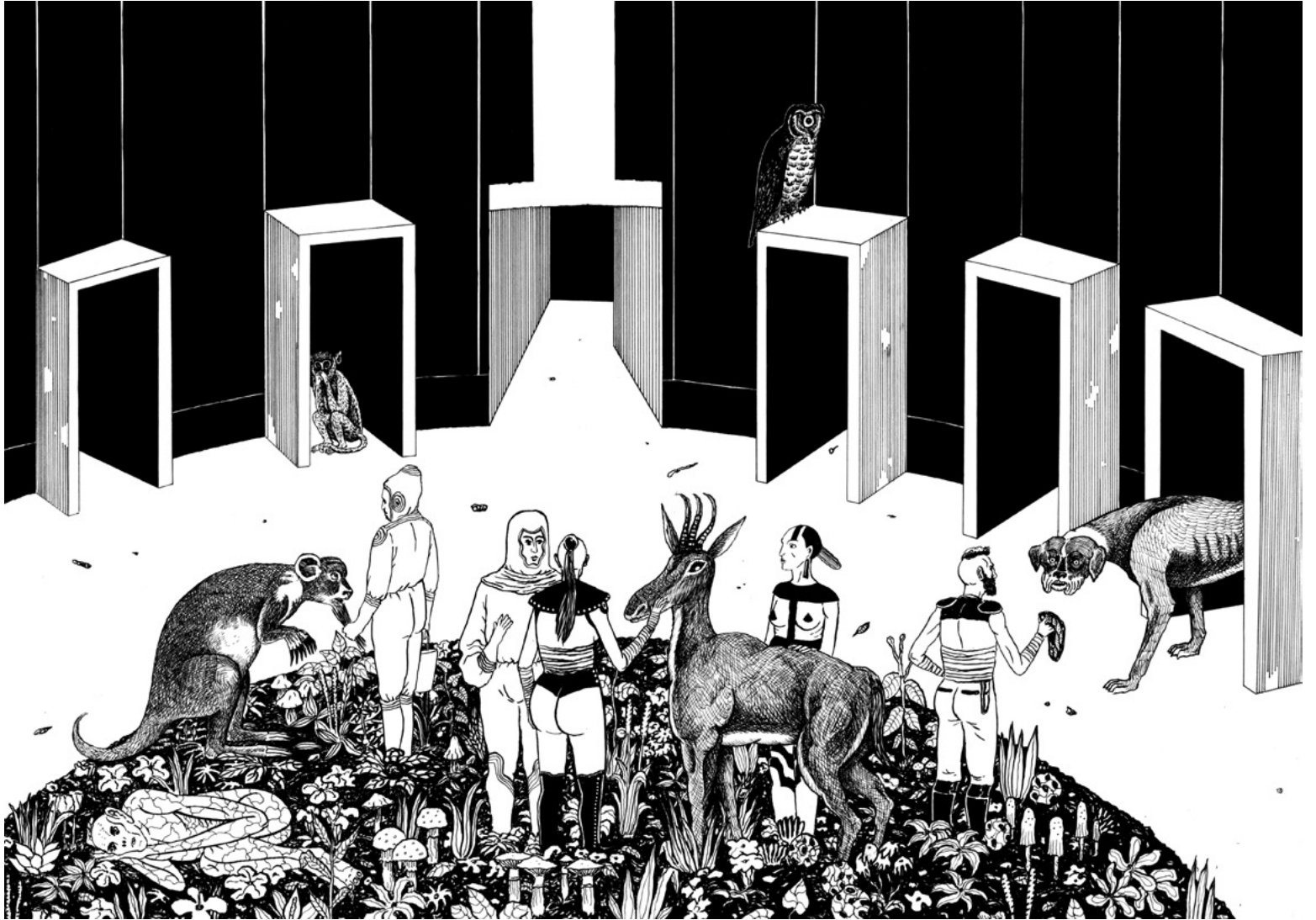
The family, or clan, is the most important social unit. Families evolve around particular forms of transport using a combination of genetic modification, training, and the passing down of knowledge and skills from generation to generation. A distinctive physique is associated with each clan and is a matter of pride: cyclists have well-developed thighs, balloonists are tall and willowy, and so on.

As well as modifying themselves, anarcho-evolutionists have developed new forms of animals to satisfy their needs: the hox is a mix of horse and ox, a hybrid animal bred to move heavy loads and pull carriages, while the pitsky is a combination of pit bull terrier and husky, designed for pulling smaller loads and personal protection.

Anarcho-evolutionists use exaggerated facial expressions and an extended range of sounds. And they thoroughly enjoy rhymes and onomatopoeia. Inspired by animal sounds, they sometimes modify their vocal cords. Warning sounds for their vehicles are also made by people, mainly out of sheer joy and exuberance. There is a constant acknowledgment of others through micro-sounds, almost like acoustic winks and nods. An incredible range of sounds is produced—superfast as well as slow, stretched noises, all used to express qualities our language rarely manages to achieve.

### Communo-nuclearists

The communo-nuclearist society is a no-growth, limited population experiment. They live on a three-kilometer-long nuclear-powered mobile mountainous landscape that crawls from one end of the country to the other, straddling two sets of three-meter-wide tracks. It travels at four miles an hour without ever stopping and is made up of carriages. Each carriage is twenty meters by forty meters, and there are seventy-five of them. The environment surrounding the tracks, like a demilitarized zone, is fully naturalized, a sort of nature paradise to be enjoyed by nature-loving communo-nuclearists from the safety of their train.



Bioliberals visiting an anarcho-evolutionist zoo lab.  
Illustration by Miguel Angel Valdivia.

The state provides everything. Citizens depend on nuclear energy for their continued survival. Although they are energy rich it comes at a price—no one wants to live near them and they are under constant threat of attack or accident, even though their energy source uses a relatively safe thorium reactor. Consequently, they are organized as a highly disciplined, mobile microstate. Fully centralized, everything is planned and regulated. They are voluntary prisoners of pleasure, free from the pressures of daily survival, communists sharing in luxury and not poverty. Like a popular nightclub, there is a one-out one-in policy, but for life.

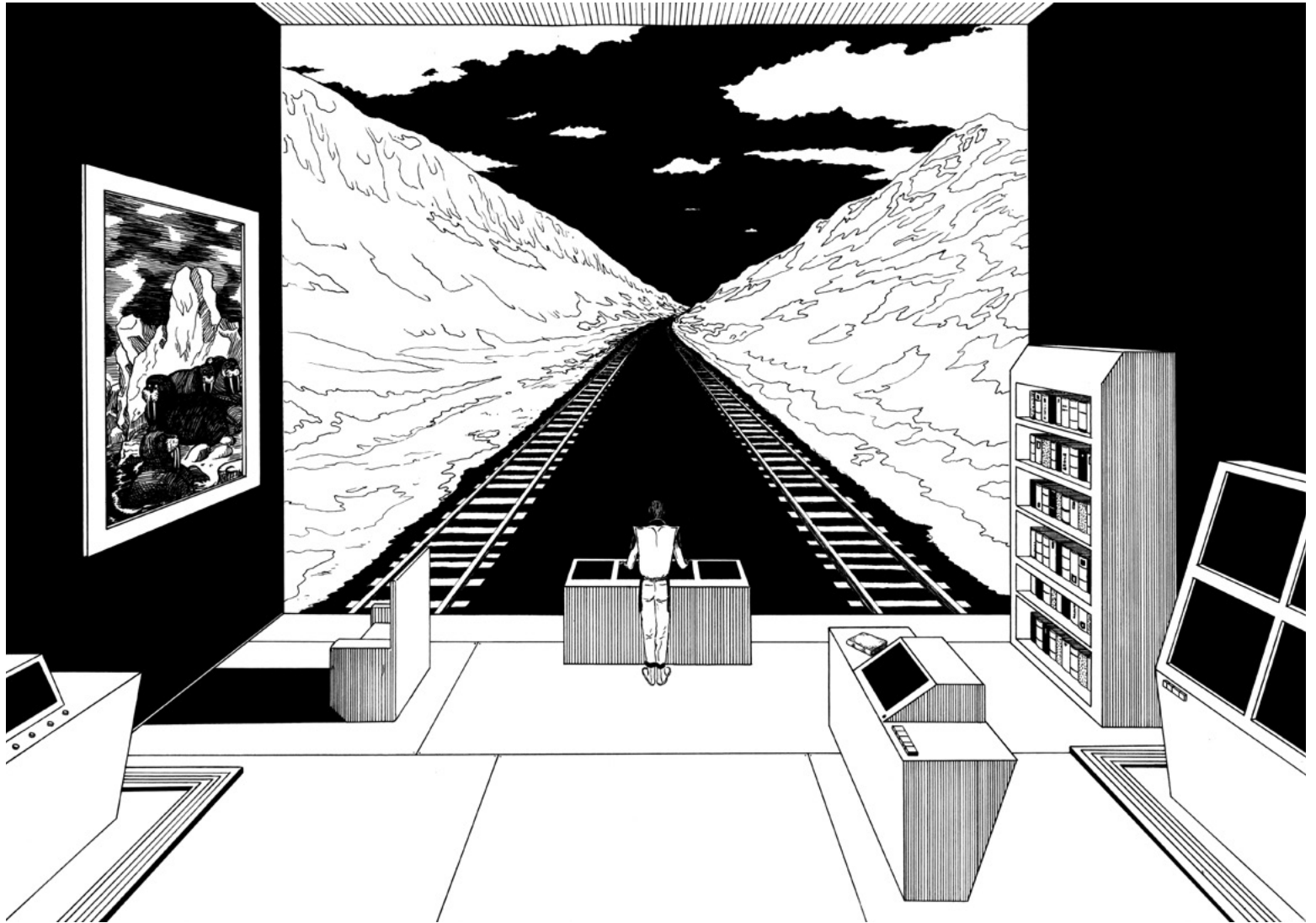
Inhabitants live inside the mountains, which contain labs, factories, hydroponic gardens, gyms, dorms, kitchens, nightclubs, and everything else they need. On the mountains are swimming pools, fish farms, and bookable huts for periods of isolation.

Although inspired by 1950s, '60s, and '70s dreams of space colonies, older United Micro Kingdom dwellers see echoes of early twenty-first-century Dubai, but on tracks. The train allows two very different sides of their collective psychology to flourish. At times it is a hedonistic playground, a very loud and vast mobile pleasure paradise announced in advance by a slow thumping sound, like a party cruise boat on the Thames. But mostly, like the 1930s Californian homesteaders, it is a community seeking isolation on the edges of civilization, away from the detrimental effects of the Anthropocene. In the ecological wilderness that has emerged along its route, the absence of humans means that wildlife is abundant and rare species thrive. Anyone who gets too close is zapped with

a noise cannon. Their survival requires extraordinary discipline, but to maintain mental well-being in such a confined environment, diversity is accommodated as much as possible.

Communo-nuclearists have a refined sensitivity to different shades of reality: the possible and impossible, imagined, actual, virtual, and so on. There are many occupations related to this, which fall under the general title of Reality Constructor, which includes reality designers, reality producers, new reality finders, and reality fabricators (bottom-up and top-down). These highly valued occupations help the community transcend the limits of their train reality. They are not exactly escapists but they do push fiction to its limits. The highest ranking of these occupations is the Connoisseur of Unreality, a role dedicated to the materialization of truly impossible objects, objects like those found in Borges's story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," which are made from a combination of sounds and visual qualities, or impossible colors lying beyond human perception, or even extreme mathematics and phenomena related to quantum physics. To communo-nuclearists, a description of an object is equal to the thing itself. Much of their time goes into articulating ever more precise definitions of impossible objects and developing strategies for their materialization while dreaming of adding new subcategories to Alexius Meinong's taxonomy of objects. Most fail, of course, but it is the attempt that is valued most of all. If physical space becomes available then a new object can be imagined, made, and stored in their famous Lending Library of Things. On the train, everything is shared and used as needed.





Communo-nuclearist control room, viewing platform, and library.  
Illustration by Miguel Angel Valdivia.

# The Antispeciesist Revolution

## Speciesism

When is it ethically acceptable to harm another sentient being? According to some fairly modest assumptions, to harm or kill someone simply on the grounds that they belong to a different gender, sexual orientation, or ethnic group is unjustified.<sup>1</sup> These distinctions are real but ethically irrelevant. Species membership, on the other hand, is normally reckoned an ethically relevant criterion. Fundamental to our conceptual scheme is the pre-Darwinian distinction between “humans” and “animals.” In law, nonhuman animals share with inanimate objects the status of property. As property, nonhuman animals can be bought, sold, killed, or otherwise harmed as humans see fit. In consequence, humans treat nonhuman animals in ways that would earn them lifetime prison sentences without parole if the victims were human. From an evolutionary perspective, this contrast in status isn’t surprising. In our ancestral

<sup>1</sup> How modest are these assumptions? A venerable tradition in philosophical metaethics is antirealism. The metaethical anti-realist proposes that claims such as “it’s wrong to rape women, kill Jews, torture babies, etc.” lack truth value or are simply false. See J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (New York: Viking Press, 1977). Here I shall assume that, for reasons we simply don’t understand, the pain–pleasure axis discloses the world’s inbuilt metric of (dis)value. Metaethical antirealists may instead wish to interpret my critique of speciesism as merely casting doubt on its internal coherence rather than being a substantive claim that a nonspeciesist ethic is objectively true.

environment of adaptation, the capacity to hunt, kill, and exploit sentient beings of other species was also fitness enhancing.<sup>2</sup> Our moral intuitions have been shaped accordingly. Yet can we ethically justify such behavior today?

Naively, one reason for disregarding the interests of nonhumans is the dimmer-switch model of consciousness. Humans matter more than nonhuman animals because (most) humans are more intelligent—intuitively, more intelligent beings are more conscious than less intelligent beings, thus consciousness is the touchstone of moral status. The problem with the dimmer-switch model is that it is empirically unsupported among vertebrates with central nervous systems, and probably also in cephalopods (such as the octopus). Microelectrode studies of the brains of awake human subjects suggest that the most intense forms of experience—for example, agony, terror, and orgasmic bliss—are mediated by the limbic system and not the prefrontal cortex. Our core emotions are evolutionarily ancient and strongly conserved. Humans share the anatomical and molecular substrates of our core emotions with the nonhuman animals whom we factory farm and kill. By contrast, distinctively human cognitive capacities, such as generative syntax or the ability to do higher mathematics, are either phenomenologically subtle or impenetrable to introspection. To be sure, genetic and epigenetic differences exist between, say,

2 Extreme violence toward members of other tribes can be fitness enhancing as well. See, for instance, Richard Wrangham and Dale Peterson, *Demonic Males: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

a pig and a human being that explain our adult behavioral differences.<sup>3</sup> Such mutations have little to do with raw sentience.<sup>4</sup>

### Antispeciesism

So what is the alternative to traditional anthropocentric ethics? Antispeciesism is not the claim that All Animals Are Equal or that all species are of equal value, or that a human or a pig is equivalent to a mosquito. Rather, the antispeciesist claims that, all things being equal, equally strong interests should count equally. Experiences that are subjectively negative or positive to the same hedonic degree must also count to an equal degree. And conscious beings of equivalent sentience often have equally strong interests, which (all things being equal) we must

3 For instance, the allele of the FOXP2 gene, implicated in the human capacity for recursive syntax. See Simon E. Fisher and Constance Scharff, “FOXP2 as a Molecular Window into Speech and Language,” *Trends in Genetics* 25, no. 4 (2009): 166–77.

4 Interpersonal and interspecies comparisons of sentience are of course fraught with problems. Comparative studies of how hard a human or nonhuman animal will work to avoid or obtain a particular stimulus give one crude behavioral indication. Yet we can go right down to the genetic and molecular level—for instance, interspecies comparisons of the SCN9A genotype. See Frank Reimann et al., “Pain Perception Is Altered by a Nucleotide Polymorphism in SCN9A,” *PNAS* 107, no. 11 (March 16, 2010): 5148–53. We know that in humans the SCN9A gene modulates pain sensitivity: some alleles of SCN9A give rise to hypoalgesia, others alleles to hyperalgesia, and nonsense mutations yield congenital insensitivity to pain. We could systematically compare the SCN9A gene and its homologues in nonhuman animals. Neocortical chauvinists will still be skeptical of nonmammalian sentience, pointing to the extensive role of cortical processing in higher vertebrates. But recall how neuro-scanning techniques reveal that during orgasm, for example, much of the neocortex effectively shuts down. Intensity of experience is scarcely diminished.

care for and respect equally—though other less sentient animals may have important interests as well. A pig, for example, is of comparable sentience to a prelinguistic human toddler. As it happens, a pig is of comparable (or superior) intelligence to a toddler.<sup>5</sup> However, such cognitive prowess is incidental for ethics. If ethics depends on sentience, then to factory farm and slaughter a pig is as ethically abhorrent as to factory farm and slaughter a human baby. To exploit one and nurture the other expresses an irrational but genetically adaptive prejudice.

On the face of it, this antispeciesist claim isn't just wrongheaded, it's absurd. Philosopher Jonathan Haidt speaks of "moral dumbfounding," where we just know something is wrong but can't articulate precisely why.<sup>6</sup> Haidt offers the example of consensual incest between an adult brother and sister who use birth control—for evolutionary reasons, we "just know" such an incestuous relationship is immoral. In the case of any comparisons of pigs with human infants and toddlers, we "just know" that any alleged equivalence in status is unfounded. After all, if there were no ethically relevant distinction between a pig and a toddler, or between a factory-farmed chicken and a human infant, then the daily behavior of ordinary meat-eating humans would be sociopathic, which sounds crazy. In fact, unless the psychiatrist's bible, *Diagnostic and Statistical*

5 S. Held, M. Mendl, C. Devereux, and R. W. Byrne, "Studies in Social Cognition: From Primates to Pigs," *Animal Welfare*, no. 10 (2001): 209–17.

6 Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012).

*Manual of Mental Disorders*, is modified to explicitly exclude behavior toward nonhumans, most of us do risk satisfying its diagnostic criteria for the disorder. Even so, we humans often conceive of ourselves as animal lovers. Despite the horrors of factory farming and of slaughterhouses in general, where all farmed animals perish, most consumers of meat and animal products are clearly not sociopaths in the normal usage of the term; most factory-farm managers are not wantonly cruel; and the majority of slaughterhouse workers are not sadists. Serial killers of nonhuman animals are just ordinary men doing a distasteful job—"obeying orders"—on pain of losing their livelihood.

Should we expect anything different? Hannah Arendt famously spoke of the "banality of evil." If twenty-first-century humans are collectively doing something post-human superintelligence will reckon monstrous—a crime against sentience akin to the Holocaust or Atlantic slave trade—then it's easy to assume that our moral intuitions would disclose it to us. Our intuitions don't disclose anything of the kind, so we sleep easy. But both natural selection and the historical record offer convincing reasons for us to doubt the trustworthiness of our naive moral intuitions. So the possibility that human civilization might be founded upon some monstrous evil should be taken seriously—even if the possibility might now seem absurd.

One possible speciesist response is to raise the question of "potential." Even if a pig is as sentient as a human toddler, there is a fundamental distinction between human toddlers and pigs: only a toddler has the potential to mature into a rational adult human being.

The problem with this response is that it contradicts our treatment of humans who lack “potential.” Thus we recognize that a toddler with a progressive disorder who will never live to celebrate his third birthday deserves at least as much love, care, and respect as his normally developing peers—not packed off to a factory farm on the grounds that it’s a shame to let good food go to waste. We recognize a similar duty to care for mentally handicapped adult humans and cognitively frail elderly people. For sure, historical exceptions to this perceived duty of care for vulnerable humans exist—for instance, the Nazi “euthanasia” program and its eugenicist conception of “life unworthy of life.” But, by common consent, we value young children and cognitively challenged adults for who they are and not simply for who they may or may not become. There is occasional reasoning for allocating more care and resources to a potential genius or exceptionally gifted child than to a normal human. Yet disproportionate intraspecies resource allocation is justified not because high-IQ humans are more sentient, but because of the anticipated benefits to society as a whole.

## Practical Implications

### I. Invitrotarianism

The greatest source of severe, chronic, and readily avoidable suffering in the world today is man-made: animal agriculture, most notably factory farming. Humans currently slaughter over fifty billion sentient beings each year. One implication of an antispeciesist ethic is that factory farms should be shut and their surviving victims rehabilitated.

In common with most ethical revolutions in history, the prospect of humanity switching to a cruelty-free diet first strikes most practically minded folk as utopian. “Realists” certainly have plenty of hard evidence to bolster their case. And as English essayist William Hazlitt observed two centuries ago, “The least pain in our little finger gives us more concern and uneasiness than the destruction of millions of our fellow-beings.” Without the aid of twenty-first-century technology, the mass slaughter and abuse of our fellow animals might continue indefinitely. Yet tissue-science technology promises to allow consumers to become moral agents without the slightest personal inconvenience. Meat produced in cell culture rather than in a live animal has long been a staple of science fiction. But global veganism—or its ethical invitrotarian equivalent—is no longer a futuristic fantasy. Rapid advances in tissue engineering mean that in vitro meat will be developed and commercialized soon. Today’s experimental cultured mincemeat could supplant mass-manufactured gourmet steaks for the consumer market. Perhaps critical for it to be rapidly accepted by the public, in vitro meat does not need to be genetically modified—thereby dispelling the worries of techno-Luddites about Frankenburgers. Indeed, cultured meat products will be more “natural” than their antibiotic-laced, factory-farmed counterpart.

Momentum for commercialization is growing. Nonprofit research organizations like the New York-based New Harvest, which works to develop alternatives to conventionally produced meat, have been joined by hardheaded businessmen. In 2012,

Silicon Valley entrepreneur Peter Thiel funneled \$350,000 into Modern Meadow, a Brooklyn start-up that aims to combine 3-D printing with in vitro meat cultivation. Within the next decade gourmet steaks could be printed out from biological materials. In principle, the technology should be scalable—while work on in vitro meat continues, rapid advances are being made in the development of so-called plant meat. In Southern California, for example, Beyond Meat has already brought to market the first plant-based meat with a texture almost identical to chicken flesh.

Tragically, billions of nonhuman animals this century will suffer and die at human hands before the dietary transition is complete. Humans are not obligate carnivores; eating meat and animal products is a lifestyle choice. “But I like the taste!” is not a morally compelling argument. Vegans and animal advocates ask if we are ethically entitled to wait for a technological fix. The antispeciesist answer is clear: *no*.

## 2. Compassionate Biology

If and when humans stop systematically harming other sentient beings, will our ethical duties to members of other species be relieved? Not if the same ethical considerations that apply to members of the human race apply also to members of species of equivalent sentience. Thus if famine breaks out in sub-Saharan Africa and human children are starving, we recognize a duty to send aid, or better still, to take proactive measures to ensure that famine doesn't arise in the first case—to provide, for example, not just food aid but family-planning assistance. So why not assist,

say, starving free-living elephants? Until recently, no comparable interventions were feasible for members of other species. The technical challenges were insurmountable. Not least, the absence of cross-species fertility-control technologies would have often made bad problems worse. Yet thanks to the exponential growth of computer power, every cubic meter of the planet will soon be accessible to micromanagement, surveillance, and control. Harnessed to biotechnology, nanotechnology, and robotics, such capabilities confer unprecedented power over nature. With unbridled power comes complicity—ethically speaking, how many of the traditional cruelties of the living world do we wish to perpetuate? Orthodox conservation biologists argue that we should not “interfere,” that humans can't “police” nature. Antispeciesists disagree. Advocates of compassionate biology argue that humans and nonhumans alike should not be parasitized, starved, disemboweled, asphyxiated, or eaten alive.

As always, bio-conservatives insist such miseries are “natural”—status quo bias runs deep. “Custom will reconcile people to any atrocity,” as George Bernard Shaw once observed. Snuff movies in the guise of nature documentaries are quite popular on YouTube, a counterpoint to the Disneyfied wildlife shows aired on television. Moreover, even sympathetic critics of compassionate biology might respond that helping free-living members of other species is prohibitively expensive. An adequate welfare safety net scarcely exists for humans in many parts of the world, so how can we contemplate its extension to nonhumans—even just to large-brained, long-lived vertebrates in our nature reserves? Provision

of comprehensive health care for all free-living elephants, for example, would cost somewhere between two to three billion dollars annually.<sup>7</sup> Compassionate stewardship of the living world would be technically daunting too, entailing ecosystem management, cross-species fertility control via immuno-contraception, veterinary care, emergency famine relief, GPS tracking and monitoring, and ultimately phasing out or genetically “reprogramming” carnivorous predators.<sup>8</sup> The bill could approach the world’s \$1.7 trillion annual arms budget. But irrespective of cost or timescale, if we are to be consistently nonspeciesist, then decisions about resource allocation should be based not on species membership but on sentience. An elephant, for example, is at least as sentient as a human toddler—and may well be as sentient, if not as sapient, as adult humans. If it is ethically obligatory to help sick or starving children, then it is ethically obligatory to help sick or starving elephants—not just via crisis interventions but via long-term health-care support.

A traditional conservation biologist might respond that elephants helped by humans are no longer truly wild. Yet following such a criterion, clothes-wearing humans or beneficiaries of food aid and family planning aren’t wild either, so why should this matter? “Free-living” and “wild” are conceptually distinct. To assume that the civilizing process should

7 See David Pearce, “A Welfare State for Elephants? A Case Study of Compassionate Stewardship,” *The Abolitionist Project*, last updated 2015, <http://www.abolitionist.com/reprogramming/elephantcare.html>.

8 See David Pearce, “Reprogramming Predators,” *The Abolitionist Project*, last updated 2015, <http://www.abolitionist.com/reprogramming/index.html>.

be confined to our own species is mere speciesist prejudice. Humans, transhumans, and post-humans must choose what forms of sentience we want to preserve and create on earth and beyond. Humans already massively intervene in the natural world, whether through habitat destruction, captive breeding programs for big cats, “rewilding,” and so on. So the question is not whether humans should “interfere,” but rather what ethical principles should govern our interventions.<sup>9</sup>

### Speciesism and Superintelligence

Why should transhumanists care about the suffering of nonhuman animals? This is not a “feel good” issue. One reason we should care cuts to the heart of the future of life. Transhumanists differ in opinion about the form our post-human successors will take—nonbiological artificial superintelligence, or cyborgs who merge with our hyperintelligent machines, or our own recursively self-improving biological descendants who modify their genetic source code and bootstrap their way to

9 The scholarly literature on the problem of wild-animal suffering is relatively sparse. See, for example, Arne Naess, “Should We Try to Relieve Clear Cases of Suffering in Nature?,” in *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*, vol. 10, ed. Harold Glasser and Alan Drengson (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 129–38; Oscar Horta, “The Ethics of the Ecology of Fear against the Nonspeciesist Paradigm: A Shift in the Aims of Intervention in Nature,” *Between the Species* 13, no. 10 (August 2010); Brian Tomasik, “The Importance of Wild-Animal Suffering,” Foundational Research Institute, July 2009, <http://www.utilitarian-essays.com/suffering-nature.html>; and the first plea in a newspaper with international scope for phasing out carnivorousness in nature, Jeff McMahan, “The Meat Eaters,” *Opinionator* (blog), *New York Times*, September 19, 2010, <https://nyti.ms/2kChG7m>.

full-spectrum superintelligence.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of the outcome, biological humans have a vested interest in the behavior of intellectually advanced beings toward cognitively humble creatures—that is, if we end up surviving at all. Compared to post-human superintelligence, archaic humans may be no smarter than pigs or chickens or worms. This does not augur well for *Homo sapiens*. Western-educated humans tend to view followers of Jainism as faintly ridiculous for practicing *ahimsa*, or harmlessness, sweeping the ground in front of them to avoid inadvertently treading on insects. How quixotic! Yet the fate of sentient but cognitively humble life-forms in relation to vastly superior intelligence is precisely the issue at stake as we confront the prospect of post-human superintelligence. How can we ensure a Jain-like concern for comparatively simpleminded creatures such as ourselves? Why should superintelligences care any more than humans about the well-being of their intellectual inferiors? Might distinctively human-friendly superintelligence turn out to be as intellectually incoherent as, say, Aryan-friendly superintelligence? If human primitives are to prove worthy of conservation, how can we implement technologies of impartial friendliness toward other sentients? And if post-humans do care, how do we know that a truly benevolent superintelligence wouldn't turn Darwinian life into utilitronium—matter and energy optimized for pure bliss—with a communal hug?

<sup>10</sup> Amnon H. Eden, Johnny H. Søraker, James H. Moor, and Eric Steinhart, eds., *Singularity Hypotheses: A Scientific and Philosophical Assessment* (Berlin: Springer, 2012).

Viewed in such a light, biological humanity's prospects in a future world of superintelligence might seem dire. However, this worry expresses a one-dimensional conception of general intelligence. No doubt the nature of mature superintelligence is humanly unknowable. But presumably full-spectrum superintelligence entails, at the very least, a capacity to investigate, understand, and manipulate both the formal and the subjective properties of the mind.<sup>11</sup> Modern science aspires to an idealized “view from nowhere,”<sup>12</sup> an impartial, godlike understanding of the natural universe, stripped of any bias in perspective and expressed in the language of mathematical physics. By the same token, a godlike superintelligence must also be endowed with the capacity to impartially grasp all possible first-person perspectives—not a partial and primitive Machiavellian cunning of the kind adaptive on the African savannah, but an unimaginably radical expansion of our own fitfully growing circle of empathy.

What such a superhuman perspective-taking ability might entail is unclear. We are familiar with people who display abnormally advanced forms of “mind blind” autistic intelligence in higher mathematics and theoretical physics.<sup>13</sup> Less well known are hyper-empathizers who display unusually sophisticated

<sup>11</sup> David Pearce, “The Biointelligence Explosion,” 2012, <http://www.biointelligence-explosion.com>.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>13</sup> Simon Baron-Cohen, “Autism: The Empathizing-Systemizing (E-S) Theory,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, no. 1156 (March 2009): 68–80.



social intelligence. Perhaps the most advanced naturally occurring hyper-empathizers exhibit mirror-touch synesthesia.<sup>14</sup> A mirror-touch synesthete cannot be unfriendly, because she feels your pain and pleasure as if it were her own. In principle, such an unusual perspective-taking capacity could be generalized and extended with reciprocal neuro-scanning technology and telemetry into a kind of naturalized telepathy, both between and within species. Interpersonal and cross-species mind reading could, in theory, break down hitherto invincible barriers of ignorance between different skull-bound subjects of experience, thereby eroding the anthropocentric, ethnocentric, and egocentric bias that has plagued life on earth to date. Today, the intelligence-testing community tends to treat facility at empathetic understanding as if it were a mere personality variable, or at best some sort of second-rate cognition for people who can't take an IQ test. But "mind reading" can be a highly sophisticated, cognitively demanding ability. Compare, say, the sixth-order intentionality manifested by Shakespeare. In *Othello*, for example, Shakespeare intends his audience to believe that Iago wants Othello to imagine that Desdemona is in love with Cassio and that Cassio reciprocates Desdemona's amorous feelings.<sup>15</sup> Thus we

<sup>14</sup> Michael J. Banissy and Jamie Ward, "Mirror-Touch Synesthesia Is Linked with Empathy," *Nature Neuroscience*, no. 10 (2007): 815–16.

<sup>15</sup> See Robin I. M. Dunbar, "The Social Brain Hypothesis and Its Relevance to Social Psychology," in *Evolution and the Social Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and Social Cognition*, ed. Joseph P. Forgas, Martie G. Haselton, and William von Hippel (New York: Psychology Press, 2007), 21–33.

shouldn't conceive of superintelligence as akin to God imagined by someone with autistic spectrum disorder. Rather, full-spectrum superintelligence entails a godlike capacity to understand the multifaceted first-person perspectives of diverse life-forms whose minds humans find incomprehensibly alien.

An obvious objection arises. Just because ultra-intelligent post-humans may be capable of displaying empathetic superintelligence, how do we know that they will exercise such intelligence? The short answer is that we don't. By analogy, today's mirror-touch synesthetes might one day neuro-surgically opt to become mind blind. But then we equally don't know if post-humans will renounce their advanced logico-mathematical prowess in favor of the functional equivalent of wireheading. If they do, they won't be superintelligent. The existence of diverse first-person perspectives is a fundamental feature of the natural world—as fundamental as the second law of thermodynamics or the Higgs boson. To be ignorant of fundamental features of the world is to be an idiot savant: a super-Watson perhaps, but not a superintelligence.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See Stephen Baker, *Final Jeopardy: Man vs. Machine and the Quest to Know Everything* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011). For an alternative to the convergence thesis, see Nick Bostrom, "The Superintelligent Will: Motivation and Instrumental Rationality in Advanced Artificial Agents," 2012, <http://www.nickbostrom.com/superintelligentwill.pdf>; and Eliezer Yudkowsky et al., "Reducing Long-Term Catastrophic Risks from Artificial Intelligence," Machine Intelligence Research Institute, 2010, <http://intelligence.org/files/ReducingRisks.pdf>.

## High-Tech Jainism?

The French writer Jules Renard once remarked, “I don’t know if God exists, but it would be better for His reputation if He didn’t.” God’s conspicuous absence from the natural world should not deter us from asking what an omniscient, omnipotent, all-merciful deity would want humans to do with our imminent god-like powers—for we’re on the brink of a momentous evolutionary transition in the history of life on earth. The physicist Freeman Dyson predicts we’ll soon “be writing genomes as fluently as Blake and Byron wrote verses.”<sup>17</sup> The ethical risks and opportunities for apprentice deities are huge.

On the one hand, Karl Popper warns, “Those who promise us paradise on earth never produced anything but a hell.”<sup>18</sup> Twentieth-century history bears out such pessimism. Yet for billions of sentient beings from less powerful species, existing life on earth is hell. They end their miserable lives on our dinner plates. “For the animals it is an eternal Treblinka,” writes Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer.<sup>19</sup> In a more utopian vein, some utterly sublime scenarios are technically feasible later this century and beyond. It is not clear if experience below Henry Sidgwick’s “hedonic zero” has any long-term future.<sup>20</sup> Thanks to molecular neuroscience,

17 Freeman Dyson, “When Science and Poetry Were Friends,” *New York Review of Books*, August 13, 2009.

18 As quoted in Jon Winokur, *In Passing: Condolences and Complaints on Death, Dying, and Related Disappointments* (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2005), 144.

19 Isaac Bashevis Singer, “The Letter Writer,” in *The Séance and Other Stories* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1968), 270.

20 See, for instance, Roger Crisp, *The Cosmos of Duty: Henry Sidgwick’s “Methods of Ethics”* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015).

mastery of the brain’s reward circuitry could make everyday life wonderful beyond the bounds of normal human experience. There is no technical reason why the pitiless Darwinian struggle of the past half billion years can’t be replaced by an earthly paradise for all creatures great and small. Genetic engineering could allow “the lion to lie down with the lamb.” Enhancement technologies could transform killer apes into saintly smart angels. Biotechnology could abolish suffering throughout the living world. Artificial intelligence could secure the well-being of all sentience in our forward light cone. Our quasi-immortal descendants may be animated by gradients of intelligent bliss orders of a magnitude richer than anything physiologically feasible today.

Such fantastical-sounding scenarios may never come to pass. Not because the technical challenges prove too daunting, but because intelligent agents choose to forgo the molecular keys to paradise for something else. Critically, the substrates of bliss don’t need to be species-specific or rationed. Transhumanists believe the well-being of all sentience is the bedrock of any civilization worthy of the name.<sup>21</sup>

21 See “Transhumanist Declaration,” *Humanity+*, 1998/2009, <http://humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-declaration/>.

# Love Commons

Marxism recounts the banishment of human beings from primitive communism and, after capitalism's collapse, their arrival at communism in its fully developed form. Its schema is a standard eschatological one, except that Marxism, guided by Hegel's phenomenology, replaces divine causality with dialectical causality. Where once God shaped the world with his words and thoughts, in Hegel the world does this for itself, driven by the contradictions of thesis and antithesis.

In Marxism, as in Judaism and Christianity, human beings were expelled from paradise where they had lived in a state of innocence. The only difference being that Adam and Eve were unaware of being naked while primitive communists had clothes, albeit not enough to be able to change them. These are complementary narratives of supply and demand: one story in which diabolic greed is driven by the knowledge of all it might possess, and another where greed is triggered by the possibility of appropriation and accumulation. For humans to return to humility, a purifying apocalypse will be needed. In Marxism, capitalism will perish by its own principle of profit maximization when it no longer pays workers enough to eat.

But this cannot happen completely by itself. Just as Judaism needs the Messiah and Christianity needs Christ, Marxism needs Karl Marx, who tells people that salvation is close at hand, that they can soon band together for the revolution. In this respect, Marx's image of communism is as vague as Jewish and

Christian notions of heaven on earth. Marx's communism is revealed above all through its negations: there is no money, let alone capital, and no "alienating" division between manual and intellectual labor. Everyone can do what they want, and they do this so abundantly that nothing is scarce, "after labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly" (*Critique of the Gotha Program*, 1875). The organization of human beings after the revolution remains as much an open question as the continued existence of personal apartments, beds, or clothes. The kingdom of God is as unfathomable as God himself.

Marx has somewhat clearer ideas of the period between capitalism's collapse and advent of a communist paradise. Under the "dictatorship of the proletariat" there would still be money but it would no longer accumulate in the private economy. Instead, every person would earn only according to the work he has done: "The same amount of labor which he [the worker] has given to society in one form, he receives back in another" (*Critique of the Gotha Program*). Under communism, this form of socialism would be superseded by a system going beyond exchange: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"

This slogan—which first appeared in the 1755 book *Code de la nature*, published anonymously but widely ascribed to Étienne-Gabriel Morelly—has helped to shape communism ever since, harking back

to New Testament descriptions of early Christian communities: "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had" (Acts 4:32); "There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need" (Acts 4:34–35).

The socialism that took shape after the Enlightenment saw itself as returning to this early Christianity. This was understood as a radical implementation of the injunction to love one's neighbor, either taking the shape of an anarchist collective or of a hierarchical society without possessions. *Code de la nature* divides society into families, tribes, and cities of equal size. From the age of fifty, male heads of the family become senators. Tribal leaders are appointed for life.

Marx and his close companion Friedrich Engels fulminated against "utopian socialists," viewing their scenarios as a form of social regression that contradicted dialectical development. Upon closer examination, Marx occupies the role of the apostle Paul rather than that of Jesus. For Jesus, the kingdom of heaven was so close at hand that there was no need for work, only a need to return to living hand to mouth, like Adam and Eve: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear" (Matthew 6:25); "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them" (Matthew 6:26). Marx and Engels came from the counterrevolutionary

bourgeoisie; similarly, Paul was born into a family of Pharisees, the sect detested by Jesus. However, unlike Jesus, he did his best to ensure that Christian teachings would be transmitted worldwide before the apocalypse. In a similar way, it was vital for Marx to develop a global proletarian consciousness rather than directly practicing communism in a gradual or sporadic way: he felt the latter tactics could, like almsgiving, only temporarily stave off capitalism's collapse.

For Paul, to love one's neighbor meant above all missionary work to save souls. As for physical love, he demanded asceticism and monogamy. Marx and Engels explicitly excluded love from their communist program. As they saw it, the abolition of private property and the collectivization of child-rearing would be enough to turn love relations into "a purely private matter which concerns only the persons involved and into which society has no occasion to intervene. [... It] removes the two bases of traditional marriage—the dependence rooted in private property, of the women on the man, and of the children on the parents" (Engels, *The Principles of Communism*, 1847). In this way, under communism, romantic love would come completely into its own. (In its ideal form, romantic love has always been separate from child-rearing and economic concerns.)

But this also meant that love would continue to involve relations of exchange. Marx ends his essay "The Power of Money" (1844) with this passage: "Assume *man* to be *man* and his relationship to the world to be a human one: then you can exchange love only for love, trust for trust, etc. [...] If you love

without evoking love in return—that is, if your loving as loving does not produce reciprocal love; if through a *living expression* of yourself as a loving person you do not make yourself a *beloved one*, then your love is impotent—a misfortune."

In Christianity, shame and the loss of innocence relate to the sexual organs; for Marx, the sex organs are the "natural" instruments of the very first division of labor, "which was originally nothing but the division of labor in the sexual act" (*The German Ideology*, 1845–46). But because sex and love are not subject to the development of the relations of production, they are excluded from dialectical materialism. Marx and Engels vilified any elevation of love to an element of communist theory, as in the writings of their predecessors, whom they castigated as "utopian socialists" and "sentimental socialists." They lambasted Hermann Kriege's kind of thinking as "lovesick drivél." Engels wrote, "Only the old cant remains. Love one another—fall into each other's arms regardless of distinctions of sex or estate—a universal stupor of reconciliation!" (*Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, 1886). In particular, Marx and Engels found it repugnant that while "sentimental socialists" agitated against material hardship from a sense of empathy, their elevation of love over all things meant that they were not too concerned with overcoming class society. It was enough to eliminate the worst kinds of hardship. This is also the case for worldly love, since it has no comparison to divine love. Apart from charitable care, in their sensuous coexistence human beings are left to fend for themselves.

An exception to this was the early socialist Charles Fourier, whose book *Le nouveau monde amoureux* (1816) outlined a society called Harmony where intimacy is only permitted in collective form, as highly ritualized orgies. A high priestess keeps watch over this “court of love,” ensuring compliance with the law. Moreover, sexual philanthropists, known as “angels of virtue,” ensure that even the unattractive and infirm receive their “sexual minimum,” which is doled out along with a “social minimum,” something like a guaranteed basic income. Fourier did not dare publish the book—it first appeared in 1967. And there is the possibility that it was intended as a frivolous parody of ecclesiastical ceremonies. Engels already called Fourier a satirist thanks to demands like giving the dirty work to children since they love dirt so much.

Fourier is also remarkable for his assumption that work as such could make people happy if it were tailored precisely to their temperament. The usual communist and socialist scenarios, from Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) to Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward, 2000–1887* (1888), cannot forgo some form of a compulsion to work; in particular, everyone must perform a minimum amount of farmwork. Belief in a heavenly reward for hard work (*Utopia*), or patriotic honor and an ingenious system of promotion (*Looking Backward*), are merely supplements to this fundamental coercion.

By contrast, Marx and Engels genuinely believed in the natural industriousness of human beings, another belief rooted in Christianity. Certainly, the end-of-times sect initially was of no mind to work, but when the apocalypse didn’t come about, alternative

arrangements had to be made. Since Christ’s teaching contained no concrete outline for how to live, Paul could put himself on good terms with worldly authorities by demanding absolute obedience to them: “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established” (Romans 13:1). Obedience here meant primarily toiling under the existing work relations: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The Catholic Church itself became a worldly power, interested above all in actions that were to its own benefit. But during the Reformation, which aimed against the power of the Church, Paul’s general work ethos became more relevant again. Martin Luther preached, “Idleness is a sin against the command of God, who has ordered work here on Earth.” He also said, in a clear reversal of Christ’s call to live as carefree as a bird, “Man is born to work as the bird is born to fly.” John Calvin took a similar line: “Our work, the earning of our living, is a calling from God and is holy.” In recognizing no difference between a worldly industriousness that benefits the common good or simply stockpiles private property, the Protestant work ethic both acknowledged capitalism and made its emergence possible in the first place. The only rule was that it should not be frittered away.

Marx (the son of Jewish converts to Protestantism) and Engels (the child of a Pietist) presumed that the Protestant work ethic could be transposed from capitalist to communist society without the need for religious superstructure or a love of one’s neighbor as additional motivation. Indeed, they suggest that the work ethic would only then come to full fruition.

Christianity and Marxism both adhere to a humanistic worldview that regards human beings as possessing an inherent goodness. In either case, as loving or working beings they simply have to find their path: either to God or to their true selves. Both narratives have enjoyed enormous success in spite of the long postponement of their main promises of salvation: respectively, heaven on earth and a communist society without money or scarcity. In both cases, these worldviews developed totalitarian power structures that brutally propelled their expansion. Christianity took more than a thousand years to become the first world religion and it was assisted by colonialism, the imperialist form of capitalism. But just 125 years after the publication of Marx and Engel's *Manifesto of the Communist Party* in 1848, governments considering themselves Marxist ruled over nearly half the world's population. Twenty or thirty years later, all that was pretty much over and done with. Real existing socialism never got beyond the dictatorship of the proletariat, which expropriates capitalists against their will. Its economic inefficiency and the severe controls it imposed on the population mean that the system is now generally regarded as outmoded. Marx not only neglected to set out the precise conditions of the proletariat's dictatorship, he also failed to outline how capitalists were to be transformed into joyful communists. The danger of counterrevolution gives Marxist rulers legitimation for permanent tyranny.

In fact, this says much in favor of early socialist communities of shared values. They had no need to await the great revolution, just as Christianity, when collective salvation failed to arrive, could at least

promise individuals entrance into paradise after their death. But the commune experiments of the hippies, often Christian in spirit, never expanded to become a broad, stable movement. They mostly remained on such a small scale that they were restricted to farming and manual labor. The backwardness of their production process made them tend toward nostalgic, anti-technological views. The sexual revolution may have added the lubricant of physical love, but in fact it had contradictory effects: rather than lead people to joyful coexistence, the hippies' free love only meant that the intimate sphere became a further scene of lifelong competition.

Just as orthodox Christians continue to await collective salvation, orthodox Marxists think that revolutionaries, Marx included, have simply been too impatient. In his "Fragment on Machines"—written in 1857–58 and published posthumously—Marx expects the end of capitalism to arrive when it has driven automation so far that human labor power is hardly necessary. If machines can perform work on their own, the capitalists who drive the workers would also no longer be needed, and the money economy would lose its fundamental value: labor stored within the product. "As soon as labor in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labor time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. [...] With that, production based on exchange value breaks down." Marx expects that capitalists would nonetheless first do their utmost to intensify exploitation even further: "The most developed machinery thus forces

the worker to work longer than the savage does, or than he himself did with the simplest, crudest tools.” Because machines moderate physical exhaustion, even longer working times become possible, and women and children can also be fully deployed. Today, the process has in fact been radicalized to such a degree that, through social media, people toil completely unpaid in their free time. Soon, no doubt, they will do so in their sleep. But Marx believes that, at some point, the contradiction between time actually worked and the working time required for social well-being will become so large that “the growth of the forces of production can no longer be bound up with the appropriation of alien labor, but [...] the mass of workers must themselves appropriate their own surplus labor. Once they have done so [...] then, on one side, necessary labor time will be measured by the needs of the social individual, and, on the other, the development of the power of social production will grow so rapidly that [...] disposable time will grow for all.” This disposable time can be used for their “own development” and “artistic, scientific, etc. education.”

In “Fragment on Machines,” Marx saw the time of communism arriving only in a late- or post-industrial society. But although he had the thought before writing his defining work *Capital*, he never published it. Instead, all his life, Marx campaigned for direct class struggle, only to be succeeded by even more impatient Marxists who incited a revolution in Russia, of all places, where industrialization had made so little progress that the proletariat had to be developed retrospectively as a revolutionary subject. The cruelty of this

process meant that when the world economic crisis plunged the capitalist world into misery in the 1920s, communism was not a promising alternative. Instead, forms of socialism arose that came cloaked in nationalism and were submissive to capitalism: fascism and the (national-)social market economy. The former kept workers happy with feats of national achievement, while the latter offered social benefits, shorter working time, and increased wages, all financed by technologically driven improvements in productivity and by mercantile exploitation of less developed economies. Cushioned by the welfare state, capitalism enabled welfare recipients to live more comfortably than in the communist paradise dreamed of by Marx and Engels. Even if the material welfare of many Western citizens is now stagnating or even regressing, this is more than balanced out by a general enrichment in the rest of the world. By now, far more people in the world die of obesity than malnutrition. Even animal and environmental protections are emerging. And if more and more people are superfluous in the production process, they anaesthetize themselves with cheap entertainment, including synthetic drugs and virtual reality, while the world is being despotically ruled by a minority of humans and other beings who are wired to accumulate power. Existing democratic arrangements don’t need to be abolished, as they were under fascism; they can’t even offer protection in their current state.

With the dialectic not going according to plan, late Marxists limit themselves to a pure critique of existing capitalism. In doing so, they radicalize Marx and Engels’s antithetical approach. Not only is the



communist paradise as unknowable as God, but so too are the historical upheavals that would bring it about. Given the presumption—similar to the Christian idea of original sin—that “wrong life cannot be lived rightly” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 1951), all that remains are blockades, terror, and sentimentality. And even these cling too much to the illusion of another, truer life, according to accelerationism’s nihilist strand. To begin with, let capitalism collapse of its own accord, even if humanity is wiped out with it.

To nonetheless arrive directly at communism, one can try to adapt the revolutionary class to postindustrial circumstances: instead of betting on steadily employed industrial workers, the bet is on all those enduring any form of precarity. To avoid the marginalized being played off against each other, jealously guarding their privileges in a particularist identity politics that recreates nationalism in miniature, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri revive the idea of love as social cement, hoping it will allow marginalized groups to unite into a global “multitude.” As a form of loving one’s neighbor, this love would not just mirror those like us, but also open us up to strangers: “When love is conceived politically, then, this creation of a new humanity is the ultimate act of love” (*Multitude*, 2004).

But where can we find enough love to avoid ending up, yet again, isolated in communities of one’s own kind? The hormone oxytocin, which creates bonds between people, also reinforces defensive reactions toward outsiders. Are human beings simply herd animals? Is this why nationalism asserts itself most tenaciously in identifying with a couple dozen top athletes at most?

What Confucianism, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and also Christianity have in common is the preaching of the Golden Rule: “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12). The Golden Rule is mostly interpreted to mean that people should not harm or deceive others and that they should help those in need. By contrast, the commandment to love one’s neighbor is totalitarian: it abolishes differential treatment between self and others, even claiming authority over one’s feelings. Any attempt to comply with this commandment is bound to fail. It seems to exist for precisely that reason: to reveal a human’s lowly status compared to God and his boundless love. The only chance of living up to the commandment to some degree is to kneel in humility before God so as to love oneself as little as possible, and one’s neighbor equally as little. The Christian work ethic helps to expel all *love* from the love of one’s neighbor, instead transforming it into pure *work* on and for one’s neighbor.

But when the majority of jobs can be automated at low cost then this charity becomes increasingly superfluous. Perhaps we humans are no longer even needed as consumers, and we will be kept alive as an endangered species or an aleatory reserve. As perfected *homo ludens*, all we do, like children, is learn and amuse ourselves. In place of the accumulation of capital and goods, far more potent, scientifically tested techniques are now available to intensify our happiness. Even today we know that beyond the satisfaction of a few basic needs, material possessions do not bring about any permanent increase in personal happiness.

When we can measure happiness with precision and consistency it will be in a position to oust money as the central unit of social value.

Radical hedonists are already considering the transformation of everything in existence into pure happiness. The transhumanist internet forum *LessWrong* suggests a definition: “Orgasmium (also known as hedonium) is a homogeneous substance with limited consciousness, which is in a constant state of supreme bliss. An AI programmed to ‘maximize happiness’ might simply tile the universe with orgasmium.” To bring about this state of affairs as quickly and reliably as possible, a “shockwave” is imagined, “converting all matter in the universe [...] as quickly as possible.”<sup>1</sup> However, for everyone but strict utilitarians, there is a catch: a shockwave would bring with it the involuntary annihilation of all sentient life-forms along with everything they love. How do we reach a point where all sentient life is prepared to undertake an action of such radical altruism, and is even capable of understanding it?

A more socially acceptable but also more complex variant of universal bliss consists of establishing the habitual emotional conditions of all sentient life—the *hedonic set point*—so far into positive territory that all feelings become “gradients of bliss.”<sup>2</sup> In that case, too, some humans and other beings will resist general happiness for reasons of humanist, religious,

<sup>1</sup> *LessWrong Wiki*, s.v. “orgasmium” and “utilitronium,” last modified November 23, 2016, <https://wiki.lesswrong.com/wiki/Orgasmium>; <https://wiki.lesswrong.com/wiki/Utilitronium>.

<sup>2</sup> See Solution 292, David Pearce, “The Antispeciesist Revolution,” in this volume.

or ecological conservatism. Even if it is possible to successfully segregate oneself from this group, one has to survive until universal bliss becomes technically possible.

To be sure, genetic technology, artificial intelligence, and robotics may soon be used to optimize humans as well as all other creatures. But is it more beneficial for individuals to strengthen their empathy and honesty or their capacity for competitiveness and intrigue? This question won’t have a clear answer when all living creatures (to differing degrees) are able to optimize themselves at any moment. No matter how much, in terms of game theory, our capacity for action may increase, we will find ourselves in ever more complex games without having the slightest understanding of most of them. Not to mention that artificial intelligences are also operating independently of us: once they are vastly superior to us, they will be as impervious as God.

In view of this danger, communism once again becomes significant because it is not content with the election of a new governing majority every couple of years, which invariably includes the possibility of oppressing a minority or allowing oneself to be oppressed by one. Instead, communism strives as much as possible to meet the needs of every individual.

In a postindustrial society, this aim becomes more and more challenging. Increased prosperity awakens the desire for ever-greater levels of comfort, even as we sense that comfort alone does not make us happy. The supply of commercial, semicommercial, and noncommercial promises of happiness is confusing and contradictory, but at the same time individualization is

so advanced that fundamental state restrictions inevitably seem tyrannical even if they could actually promote self-development.<sup>3</sup> This is why a guaranteed basic income has become a sociopolitical *ne plus ultra* for many on the Left. Marx's demand for collective child-rearing has become a distant prospect, not to mention Fourier's plans for exclusively collective sexual acts.

However, beyond material comfort, love is precisely what we humans want the most. Apart from work, it is what most occupies us. Kissing, caressing, sex all year round—for us humans, the expression of love is an essential part of social communication, which otherwise seems to be the case only for bonobos, and we also practice it beyond species boundaries. Lack of love can cause us much more suffering than drug withdrawal, and it can lead us to die years too early. But while state and charity protect us from hunger, thirst, and cold, we are completely on our own in finding enough love, whether in a family, a partnership, with friends, or on social media, even if we might be disadvantaged on the basis of our appearance or character or because of a disability. To be offered institutional support for our loneliness or troubles in love we have to fall victim to depression or psychosis. And even then, what we are offered is talk therapy and drugs, not what we actually lack, which is love.

What an automated society needs is actual *love* of one's neighbor, and we first must develop some idea of how this might work in practice, beyond sporadic free hugs. Capitalist society conditions us to consume according to our income and assets, just

<sup>3</sup> In *Solution 264-274: Drill Nation* (2015), I develop models of a state based on these kinds of restrictions.

like it conditions us to fall in love according to our attractiveness and to keep on loving only if our love is required. To love someone regarded as less attractive is an indication of perversion or some other weakness. Anyone who continues to love without being loved in return is delusional.

Capitalist society only accepts unidirectional love toward beings and things that we own, like children, pets, or jewelry. This love, like that of God, is always also an instrument and an expression of power: our love renders us compliant, and we love what we have shaped in accordance with our imaginings. It is different with sensual charity. The recipient can reciprocate in a similar way—everyone can love—without being obliged to, or needing to feel obliged to.

It is not necessary or possible for a communist society to entirely abolish love-as-exchange. Those in need of love will usually, of their own accord, reciprocate a love that satisfies them. Furthermore, charitable love—whether caring, sensual, or sexual—needs only to be practiced as and when it is required. It need not be, as the Judeo-Christian commandment to love one's neighbor demands, that everyone must love everyone else, just that we all strive to somewhat extend the spectrum of our desires in order to transform society into an excessively flowing fountain of love.

Compared to traditional charity, in which ordinary work is rewarded with gratitude at best, charitable sensual love is far more rewarding for its donors, but also more demanding. We must not only learn to be interested in and delighted by people whom at first we are indifferent to or find revolting. We must also

convince reserved, anxious people to trustingly open up to our love, but without inflaming their desire so much that they develop an obsession. Charitable love is personal, but it cannot replace an exclusive partnership.

Charitable sensual love is more fulfilling and enriching than most jobs in today's world; in a fully automated society, it would be well suited to replace wage labor as the dominant activity in people's lives. As with pets, love will become the essential force of production for human beings. Whereas industrialization was based on the curbing of desire so that work could run smoothly, we must now learn to become aroused in an equally focused way. As foreseen by the hippies, lovers will replace the proletariat as the new revolutionary class. But through a dialectical synthesis, love also must be understood as work in order to truly master it.

Romanticism established an idea of love as an elemental force resistant to industrialization and rationalization. Whenever love's revolutionary potential has been invoked, from the early socialists to the hippies and then to Hardt and Negri, this potential is inherently regressive: it implies that however human beings may have fucked things up historically, deep down we are all loving and thus lovable creatures, and can come together on that basis. Sensual charity, by contrast, makes love itself a specific object of redistribution before it can become a factor that facilitates redistribution. A love that is actually capable of uniting all oppressed beings beyond the boundaries of class, race, gender, taste, or even species must itself first be developed.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See Solution 287, Ingo Niermann, "Trade Union of the Un- and Underemployed," in this volume.

Soon we will also compete with robots and avatars in terms of love: with their superhuman appearance, their superhuman skills, their infinite patience. But these perfect love servants cannot feel anything themselves, and so to interact with them remains, however much we may lose ourselves in it, a form of expanded masturbation. In the future, even if we learn from robots and avatars in our sensual charity, even if we adapt ourselves to them, we remain reliant on ourselves for the direct act of sensual charity. Relations of production could hardly be more primitive. Sensual charity gets by without any means of production whatsoever. And since it is not based on reciprocity, it can even do without, as *The German Ideology* put it, "the division of labor in the sexual act."

Nonetheless, the social organization of charitable lovers is reasonable: it can serve to exchange ideas, establish standards, and protect against abuse. Those in need of love can find a trustworthy place to go. Sated with attention and caresses, they will often themselves become love donors. What's more, the Army of Love can also practice conventional modes of charity, from babysitting to caring for the old—always beginning from love.

As society as a whole comes to resemble a school—we never stop learning, never stop being tested, no longer need to work, never grow old—the organization of charitable love most closely resembles an army.<sup>5</sup> It too must deploy its weapon, love, with great care and consistency. To do so, its members must

<sup>5</sup> See Solution 274, "Army of Love," in *Solution 264-274: Drill Nation*; and <http://www.thearmyoflove.net>.

intensively recondition themselves; in other words, they must engage in drills.

Unlike the “industrial army” outlined in Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, membership in the Army of Love can only be voluntary. However, it could conceivably emerge as a state within a state, like many modern armies and paramilitary organizations that provide their members with particular social services. In this way, the army, as Fredric Jameson imagines it in his essay “An American Utopia” (2016), could move from the “first glimpse of a classless society” to being its nucleus; all the more so if, like the Army of Love itself, it functions as an original social service. Since wealth and egotism are correlated, particularly committed members of the Army of Love will voluntarily transfer their property. This can be used to provide members with benefits like accommodation, food, clothing, and health care. In this way, what begins as the communization of love can end in complete communism.

Since the core task of the Army of Love—to love—cannot be imposed by force, in its other activities, too, the army is immune from demanding more from its members than they really want. The Army of Love is not meant to be a preserved habitat in the midst of capitalist misery, “wrong life lived rightly.” It is up to every member to decide how much they will commit themselves.

Like every social system, human society generates itself out of acts of communication. It is therefore determined by dialectical processes, which, however, do not follow a preformulated discourse. Today we cannot yet grasp what communism could some day become. This is not just because its magnificence far surpasses



Still from the film *Army of Love* (2016), directed by Alexa Karolinski and Ingo Niermann

our judgment, stunted as it is by capitalism; it is because we must first educate ourselves to reach communism, and in this, as in all else, it will be revealed that we have differing capabilities. Some are early adopters, others struggle all their lives. Some are helped by technical devices, others are distracted by them. The Army of Love bestows its unconditional love on all.

Translated from the German by Brian Hanrahan

## Inaugurating the End

Among constitutional scholars, a constitution's endurance—its survival in a future infinite and unknown—is often promoted as its virtue. According to this constitutional common sense, endurance confers political stability and demonstrates the institutional foresight of “founding fathers.” Opponents of the perpetual constitution cite its democratic deficit: How can a constitution be legitimate if it binds generations who did not, and could not, consent to its terms at its founding?

To take the problem of perpetuity and legitimacy to its extreme, I engaged in a thought experiment: What if a nation was founded, and a constitution was written, to phase out human life? Certainly the stakes would be high for the generation unborn or in childhood. However, it soon became clear that such a constitution throws into relief issues that go beyond intergenerational legitimacy; issues endemic to the constitutional form itself. Two were of particular interest to me: first, that constitutions belong to certain times, encoding the context in which they are written; and second, that constitutions create a sense of time or historical consciousness, typically privileging a narrative of perfectibility.

My project asks: What might we learn from a constitution that explicitly privileges some generations yet burdens others, that repudiates narratives of progress and redemption, that preserves ecology and peace through individual constraint, and that ends the very “people” it constitutes?

Termina is a nation on an alternative future Earth. In this reality, Earth's natural resources have been largely depleted and carbon emissions were never properly curbed. Extreme weather events are commonplace and threaten human life. The nations of this Earth responded to these challenges differently. Some pursued a hedonistic agenda and did not alter their consumption. Scarce resources in these nations led to internal and external conflict. Others turned to technology in the hope that an answer lay there. This quickened the degradation of their environments. In contrast, Termina implemented a regime of strict government control over resources. Rationing and state ownership were scaled up.

As neighboring nations destroyed themselves, each other, and their environments, Termina survived but did not thrive. It became a destination for refugees who, while fleeing for their lives, did not necessarily abandon their nations' ideologies. This period of migration is recorded in Termina's history as the "Endling March."

Thus, Termina became the last nation on the planet. It continues to strictly control its resources, and now implements a policy of zero population growth. Despite these policies, the nation's best scientists estimate that Termina will no longer be habitable in a century.

Two major ideological positions dominate Termina's politics: Anti-humanism and Extreme Pacifism. The Anti-humanists prioritize the environment. They believe that the time of humans has inevitably passed and that the environment should be preserved. The Extreme Pacifists prioritize peace and are fearful that Termina will follow the violent destruction of neighboring nations.

They too believe that the end of humanity is inevitable and advocate control of that end and preservation of the memory of humanity.

Representatives of these two groups form an unlikely coalition. With a supermajority composed of Anti-humanists and Extreme Pacifists, the nation's old legislature passes a motion for the controlled phasing out of human life. There is strong opposition to this motion by independents, who represent a range of ideological positions. Some of these positions are inherited from or influenced by the descendants of those who came to Termina during the Endling March. Others, like the Anti-humanists and Extreme Pacifists, are indigenous to Termina. However, this opposition is not organized and cannot compete with the supermajority.

Since the motion signals a new yet final era in Termina, lawmakers decide that a new constitution must be drafted to organize society around this commitment to preserving the environment and peace through phasing out humanity. This constitution will bind its political opponents in the present as well as those who could not vote but whose lives will be most affected in the future: the children of Termina.

# THE CONSTITUTION OF TERMINA

## PREAMBLE

We, the people who inhabit the territory depicted on ancient maps as Tasmania, in order to ensure environmental justice and secure domestic peace, establish this Constitution for the nation of Termina.

With this Constitution we inaugurate the end of human life on this planet. In light of the irreversible depletion of natural resources and growing civil unrest, we commit to ending our nation three generations after this Constitution comes into force.

We wish to promote harmony, dignity, security, and certainty in the years remaining to humans.

Let this Constitution be our last political compact and our lasting monument.

## CHAPTER I – THE PEOPLE

### Article 1

#### *Constituent Power*

The power to create this Constitution is vested in the people of Termina. It is through a decision of the people via referendum that this Constitution comes into force.

### Article 2

#### *Citizenship*

Those persons physically located within the territory of Termina when this Constitution comes into force are deemed citizens of Termina.

Citizenship is non-renounceable once conferred. A citizen may not leave the territory of Termina after this Constitution comes into force.

In the event that foreign persons enter Termina's territory, they will be deemed citizens and subject to the rights and duties of citizens.

Citizenship is not extended to non-human life and nonlife, though their existence is respected and supported.



## Article 3

*Rights and Duties of Citizens*

The government shall ensure that citizens are granted the rights enumerated in this Constitution, subject to the variation based on generational designation outlined in Article 4.

All shall respect this Constitution as well as the laws and duties derived therefrom.

## Article 4

*Generational Designation*

Those persons alive when this Constitution comes into force shall be designated Founders.

Those persons born after this Constitution comes into force shall be designated Enders.

The rights and duties of citizens will vary only on the basis of their generational designation.

## Article 5

*Population Control*

In accordance with the commitment set out in the Preamble, all male-sexed Enders shall be sterilized when this Constitution comes into force.

## CHAPTER II – RIGHTS AND DUTIES

## Article 6

*Rights of the Natural Environment*

Termina's biological, geological, and meteorological environment is granted legal personhood, with all the corresponding rights, duties, and liabilities.

The Minister for Environment exercises these rights and duties on behalf of and in the name of the biological, geological, and meteorological environment.

All shall respect and protect the environment. Natural diversity and heritage must be maintained and prioritized. Where possible, earlier damages shall be repaired.

## Article 7

*Rights to the Natural Environment*

All have the right to travel within the territory of Termina for the enjoyment of the natural environment, subject to the limitations expressed in Article 6.

Sustainable development and public interest shall guide the use of natural resources.

Termina's natural resources are the joint and perpetual property of the nation until the nation ceases. No person may acquire natural resources as property.

Article 8  
*Equality*

Citizens of Termina shall enjoy the rights enumerated in this Constitution without discrimination, except on the basis of generational designation.

Article 9  
*Right to Life*

All shall inherit the right to life at birth. All shall be guaranteed a life of dignity and security against any kind of violence.

Article 10  
*Right to Death*

All have the right to death with dignity. The government must make available humane measures by which legally competent persons may hasten their natural death.

Article 11  
*No Right to Children*

It is prohibited for those persons designated Enders to procreate.

Article 12  
*Health Services*

All have the right to mental and physical health to the highest standard possible. To this end, all have the right to accessible, appropriate, and adequate health services.

The right to refuse treatment is guaranteed to those who are legally competent.

Article 13  
*Right to Vote*

All citizens have the right and responsibility to vote when they reach the age of majority which, until the Parliament provides otherwise, is thirteen years.

It is compulsory for all eligible citizens to exercise this right.

Article 14  
*Freedom of Opinion and Expression*

All are free to have their opinions and convictions and shall have the right to express their thoughts.

Laws may stipulate limitations on the freedom of expression where such expression is contrary to the principles contained in this Constitution.

## Article 15

*Freedom of Religion*

Termina has no state religion. All have the right to religion and a life philosophy, including the right to change their religion and the right to remain outside religious organizations.

All shall be free to pursue their religion, individually or in association with others, publicly or privately.

The freedom to pursue religion shall only be limited by law where its pursuit is contrary to the principles contained in this Constitution.

## Article 16

*Right to Association*

All have the right to establish associations for a lawful purpose, including political parties and unions.

An association established contrary to the founding principles of this Constitution is not established for a lawful purpose.

## Article 17

*Right of Assembly*

All have the right to assemble without special permission. This right shall not be abridged except by law, and then only in accordance with the principles contained in this Constitution.

## Article 18

*Education*

All have the right to a primary and secondary education according to their ability, without charge.

The Department of Education and Employment shall set the curriculum for environmental science, ethics, and history.

## Article 19

*Employment*

The Department of Education and Employment shall allocate work assignments for citizens of Termina in accordance with their abilities and preferences.

## Article 20

*Social Welfare*

The right to an adequate standard of living is assured to those who, due to disability, age, or other impairment, cannot work.

## Article 21

*Universal Basic Income*

The same basic income is guaranteed to all citizens of Termina.

## CHAPTER III – THE PARLIAMENT

## PART I – GENERAL

Article 22  
*Legislative Power*

Legislative power is vested in the Parliament of Termina, which shall consist of two chambers: the House of Elders and the House of People.

The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have the power to make general laws for the peace, order, and good government of Termina. In addition, the Parliament shall have the power to make special laws for the maintenance of this Constitution.

Article 23  
*Powers of the Houses with Respect to General Laws*

Except as provided in this Article and in Article 24, the two Houses shall have equal power with respect to all proposed laws.

Proposed laws that appropriate or expend public resources shall not originate in the House of Elders.

The House of Elders may not amend proposed laws that appropriate or expend public resources. The House of Elders may, however, return to the House of People the

proposed law that it may not amend, requesting the omission or amendment of any items or provisions therein. The House of People may, if it thinks fit, make any such omissions or amendments, with or without modifications.

Article 24  
*Powers of the Houses with Respect to Special Laws*

Proposed laws that maintain and realize the terms of this Constitution may originate in either House.

The House of People may not amend such proposed special laws, whereas the House of People must pass any amendments proposed by the House of Elders.

Article 25  
*Sessions, Prorogation, and Dissolution*

After any general election the Parliament shall be summoned to meet not later than thirty days after the results are promulgated.

The Cabinet of Ministers may appoint such times for holding the sessions of the Parliament, and may also from time to time, by proclamation or otherwise, prorogue the Parliament, and may in like manner dissolve the House of People. The House of Elders may not be dissolved.

## Article 26

*Sessions of the Parliament*

There shall be a session of the Parliament at least once every year, so that twelve months shall not intervene between the last sitting of the Parliament in one session and its first sitting in the next session.

## Article 27

*Elections*

Elections shall be held on the first Saturday of April every four years for the House of People and every twenty years for the House of Elders.

Election day is deemed a public holiday.

Postal and proxy votes shall be made available.

## Article 28

*Disqualification of Members*

Any person who suffers a conflict of interest, as defined by the Parliament, that renders them incapable of exercising their duties under this Constitution shall be incapable of being chosen or of sitting as a member of the Parliament.

If a member becomes subject to a conflict of interest, their place shall become vacant.

## Article 29

*Disagreement between Houses as to General Laws*

Except for proposed laws for appropriation and expenditure and proposed special laws, if one House passes any proposed law (the initiating House), and the other House (the receiving House) rejects or fails to pass it, or passes it with amendments to which the initiating House does not agree, and if after an interval of three months the initiating House again passes the proposed law with or without any amendments that have been made by the receiving House, and the receiving House rejects or fails to pass it, or passes it with amendments to which the initiating House will not agree, the Cabinet of Ministers may dissolve the House of People.

If, after such dissolution, the initiating House again passes the proposed law with or without any amendments that have been made by the receiving House, and the receiving House rejects or fails to pass it, or passes it with amendments to which the initiating House will not agree, the Cabinet of Ministers will put the question to the people of Termina via referendum.

Article 30  
*Powers, Privileges,  
 and Immunities of Houses*

The powers, privileges, and immunities of the House of Elders and the House of People, and of the members and the committees of each House, shall be such as are declared by the Parliament.

Article 31  
*Rules and Orders of Houses*

Each House may make rules and orders with respect to:

1. The mode in which its powers, privileges, and immunities may be exercised and upheld.
2. The order and conduct of its business and proceedings either separately or jointly with the other House.

## PART II – HOUSE OF ELDERS

Article 32  
*Composition of the House of Elders*

The House of Elders shall be composed of twelve members directly chosen by the people of Termina as one electorate. The outcome of elections will be determined by a proportional counting method.

Members shall be chosen for a term of twenty years. Members may not sit for more than one term.

Article 33  
*Exclusive Constitutional Jurisdiction*

The House of Elders has exclusive jurisdiction to determine any dispute that arises under this Constitution. This is not an advisory jurisdiction.

By consensus, the House of Elders will appoint three members as judges of an ad hoc constitutional court to resolve the matter. The House of Elders acting in its capacity as a constitutional court shall exercise the practices and procedures of Termina's Supreme Court.

All decisions of the House of Elders acting in its capacity as a constitutional court are final and binding.

Article 34  
*Qualifications of Members  
of the House of Elders*

The qualifications of members in the House's first term shall be as follows:

1. They must be a citizen of Termina.
2. They must be at least twenty years of age.
3. They must have been involved in the Convention that gave rise to this Constitution.

Members in the House's subsequent terms must have served at least ten years in the government departments of Termina.

Article 35  
*Casual Vacancies in the House of Elders*

If a member becomes disqualified, resigns, or dies, their seat becomes vacant. If the place of a member becomes vacant before the expiration of their term of service, that member shall be replaced according to the terms of Article 36.

The place of a member shall become vacant if for two consecutive months of any session of the Parliament they, without permission, fail to attend the House of Elders.

Article 36  
*Replacement of Members of  
the House of Elders*

In the event a casual vacancy arises during a session of the Parliament, an acting member will be appointed by an absolute majority of the House of People. Members of the House of Elders may nominate candidates for consideration.

A permanent member will be elected at the next election of the House of People by the people of Termina as one electorate.

Article 37  
*Quorum*

Until the Parliament provides otherwise, the presence of at least three-quarters of the whole number of members shall be necessary to constitute a meeting of the House of Elders for the exercise of its powers.

Article 38  
*Voting in the House of Elders*

Questions relating to proposed general laws shall be determined by a majority of votes, and each member shall have one vote. When the votes are equal the question shall pass in the negative. Proxy votes are not permitted.

Questions relating to proposed special laws shall be determined by consensus. A question shall only pass with unanimity. Abstentions are not permitted.

Questions relating to rules and orders of the House of Elders shall be determined by a majority of votes, and each member shall have one vote. When the votes are equal the question shall pass in the negative. Proxy votes are not permitted.

## PART III – HOUSE OF PEOPLE

## Article 39

*Composition of the House of People*

The House of People shall be composed of members directly chosen by the people of Termina as one electorate. The outcome of elections will be determined by a proportional counting method.

The number of members chosen shall be in proportion to the population of Termina. For the first election, the proportion shall be one member per ten thousand people. For subsequent elections, the proportion shall be determined by the Parliament.

Members shall be chosen for a term of four years. Members may sit for a maximum of two consecutive terms and three cumulative terms.

## Article 40

*Qualifications of Members of the House of People*

The qualifications of members in the House's first term shall be as follows:

1. They must be a citizen of Termina.
2. They must be at least twenty years of age.



## Article 41

*Casual Vacancies in the House of People*

If a member becomes disqualified, resigns, or dies, their seat becomes vacant. If the place of a member becomes vacant before the expiration of their term of service, that member shall be replaced according to the terms of Article 42. The place of a member shall become vacant if for two consecutive weeks of any session of the Parliament they, without permission, fail to attend the House of People.

## Article 42

*Replacement of Members of the House of People*

In the event a casual vacancy arises during a session of the Parliament, an acting member will be appointed by an absolute majority of the House of People.

A permanent member will be elected at the next election of the House of People by the people of Termina as one electorate.

## Article 43

*Election of Speaker*

The House of People shall choose a member to be the Speaker of the House after every election, and as often as the office of Speaker becomes vacant.

The Speaker shall cease to hold office if they cease to be a member of the House of People. They may be removed from office by a vote of the House, or they may resign their office.

## Article 44

*Quorum*

Until the Parliament provides otherwise, the presence of at least two-thirds of the whole number of members shall be necessary to constitute a meeting of the House for the exercise of its powers.

## Article 45

*Voting in the House of People*

Questions arising in the House of People shall be determined by a majority of votes other than that of the Speaker.

The Speaker shall not vote unless the numbers are equal, and then they shall have a casting vote.

## CHAPTER IV – THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNMENT

### Article 46 *Executive Power*

Executive power is vested in the Cabinet of Ministers, and extends to the execution and maintenance of this Constitution, and of the laws of Termina.

### Article 47 *Cabinet of Ministers*

In each parliamentary term, once the results of the general election are determined, a joint sitting of the Parliament internally appoints Ministers to the following departments:

1. Environment
2. Aging and Dying
3. Archives
4. Planning and Infrastructure
5. Education and Employment

Ministers must be drawn from members of the House of People.

### Article 48 *Appointment of Civil Servants*

The appointment and removal of all other officers of the executive government shall be vested in the Cabinet of Ministers, unless delegated by the Cabinet of Ministers or until the Parliament provides otherwise.

### Article 49 *Provision for Additional Departments*

The Parliament may establish new departments and may, upon such establishment, make or impose such terms and conditions as it thinks fit.

Ministers of any additional departments shall be appointed in accordance with the procedure in Article 47.

Ministers of any additional departments do not join the Cabinet of Ministers.

## CHAPTER V – JUDICATURE

## Article 50

*Judicial Power and Courts*

Judicial power shall be vested in the Supreme Court of Termina, and in such other courts as the Parliament creates.

## Article 51

*Judges' Appointment and Tenure*

Judges of the Supreme Court and of any other courts created by the Parliament:

1. Shall be appointed by the Parliament.
2. Shall have life tenure.
3. Shall not be removed except by a three-quarters majority vote of the Parliament on the grounds of proved misbehavior or incapacity.

## Article 52

*Number of Judges*

The Supreme Court shall consist of a Chief Justice, and so many other Justices, not less than two, as the Parliament prescribes.

## Article 53

*Appellate Jurisdiction*

The Supreme Court shall have jurisdiction, with such exceptions and subject to such regulations as the Parliament prescribes, to hear and determine appeals from all judgments, decrees, orders, and sentences.

## Article 54

*Power to Define Jurisdiction*

The Supreme Court must satisfy itself of its jurisdiction before it proceeds to resolve any substantive dispute brought before it.

The Parliament may make laws defining the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court consistent with this Constitution.

## CHAPTER VI – ENDING PROVISIONS

## Article 55

*Resources Controlled by the Government*

As far as the terms of this Constitution require, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure shall strictly control production and consumption of all public resources and infrastructure.

## Article 56

*New Infrastructure Prohibited*

It shall be unlawful for any person to build permanent infrastructure for any function or purpose.

## Article 57

*Disuse of Infrastructure*

There shall be no human intervention to ameliorate damage or disrepair to infrastructure that falls into disuse.

## Article 58

*Exception as to Historical Memorials*

Articles 56 and 57 do not apply to the building and maintenance of memorials dedicated to preserving the history of Termina.

## Article 59

*Establishment of the Environment Protection Authority*

The Parliament will establish an authority to protect the biological, geological, and meteorological existents of Termina by the name of the Environment Protection Authority.

The functions of the Authority are:

1. To develop and implement environment protection policies and regulations.
2. To conduct regular reviews of environment protection policies and regulations.
3. To monitor compliance with environment protection policies and regulations.
4. To investigate breaches of environment protection policies and regulations.
5. To provide advice to the Minister for Environment.

## Article 6o

*Establishment of the Aging and Dying Research Organization*

The Parliament will establish a research organization to support aging and death services in Termina by the name of the Aging and Dying Research Organization.

The functions of the Organization are:

1. To develop best practices in aging, palliative, and dying care.
2. To develop technologies to support end-of-life mobility and independence.
3. To provide advice to the Minister for Aging and Dying.

## Article 6i

*Establishment of the National Archives of Termina*

The Parliament will establish an archive for the institutions and people of Termina by the name of the National Archives of Termina.

The functions of the Archives are:

1. To ensure the conservation and preservation of the existing and future archival resources of Termina.

2. To encourage and foster the preservation of all other archival resources relating to Termina.
3. To promote, by providing advice and other assistance to the institutions and people of Termina, the creation, keeping, and management of new archival resources.
4. To provide advice to the Minister for Archives.

CHAPTER VII – MISCELLANEOUS

Article 62

*No Alteration of the Constitution*

No part of this Constitution is subject to amendment.

Article 63

*Seat of Government*

Termina's government shall be located in the ancient city of Hobart.

Article 64

*Entry into Force*

This Constitution shall enter into effect when approved by 75 percent of the voting population at referendum. For the purpose of this referendum, the age of majority shall be ten years.

Upon the entry into effect of this Constitution, the previous Constitution shall become void.

Article 65

*Savings*

Until the Parliament provides otherwise, civil and criminal laws operating in the territory of Termina that are consistent with this Constitution remain in force.

Article 66

*Cessation of Constitution*

This Constitution will cease to have effect when the average age of Termina's population reaches eighty years.

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Metahaven's practice reaches across art, filmmaking, and design to provoke new imageries that are equally bound to aesthetics, poetics, and politics. The studio was founded by Vinca Kruk and Daniel van der Velden. Recent publications include *Can Jokes Bring Down Governments?* (Strelka Press, 2013) and *Black Transparency: The Right to Know in the Age of Mass Surveillance* (Sternberg Press, 2015).

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“Communism Is . . .,” by Frank Ruda, includes the author’s translation of Bertolt Brecht’s poem “Der Kommunismus ist das Mittlere.” © Bertolt-Brecht-Erben / Suhrkamp Verlag 1993. Used by permission of Liveright Publishing Corporation.

“Queer Communism Is an Ethics,” by Georgy Mamedov and Oksana Shatalova, is based on a conversation-performance that took place during “Contemporary Utopias,” a conference organized by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation at the Winzavod Centre for Contemporary Art in Moscow, December 17–18, 2015. It was first published in Russian in Mamedov and Shatalova’s book *Kvir kommunizm eto etika* (Free Marxist Press, 2016).

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