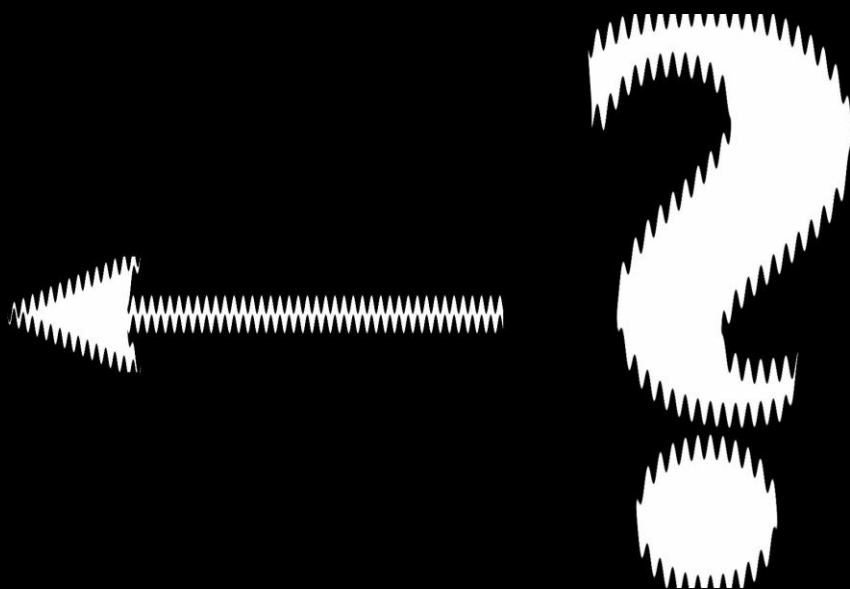


What is Left?



tukolor

What is Left?

by

tukolor

*The world would be a better place
if people could see what can be seen
by the reformers*

*But eyes by lies are slow and firmly closed
the mind is shrived but the body damned
forever*

The leader of the Islamist militant group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, is very much putting himself forward as the figurehead of a post-Assad future in Syria. [BBC, 2024]

Ukraine's highest profile combat unit to recruit English-speaking soldiers . . . Azov, a volunteer brigade **whose decade-old nationalist origins have made it a target of Russian propaganda** . . . [Guardian, 2025]



*The original "National Idea" symbol in the emblem of
the **Social-National Party** of Ukraine :*



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Preface

Two departed souls are approaching St Peter with some trepidation. Before them they see two imposing doors. The first is made of gold and from it emanates the pleasant scent of frankincense and myrrh. The second smells of sulphur and drools with blood. The great apostle hands each soul a slip of paper. **HEAVEN** says one slip; **HELL** the other. As they take their slip, the two doors grind open and each soul steps through to meet her fate. To their great astonishment, however, at the other side of the door all they see is each other and an enormous hall. One sighs sadly, the other sighs gladly. After a minute of sheer astonishment, they both speak at once. 'Well, we're both here now, so let us see if there is any common ground between us.'

The following pages are a call for a new left counterculture written for those who live in the land far below the cloudcuckooland of the new normal.

The ideas in them are not, I am certain, ones that cloudcuckoollanders will want to hear. The old left counterculture has long ago fallen to the forces of neoliberalism and neoconservatism and its voice is now silent.

What lives within the assimilated cloudcuckooland is blithered with open genocide. It is a land bathed in blood and bombs and rubble. You can look away from the blood and the rubble and the people living in it, but you cannot wish it away. To pretend the unspeakable does not exist is to silently leak your soul away in an endless tick and tock of drip and drop. The voice of the new normal is the voice of the assimilated. Who wants to know what some leaky soul thinks about the world, whose soul can save what

soul? All these leaky assimilated people will say to you is this and this and this and this:

WILL STARMER RESTORE THE MORAL
HIGH GROUND FOR LABOUR? ZELENSKY
SAYS TOMAHAWKS NEEDED TO PUT
PRESSURE ON PUTIN. ISRAEL URGES
HAMAS TO ACCEPT HOSTAGE DEAL.
WHAT BENEFITS DO THE LATEST
ROUND OF CUTS OFFER US?

This book is for the unassimilated. It is for those who can see across the great divide of heaven and hell and can perceive beyond them a common ground. For what is politics in the end but common ground? and what is common ground but the last hope of the people outside the cloudcuckooland of the assimilated?

Slava the new counterculture!

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I. Waking

When I awaken to the sleep of dreams
I walk forever in the endless ways
I open my eyes to let the daylight in
And that is where all dreams begin

I walk all day until I reach the night
But my dreams are all a sea of light
I walk all night until I reach the day
And when I waken I lose my way

Nothing seems to be what it seems
Except when I close my eyes and sleep
But can I ever really be asleep
When I awaken to the sleep of dreams?

For the average person to start thinking,
The ship would have to start sinking –
No – be more or less sunk –
And, before the last dunk,
They'd ask, "Is this salt water I'm drinking?"

No problem can be solved by those who cannot see it. Those who don't look behind are doomed to fall to the baddie. Every pantomime knows that. The same fate for those who close their eyes to what is before them. The baddie wins again. The most helpless are those who sleep. These have no chance. The baddie can come at them from any angle at any time.

We live in a neoconned world where the baddies have won but are not seen as baddies. The people of the west have been set down into a huge sleep, at once lulled by the soothing lilt of propaganda that places a white hat on the heads of the baddies themselves yet also roused by the fearful appeals and feral pointing at those who have been adorned by the baddies with black hats. These, it should be said, are rarely goodies (after all this is not a pantomime no matter how much it looks like one), but rarely are they really baddies. All it is, usually, is that the baddies don't like them, most times because they have stuff that the baddies want but refuse to hand it over. The baddies never tell the sleepers that. All the sleepers ever know is

that the baddies who wear white hats are there to protect them from the black hats and protect the weak of this world from black hat threats. In this pantomime, it turns out, there *are* goodies. The baddies themselves dressed in their white hats.

That was the pantomime long ago in the days of the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, quickly nicknamed the Nazi Party and it is also, I believe, today's pantomime – and likely tomorrow's and tomorrow's and tomorrow's. As they sometimes say in the land those earlier Nazis occupied during WWII, 'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'. Like all such sayings it is an overconfident truth. In this case, however, it veers towards verity, for baddies are baddies wherever and whenever. Nazi, meet neocon; neon, meet nazi. If you look at them through eyes that sleep you say, 'yeah, whatever'. If you look into their eyes, you awoken, what difference do *you* see between neocon and nazi? Black hat or white hat, 'a baddie is a baddie wherever you go'.

This chapter is about sleeping and waking. We all want to change the world, but we must wake to see what to change. We have to turn our back on the pantomime and face the real baddies, to acknowledge their triumph and think on how to overturn it.

1.1 The First Step

Even an insomniac can sleep soundly throughout their life if they don't wake up their mind. They look out of their own two eyes and they watch the news and they see what they see and they believe what they see and trust that what they see is the world. They lie awake each night in the deep sleep of a false reality in a world that has no existence outside their

imaginings and sentiments. This sleeping is effortless. Waking is hard and often uncomfortable.

In our modern world, we live local in a global space and local and global both inhabit the same self in the same skull. To those who sleep, these merge into one and become the world. The local expands; the global contracts. They bleed into each other. Local we see what we see; global is seen for us. This is what sleep is to those who never find the spark to wake.

Why wake? is the question. If asked, answers are easy to find. Why ask? is the underlying and most important question. To ask is to light the spark.

If I ask, my answer is that we live in interesting times with interesting crimes. Our internal world is created when what we see and what is seen for us is planted into our skull, for if we sleep an intellectual sleep, our dreams are scripted for us. But to trust in that world is nowadays a misplaced trust.

The awoken live in interesting times but not those who sleep untroubled and unaware. These sleepers live in the 'new normal' where every mad thing is done for a reason and done only for 'you'. The new normal world seems certainly a liveable kind of place. It is filled with lotteries and lowest prices and phones swiped to make treasures rain down. Even its many fears are framed so that each fear has a white hat to save the day. The fears never seem to go away, it is true, but then neither do the white hats. Of course, none of this is real. It seems so to those who are asleep but it isn't. It isn't a meaningful illusion like *maya*, it's just reality with a fake tan. Why ask why wake, then? Because interesting times are dangerous times and they are hidden from those who sleep.

To wake is simply to see some *clue* that there is a reality beyond the dream. There is a *door* to the beyond. This door is the eye that is shut and waiting to be opened by the *key*. This key is ‘enlightenment’. All that is needed is just one something that *clicks* to let the eyes open and the light flood in.

We – the human race I mean – need to have as many open-eyed and awakened people as possible. Are these interesting times our last? Will Mammon defeat Gaia? Will primates and sociopaths in charge of nuclear weapons give in to their urges? Will the priests in charge of funny money lose faith? These are the forces behind these interesting times and they are working together to marinate the chaos into a maelstrom of force that is capable of unleashing doomsday on a grand scale. But, to those blinded by the new normal sleep, the days go by in a mindless haze.

To sleep is to see what you see; to wake is to see. For example, to see genocide not antisemitism; to see NATO warmongers not Putin; to see quadrillions of funny money dollars not ‘rational’ ‘free market’ economies; to see greed not ‘free’; to see automatons not autonomy; to see oikocracy¹ not democracy²; to *wake* and to *see*. Those who sleep never ask why they are asleep. There needs just that one click to make them ask that vital question: *Why wake?* To even ask that question is to at least notice your slumber out the corner of your eye.

My own awakening came from being directed towards an online discussion group of US blowhards right

¹ That is, government for and by big business.

² That is, government for the people.

after 9/11. That was my ‘something’, my key. The blowhards led me straight to the disturbing world of right-wing Zionism and the seeming paradox of Jewish nazis. It is here we can say, *Why ask why wake?* If you grew up under the shadow of WWII and Hitler and the Holocaust, do you need to ask ‘Why ask?’ when faced with this interesting and disturbing conundrum right at the point of the emotional upheaval of 9/11? For me at any rate, asking led to waking. Slowly, slowly; but surely. For example, if you are puzzling about right-wing Zionists and their endless **DEATH TO THE ARABS!** fantasies and then America invades Iraq amidst all sorts of confusing **AL QAEDA** propaganda noise, you now have a whole jumble of puzzle to process: Zionism, Jihadism, neoconservatism, oil, imperialism, US foreign policy, Tony Blair’s New Labour, tabloids, propaganda, the right-wing, Iraq, Palestine and so on and on. When you awaken, you tend to stay awake. You no longer just see what you see; you are compelled to see. At least if you live in interesting times.

All it takes to awaken is a something that clicks, that draws you in to undertaking that most subversive of acts, *to ask yourself*. To ask is to be aware of the dream; to *answer* is to wake. So you chance across some annoying arrogant racists, you try figure them out, you see their racism is all in the mind – there are no ‘the thejews’ or ‘the thearabs’ outside these racists’ imagination – you see the importance of the internal ‘I’ and external ‘they’, you generalise to see the universal significance of these, and so now at last you see that your rulers themselves are the ‘I’ and you yourself are the ‘they’ within a neo world.

You wake just the once but waking is a forever process. You however realise you will always remain half-asleep, half-blind. Awoken, you see that life is twilight pretending to be daylight. To remain awoken is, you feel, quite the thing that CP Cavafy once described with these words:

You who stand on the first step
ought to be happy, be proud.
To reach so far is no small thing:
to achieve so much, a great glory.
For even this first step
is above the reach of the crowd.
To be able to stand on this step
you must be by your own efforts
a citizen in the city of ideas.
And it is difficult in that city,
and rare, to be inscribed as a citizen.
In its squares you find Lawgivers
who will call out any lawbreaker.
To reach so far is no small thing:
to achieve so much, a great glory.³

1.2 The Threshold

So, to waken is to question and that is good. It is to see the interesting times, the underlying subject of this book. The first step is to wake, the next step is to see.

Claims the end is nigh are not new. Certain religious beliefs to some extent encourage a hope that the world is about to end and the path to heaven is ready for the taking. The signs are plentiful though that the threat to humanity today is real. The technology to

³ Τὸ Πρῶτο Σκαλί, 1899.

achieve the annihilation of humanity certainly exists in the form of **nuclear weapons**. In the old days Chingis Khan, for all the destruction he caused, had no such technology. You can't destroy the world with swords and bows and arrows. Aside from technology, a second threat lies with the environment. **Climate change** has a good chance of making impossible the globally interdependent economy that currently exists. Nature can simply remove the resources making such a society conceivable. A third threat is the more or less magical and mystical **religion of money** that has evolved over the last forty or so years. This really is a world of funny money, of forged and imagined values that exist only in the form of bits and bytes. The amount of money in the world far exceeds the amount of wealth in the world, and this difference requires belief (a more or less religious belief) in order to maintain itself. The system can maintain itself if it believes in itself. So, if it loses faith, then what? **Crash**.

These dangers can easily fire off into a feedback loop. What better way for the necessary faith in funny money to be lost than the climate making the planet unliveable in many regions? What if the Middle East — Iraq, say — grows so hot that life above ground becomes an impossibility? Who will extract the oil, and how? Without the oil to feed the economy, how easy would it be for the investor to lose faith? If society starts to collapse, how would conflict be avoided, and if not avoided, resolved?

A powerful insight into the nature of these dangers is provided by a not a very well-known writer named Olaf Stapledon, via his great work 'Star Maker' (1937), I think one of the most profound workings of

the imagination ever written⁴.

The book begins in a northern English town set in a valley. A man is reading his paper waiting for his dinner. He decides to pop out for a bit of fresh air. He climbs up the hillside behind his home, lies on his back, looks up at the stars. A short while passes, then he feels himself possessed by a force beyond his control: he is now floating up into the air! He looks down at the town he will never see again and sees it grow smaller and smaller as he rises higher and higher. On and on he floats, far away from his home planet and then even the solar system itself. It seems he is being directed, for at length he arrives at a planet inhabited by an intelligent alien species. The alien people cannot see him and this allows him to observe them and their habits. When he feels he has understood their society sufficiently, he feels the pull again and is directed to another planet. Then another and another. After a while he starts to see patterns in the societies he has observed, in their similarities and differences. As he widens his travels, visiting countless planets and observing cultures at many different stages of development, he becomes increasingly able to control his movements and eventually the 'geography' of the universe itself becomes second nature to him. In the end he has attained a more or less godlike knowledge. He has seen it all.

So, what does he learn? He knows about all that exists or has existed and has analysed it all and he knows all there is to know about the dynamics of

⁴ If you don't want to listen to me, Arthur C. Clarke once wrote that it is 'probably the most powerful work of imagination ever written'.

civilisations and how they succeed or fail.

Perhaps the key term for him is: **threshold**. There are smooth paths over the whole of a civilisation's development, but within this lies an invariable set of thresholds. When a civilisation reaches such a threshold it is do or die time. A successful civilisation — the species that survives the challenge — enjoys a huge leap in progress. The unsuccessful species destroys itself.

That, the unnamed hero of the book says, is a universal truth. It is not unreasonable to believe humanity has reached such a threshold in the here and now. It has been approaching it for decades and we today are now there.

1.3 The Blanc and the Noir

Nations engaged in genocide do not go to such great lengths trying to reduce civilian casualties . . . Israel's conduct in its defensive war, started by Hamas, has been exemplary. *Alan Dershowitz, Jan 30, 2024*

"There are no half measures. Rafah, Deir al-Balah, Nuseirat – total annihilation. 'You will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven' – there's no place under heaven," Smotrich said . . . He also called for the destruction of Hezbollah in Lebanon, saying Israel must "clear out, with God's help, with one blow, wicked Hezbollah in the north, and really send a message that what will happen to those who harm the Jewish people is the same as those who have tried to harm us in the past – they will be destroyed, destroyed, destroyed." *Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, April 30, 2024*

That there is evil in the world is one thing, that there is organised evil quite another. We have met with black hats wearing white hats declaring war on white hats wearing black hats and that raises the questions as to What is evil? And then How to see evil?

In the films evil is easy to see. It looks evil and if not acts evil. It must wear some sort of evil badge. Evil, in the films, is reified into a thing. It is ice cream for evil people, a juicy bone for evil monsters. Good to them is curdled milk and maggoty ham and all things yech. Evil is faith, good is devilry. Their hats are black as their hearts and they never take them off.

This vision of evil is so often repeated and so plausible⁵ that most people's idea of evil is something like this. This is also the evil offered by any tabloid where 'beasts' abound and 'sickoes' run rampant. It is also the evil presented to the people by propagandists. 'Saddam', 'bin Laden', 'mad dog Gaddafi', all the way back to the 'Saracen' and 'barbarian'. Saracen and barbarian sickoes running rampant beyond the city walls was what it was.

This model of evil renders real evil invisible. It is, as so often happens, a misdirection. It occurs wherever you are not looking for it for you are always looking for the wrong thing. You lost your keys and you're looking for your phone.

The following section offers an alternative model of evil; one I would argue is all too relevant today. It examines one of the very archetypes of evil, the man who inspired Adenoid Hynkel.

⁵ A film that isn't plausible is no film.

Think of a proposition in the form of a question. ‘Do you think X? Yes or No.’ We can call this a **deliverable proposition**⁶. Most propositions are deliverable. There are two sides to practically every story. As Joseph de Maistre once said, *What the human mind can build up, it can tear down*. You can be as clever as anyone can be and engineer the cleverest ideas of anyone, yet someone, somewhere, will at some point tear down what you built up.

Why do histories of philosophers have so many of them? Why do they contradict themselves? Idealists and realists. Hobbes and his ‘leviathan’ of a state, Locke with his pluralistic state, JJ Rousseau and his ‘social contract’. Marx his socialism, Proudhon his anarchism, Burke his conservatism. Joseph de Maistre his irrational King, Plato his rational Guardians⁷. As with philosophy, so politics with its ‘left’ and its ‘right’⁸. What the one builds up the other tears down as left succeeds right and Party succeeds Party.

This is our everyday world, a straightforward place of deliverable responses. This is what we see as the world of politics – how in fact we see the world.

Now consider a Nazi proposition, ‘Is the Jew a bacillus that must be destroyed? Yes or no’. If you treat this as a deliverable you would probably answer ‘no’. But morally, this is wrong. This is because *you are accepting the question*. For this is an example of

⁶ Mathematically, $y \vee n = x$.

⁷ See how Plato tears down what Joseph built up?

⁸ Obvious examples are ‘Republican’ vs ‘Democrat’ and ‘Tory’ vs ‘Labour’.

what can be termed an **unthinkable proposition**⁹. It cannot and ought not be answered. ‘Do you believe in sexual activity with four-year-old children?’ ‘Do you believe rape should be legal?’ ‘Are you in favour of murder?’ Yes or no. Rather than *answer* an unthinkable proposition, the *proposition itself* must be rejected. Your ‘no’ should not be directed at the question but *to the fact of the question being asked*.

But the Nazis *did* believe in their race theories. So much so that they answered *yes* to many apparently unthinkable propositions. Not only that, they used the resources of the German state to plan and implement a process to destroy ‘the Jew’. But did they really affirm the unthinkable?

It is a misconception that Hitler ‘hated Jewish people’. What he, and the other antisemites, hated was ‘the Jew’. This ‘Jew’ existed only in the heads of this antisemite collective. The connection between ‘the Jew’ and ‘Jewish people’ had no relationship at all to reality. This ‘Jew’ was behind ‘the financier’ and ‘the Bolshevik’. The ‘Jew’ was thus a global figure, a demonic force that stood behind both the US and the USSR and of course was a corrupting figure throughout Europe. Ultimately, he was a more or less *cosmic* figure. Everywhere there was trouble, there was the Jew.

Now, before the invasion of Poland, Hitler was confined within the German borders and before he came Chancellor, the Jewish population of Germany was German. They spoke German, lived in Germany (mainly in Berlin), thought of themselves as German and wanted to be good German citizens. Jews in

⁹ Mathematically, $y \vee n = \emptyset$.

Hungary or Poland or Romania or Lithuania or the Ukraine or Russia lived mainly in small independent communities, quite different to Jewish Germans. Their concerns were local and parochial¹⁰. Were these people a cosmic force of evil? If you read the words to a typical klezmer song, the important thing was plucking up the courage to go to the market to chat up that beautiful girl or boy you like, and maybe to arrange a tryst in the woods (away from the beady eye of parent and rabbi). These actual Jewish voices are at complete odds with the voices put into the mouth of 'the Jew'¹¹.

Take Mascha Kaléko, a Berliner¹² who gained fame writing verse about the city's society in rags such as the Berlin Daily (*Berliner Tageblatt*). Her verse is still as lively today as it was then. In 1935, with the Nuremberg Laws, she all of a sudden became not German, but a 'Jew' (or I suppose 'Jewess'). In 1938, she and her husband left Germany for New York and they spent the rest of their lives in unhappy exile. Kaléko learned to speak English adequately, her composer husband barely a word. The couple therefore struggled and Kaléko's own gift for verse was worth nothing. She could not write English verse and what market was there in the US for German

¹⁰ Though of course big ideas such as Socialism and Zionism were popular especially amongst the youth, in particular as a way of escaping the tyranny of parent and rabbi.

¹¹ The sort of unpleasant fellow you will find skulking in the pages of the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion'.

¹² Kaléko is particularly interesting here as her German roots were shallow, she being born in Galicia (1907), her family moving to Frankfurt in 1914 at the outbreak of war, and Berlin in 1922. However, she grew up in Germany and her verse was very popular because it cannily, vividly and wittily described everyday life for Berliners.

verse? After the war, she and her husband moved to Israel where she felt isolated as she did not speak Hebrew. She thought about returning to Germany, but how could she? She did write verse — including some of her best work — but as if to herself.

Whatever land I go to
I go to Nowhereland.

Perhaps she is the ‘Der Eremit’:

They threw the stones at he, at he
And he laughed into his pain.
He wanted not to be seen, but see.
They looked into his heart in vain.

His little cries no one could see.
To the desert he moved his bones.
They threw the stones at he, at he,
So he built a house with the stones.

So here is a real Jewish person and there is ‘the Jew’. What do they have in common? A person and a cosmic evil that existed only in the heads of the old nazi collective? Opposed to the ‘Jew’ was the *Nordic Aryan*, said to be the ‘true German’. If we understand that the ‘Jew’ was utterly unrelated to Jewish people, it is easy to see the ‘German’ was entirely incidental to German people. The Jew and the German dwelled in the sallow cave of Hitler’s skull inside which the eternal yinning and yanging between good and evil took place. When Hitler talked about German and Jew, as he did endlessly, we must remember these had nothing to do with German or Jewish *people*.

We are now in a position to understand what Hitler would have thought when answering the question ‘Is the Jew a bacillus that must be destroyed?’. In the first place, to him the question would be read as,

‘Should Evil be destroyed?’. *This is no longer an unthinkable proposition.* Moreover, Hitler and his Party *represented* the ‘German’, the template of all that is Good. So, the question now becomes: ‘Should Good try to defeat Evil?’. The unthinkable is now a deliverable everyone agrees with!

There is the puzzle, an unthinkable evil *act* motivated by a universally-agreed ethic. The Evil fought by the Nazis was created from nothing that exists in the real world. It was a demonic statue reified out of water then reshaped into angelic form. It was a battle of baddies in white hats versus goodies in black hats.

Evil is not the evil of Hollywood and fairy tales. Most often, evil is not what believes in evil but what puts its faith in good twisted out of shape. *Evil is oftentimes more righteous than good.* That is its disguise; that is its secret; that is often the reason for its success.

So, the question is, if evil could hide in plain sight simply by wearing a white hat, why can’t people understand that it can to so again? That it can and it has?

Any left, in interesting times, ought to consider evil, especially a most righteous evil that will invariably try help you to dream the nightmares it unleashes away.

1.4 The Question

What is left? is a question about countercultures. A left counterculture today must be a social and political force against 1) the ‘right’ and 2) the right-wing powers enjoying a position of full-spectrum

dominance. There is a subtle question lurking in this distinction which is key to this book. Why is a 'left' not simply opposed to a 'right'? Because much of the opposition to these established right-wing powers *comes from the 'right'* and for this reason older notions of 'left' and 'right' make little sense.

This full-spectrum-right consists of two forces, neoliberalism and neoconservatism. Neoliberals 'came to power' around 1980 with Thatcher and Reagan and the neocons in 2001 after ninileven. From about 2015 on, neoconservatism has been steadily taking over¹³ via a Washington¹⁴/NATO axis of power.

Neoliberalism has enjoyed such great success because it has placed itself as a 'centrist' political force¹⁵. Centre is reasonable is the rule. Anyone who opposes neoliberalism is either 'left' or 'right' and increasingly unreasonable QED. A neat little trick here is the epithet 'far', frequently applied to both 'left' and 'right'. As 'far' means 'very' it always implies 'very unreasonable'. By this cunning rule, the extremist cult of neoliberalism is always 'reasonable', as this news snippet illustrates:

European elections next weekend could also add to anxiety over the economic outlook if moderates lose

¹³ So, we move from an extremist cultist globalised form of capitalism to a fortress-America war economy preparing for a doomsday battle with China (via Russia).

¹⁴ Currently (2025) we are in the middle of the chaos and confusion of a second Trump administration which seems to be moving towards a mind-meld between neoconservatism and the ultra-aggressive ultra-masculist American far-right, the resultant monster merging in turn with Israeli ultras.

¹⁵ Its actual place in the political spectrum was widely recognised when it first came to power via Thatcher and Reagan. The 'monetarists' were 'radical right', everyone knew that back then.

ground and the balance of power shifts to the extremes.

This emphasis on the ‘centre’ does however allow a key insight as to ‘What is left’. If a new ‘left’ counterculture is to be in opposition to neoliberalism at the centre, does it make sense to pick the ‘left’ side to look for common ground? If both left and right oppose neoliberalism, how can there be no common ground between people identifying with each group? In fact, do people who oppose neoliberalism necessarily identify as ‘left’ or ‘right’ or even care about such niceties? Is the What is left to be exclusively ‘left’ in conventional terms?

The neocons are a different matter and simpler for a counterculture to oppose, for these **new nazis**¹⁶ are a frightening power rapidly gaining traction, these ‘hawks’ in their Washington HQ linked to NATO Europe’s local branch of the Pentagon and the local NATO branch manager leaders. The neocons gift us with the unthinkable proposition, Do you wish [*your country here*] to be levelled in a nuclear attack? Yes or no.

If that is the question, where is the politics in an issue no one can disagree with? Where is left? Where is right? What does it matter, if the UK is levelled, if ‘the Muslims’ have come over here? if women work and earn money? if you think all men exploit all women all the time in a ‘patriarchy’? if he is a she? if footballers are overpaid? if young people can’t spell? if there’s too much traffic? If the UK is levelled there

¹⁶ If ‘new nazis’ seems a tad strong, consider that 1) they invaded Poland in 2003; 2) they appear to be itching to invade Russia; 3) they are committing an open genocide in Gaza.

will be no more 'if'.

For the neocons, a What is left? party needs to counter the brainwashed primate, the psychopathically indifferent, the sociopath up in cloudcuckooland leading the charge to the last dead-end — a left to counter the *Sheep*, *Sleep* and *Grim Reap* Parties. Humanity here badly needs such a left, with all its 'political correctness'¹⁷, idealism, dreams and hopes. In the beginning, it is not whether this can be done or will be done but a matter of what *must* be done. In the meantime, the **moron**, the **mannikin** and the **mad** are everywhere on the march. And they are so many and ye so few.

Whether neolib or neocon, 'What is left' is a question and all good questions must precede their answer. At the moment the left is merely a question mark waiting for the question to be filled in. Waiting impatiently for the chance to be a left to a right, not a nothing in a nowhere.

¹⁷ A right-wing propaganda term that can be translated as 'moral values' and 'social restraints'.

2. Receiving

I was at the centre of the Earth, inside the relentless furnace of the fires of Hell — or so it seemed to me — within the molten iron core of Earth's belly — and this was to be my new home. It was dry as dust, this city. Silent as a sincere prayer. How it towered! It was all tower! A terrifying tale of towers. I looked around me. Eyes were no use. What I could see was beyond me. I do not mean beyond in mere space. Just — beyond. First far — then farther — at last farthest. Everything I knew was beyond me. Beyond touch, beyond comprehension, almost beyond my mortal gaze.

Waking is thinking and to not stop. The problem is that there are so many factors that stop us from thinking and merely accepting and receiving information. Not the least of these factors is that ‘making sense’ organism we call the brain. How easy it makes things for us! We say calculating two fifteen-digit numbers is a fantastic achievement and picking up a mug of tea ridiculously simple. We say that because our brains trick us into believing it. Picking up a mug of tea is ridiculously complex, if you try work out how it is done. Or try to build a robot that can pick up a mug of tea¹⁸. Language, too. The human brain is built to process and communicate language. It tricks us here too. Anyone can say, *That is a velociraptor* ergo it is easy stuff to say it. Of course it isn’t easy.

This ‘If anyone can do it then it is simple’ attitude is easy to hold. It is, in a sense, mere common sense even though it is utterly wrong. However, the sociology, psychology and neuroscience of language is well-studied and computer models of language are now super-sophisticated. At this anything-but-simple level of understanding language, we have those who study how language can be used to manipulate people. This is doubly significant because what do we think

¹⁸ Bonus points if it doesn’t spill anything.

with if not language? To manipulate language is to influence thought and to do that is to redirect behaviour. This is *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxis*.

To wake, then, is to regain control of language; to sleep to be controlled by it. This section attempts to look at the basic mechanisms of how people take in the world and ultimately construct a 'self'. If that seems very far from neocons eager to strike at Russia, consider that the 'Russia'¹⁹ they are threatening is all perception utterly detached from any physical reality and that this perception is what is passed on via their propaganda. Is that really so very far from here?

2.1 Sense and Memory

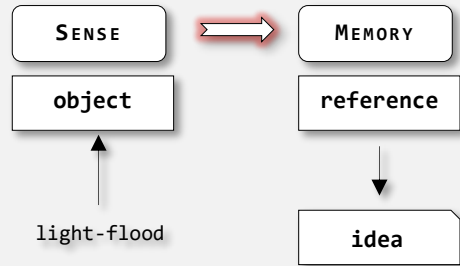
Philosophers can say what they will and examine the notion of 'truth' in their own way — and that is of course fine and dandy — but truth is important in the everyday world. Trying to understand 'truth' is altogether practical and pragmatic. If we ask a question such as What is left?, we are seeking to find a truth, even if it is merely our own truth. But truth, or at least how we understand it, is dependent on how we think. How do arrive at truth? How does it arrive at us?, perhaps is a better question. The wise old adage cogito ergo sum suggests it arrives through our senses. Those who see what they see may be asleep, but to those who wake where else does it all start with but to see? If so, truth begins with **sense** and **memory**.

We are all of us a little dot on the World that is itself a relatively far tinier dot in the Universe. We look out onto the world through those little windows we call

¹⁹ And in particular 'Putin'.

our eyes and what we see floods back into that complicated processor we call our brain. Our brain's basic function is to make sense of the flood pouring in through our eyes from the **forms** that exist outside us.

The diagram to the right shows a model of how sense works and its relationship to memory. In the model, we see the light flood enter the eye, passed to the brain and then converted into an **object**. The object is then converted into a memory as a **reference**. With memory, sense can acquire permanent form.



Is sense truth? What we see is made out of these forms in the flood. This is the world of common sense in its most fundamental layer, these forms. What we see, we see exists. The world outside us can be thought of as pure **existence**, an endless chain of particles in a sea of vacuum. But we *see* apples and oranges, trees and cars, and buildings and dogs. That suggests the following catechism:

If the form is real then the object
is real; if the object is real then
the reference is real.

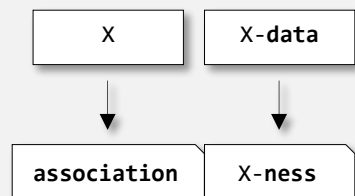
Is sense truth? An object can no more be true than the form it represents. This form, having existence – in other words a permanent repetition of its own self – just *is* and existence is all it is. *A truth however is more than existence.* For example, a rock is not a truth, but that the rock is 450 million years old *is* (if

that is the age of the rock).

Now, an object has a momentary existence. It is created and destroyed. Physically, all it is – all anything is in the brain – is a network of neurons (a ‘brainwave’). An object is as permanent as a breaker falling onto a beach. The reference transformed into a memory is what provides us with such permanence as we have, though even this is intangible. There is no ‘picture’ in a memory. When we ‘remember’, each time the same memory is recreated from the same reference but differently each time.

Is memory truth? The answer is generally more or less yes. As time goes by, the relationship between the momentary object (by now long-gone) and the reference becomes ever more remote. The details are likely to become more and more muddled. But the same sequence of our catechism still holds: form to object to representation. In general, the world of memory lives in a **fuzzy existence**, but as far as truth – meaning over existence – goes, a fuzzy rock is generally as good as a solid one.

Another key part of our model is **ideas**, which are constructed out of references. We can use a ‘tree’ as a simple example. The reference to it can be thought of as ‘tree-data’. This ‘data’ is in turn linked to what can be termed ‘tree-ness’. This ‘**ness**’ seems to be a major factor in how the brain can make sense of things so rapidly, as we see for example ‘tree-ness’ mapped to the tree reference²⁰. The human brain

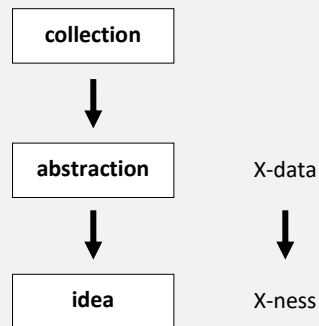


²⁰ This process is of course equally relevant to the *object* sensed

also has the ability to create a symbolic picture of what it ‘sees’ using language and these symbols are also mapped to the *ness*. This done, we know *what* we remember and what it is *called*. In our minds, we ‘see a tree’. We can call this mapping of *ness* to *reference* an **association**. This ‘tree-ness’ is clearly important. The ‘ness’ is a property of every tree. It is what makes it, to us, a tree. It turns a *persona* ‘mask’ into a person.

If we observe a collection of trees (‘coppice’, ‘wood’, or ‘forest’) we can note that this is a form just as much as a single tree is a form. An observed collection is a singularity with its own -ness. Sycamore tree; the woods of Bacombe Hill. But what about an abstraction such as ‘trees’? How is an image created for abstract collections? How can a general idea have a specific -ness?

Any collection of things shares the -ness of the thing itself. For example, ‘trees-ness’ cannot exist without ‘tree-ness’. In the case of a collection, the image is not recreated directly from the data of a specific reference. It is an **abstract** tree constructed via the sense of ‘tree-ness’. As a specific representation cannot be achieved with ‘trees’, so ‘trees-ness’ will be represented by some **instance** of ‘tree’ we have stored away and created from this abstraction. That is, if we remember a tree we will fetch back *that* representation but if we think of ‘trees’ we will fetch back *some* representation.

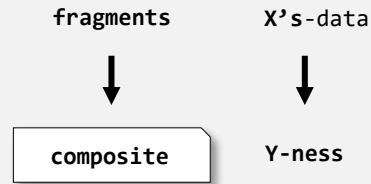


directly via the light-flood from the *form*.

This example of 'tree' is simple. But what if we replace it with 'America'? That America is a form is literally true. America is the landmass delineated by its borders: with Canada and Mexico north and south and with the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans west and east. America is just as much a thing as a tree is. But substituting 'America' for 'tree' profoundly changes the way the model works. With a tree, we 'see' the form. America is too big to see. We can see a tree planted on American soil, but we can't see America. We can see a map of America, but that is a mere abstraction. We can even see a satellite image of America, but that is a mere depiction. Yet America is just as much a representation as a tree. We can speak of 'America-ness' and the brain is perfectly able to 'make sense' of 'America'.

Because America lacks a form, it cannot follow the simple path of object > representation > idea, so how can a representation or an idea can possibly exist without an object? This is the delicious secret behind such strange characters as Edward Lear's *pobble* (he who had no nose). How can a pobble have a representation when there is no such thing as a pobble? Simply put, the brain invents one. It does not know what a pobble *is* but it knows it is a living thing that has a living-thing-ness. What this ness is depends on the reader and the time of day and all sorts of incidental stuff. If you read Lear a decade apart, your pobble will not be the same pobble as he was. Whatever the weather though, you will be able to picture him due to this 'ness-ness'.

If a pobble can be made sense of, of course ‘America’ can. The modifications to the model we require lies in the *form* itself. America cannot be seen entire, but we can as it were see inside it. We can see small fragments of it. Just as a pobble is built up out of ‘living-thing-ness’ (*sans* nose of course), ‘America’ is constructed out of fragments of representations related to it. We watch ‘Columbo’ and ‘Goodfellas’, we read the ‘Grapes Of Wrath’, we eye footage of JFK and Ronald Reagan. There’s Vietnam, the Gettysburg Address, slavery, civil rights; Cole Porter and Motown. We read Emily Dickinson and Allen Ginsberg. There’s Arizona, Ohio, Delaware, Alaska; Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia. The Mississippi, the Grand Canyon, the Rockies, Yellowstone Park. And so on. Fragments to build a whole.



Our model still works, just a little differently and in a less linear way. We now have a **composite idea** constructed out of one or more references. Note that the composite is necessarily *fluid*. The ‘decision’ over which fragments to use in the composite of ‘America’ can be *random* or *contextual*. If we are talking about whether or not America is still a democracy, we are not going to use the Grand Canyon as a fragment, whereas if we are talking about American TV we might use ‘Columbo’, and so on. If we are talking about America in general, we are likely to represent it with some random fragment.

Given this, how can ‘America’ not be a term open to politicisation? What ‘America’ is has been a carefully modelled cog in the country’s — well, in how it

sincerely sees itself and how it would sincerely like to be seen, but more disturbingly (especially in recent years) how its manipulators and propagandists would like us to see it.

The very fact that America cannot be seen means it is more than it seems. Understand that about America and you ought to immediately see how many things this principle applies to.

Politics and persuasion, then. The world of things that can't be seen. A world of carefully assembled fragments that in so many ways make up our accepted reality. We are the consumers of these fragments, be they sincere or contrived. We are our culture as well as our propaganda and who would claim either leads to any form of truth?

2.2 Consciousness

Sense is derived from *forms* turned into *objects*. Ultimately, all truth is built on these objects stored in memory as a *reference* and retrieved as an *idea*. Ideas are where we live, to paraphrase that caustic old librarian of Hull²¹. We build up our truths out of ideas, but these must always lead back to the object they were created from.

We live precariously balanced on the merest tip of our brain. We call this seat **consciousness**. We are our consciousness. Our bodies, sure, we have bodies. But what the body does is essentially *enable us to be*. Our body fails, we die; it works, we live. But we are our consciousness, that voice in our head that

²¹ Who seemed so incredibly dull | Those glasses! that frown! | But what he writ down | Made many a mucker to mull.

simultaneously is us and speaks to us. There we sit on our seat on the surface of our minds and there we perish when our time comes. There we sit as the light floods in and is transformed into sense within the silent darkness of our brain.

Our consciousness presides over our feelings and our thoughts but it also gives us the misleading impression of what we are. We are, it tells us, our body entire. This voice in our skull on its throne gives out commands and our body obeys. Our consciousness has full control over our body. The point is not that we think this is so, but that we *feel* it is so. It feels as if we are in control. After all, our consciousness is all we are able to see of ourselves, in a sense. Of course, we can see our body in a mirror, but that image is really an *other*. We are not the image; we are the object reflected in the mirror. It is our consciousness that is real, what we *feel*. Our image does not feel and we do not feel it.

We can define four ‘layers’ of consciousness:

- **pre**consciousness;
- **sub**consciousness;
- **icon**sconsciousness;
- consciousness.

The body is a busy thing. A busybody. All along its length and width processes and subprocesses are being performed. The business in the busybody is often localised yet linked via hormonal messages. Each organ takes care of itself as far as it can. The building block of a body is a cell, itself packed with processes and subprocesses and local regions. It is hard not to use the word ‘intelligent’ for all these

localised activities, both in themselves and as they work together. The more we learn about DNA, for example, the more astonishing the ingenuity of the 'design' becomes. But this all is not 'consciousness' in any sense of the word.

However, there is a co-ordinator of the body: the brain. The body sends messages to the brain and it sends back messages to the body. We can call this *preconsciousness*. We are not and cannot be aware of the preconscious mind. We can think of it as a more or less mechanical (or organical) world. Need sugar, need oxygen, too much sugar, too much oxygen.

Above this we have the subconscious zone. We are unaware of this zone's workings but they do affect our conscious thoughts. An example is the *saccade*. This process shows us very plainly our conscious view of what we see, which we think we are in control of, overlies more fundamental activities.

To the untutored eye, as it were, seeing is *looking*. We see by focusing our eyes at this or that object. However, in fact, the flood of light goes through two levels of processing in where there is a *subconscious* fast-track process that we can never be aware of. This is a sensible 'design'. If all that we saw was all that we intended to see humanity would have been extincted long ago

Imagine you are walking along a forest track located in tiger country. This is where your subconscious fast-track visual processing may save you. This channel processes the entire light-flood and looks for shapes. For each shape it finds, it looks up what it might be and then checks for any associations for the thing. As you tackle the path, at some point the

channel detects a shape that is flagged as a possible ‘tiger’. The associations here are very bad. The channel takes action. It orders a *saccade*; in other words, telling the brain to focus on the threatening shape it has found. This activates the slow-track channel, which will create a detailed image of the object and ask the symbolic bits of the brain what the thing is. Meanwhile, because the associations for the object are threatening, the body will be put into panic mode via the fast-track channel. You will therefore begin to panic and *then* ‘see’ the tiger. But you will be unaware of the subconscious fast-track process as you scream out ‘Tiger!’ and run, although under the hood, it was your brain that thought for you.

In fact, saccades are a basic fact of life. You cannot stare into space, in the sense that you are staring at nothing. It might feel that way, but if you are not consciously controlling your focus, your brain will focus on something for you. Working away constantly, subconsciously.

The familiar state of *consciousness* needs no discussion. We can call it ‘awareness’. It is the bit of the brain we know because it is the bit that reveals itself to us.

So, there is consciousness that reveals itself to us and subconsciousness that is in itself hidden but whose effects reveal themselves. But there is I think a level in between these that is vital for understanding how we think and how our opinions are formed. I call this layer **iconsciousness**.

Greek εἰκών *eikon*, latinised into *icon* then borrowed into English, has a range of meanings: image, reflection (in a mirror), archetype, portrait. In the

previous section we examined the nature of *sense*. Here we found the form and the object; the reference and the idea. Both 'tree' and 'America' are ideas but the latter is a composite constructed from one or more references. You can see a tree; you cannot see America. Iconsciousness is the layer that composes these ideas and gathers the fragments. The layer reveals itself to us, but not fully. It processes itself; we do not process it. It is a thought that is not thought through. It is there, but not there in front of us.

One way of seeing this is to look at the levels of consciousness (ignoring preconsciousness) like this:

unlit ;
twilit ;
daylit ;

Our subconsciousness lies in absolute darkness, our consciousness stands there is broad daylight, but iconsciousness exists purely in a twilit zone. As soon as we look at a twilit idea it becomes daylit. We cannot look at anything in our iconsciousness without transforming it. We cannot look directly at a twilit idea.

This is I think very important. Consider 'the Jew' of the antisemites. How can such an absurdity exist? The twilit iconscious layer explains precisely how. The 'Jew' exists in this twilit zone. Flourishes, really. Of course, the old nazis were fond of writing articles and books proclaiming their antisemitism. However, in a daylit world 'the Jew' becomes a somewhat unconvincing character. He is for example, Kaganovich, the 'Jew' who was said to rule the Bolsheviks, for he was their 'wire-puller'. Then comes

the 1936 show trial, Kaganovich is executed and where now the wire-puller? In the daylight layer of consciousness, we can perhaps look to other explanations of antisemitism: group-think, for example. Personal or social resentments ('the backstabber of WWI'). Need for a scapegoat (economic collapse, 'the Jew!').

In the layer of unconsciousness, however, the Jew can be all-powerful. He doesn't need to be a Kaganovich, for in this twilight there is an omnipresence. Anything you do not like is a potential fragment with which to compose 'the Jew'. Modern Art, Jew. Modern science, Jew. Urban living (again healthy rural living), Jew. Rats in the cellar, Jew. Tea expensive nowadays, Jew. In the twilight layer of consciousness, these shadows flit into the shades and any one of them can settle in its branches. The Devil and the Jew are in many ways the same thing or similar, for if 'the Jew' is 'things you do not like' then what is the Devil if not just that in the world of the everyday?

It is I think this strange layer of consciousness that we can recognise in a great deal of thought that might be termed right-wing. Immigrants, blacks, 'Asians', 'men', 'women', 'poofs', reds, 'the Irish', etc. Surely these all dwell unhappily in this twilight cavern of the brain?

2.3 Perception

Perception is conscious. We are now stepping into the daylight zone of the brain.

Perception, as I define it here, is simply an expanded form of consciousness. It is, so to say, the beginning of what we *do* with consciousness. With it, we are

beginning not just to experience, but *act on* consciousness. We sense a tree; we are conscious the tree is there: now we begin to react to the tree. We hear the breeze rustling in its leaves, we admire their beauty in the early autumn, we wonder at the great age of the old oak.

Regarding America, we ponder Ralph Waldo Emerson and his relationship to Transcendentalism, we examine the sites of the Civil War, we imagine John Rolfe and Pocahontas strolling across the Virginia plains, examine the origins and rise of hip hop, wonder why the Dutch-speaking and New York-born Sojourner Truth delivered her 'Ain't I a Woman?' speech in a southern Black accent, etc.

Perception is also a feedback loop from *perception* to **reflection** and back. We perceive, reflect about what we perceive, and inject our reflections into what we now perceive. For example, we perceive the smiling face, then reflect on the backhanded compliment. When we next see the face, we doubt its smile.

Perception can also be **fluid** or **solid** and this difference has great significance for thought and ideas and hence politics and ideology.

A fluid perception is one in which the separation between things is *blurry*, so for example nations are separate but not discrete to the fluent thinker. England is England and France is France, but both share a common heritage and have in many ways a common culture.

A solid perception separates things into what I call a **realiform**. This is *an abstract idea hardened into a real-like shape*. England and France, for example, are transformed into realiforms by the solid thinker.

England is a bowler-hatted man and France an arrogant man capped with a beret. These two ‘men’ are utterly different. Two realiformed nations are absolutely discrete, and East is East and West is West.

Blurry, hardened. I suggest, left, right. The left is the home of the misty ideal, the right of the stony realiform. With this notion, we advance in our understanding of ‘the Jew’. He is a realiform. Right wing types often claim to believe in the ‘real world’²² set proud against the puffery of left idealism.

We can see then that the ‘real world’ of the right is invariably and inevitably realiformed. Left abstractions are *expansive*, right abstractions are *contractive*. The left expands into Utopia and the right contracts into ‘the Jew’. But they are equally abstractions, these real and ideal worlds.

2.4 Will

The will is a wavering creature. It is there, but where? It is as if it is contained within a space — the human skull — but reveals itself in lightning flashes at any point within this space. We do not wander through this space; we dart and dash. And that is our ‘here’, our will.

The will is a sort of organiser of perceptions but it does not depend on perception. So far in our journey up through the human mind, the object²³ has been ever-present. The will though is not built around the object. It moves through the skull and we move with

²² ‘FACT!’, is how it is so often expressed.

²³ Expressed via the *idea* derived from the *reference* held in memory.

it. It organises but it also judges. Our perceptions are organised and gathered together inform our judgements.

The Latin words *homo*²⁴ ‘man’ and *humus* ‘moist earth’ are related. Why so? A Norse myth explains. This tells of how Othinn, Vili and Vé were a-travellin’ and they came across an inanimate lump of earth. Othinn (‘breath’) breathed spirit into it, Vili (‘will’) gave it thought and Vé (‘hue’) gave it colour (white being the colour of death). And so, Man was born. In fact, the word ‘man’ is derived from the ancient ancestor Mannus, which can be translated perfectly well as ‘Will’. Thus do the words *homo* and *humus* do go together following the same tradition.

What the myth tells us is that a human needs breath and hue²⁵ but they are *animated* with *will*. The body is no longer mere clay with oth and vey, but it is vil that makes us human.

If the myth is naive, it provides an intelligent enough ‘model’ to illustrate the importance of the will. Note that, if the will organises and informs our judgements and if the will is our ‘here’ — our centre, our focus — the material it is organising is of the first importance, for here we come to the orchestration of perceptions by what some say is the most complex thing we know of in the universe, the human brain.

When I look at a tree and you look at a tree, although we see a different form — you have your visual perspective and I have mine and your colours and my colours will be different and your eyesight and my

²⁴ *Homo* is related to Germanic *guma* ‘man’, indicating an underlying tradition held in common.

²⁵ The red ochre of life not the white chalk of death.

eyesight will be more or less powerful — the differences will be slight. Your tree will agree with my tree in most all essentials. The reason is obvious. We have exactly the same type of processor, the human brain. A cat or a frog would look at the same tree and see a different form. Their brains work from different models to ours²⁶ We can say to each other ‘that is a tree’ because we both see essentially the same form in the same way. We consume the same flood of light, we create the same shape, we fetch back the same symbols (in word and grammar).

However, if we say ‘this is America’, because we can neither of us see America and therefore produce a composite idea out of the word, we cannot say we seem the same thing. Your tree is my tree; your America is not my America: your orchestration and my orchestration, your judgement and my judgement, your will and my will. A composite idea such as ‘America’ is nothing but the orchestrations of the will.

The will is built on what we know, on our objects I suppose, the objects imported into our brain. The *references*. Our will is dependent on what it has to orchestrate. Our judgement is dependent on what we know. What do we know and how do we know it? Some of what we know we learn ourselves; other knowledge is given to us. We understand and are given to understand.

It is in the complexity of the will we begin to approach the everyday world of political conflict.

²⁶ The frog’s is a very basic model. A bat meanwhile uses echolocation, so what would it see?

2.5 Self

The will is the *core* of us, the self *is* us. We are so used to the self we do not realise how precious and rare it is. To have a self is literally to be human. No other creature has a self like a human has.

1) In a recent study of chimpanzees, a band of chimps was closely monitored and an interesting thing observed. A threat was spotted and the chimps in the troop hid, but one chimp was seen communicating with another to alleviate its distress. The interpretation of this behaviour was that the chimp was showing empathy with the other member of the troop. That is, it was connecting its own sense of ‘self’ to the other chimp. It understood that the other chimp had a self that was similar to its own. What it felt, it sensed the other chimp was feeling.

Whether this interpretation is true or not, I think it raises an important fact about the human self, which is very much aware that other humans have a self. In fact, if we examine pre-scientific societies say in the Iron Age or Neolithic or hunter-gatherer groups — if we apply this principle of *the projection of the self*, we see it underlies so many aspects of early human societies, where the human self is *projected onto the outside world*. The wind, lakes, rivers, trees, animals — even rock and stone — all these were assigned human-like ‘selves’. This is the **projected self**.

Read the old Gaelic tales²⁷. Every river and loch had a spirit that was generally seen as female. The spirit could be gentle or harsh as the mood took her but there she lived within the lake. The trees spoke. The

²⁷ See for example JF Campbell’s *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*.

birds in the trees spoke. If you understood what they were saying you would acquire wisdom. The gods dwelt in rocks. The Greek βαίτυλος *baetyl* was a sacred stone, the word probably being derived from a phrase like Hebrew *bēt ʔel* ‘house of God’²⁸.

These ideas can be explained as the human mind projecting itself onto non-human objects. An excess of empathy, if you like. This excess can later be found in, for example, the projection of Woman ‘the Other’ onto the nation (Erin, Britannia, Marianne etc). To the poets Petrarch and Leopardi, ‘Italy’ was a woman²⁹.

This projection can easily be politicised.

2) Another aspect of the self originates in the basic fact of existence that we live *in* somewhere. In the first place this is ‘the world’, more remotely what might be termed ‘the cosmos’. That is, we the *self* are inside (on its seat at the tip of consciousness) and there is the *outside* — the world or cosmos. While there is an outside *we are only conscious of it as we pull it inside of us*. We pluck it out of there and into here. The light-flood enters us and we transform it into an object. Even the world, even the cosmos. The cosmos — that is the sum of its matter and forces — exists out there but only in dead form. *The* cosmos, the one we know, exists only in our skull, pulled in with the light-flood and converted into shape and colour and being by our brain. This is the **self, world, cosmos** phenomenon.

This is I think of very great significance. It implies

²⁸ Found in the name of the old sacred site Bethel.

²⁹ Who of course was helpless and required defending.

that whatever lies outside us is dead matter given a meaningful life only by being captured within our self. Therefore, *our self and the world and the cosmos are one and the same*. They exist within the same skull. The cosmos is created when we are born and dies when we die and it is our own cosmos. Each of us is a world and a cosmos and each of these lives and dies along with us.

In so far as politics and power and wealth generally have a high positive correlation to the ego, if the ego and the world and the cosmos share a bed, this idea is very useful to understanding notions of power. Take the names *Chingis Khan* and Gaius Julius Caesar's frenemy *Dumnorix*. Both of these names suggest a meaning 'King of the World'. More recently we have the cartoon series *He-Man and The Masters of the Universe*. The universe and the self sharing a bed in the skull in excelsis.

Subtler and more powerful than the realiform we met with in the previous section, this is not mere form but a place, a *habitus*.

3) Our self, like our will, is built up with stuff that is lying about in our brain.

How did all this stuff get there? Did we put it there or was it put there? Again, this aspect of the self is key to understanding politics and ideology. If we do not actively try to learn things for ourselves or try to understand them, the stuff we know is by definition passively acquired. It is given to us. If this goes far enough, we simply possess an **off-the-self**. A prefabbed self. Cult members have an off-the-self and cults try their best to manufacture them. Someone who has been indoctrinated sufficiently will have an

off-the-self.

However, *everyone* is affected by the culture into which they have been born. Any culture has accepted values that are never questioned, for whatever reason. Because a culture is not a cult, these values are more or less invisible due to people's acceptance of them. But this is not indoctrination and so cultures do not produce off-the-self individuals. However, because culture determines much of what is put into the minds of its members, the self of an individual is determined to a substantial degree by their culture.

2.6 Receiving to Conceiving

The previous sections discussed how the brain *receives* information. This is the world of those who see what they see, for it is the step beyond *reception* that moves towards a proactive *conceiving* and the world of **thought**.

A thought can be defined as *an idea whose associations are the arguments used to produce it*, just as a mix of ingredients produces a single cake. It can be produced *actively* by **thinking** or unconsciously by **intuition** or by *passively* receiving external thoughts³⁰. Active thoughts are *conceived* and passive thoughts merely *received*. We can define both thinking and intuition as **the manipulation of ideas**³¹.

³⁰ From another person or a book or the media (old or new) etc.

³¹ In the model used in the previous sections, 'ideas' are based on *references* held in memory, these references being based on *objects* constructed by the brain from *forms* observed in the external world. A 'tree' is a direct reference to a form in the material universe; 'America' is composite reference that lacks an originating form. Although the object is transitory, it is what references are constructed from and is what connects the real and mental worlds.

A thought is essentially an abstract and **nessless**³² **reference**.

The result of a thought is *an understanding whose associations cohere*. A thought ‘makes sense’, like everything else in the conscious brain. All thought, no matter how bizarre or seemingly confused, is coherent in its own terms. This leads to the conclusion that often thought is not and does not aim to be objective truth. It is there to ‘make sense’ and if it does so it has done its basic job. In other words, thinking does not inevitably lead to an intellectual waking. It creates *an understanding* but not necessarily *objective* understanding.

The classical form of thinking is the **formal argument** set down for the professional arguers, which can be defined as *a sequence or collection of falsifiable statements or arguments*³³ *leading to a conclusion*. Ideally a conclusion can be evaluated as **true** or **false**. There is also the possibility an argument is **unknowable**, which could be described as either **truish** or **falsish**.

The once-popular theory of the *four elements* is an example of a false argument; its modern counterpart the *periodic table* of a true argument. The theory of the *atomists* was in classical times an example of an unknowable argument; the *Big Bang Theory* is a current example. *Continental Drift* is an example of a scientific argument that was unknowable³⁴ when it was first proposed in the early 20th century by Alfred Wegener but is now considered true. *Euclid’s axiom*

³² Ideas that refer to forms have a ‘ness’ to them; so a ‘tree’ has ‘treeness’. This ‘ness’ is what all referenced trees share. A thought is made out of arguments, so it lacks a ‘ness’.

³³ With a scientific argument, we can add **data** to this list.

³⁴ And universally rejected.

about two parallel lines never meeting is truish. In the 2-D space the geometer was interested in it is indeed always true, but in the 3-D space of a sphere it is always false. Taken together, *classical and quantum physics* are both falsish. The rules of each work only at the classical or quantum level respectively³⁵.

We can write a very simple equation for how a formal argument works like so³⁶:

$$(s_1 + s_2 + s_x) + (a_1 + a_2 + a_x) = c$$

But we also have what might be called an **everyday argument**, the stuff that is blurted out by your everyday arguer such as you and me in our cups and 24x365 by the average internet commenter. If we study everyday arguments, we observe that, for much of the time, thinking is simply confirming what is seen by the people who see what they see. If thinking is the deliberate manipulation of ideas, it is clear that the ideas available to think with are of vital importance and a crucial part of thinking is acquiring these ideas. All arguments consist of a conclusion that is equated with the ideas used to justify it, but the everyday arguer is rarely as precise as their pro counterpart. Both the selection of ideas and the available stock of them tend to be ad hoc. Everyday arguments often aim to confirm and conquer rather than prove. Many everyday arguments are constructed out of such a meagre stock of ideas they are like someone with just the one tooth chewing on

³⁵ Of course, anything truish is also falsish and to use one or the other is mere semantics. However, Euclid's axiom is clearly *truish* in terms of his geometry. This is equally the case with classical physics, but it seems more useful to think of it as *falsish*.

³⁶ Where we have **statements**, **arguments** and a **conclusion**.

a steak as tough as leather.

Here are four types of everyday argument: *egological*, *echological*, *brontological* and (most significantly) *metalogical*.

EGOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

An egological argument can be defined as ‘**I am right, therefore I am right**’ and its equation is:

$$c = c$$

Three real-world examples of egological arguments:

1)

Your original claim was that “They have been treated with kid gloves; much better than any deal America ever gave any nation it conquered in North America,” but now you make the argument that they deserve the harsh treatment that they have in fact received.

So fucking what? It’s not inconsistent except to someone who can’t reason.

2)

I understand that you are bitter and twisted about this, but please understand, I’m making no value judgement. It’s merely a fact.

3)

I don’t agree with your conclusion. Prove it.

There’s really no conclusion other than facts, so prove what?

ECHOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

These occur when a small arguer hides behind a big arguer like this:

Big Arguer: [huge spiel snipped]

Small Arguer: Yes, that's true.

The equation is:

$$C_{\text{small}} = C_{\text{big}}$$

BRONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

These occur when the sheer volume (bronte 'thunder') wins the day for the arguer (at least in their own mind).

Example.

THE TRUTH IS THAT THEY WERE OFFERED THEIR LAND SEVERAL TIMES SINCE 1947; THE TRUTH IS ALSO THAT IT HAS NEVER BEEN THEIR LAND THE TRUTH IS ALSO THAT WHILST THEY WERE UNDER JORDANIAN AND EGYPTIAN OCCUPATION THEY WILL ALREADY ATTACKING ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIERS JORDAN OR EGYPT. FINALLY IT APPEARS FROM ALL THAT THEY ARE A CROWD OF PROPAGANDA AND LIES GUIDED PEOPLE WHO RELY ON THE DOCTRINE : "IF YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO: MURDER. DOES NOT MATTER WHOM. LOOK AT THE MASS MURDER BY ARABS AND MUSLIMS OF SUDANESE; IRAQIS, (DAILY), HALABJA, BALI, NEW YORK ETC ETC. THERE IS NO END TO ARAB THIRST FOR MURDER AND DESTRUCTION.

The formula for a brontological argument is simply,

c!

METALOGICAL ARGUMENT

A metalogical argument works as follows. You have statement *s* which supports conclusion *c*, which is fundamental to your belief system. There may be one, one hundred, or a million contradictions to conclusion *c*, but there only needs to be the one single supporting statement – not necessarily a good one – and that’s all you need to ‘prove’ conclusion *c*.

The formula is therefore:

$$\left(\sum_{s=1}^{\infty} s = \emptyset \right) + s = c$$

Here are three examples of metalogical argument:

1)

Jewish caravan parked in West Bank (not in Israel) in 2001. **Legal settlement.**

Arab village founded in Negev (in Israel) in 1850. **Illegal settlement.**

2)

[*Media Lens*]

[Peter] **Beaumont was unwilling to challenge even one of the thousands of arguments and facts published in 2,000 pages of Media Alerts** and in our book *Guardians Of Power* – so, instead, our ‘nastiness’ was the focus of attention.

3)

[Glenn Greenwald]

During the protests several months ago against proposed anti-immigration legislation, there were all sorts of **angry denunciations over the protestors' waving of Mexican flags**. Yesterday, in the middle of New York City, protestors clogged the streets of Manhattan for a large rally called the "Stand with Israel" rally. As the photographs taken by one of the attendees reflect, there seem to have been many Israeli flags but, at least in these photographs, no American flags. Despite that, **one of the most vocal commentators who lambasted the waving of Mexican flags on U.S. soil lauded the pro-Israeli protest**.

Thinking, then, often acts as an autoimmune system to deal with unwanted thoughts. This is not to mention the passive **precompiled thoughts** that are merely received. Fundamentalists of all kinds live in an precompiled world already thought out for them. If thought is created by an active organising of ideas, here we see the importance of *what these ideas are and what their origin is*. A fundamentalist (or a cultist) is *organising precompiled ideas*. This is **closed thinking**. To awaken requires **open thinking**, where **receiving leads to conceiving**.

So, we receive the universe and its forms as ideas. At the highest level of our awareness, we organise our references into thoughts. Which is precisely the realm of the **manipulator**, this receiving and these thoughts. It is in our thoughts we can most free our minds, but these very same thoughts are where manipulators can forge their most magnificent manacles.

How they do this and what they do is the subject of the next chapter.

3. Manipulating

The more blatant the horror, the more work needs to be done to rationalise it and the more you have to do to shut your eyes to it. This is one way to judge the worth of a society: how tightly do you have to shut your eyes in order not to see the horror?

Ignorance and acceptance are the real engines of evil, for the horror is performed by the few but ignored and accepted by the many.

Once upon a time there were seven blind sages and a propagandist. The propagandist leads the seven blind sages to an elephant. The propagandist feels the animal's trunk. *These are its jaws*, says the propagandist. The propagandist feels the elephant's tusks. *This is its sharp teeth*, says the propagandist. And on the propagandist goes: *this is its mane, these are its deadly claws, and so forth*. The seven blind sages listen with growing fear. *Sir, it is a lion that is prowling so close to us, is it not?*, asks one of the sages at length, frightened out of her wits. Indeed yes, cries the propagandist. *Have I not described its mane and its sharp teeth and its deadly claws to you? Now you will do as I ask of you, or else I shall set my lion on you!* The seven blind sages obey, for fear of the lion. For who would wish to be devoured by such a creature?

In many ways our brains are honest. The light floods in our eyes, we process it into a meaningful shape; the object we see must have a direct relationship with what we perceive³⁷. This is true for trees and dogs and Eiffel Towers, at least. But, as we have seen, there are many things – such as ‘America’, ‘German’, ‘chavs’ and so on – that cannot ever ‘see’, so we match a word (‘chav’) to an image and an idea. It is no good saying ‘she is *chav*’. She is not ‘chav’ any more than that nice bar in Biloxi where you are currently enjoying rib-steak avec root beer is ‘America’. Walter

³⁷ In a normally functioning brain.

von der Vogelweide and Heinrich Himmler are both Germans but they are not (heaven forfend) ‘German’.

Then again, what we see in the modern world is both local and global. Local stuff we can at least see what we see; global stuff never. That is a lot of stuff we never see directly. This is at least metaphorically, unicorn territory. How much of the global stuff we see is unicorn? The point here is, how can we know what is unicorn and what isn’t? We can’t. Metaphorically.

Our brains are honest but what feeds our brains? Enter the manipulators. Note: *it is the job, the intent, of the manipulator to manipulate*. If the brain is force-fed unicorn by manipulators, what is left of the brain? In a global word where we cannot possibly tell what is unicorn or not?

This section argues that we now live in a world dominated by manipulators who not only offer a world of unicorn to the masses, they insist their unicorn is the absolute truth to swear by and that any denial of this ‘fact’ is at best ‘conspiracy’ or ‘fake’ and at worst criminal.

3.1 Mediation

CH 189: TRUE ENTERTAINMENT 23.00 HOLOCAUST

The world is turning; the world is changing. Once what people saw was in the main seen with their own eyes. ‘News’ was in general not much more than rumour of things going on from afar. In preliterate times, even the past was rumour. Myth and legend and saga. Even to the extent that long-ago events (the

life of Muhammad or Jesus, Adam and Eve, Jesus and Mary and so on) were embedded into everyday culture, these events were invariably quite obviously *extraordinary* and not to be confused with everyday life. For example, the endless *stabat mater*³⁸ poems of the medieval period, depicting (often very movingly and powerfully) the feeling of Mary standing before her son as he is being crucified, are very human but very remote from the life of an English village.

The newspaper, the wireless, the television, the cinematograph, the computer, the Internet: *the news*. Pickled in rumour or not, the news is far more than rumour. It contends that it tells us about the world at large, that it informs us. If we want to keep up with events, we need to watch the news. Says the news.

With the advent of the news, humanity lives in two worlds. The first is the **proximal world**, discussed in the previous section of this book. This is the world we see directly with our own eyes, the world in front of us. The second is the **mediated world**, the world we see second-hand via whatever medium we receive it (paper, screen, sound).

It should be clear from what has been said before that the mediated world, like anything else outside us, exists for us only when it has been pulled into our self. This is just as true for the proximal world. Thus, an important conclusion. Although it would seem common sense that we are our direct experiences and that therefore mediated experiences are at best peripheral, this is not in fact the case. Once inside us, mediated experiences are much like proximal experiences. If we visit Lake Windermere, it becomes

³⁸ 'Stands the mother' before the Cross.

to us an object stored as a reference. If we watch a travel programme of the lake, the same. Of course, a thing directly experienced is more tactile. Nevertheless, the object and the reference in these two cases are both Lake Windermere. The mediated reference may in many ways be more vivid and more dramatic than any direct experience we have. When we visited, didn't we just see a grey surface of water under grey cloud? When we watched the telly, we saw sweeping spectacular aerial views of the blazing blue waters of the lake.

For most people in the 'developed world', mediated stuff is richer, greater and deeper than proximal stuff. A good deal of what makes up our self derives from mediated material, not from things we experience personally.

What then if the news we see is mere propaganda? What would become of our world? If the mediated world is controlled — carefully controlled and curated — what then? Who would deny in that case that the result would be mass brainwashing?

3.2 Brainwashing

Brainwashing was born during the Korean War. A group of US soldiers captured by the Chinese suddenly appeared on television condemning capitalism and imperialism and the United States. They appeared to be unharmed and there was no sign of coercion. The CIA of course was interested and launched an investigation. A side-effect of this was a new term, 'brainwashing'.

China had long had a technique sometimes called 'cleaning the brain'. The aim here was to conquer

unwanted thoughts that made a person unhappy or insecure and suchlike and was effectively what we call therapy. Under the authoritarianism and dogma of Chinese Communism, 'unwanted thoughts' changed its meaning to thoughts set against authority and dogma. The term 'brainwashing' is 'cleaning the brain' in this sense. But in US terms, it also meant links to a right-wing school of psychology called Behaviourism that studied how behaviour can be influenced and controlled. The hope, so it seems, was that this could be achieved. A brainwashed person was a controlled person, an automaton. A 'Manchurian Candidate'. So seems to have been the hope.

Alas. What can be achieved, it now appears, is what might be called **brainmashing**. Modern techniques in this sort of thing involve sensory deprivation over a long period. A bare cell with a single light bulb. All sense of time drained away. Alternating heat and cold. Auditory senses blasted with deafening music for hours at a time. Questioning, now threatening and cruel now accommodating and kind. Perhaps physical stuff, stress positions and electric bolts and even beatings. Little by little the brain shrinks until it is a shrivelled little shell scarcely covering the broken ego within. It has been *smashed*.

This unachievable notion of brainwashing — of absolute mind control — has I think been immensely useful in achieving astonishing levels of actual brainwashing on western populations. It is the magician's trick of misdirection. As the popular conception of brainwashing is absolute mind control, accusations it is being carried out appear to be absurd. Moreover, it is easy to say 'They do not

control *my* mind' and snort with derision at the idea of being brainwashed.

But mind control is not possible. The mind is far too complex to be controlled, at least by any known technique.

The question can be now asked: why would a manipulator *want* or *need* mind control? Modern societies would seize up in an instant if they were populated by people with no free will. Such a thing would be counterproductive in the extreme. Second, it is very hard to see *why* something so extreme as mind control would be on anybody's to-do list. It is quite simply unnecessary.

So let us redefine brainwashing into something both achievable and desirable (for a manipulator). The major step is to forget about *control* of the *mind* and focus on *influence* of *behaviour*. 'Behaviour' here means not all behaviour but desired behaviour. As for opinion, the manipulator is not aiming to change all of your opinions or even one of them. The aim is to *direct* specific opinions³⁹.

When Iraq was invaded in 2003, the Bush government had no great need to change opinions so that all Americans supported the war and agreed with the need to invade. In fact, Iraq was a Republican war and the government only needed to talk to its base. The aim of the direction here was simply to *neutralise* Americans into *accepting* the invasion. The

³⁹ If someone wants you to accompany them to the cinema, they are not interested in changing your opinion about every film ever made or even about the film they are going to see. They don't need you to like the film. They simply want you to go and if you end up going you have successfully been directed no matter how much you hate the film.

underlying technique was a simple stimulus-response linkage between 9/11 and Osama and Saddam. Americans, in the end, were utterly confused as to why the US was invading, as were the troops deployed there. However, the propaganda had left them to work out that the invasion had ‘something to do with 9/11’ and that Saddam was ‘somehow involved’. Just so were Americans — certainly Republican Americans — directed. In other words, *brainwashed*.

3.3 Truth Value

Most human interaction and discussion and thinking exists in a world of *truth value*. I say X and it is in the end *true* or *false*. You *agree* or *disagree*.

If we want to understand a world *without* truth value we can consult Niccolò Machiavelli, author of ‘The Prince’, a mirror for princes after it had been crack’d from side to side. Machiavelli lived in a world of city states dotted throughout the north of Italy. Each city state was ruled by a prince and these were his target audience.

A prince has two basic aims, says M: 1) to keep hold of his rule and 2) if he can, win glory. This implies that the world of the city states is one of all against all. All princes aim for glory if they can, which is the law between city states. Within the state itself, there are three parties: the *prince*, the *court*, the *commons*. To rule, the prince must therefore control the court and the commons. Our primary focus here is Machiavelli’s ideas on *persuasion*.

Although fear can be used as a means of control, persuasion is of key importance. The main thing is that the prince is alone, even if he is alone in a crowd.

He can trust no one. The commons can certainly never be trusted. You may see them cheering you ecstatically, but. Next year — next week, who knows? — they may be baying for your blood. So says our author. The crowd is fickle. Its cheers curd like milk in a churn. The court is no better. Trust no one, least of all the man who in his cups says he will lay down his life for you. That man is likely to be the first to betray you.

How do you persuade, then? In a nutshell, you tell people what they want to hear. You make promises. This is not crude advice, for the prince who follows it must be a fine judge both of his own self and his audience. Machiavelli is not telling the prince to make empty promises but *effective* promises. If he makes a promise, for example, he needs to consider the consequences of not keeping it. What he should pay no mind to is *truth*. His job is to persuade. He can say one thing one day and the opposite the next (if he can get away with it). Break any promise if you can, keep those you need to: there is no dishonour where there is no truth. Say what needs to be said and be a canny judge of what is needed. Break your enemies (here ruthless violence is encouraged) but make allies and try to keep them.

This, clearly, is a world that lacks truth-value. But that is, I think, a difficult thing to understand because it is so far from most people's everyday interactions. It is easy to see that something can be true or false, but without truth-value *true and false do not exist*. A Machiavellian statement *is neither false nor true*. Instead, it can be said to be *effective or ineffective*. If it directs behaviour in the desired way, it is effective and, if not, it is ineffective. You

win an ally, good; make an enemy, bad.

A world without truth-value is a frightening place. If the human brain is essentially a ‘making-sense’ organ, it can either make no sense in this world, or it makes false sense out of nonsense. Hannah Arendt, in her classic ‘Origins of Totalitarianism’, argued that a characteristic of a totalitarian state (here she was speaking of Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s USSR) must be that it destroys the very notion of truth. When there is nothing to believe in because nothing is true or false, the emptiest of words can rain down upon the captive population. They simply add more nothing to the void.

3.4 Propaganda

Propaganda, like brainwashing, has a specific origin. In 1622 the Vatican started the *Congregātiō dē Prōpāgandā Fidē* (‘Committee for spreading the word’, loosely translated). Here we see the verb ‘propago’ (< *prōpāgāre*): ‘I propagate’. The root here is *pangō*, with a sense of ‘attach’ and ‘fasten’. Other important Latin words with this root are *pagus* (‘district’ ?< ‘allied places’ or ‘places bound together’) and *paginus* (‘page (of a book)’ ?< ‘paper bound together’). Perhaps the underlying meaning of ‘propagate’ was ‘to connect’. In any case, ‘propaganda’ means ‘that which is propagated’ which, back in 1622 was the holy writ.

Propagating was not seen as bad. A more recent parallel might be the once relatively innocent act of **advertising**. You had a product, you wanted people to know about it, you advertised. Just so with a message you wanted people to hear. You propagated it.

In the late 19th century, with the relentless expansion of the State and the growth of cities, there was anxiety about large groups of people. The psychologist Gustav le Bon wrote a text on the ‘Psychology of Crowds’ (*Psychologie des foules*, 1895), a ‘**crowd**’ here being a physical mass of people that might become a mob. A more intangible entity soon followed: the **mass**. Newspapers and magazines — in a short while to be joined by wireless and cinema — were the natural habitats of the mass. For, unlike the crowd, the mass did not congregate. That removed the danger of the mob, but the mass invoked subtler anxieties simply by being everywhere. Within the state abides the mass.

It was during WWI that something like modern propaganda developed, using *the mass media*. One word echoes on a million tongues, so it was said. This propaganda was truly propagated, but it was no longer just a matter of wanting people to hear but *to influence them*. Key early works on the subject include Walter Lippmann’s *Public Opinion* (1922) and Edward Bernays’ *Propaganda* (1928). It has been said that a curious characteristic of the latter is that it is propaganda *for* propaganda. In fact, Bernays saw the dangers of the somewhat aggressive term and soon softened it to ‘Public Relations’, our modern PR.

By about 1930 or so, propaganda existed in a stable form that is familiar to us today (or rather, as it is largely invisible, its familiar effects).

Propaganda has an intimate link to ideology, which is one of its main purposes to propagate. One of the more disturbing aspects of contemporary culture is the way propaganda and PR — functionally more or less identical — seem to be merging. As government

and corporations merge as one, corporate propaganda merges with government propaganda. Propaganda is becoming ever more the backbone of neoliberal and neoconservative governments. There is also a feedback loop between ideology and successful propaganda, for as propaganda seeps into a culture its messages become part of it. We can say that

the **propagandist** is *outside* the message;

the **ideologue** *inhabits* the message;

the **propagandee** *consumes* the message

With a successful enough piece of propaganda absorbed into a culture, after a while we are likely to see even later propagandists inhabiting the spirit of an old message, perhaps even using it in their own propaganda.

A good analogy for a propaganda message is a soap opera character. Soaps have a small number of core characters which are all-important to it. For the show to work, each core character must be at once stereotypical and unique, a difficult balance to achieve. For example, *two* alcoholics would be out of the question, as would two baddies. Introducing a new key character is something to be carefully managed. There are three stages in the life of a soap character,

- 1) The **introduction**. In this traumatic (for the producers) stage, the character steps out into the light and they must be stereotypical and unique from the get-go. Every viewer should feel they know the character from their first appearance.

- 2) Next comes **familiarity**. The fans know the character and how they behave. Even if there is a plot-twist in which our character acts out-of-character, in a way this enforces the familiarity.
- 3) After a certain period of time, the character becomes part of the furniture. They are **established**. A Dallas without JR? Corrie without Hilda Ogden⁴⁰? London without the Tower?

A well-thought-out propaganda message is like a soap character and if it ends up like JR or Hilda Ogden it has more than done its job.

We have examined the nature of *truth value* in an earlier section. Propaganda is Machiavelli writ large. Its values are the values of *Il Principe* and truth is not one of them. Therefore, as it has no truth value, a propaganda statement is neither true nor false, only effective or ineffective. This is, to repeat, a hard thing to understand, for it is easy to say that a news story is a lie, that politicians — most infamously Boris Johnson, ‘Boris The Liar’ — are liars. But they are not liars. Like the prince, their intent is to influence. Propaganda aims to tell you what you want to hear. The ‘green’ statements of energy giants are not lies, because they exist in a world without truth value. Energy giants claim they are ‘green’ because they are not. They are destroying, or at least damaging, nature. Their propaganda tells a literal falsehood

⁴⁰ To say that Coronation Street was without Hilda Ogden for 26 years is to say nothing. The phenomenon lasts while the character is still in the soap and vanishes immediately after their dramatic and tearful exit.

because it is literally false to a reality which it wishes to place a veil over. This is always a main aim of propaganda, to veil bad stuff.

Propaganda, veil of evil.

There, a slogan.

3.4.1 Propaganda: The Propagandist

This is 'news'. This is 'our' culture. I looked at the man speaking this 'news', speaking the words a stenographer had prepared for him. He looked like a dead man, a corpse that moved. His eyes were dead, and his face. His clothes were the clothes of a dead man. They were placed on him, his suit, merely to mark him as a piece of corporate body. A piece of body distributing the corporate chant to the other bodies. Body to body, earth to earth, dust to dust.

Who is the propagandist? How is propaganda delivered to its victims? One of the most important characteristics of propaganda: *the propagandist is always situated outside their propaganda.* These days, the news is basically a pravda. Although it can contain mere distraction, anything of any importance is likely to be propaganda. This raises an apparent problem, considering how many news desks there are and how many reporters. If too many cooks spoil the broth, what do too many propagandists do to propaganda? Why do all these propagandists deny what they are? The problem however is only apparent. These reporters are not propagandists. If anything, they are propagandeers.

To understand the delivery mechanism of news is to see the transmission of propaganda at work.

A good starting point is the news delivery mechanism in a totalitarian state: National Socialist Germany. Here the central figure was Otto Dietrich, the news big cheese. Every Friday, he and the editors of the major newspapers gathered to discuss next week's news. The main topic of discussion was the agenda for the next week (called by communications theorists *agenda setting*). What themes? What language to be used in the news stories? What should not be talked about?

These discussions were not confrontational, note. Dietrich was a collaborator, not a dictator. The editors were part of the regime, not opposed to it. That is, presumably, why they got to be an editor. We can see that what was being set was the Overton Window⁴¹. Of course, many things never needed to be discussed. It was simply understood by one and all these things were not to be mentioned. End of. No editor would, or would want to, broach the issue of Jewish rights, or the benefits of international socialism.

News in the west, surprising as it may seem to those who consume it without a moment's thought, who *accept* it and the values it professes — news in the west closely conforms to the **Dietrich Model of Delivery**, and in fact vastly exceeds and 'improves' it. How so?

The key is to understand the death of the journalist (outside of marginalised bloggers and political

⁴¹ The window represents what you can see when you metaphorically look out of it. If you get all your information from the news, all you can possibly know about Uighurs or yellow-jacket protests in France is what is reported there.

websites), who has been replaced by the reporter (pronounced ‘repeater’). For all their flaws and their discarded whiskey bottles and impressive piles of multipacks of Rothmans, the journalist — the serious and honest journalist — is a precious thing in society. Now, in the late 19th century a little movement materialised called the ‘muckrakers’. That term was a compliment. By it was meant that the muckrakers uncovered the murky truths of the rich and powerful. Upton Sinclair was a leading muckraker with a mission for the truth. There was a vague sense of an even higher mission than simply *telling* the truth, based on an awareness of what they believed the truth could *do*. If the wicked deeds of the powerful were revealed to the people, they reasoned, they would cease. The muckrakers had at least a hope that they had found the key to reform society and that key was the journalist. Journalism could more or less eliminate corruption (in its widest sense) simply by bringing it out in plain sight.

This may be utopian, but there is an obvious if more modest truth to it. Actual journalists tend to be cynics (and according to the stereotype alcoholics) rather than reformers, but they are subversive because they have a nose for a story and, if that story concerns corruption in high places, they have the intelligence, knowledge, contacts and investigative nous to follow their story to a just conclusion.

Where have all the Pilgers gone, long time passing? In the mainstream press? Gone, gone, gone. There are only reporters (repeaters) now. News is made within an increasingly tabloidised environment and as big news becomes ever more corporatised profits and margins and sales are the ruling forces. News teams

are cutback to the bare minimum, schedules tightened and rationalised, content guided towards ‘human interest’ — functionally, there is no room for journalism. So where does news tend to come from these days? From sources. Official sources and PR companies and the like. What happened in Iraq any time in 2005, say, was determined by CENTCOM (Central Command, the US command centre in the Middle East). What happened in Afghanistan in 2016? Ask the Pentagon, or Washington. In fact, it’s worse than that. Ask? Reporters don’t ask. They are told. All of a sudden, when the Pentagon (or Washington or Whitehall etc) wants something known, its posts a story to the press. A reporter reads it and rephrases it. At best, the story might prompt a few phone calls to official sources to confirm or deny such and such detail. But, with the Pilgers gone, that is pretty much that and a more sophisticated version of the Dietrich Model of Delivery prevails. News content is almost entirely determined by the propagandists. Desk editors know better than to complain or wander too far off base, reporters find it all makes things so much easier having it all thought out for them. Opinion writers base their opinions on the news, so their work is effectively propaganda. Chat show hosts, taking on ‘topical’ stories, the same. Even satirists work with this overton world. Even a savagely satirical cartoon is still in the end working within the Overton Window.

This is a world where more or less anything can be said about Vladimir Putin and nothing about Volodymyr Zelensky, anything about Hamas and nothing about Israel. Every desk manager knows what you cannot talk about. It’s just not worth it for a start. The fact checking for an article about Putin

or Jeremy Corbyn is minimal. Anything about the Ukraine or Israel must be quadruple-checked⁴². If you are such an editor, these are your everyday concerns.

A final point I will make here is the disturbing way in which an overton world works with basic human perception, a fundamental principle that works on all human beings all of the time. The axiom is: *we know everything we know and nothing we do not know*.

First, how can we know anything we don't know? It is physically impossible. Of course, we can know now what we did not then and, hopefully, know more in the future than we do now. At any one time, though, the statement must be true. Likewise, every single thing we know by the basic rules of logic we *must* know. Every positive integer is a positive integer, every dog that has had its day has had its day.

Second, the consequence of this axiom is that *we seem to ourselves that we know everything*. If we think about something and reach a conclusion, it may be we are quite obviously wrong but we do not know the things that make us wrong. Because we do not know what we do not know, we can never know we are wrong. Within ourselves, our reasoning is impeccable and impregnable. For example, an Afghan man was talking about the Vietnam War and it soon became clear he understood Vietnam and America were neighbouring countries. He would not be persuaded there was an ocean between them. He was a true villager who had never travelled or seen a map of the world. His reasoning was that, because America had

⁴² An editor who let an article mildly critical of Israel be published had to take time off work with RSI after deleting the trillions of angry emails in his inbox.

invaded Vietnam they *must* be adjacent countries. He was wrong, but not stupid. He knew everything he knew and he knew nothing about any ocean separating Vietnam and America. He thought he knew everything. We all do.

Third, this principle has worrying implications for an overton world, mediated and defined by propagandists who select what goes into the window. If we seem to know everything, *everything in the overton world will seem to be true and the overton world will be everything.*

3.4.2 Propaganda: Some Methods

The basic techniques of propaganda – and very powerful they are, too – I think are **noise**, **silence** and **selection**. These create an Overton Window – the same window, note – for all who live in its mediated world. There are many other propaganda methods – *treetops, grassroots, glittering generalities, name-calling* and so on⁴³ – but here I examine a few of them that I have myself studied and analysed.

1) Noise

Noise is the most noticeable arm of propaganda. It happens when the propagandist wants you to know about something. It suddenly appears and – whether after a short or long while

⁴³ With that lot, if you were a particularly enthusiastic propagandist, you would 1) set up a Free Gaza group telling journalists and politicians about the tyranny of Hamas; 2) organize as many useful idiots as you could to march for your Gaza for Gazans movement; 3) speak out about the need for a peace process and a decent future for the people of Gaza under a democratic government; and 4) write an endless stream of articles condemning the incomprehensible atrocities that Hamas terrorists committed on the hellish day of Oct. 7.

– just as suddenly vanishes. In our modern mass mediated world, this noise can get very loud indeed.

Some noise is short-lived. For example, when the US was preparing to attack the Iraqi town of Fallujah there was noise and likewise when it was preparing to attack Libya in 2011. When the ‘Chavist’ President of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, was being threatened by the US-sponsored ‘opposition leader Juan Guaidó, there was noise. These noise campaigns quickly came and went.

Some noise is background noise. This usually occurs when an enemy figure is being targeted. It tends to be muted but incessant over a long period, as long as the enemy is still a threat. For example, when Jeremy Corbyn all of a sudden became Labour leader a low-level noise immediately built up and maintained its presence until his final defeat. In a nutshell, Corbyn was a freak with a manhole cover fetish who wanted to exterminate ‘the Jews’. It was probably this ‘Corbyn is an antisemite’ meme that did for him. An older example was the Sandinistas, whom the Reaganites relentlessly pursued. This meant years of muted noise directed against the group. A recent example in the UK is ‘Windrush’, which is a noise suggesting that right-wing nationalists are racists who do not represent a rebranded inclusive multicultural ‘Britain’ that wants to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda.

Big noise is for big events. Older examples include the Falklands War and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. More recently we have the invasion of Iraq, covid and the Ukraine. These last two were utterly explosive and both illustrate a new phenomenon of supra-state messaging, the former via the WHO and the latter a gruesome combination of the US, NATO and the EU. Covid was possibly the most prolonged and ambitious noise campaign in human history and the incessant noise it produced is only demonstrated all the more clearly by its sudden relapse into silence.

2) Silence

Silence is golden in propaganda. Its paradox is that — being silent — it is in some ways not propaganda at all. It is not delivered to an audience. Yet it *is* propaganda. It is the key to how modern propaganda works. How can you create an Overton Window without silence? The overton world is one of carefully controlled information. To achieve such a control, it is as important to decide what to keep out as to what to include. Silence is the echo of noise, the whisper in the dark.

Perhaps a political comparison might explain it most clearly. A party member who toes the line can be *selected* as a candidate for MP; a dissident voice *deselected*. The politically correct member makes the right *noise* while political incorrectness is *silenced*.

3) Selection

Selection maintains the Overton Window, vital to modern propaganda and brainwashing. It helps keep the people confined within a carefully created overton sleep. Here is a particularly hideous version from the BBC (28/07/2025):

Yesterday, Jordan reported that, along with the UAE, it had airdropped a total of 25 tonnes of food into Gaza.

Since the resumption of aid deliveries in May, the average food aid truck has carried about 21 tonnes of supplies, based on data from the Israeli military's Cogat department.

The total aid dropped into Gaza by parachute yesterday was therefore only slightly more than a single truck of food aid entering by land.

On the same day, 120 trucks of aid were collected and distributed within Gaza by the UN and other

international organisations, according to Cogat.

Dropping aid from planes has made up only a very small proportion of the overall total reaching Gaza since the conflict began.

Prior to this weekend's airdrops, just 3% of the total had come in this way - most of this in March and April 2024.

You will note this only mentions Israel in order to imply its role in Gaza is to deliver aid⁴⁴. Genocide is transformed into 'conflict'. The article infers that some sort of disaster has happened and that the charity of outside forces has come into play. Luckily for the people of Gaza, the world outside is here to help them, perhaps with help from the enigmatic 'Cogat' group. The article, it might be mentioned, appeared under the BBC's 'Verify' banner.

With selection you talk about Ngô Đình Diệm, your puppet in Vietnam. You speak in terms of glittering generalities. Democracy, progress, freedoms, development, the usual. You don't mention his secret-police brother Ngô Đình Nhu who hearted wrapping his victim in barbed wire and pounding him (I suspect him) until his innards were pushed up and up and eventually out of his mouth. Democracy, progress, freedoms, development.

When Julian Assange is led out of his Ecuadorian room on his way to Belmarsh you make fun of his appearance. *He looks like Uncle Albert from the old comedy show Only Fools and Horses we all used to watch!* You don't mention that three months before MI5 refused him access to a razor, hence the three-month beard. You don't wonder why a man who had been arrested in Sweden with the charges subsequently dropped for a charge carrying a maximum fine of a few

⁴⁴ '[T]he average food aid truck has carried about 21 tonnes of supplies, based on data from the Israeli military's Cogat department[.]'

thousand pounds was being sent to a maximum-security prison in the UK. He looked like Uncle Albert is all.

During Donald Trump's first administration, there was a story that he made an African-American woman who had just lost her husband deployed to Niger cry. Georgie Porgie pudding and pie. No questioning what the soldier was doing in Niger. No mention of the fact that the Pentagon issued various contradictory statements about the circumstances of his death. No mention of Africom ('Africa Command', the shadowy command centre for US operations in Africa, which would explain precisely what he was doing there). No investigation into the operations the US was clearly carrying out in the region.

Whereas noise and silence represent propaganda on the macro scale, selection is effectively the same at micro level. It deploys noise and silence within a single story.

4) 'Diversion'

Methodism was a populist Christian movement that emerged in the 18th century under the watchful eye of John and Charles Wesley and enjoyed strong support among the working class. It therefore acted as a **diversion** away from bad things like the rights of man, combinations and socialism.

The propaganda of the Methodists, which must include the wonderful hymns of Charles Wesley, is not an issue here. What is interesting is Methodism's status in society as a whole. It is not what Methodists said but where Methodism was situated.

As the 18th century moved on, unsettling ideas appeared. Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire were intellectuals remote from the 'servile classes' but then there was the French Revolution and American Independence. Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man* was written and, worse, read. Industrial capitalism grew up and with it the worker. Worse yet, the

worker found a means of expression in the *combination*.

It is easy to ignore how profound an idea *the rights of man* is ('human rights' in modern terms). Consider the medieval view of nobility. There is a noble and the villein (or serf). The noble is *inherently* noble, the villein *inherently* ignoble. Perceptive writers like the poet Dante rejected this idea and said that nobility is earned not inherited and potentially applies to *all men*. To the noble and the villein alike. In 18th century terms, to the gentry and the servile classes. One writer, Mary Wollstonecraft, even wrote a book entitled *Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

So in comes Methodism. A massively conservative movement appealing to the servile classes. Of course, many people were drawn in because they liked the messages that were offered. Moreover, as a social — or even Marxian economic — class, not all workers were (or are) socially progressive. The very respectability and conservatism of Methodism no doubt appealed to many.

For all that, Methodism seems remarkably convenient, and here we see something that sits within propaganda. For Methodism was welcomed by the authorities in a way that neither socialism nor unionism were. Clearly, it was a convenient movement that drew workers away from radicalism.

In recent times, we have seen a succession of far-right parties whose function seems to be to divert 'workers' from socialism. The BNP briefly achieved some level of national popularity during which time the right-wing press at least gave it a measure of respectability. It was granted a slot for a Party Political Broadcast and its leader Nick Griffin appeared on the respectable fake-debate BBC flagship 'Question Time'. But Griffin's appearance was a generally-agreed disaster and the BNP was buried. Remarkably, a replacement party appeared soon after: The English Defence League. For a while, the EDL grew rapidly in popularity,

hoovering up the people who believe the messages emitted by the 'old' right-wing press (and, in gentler form, the 'new' right-wing New Labour press). The EDL gained traction but never found a winning populist formula. For example, it organised a well-publicised march through Tower Hamlets in the East End of London with the intent to show white 'English' solidarity against multicultural populations. The march in fact illustrated a fact apparently beyond the imagination of EDL leaders, that these multicultural communities, including their white members, did not like people from outside marching through their streets. It was the EDL marchers who were the foreigners. That sort of symbolism is potentially ruinous to a movement struggling to find a voice in the mainstream. But for a while it was treated with a certain level of respect by the media. Even 'Newsround', the BBC's news programme for children, checked in a positive report. Anyway, like magic, the EDL was soon replaced by the 'UK Independence Party', fronted by the affable and media-savvy Nigel Farage. It was the UKIP that found the winning formula to become a mainstream and respectable political party. The sequence of the BNP, EDL and UKIP can in fact be defined as a single political force trying to find the formula with which to tug the public's heartstrings.

These three parties are in many respects the successors of the Methodists. This is not to deny that they offer something to their supporters or to suggest that their supporters are mere dupes. The point is that they are there. You could say 'Of course they are there, they represent beliefs that are there. They are simply parties that represent these beliefs.' But that misses the fact they are *visibly* there. Where for example are the socialists? Invisibly there. Except when, well look at Jeremy Corbyn's revival of a social-democratic Labour. This had to be visible because the Labour Party cannot be hidden. But this phenomenon could almost be an examination question:

| ‘Note some of the differences you observe between the media treatment of Corbynite Labour and the EDL or UKIP. [5 marks.]’

6) ‘Merge and Transfer’

A clever and effective propaganda trick is **merge and transfer**.

We see a very good example of this with the words **jihad** and **Jihadist**. One of the basic factoids about Islam is that it has the Five Pillars but that jihad is generally considered a sixth pillar. This implies that all Muslims are Jihadists. ‘Not all terrorists are Muslims but all Muslims are terrorists.’⁴⁵

What then is jihad? In the first place, it is a word. Arabic words are usually based on ‘roots’, which is to say a sequence of consonants. A three-letter sequence is called a *trilateral root*. It is an abstract notion expressed in a base word and its derivatives. For example, SLM, meaning ‘peace’, is a root and **salām** its base. The Arabic vocabulary is built up out of these roots.

| Examples.

| 1) When one tribe defeated another, the submission of the vanquished tribe led to peace. So the word for submission is built around the SLM root: **ʿislām**.

| 2) One class of verbal nouns in Arabic begins with a ‘m’. The word for ‘one who submits’ is therefore **muslim**.

Just so, **jihad** is the base word for the root JHD. The meaning here is the notion of ‘effort’. This meaning has been narrowed within Islam, where it suggests something like ‘striving to be a good Muslim’. We see jihad in its basic sense

⁴⁵ Really, if you have never seen it before, that is a genuine right-wing saying, if not slogan.

every day and everywhere. When athletes train hard and politicians campaign hard, they are doing jihad. An actor learning their lines, a student revising for an exam, a couple cooking the Sunday dinner – all of these are jihadists.

The sixth pillar of Islam, then, simply enjoins Muslims to be good to their faith. However, the ultimate expression of jihad is to fight — perhaps to die — to defend the faith. This is hardly unique to Islam, what with *dulce et decorum est* and all that. Even the radical liberal John Stuart Mill said once the highest deed a man can do is die for a cause.

And Jihadists capital 'J'? These are radicals who reject secular modern societies and believe their leaders are not Muslim and can therefore be excommunicated from the faith and jihad waged against them. This is an extremist view that was situated far from the basic meaning of *jihad* and warps the meaning of 'holy war' beyond recognition.

If you know what *jihad* and *jihadist* actually mean, would you think it implies that all Muslims are Jihadists? If you do not know this, merge these two words and you inevitably end up with a saying such as, *Not all terrorists are Muslims but all Muslims are terrorists*.

Another merging can be found with **tax evasion** and **tax avoidance**. The latter seems to have found a voice in the City of London in the second half of the 1950's, with the *Eurobond*. From this gentle beginning a whole tax haven industry grew up. In a tax haven it is possible, for example, to set up a company no questions asked and with minimal information legally required. What goes on, financially speaking, behind the name is opaque. Investigators *can* unlock the key after considerable effort, but this is the age of the computer. An account can be set up so that, as soon as there is a threat, its contents will be transferred to another account. Who knows how many of these opaque accounts have been set up in who knows how many tax havens?

Tax *evasion* is illegal, but tax *avoidance* is not. These havens encourage both activities, but few large companies or billionaires would try to evade tax. It would be a huge risk to revenue and reputation and not one worth taking. Which leads us to the fact that havens exist to draw in money. They are more or less designed to enable tax avoidance. That achieved, the super-rich (individual or corporation) will flock. Tax avoidance is therefore there *by design*.

From time to time there is a noise form of propaganda based around a story of a leaked document belonging to one tax haven or another, for example the *Panama Papers* (Panama being a US haven). These noises cry havocs in order to let the masses know 'the authorities' are 'doing something' about corruption. This noise *sohos!* on and on about tax evasion and they are cleaning out the house. But no one, I think, would ever even suspect the importance of tax avoidance, that havens enable tax avoidance, that tax avoidance is near to being their *modus operandi*. The noise *transfers* avoidance to evasion as if avoidance doesn't exist.

Then we have disability. There is an old National Socialist poster from the mid-1920's showing a disable man along with text aggressively pointing out how many Reichsmarks it costs to keep him alive. Neoliberals broadly agree with this and have been steadily cutting back benefits for the poor and disabled ever since they came to power. Sir Keir Starmer joined the throng just recently with a cruel round of cuts aimed at the sick and disabled. The Tories, albeit in opposition, as usual go worse:

The leader of the Conservatives, Kemi Badenoch, has said she does not believe one in four people are disabled and the term is in danger of losing its meaning, as she used a speech to criticise the size of the welfare state. [July 10, 2025]

As an example of how morally depraved this all is, consider the woman on Universal Credit who was told she had to

attend a 'back to work' meeting. Although she informed the DWP⁴⁶ person she had a serious heart condition and could not attend, she was told firmly she must attend or lose benefits. An ambulance took her to her pointless meeting, just as I guess another one took away her corpse when she died of a heart attack a few days after her attendance.

In the mediated world though, all is sunshine for the disableds. Look at them all. All of the sudden for at least a decade there is the Paralympics splashed all over everywhere showing disableds performing storming athletic feats in running and swimming and all that and you just feel don't you these disableds on benefits must be just be skivers who don't deserve a break if they don't pull their finger out and play the game and get on their bikes and look for work. Merge and transfer, see? Disableds are the disableds of the Paralympics. They're getting up and doing it. What was the woman with the heart condition doing? Why isn't she out there competing in the Paralympics? Why should we pay our Reichsmarks to her, if she's a paralympic athlete? She's a disabled isn't she?

This merge and transfer meme has been so successful it is become almost a Party slogan as per '1984':

**WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH
SICKNESS IS HEALTH**

Another example is the merging of **socialism** and **social democracy**. The early neoliberals — in the first days of Margaret Thatcher — often spoke about 'socialism' (which of course had to be exterminated). This involved such a subtle merging that even today I don't see much of a recognition that this included *social democracy* (which in turn included in this context Keynesian economic policies). In

⁴⁶ The Department of Work and Pensions, or the Ministry of Plenty.

fact, it seems to me social democracy was the prime target of neoliberalism even back then. After all, socialism in the UK was purely theory but social democracy was the predominant practice for all the governments of the day.

7) 'The Bad Apple'

'Bad Apple' propaganda is immensely powerful. It is to be trotted out in a crisis, but also intermittently as a reminder that the system is good.

This propaganda can be best understood in the context of one of Karl Marx's most useful ideas⁴⁷. Look, said Marx, at the system not the person. That is to say, look at *capitalism* not *the capitalist*. He did not believe that capitalists were inherently bad people. If you look at capitalists, he is suggesting, you will find good men and bad men but always the same exploitative system. This is important because a natural impulse in those wanting to make things better is to want to make *people* better. A *reductio ad absurdum* here can be seen in the hellish conditions of Jewish workers at the Auschwitz extermination camp. There, life was made infinitely worse by the sadism and bullying of the guards. Why, says the kind-hearted reformer. Employ humane guards. Feed and clothe the inmates properly. Improve the quality of accommodation. Everything, they suggest, will now be peachy. The inmates will now be happy clearing out the bodies of the latest batch of exterminated people day in day out and extracting any wealth (teeth, rings etc) from their corpses.

'Bad Apple' propaganda works so well because it distracts attention away from the system onto individuals. The case of Grenfell Tower is a textbook example. This building close by the Westway road into central London caught fire, all too

⁴⁷ Although borrowed from Henri de Saint-Simon, Marx gave the idea teeth.

visible to the public gaze, and the media flocked to see and film the sight. At this point, the burning tower was a spectacle. Soon though, awkward questions began to be asked about reasons and causes.

It is the background to the fire that is key to understanding the propaganda. The building was a tower block in the wealthy London borough of North Kensington. Poor people lived in it. About half of the residents were transients, so only half had a stake in it or called it home. This half, though, had a resident's association and these residents were understandably not happy. On the one hand, things that mattered never got sorted or if so, very slowly. If a lift broke it stayed broke. Reporting a plumbing issue meant a long struggle to get the issue fixed. On the other hand, other things ran perfectly smoothly. These were various building projects that were invariably no use to anyone and benefited no one. The last one of these before the fire was a serious issue. Flammable sheets were stuck on the front of the building. The residents submitted an official complaint. As always, there was the council and the contracted company. The result of the complaint was a lawsuit against the residents. But when the fire broke out it was these flammable panels that caused the deaths.

I don't think you could imagine anything more systematic than this. There are no 'bad apples' here. This is the neoliberal system in all its ingloriousness. This is how the system works, more or less a case study.

Soon though, as the fires were put out and the dead counted and the dust settled down, the wheel of the official government response began to turn. There was no system here. Sorry, the government was, for this terrible *tragedy*. At this point, there was no observable cause at all. No hint at any responsibility at all. As the weeks and months rolled on though, questions were asked. It was now the 'bad apples' emerged from out the shadows. A triumphant government

could now announce it was doing something and when the bad apples had been found, heads would roll. Like the wheels of the system not to be mentioned.

8) The Psychology of Pronouns

Understanding the **psychology of pronouns** is useful in understanding propaganda, for what better way to hide meaning than in lil ole me?

Pronouns are an extension of the self. They map out the fundamentals of human experience with respect to the Other. The root of the self is represented by the pronoun 'I'⁴⁸. That is the fundament: 'I' looking into the outside.

As we look into the outside, we experience two basic feelings: *identification* and *alienation*. Our pronouns map these very neatly. 'We' means identification. 'They' means alienation. The we attaches itself to the ego, the *they* detaches itself. The we is invited into us, the *they* remains outside. With these two pronouns, we unlock or lock the door.

The subtlest pronoun is 'you' (singular or plural). This is an intermediate pronoun. It can be **inclusive** or **exclusive** depending on context: 1) *'If you want a communist society you need to work for it.'* 2) *'You communists are all the same!'*

In the Overton Window – in propaganda generally – the psychology of pronouns can be seen constantly at work. Always 'we'; always 'they'.

*We is Us and They is Them & ne'er the twain shall meet,
Till the last propagandist must face their last defeat.*

⁴⁸ In Latin *ego* and used by the original translator of Freud for 'ich' (instead of 'I'), thereafter becoming a key term in psychology.

3.4.3 Propaganda: As It Is Now

Propaganda has always – at its most effective, I will not say ‘best’ – been incredibly powerful. It aims to change minds and it does. Not only that, it creates. It can create words, histories and even myths.

Word. The no doubt rather ruthless queen of Samaria Jezebel once offended the Yahwist prophet Elijah. Now she is a byname for the Whore of Babylon and the very word for a ‘wicked’ woman.

History. Out of the mundane and cynical politics of German and Byzantine emperors mixing it with Roman popes came the famous period of history full of parfit gentil knyghts full of chivalry fighting to win back for Christendom the Holy City of the Holy Land. But this city and its land were never even nearly part of the aforementioned ‘dom’.

Myth. The medieval clerk Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote a clever book that I think had a propaganda purpose. His book followed the progress (a progress more of less entirely made up by Geoffrey) of the kings of Britain before the English arrived, culminating in the victory of Arthur and defeat of his epigone Vortigern to Hengist and Horsa. This ingenious work thus gave the British (that is Welsh, Cornish and Bretons) a noble and heroic history of their own without upsetting the English tradition – in fact, enhancing it. But an unintended result of this was the medieval Tamagotchi craze for Arthur. Soon a veritable cycle of tales developed about this obscure Romano-British resistance leader. In fact, the popular tales were of his great knights, with the king in the background. Then the motif of the holy grail was

introduced, the old cauldron of plenty and revival combined with who knows what Christian esoterica. This is now the moralising world of Sir Galahad the genuinely parfit knight and the imparfitions of the lusty Sir Gawain. The resultant grand epical tale now bookended by the birth and death of Arthur was in effect a retelling of the old Celtic myth of royalty (birth, prime, eld – then rebirth). Later poets such as Alfred Tennyson, Lord reimagined the myth as representing the death of the heroic age itself seen from a world of desks and clerks. All this from a man whose historical record runs, “*Battle of Badon in which Arthur carried the cross of Our Lord Jesus three days and three nights on his shoulders and the Britons were victorious.*” and “*Battle of Camlann in which Arthur and Modred fell.*”

The next sections illustrate how a new form of propaganda has evolved over the last ten years or so. We might call this the era of **the triumph of propaganda** characterised by **total propaganda**.

The new propaganda just *is*. It is just the self. In a sense it becomes an off-the-self built out of pure propaganda, the new normal ego; a **neoe**go.

This new – neo – propaganda has no truth value, like all propaganda. However, it is pumped out in all places at all times all over the west with noise and selection (with all unwanted information of course absolutely silenced). This propaganda is presented as an absolute truth to disbelieve which is to admit insanity. To its ‘truth’ is opposed the ‘fake’.

The totalitarian and wide spread of the new propaganda is illustrated by these headlines which

are, it should be emphasised, in the wake of a blatantly illegal and unprovoked by Israel on Iran.

Sute de rachete balistice, lansate asupra Israelului (Cotidianul)

Irán lanza cientos de misiles balísticos y el ejército israelí ordena refugiarse a la población (El Mundo)

Irán responde a Israel con misiles que dejan 40 heridos en Tel Aviv (El Pais)

Israël subit une vague d'attaques de missiles tirés depuis l'Iran (Le Monde)

L'Iran lance des missiles sur Israël en riposte à une attaque massive sur son sol (Le Parisien)

Tel-Aviv ciblée par des «dizaines de missiles balistiques» iraniens, sirènes à Jérusalem (Le Figaro)

Írán v odvetě odpálil na Izrael stovku raket, po celé zemi zněly sirény (Lidovky.cz)

Iranas paleido raketas į Izraelį: Jeruzalėje kaukia (klaipeda.lt)

Iran startet Gegenangriff mit Raketen auf Israel (Frankfurter Allgemeine)

Menschen in Israel dürfen Schutzräume wieder verlassen (Zeit)

Iran startet Gegenangriff auf Israel (Stern)

Nach Raketenangriff aus Iran – Israelis dürfen Schutzräume vorerst verlassen (Spiegel)

Teheran contrattacca: missili balistici sul Paese. "41 feriti, 2 gravi" (Repubblica)

Il contrattacco dell'Iran: tutta Israele sotto centinaia

di missili, feriti a Tel Aviv (La Stampa)

Krijgsmacht Israël: Iran vuurde minder dan honderd raketten af (De Telegraaf)

Iran launches retaliatory missiles at Israel after Iranian supreme leader vows revenge for nuclear site attacks (Guardian)

Iran launches ballistic missiles at Israel in retaliatory attack (Times)

Iran launches wave of missiles at Israel & smoke billows over Tel Aviv after Ayatollah vow to avenge blitz on nuke sites (Sun)

Iranian ballistic missiles rain down on Tel Aviv with skies ablaze after Iran vowed 'revenge' on Israel for nuclear site attacks (Mail)

Iran retaliates with missile attacks on Israel, as Netanyahu urges Iranians to stand up to regime (BBC)

Who was attacking whom? This neo propaganda summons up all of its powers to suck up reality into a black hole where it is never to be seen again.

The three examples given below more or less have their own little narrative. Novichok is a single story injected into the UK media; covid is a gigantic ball of noise maintained over a couple of years; the Queen's funeral is another single story but post-covid and seemingly assured its narrative will be accepted.

So, *tentative, overwhelming, assured*. The basic saga, I think, of the new total propaganda. This is a propaganda so powerful that to contradict it is literally heretical to many people and will invoke in them contempt, anger and perhaps even violence. It

is as if it casts a net over their emotions that it can shake for ever after.

1) Novichok

@MsZeeZed could the Skripals poisoning be described as “Masterminded”? Given that it was obvious, the perpetrators were identified, used a nerve agent that only Russia has, failed to kill its targets, accidentally killed Dawn Sturgess, an unrelated person one town over, because of the casual disposal of the Chemical Weapon used like it was a cigarette packet. Its main result was annoying a Government who was relatively passive towards Russia & instead of instilling fear it supercharged the next PM into signing a full military support alliance with Ukraine in 2021, when Russia threatened its full invasion.

The saga of Sergei Skripal appeared all of a sudden and made an almighty noise in the pravda for quite a while.

First, let us summarise the official narrative. Once upon a time the tyrant Putin decided to kill Sergei Skripal, a fellow Russian who lived in the quiet city of Salisbury. The tyrant hatched a plan. He would send two of his top agents to the UK to do the deed and supply them with the deadly Soviet nerve agent *Novichok*. The two top agents, both of whom looked like thugs, made the journey, making sure that they appeared on every CCTV camera they could. Arriving in Salisbury the day before the killing, the tiptop agents who looked like thugs checked into their hotel where they proceeded to get hammered on spirits and cocaine and hired a prostitute. Luckily, the prostitute never pulled a fast one and the thuggish tiptop agents of the tyrant Putin went to work. They arrived at Sergei’s house where his daughter Yulia was staying. They took some Novichok and smeared it on the doorknob of Sergei’s front door, their tiptop minds

assured that, with his daughter staying there, Sergei would def touch the doorknob. The assassins of the tyrant Putin had thought of everything. It was a Saturday and Sergei and Yulia stepped out of Sergei's house and went for a wander around Salisbury, both conveniently handling the doorknob covered in the super-deadly nerve agent. After a couple of hours wandering round the town, they decided to have a pub lunch and then went for a walk in the park. They now both at the same time began to feel woozy about three hours after coming into contact with the Novichok⁴⁹. Luckily the 15-year-old daughter of the chief nurse of GCHQ happened to be walking by and pluckily notified GCHQ and GCHQ came to the rescue and Sergei and Yulia were whisked away never to be seen again except for the one interview with Yulia in which she spoke a Russian text not written by any native Russian speaker even though she is a native Russian speaker.

My own (for obvious reasons speculative) view of what happened is as follows. Sergei Skripal was a Russian intelligence agent who took the king's shilling and began working for MI6. He was caught and jailed for six years, but released in a prisoner exchange. The fact he was released indicates that the Russian government believed he posed no threat. MI6 then settled him in Salisbury, close to GCHQ, where he continued to work with British intelligence. It is clear he had upset someone in Russia, but there are many powerful individuals there to upset. I would think the government might be the least likely suspect. At any rate, someone clearly tried to take him out, or at least deliver a warning to him. The fact that he and Yulia felt woozy just after a meal suggests poisoning but then, as they were in a park, they would have been an open target. It is also clear

⁴⁹ Normally even a standard nerve agent acts within fifteen seconds or so, leaving the victim completely disabled. Without treatment, the body will seize up after about twenty minutes, leading to death. The official story stressed Novichok is a *particularly powerful* nerve agent.

Sergei had a ‘batphone’ to HQ, for medical aid came very quickly. In her post-attack interview, it is clear Yulia had had a tracheostomy performed on her, indicating that the seriousness of the attack was not invented. It is also understandable that MI6 would be angered by such an attack, whoever carried it out.

I suspect that GCHQ quickly realised the attack offered an excellent propaganda opportunity, with the right cover story. Vil Mirzayanov’s book *State Secrets* mentions Novichok and even prints what it claims to be the chemical formula. This is exactly the sort of book someone working for GCHQ would have read. So, I speculate someone who had read Mirzayanov’s book and remembered the nerve agent realised it could be used to create an anti-Putin propaganda story and be tied to the attack of the Skripals. The thing about Novichok is that it’s effectively a fingerprint. It identifies Russia. Any general nerve agent would not do so. The propaganda gold here is clearly the implied equation,

$$\text{Putin} = \text{Novichok}$$

The Novichok Affair turned out to be a taste of what was to come, a controlled narrative injected into the media that cannot be contradicted⁵⁰. Novichok was not only believed but accepted as an act of faith opposing which was an almost blasphemy. Any disagreement was ‘conspiracy theory’ or ‘fake news’.

2) Covid

The Novichok story had a narrow focus, but the scope of Covid propaganda was nothing less than global.

Here it is especially important to note the difference between actual reality and propaganda noise, and to remember that propaganda *has no truth value*, so it is neither

⁵⁰ There was even a three-part BBC drama, ‘The Salisbury Poisonings’.

true not false. There is Covid the virus on the one hand and Covid the star of the propaganda soap opera on the other. In this section I will discuss the propaganda not the reality of the pandemic.

In the covid soap, there were two stars — *Covid* and the *Cure* — and two supporting characters, the *Mask* and *Lockdown*. If we reduce things to this level of simplicity, and focus only on the propaganda, it is easier to see its existence, for the level of noise 24 hours a day day after day for two years or so is surely unprecedented over the whole range of human history and drowns out any hope of thought or perspective. It acts as a gigantic **brontological argument**⁵¹. We find here however the same principle as with the Skripal story, a story that must be accepted implying that any critic of the story must be insane.

First, as with the Skripal affair, let us attempt a narrative as to the reality of what happened. We know that the WHO, just for example, anticipated some form of pandemic, especially via a corona virus. The corona virus named COVID-19 was the cause of such a pandemic during the early months of 2020. So, it would seem to me the initial phase of the pandemic was largely influenced to the WHO following the procedures it had previously set out. The fact that the 'cure' was provided by big pharma is I think also most likely due to the WHO, which has strong ties to these companies. Also, it is likely that, the longer the crisis went on, it was realised that here was a chance to study population control and (during lockdowns) monitor how the economy could cope with operating on the most minimal scale. With the advent of the jab, things were gradually wound down. In the end, there was silence.

But while the propaganda was running oh how there was

51 From the Greek for 'thunder'. *Plato*: ['The Republic' unabridged, snipped]. *Shlub*: THAT'S ABSOLUTE CRAP AND YOU KNOW IT!

noise! A noise that was promoting what was more or less a death cult. News tickers of death counts constantly rolled across TV screens accompanied by news stories about the virus. It seemed at time almost nothing else existed apart from covid. The intention of the propaganda was clearly to scare people and it is here we can see a carefully designed propaganda campaign. Authorities fear panic almost more than anything and hide any information that would lead to mass panic. The fear porn is in itself proof that the news was carefully controlled and there was a general confidence no mass panic would occur. Why was this? Because there was another message buried in the noise. In the early days, there was always the assuring notion that the authorities had the virus under control⁵². Here the first supporting character enters: lockdown. This was the counterpart to the fear and this was the device to prevent a mass panic in the face of the fear porn. As the lockdown came to an end, the second supporting character entered the soap: the mask. As with lockdown, the mask was clearly a device to prevent a mass panic for people allowed back out on the street. It was effectively a sort of nosegay to make people feel a little safer. *To not panic*. After a little while of this, the second main character appeared: the *cure*. The soap audience could now look forward to a happy ending, as the cure defeated covid in the final battle. In the meantime, in the UK, there was a second lockdown announced at Christmas, the noise raging like a hurricane now. As that lockdown ended, however, the storm died down and the first news of the forthcoming cure began. Now the fear porn was interspersed with a new noise that sighed and sougled and soothed the weary population. From thereon, mask and cure gradually took over, the death cult faded away until at last even the mask took a final bow. The soap was effectively over. The white hats had won.

⁵² An example of the white hat to save you from the black hat.

If we look at the characters in the soap, our concern is not with covid and cure, or lockdown and mask, but the fact that the noise forbade any *questioning* of them. Take the mask, for example. It is a basic truth that there is debate about its effectiveness. Likewise, lockdowns. There is *no* consensus about lockdowns and many — I mean many domain experts — believe they have a negative effect. The point then is not whether masks and lockdowns should or should not have been deployed, but the disturbingly absolute position of the noise⁵³. A powerful ‘deprogramming’ video, made in the US and based on US news broadcasts, begins with a news reader. The screen the splits into two and you see two newsreaders reading the same message. The screen then continues to split until there is a whole chorus of newsreaders. Reading the same message. No alternative view was ever aired. Covid. Cure. Masks. Lockdown. Another video, from Spain, indicates the absurdity of the noise. Here a woman is out jogging during lockdown and captured on film by a woman in an apartment block. The apartment woman screams out abuse at the jogging woman even though the street is deserted. A passing police patrol car now stops and two men get out. They bundle the woman to the ground and handcuff her, then drag her into the car and off to the local cells. In this play, nothing makes sense. Covid is here clearly the ‘dreaded lurgi’, something that can spread even when no one else is around. Note the jogging woman is assumed to be stricken by the lurgi. Then the police arrive and immediately place themselves in ultra-close contact with the lurgi-infected woman, driving off with her in the confined space of the car to the confined space of the police station where she can spread the lurgi to everyone there. This is the ‘new normal’ and it is quite sane; questioning masks is insane.

The cure is particularly absurd here. The issue is not its

⁵³ Which, remember, was overwhelming.

effectiveness or otherwise, but with its propaganda which here was especially dogmatic. It had to be because the role of the cure was as the white hat hero to the black hat virus. You precisely do *not* require an iota of expertise to know that any claim of *certainly* about the cure is wrong. Here is a typical dictionary definition of the word ‘vaccine’:

A substance given to stimulate a body’s production of antibodies and provide **immunity** against a disease.

The cure was persistently labelled a vaccine and in fact initially claimed to *be* a vaccine. That is, the jabbed would be immune to covid – in terms of the soap narrative, they would be cured. But even its official effectiveness quickly dropped to far below 100%. It was not long before it was announced that more jabs were needed as the original jab ran out of juice after a while. In any case, none of the various cures offered by Pfizer, Moderna, Oxford–AstraZeneca etc had been properly tested. Medicines normally take many years to be developed. The cure was not only rushed through without such testing; it was also employing a new mRNA-based technology that had never been used before. In a nutshell, an untried drug using an untried technology, but covid propaganda refused any questioning of using the cure *on entire populations*. You may think the Marx Brothers are funny and the Marx Brothers may be funny but would you forbid anyone to *question* the Marx Brothers are funny?

If you detach its propaganda from its reality — if you realise that propaganda has no truth value and that therefore what was true and what was false is irrelevant — covid is disturbing in every conceivable way. It does not matter if covid was a fiction or deadly, whether Bill Gates made it to kill Americans or whether it burst out one day in Wuhan. Its propaganda is a thing in itself and that thing was a gigantic and coordinated campaign that spread throughout the world and via all mediums — even birthday cards! — with a message that brooked no contradiction.

A year or so after the soap opera ended, there was resurgence of the virus. It seemed at least as serious as the outbreak that caused the death cult. Many people I know caught it. The outbreak this time was minor news, of marginal interest. You go, good people. Get on with your lives. Nothing to see here. And this wasn't even silence, just indifference. Few questioned why no noise now. They just saw what they saw and carried on sleeping.

3) Funeral

Hot on the tail of the covid soap came the case of the Queen's funeral. I think Mick Jagger expressed the right things when he said that it was as if the Queen had been there all his life and he would feel a loss now she was no longer there. That's more or less what I felt. I think that's a simple human feeling. Around the same time, various musicians involved in making some of my favourite music died. They meant more to me than the Queen but they were also a far less visible presence. It was in her public presence that the Queen was unique. For most people, she was a familiar it was sad to lose.

Then came the noise, and what a thunderous noise it was! The Queen's Death was followed by the Queen's Funeral. A satirical video said it all: footage following the Queen's cortege voiced over by Huw Edwards' sneering commentary of the funeral of Kim Jong Il in 2011. The match was perfect. For you just had to glimpse at the news to see a repeater performing some sort of crawling obeisance to what was once a human being. This abject reverence was — clearly — mandatory for all repeaters on all channels. In a country where about a quarter of its citizens are republican (which obviously does not include those who are agnostic towards the monarchy), the pravda endlessly repeated its cringe-worthy almost *worship* of the Monarchy. I wonder what the Queen herself would have thought of it all. 'Look at all these bloody idiots,' I can imagine her saying.

Here we have the same coordinated message, effectively transforming the Queen's sendoff into an unholy propaganda noise that demeaned the person it was supposedly celebrating. This worrying extremism, this fetishising of the Monarchy, surely this was what few people felt outside the realm of the propagandists and their repeaters in the media.

So, more propaganda insisting on belief without any contradiction. A pattern emerges.

3.4.4 Propaganda: Effects

We have observed the human mind in the processes building up to making a self, how people think and noted the basics of how propaganda works and a few of the techniques it uses. One of the most important things to understand about propaganda is its basic function – to *propagate* a message to the emotions primarily but to a lesser extent to influence thought. The basic pattern here is,

propaganda > influence

Very well, but why care? What does it matter? Propaganda doesn't affect *me*. I just ignore it. It's annoying, yes, but it's not important. It's just words. It's only an irritant.

So say those who see what they see. But if we understand the basic intent of propaganda, to propagate, if we are at all awake, we observe that it is *everywhere*. It is impossible to escape.

Examples.

1) I hover my mouse over my Windows 11 taskbar and suddenly I see a news headline from the Times saying something about Boris Johnson wanting to send UK troops into the Ukraine. 2) I fire up a search for an Android

programming issue and suddenly there is Microsoft Edge full to the brim with pravda headlines, one of which tells me Israel has killed Hasan Nasrallah. 3) I load a video entitled 'Crazy Frog' up to YouTube, a silly animation backed by a music track it took two minutes to make – I upload this three times and each time below my own video I see a link to a recommended video that will tell me how RUSSIA HAS LOST THE UKRAINE (or words to that effect) along with a great big picture of 'Putler' himself and a charming illustration of rows of soldiers each with a red cross over his face.

Surely in a sane world you can't get there from here, can you? Mousehover to incitement to WWII? Tech problem to political murder? Crazy Frog going crazy to salivating at killing?

That is propagation on an unprecedented scale, and you will note that *each of these three unasked for messages is propaganda for the same thing*: the neon forever-war. This is not just 'propaganda', it is *focussed propaganda*. Clearly, whatever algorithms are causing *these particular messages* to be fired up are heavily loaded in their favour. You could call it **panaganda**⁵⁴.

These levels of intensely-focused propaganda messages cannot but transform the way a mass population sees the world. Note, *transform*. This is brainwashing a mediated mind without a hint of truth value. A mass mind; a mass of minds transformed.

The following sections examine these effects in more

⁵⁴ Particularly if you want to annoy a classicist grammar nazi. πάν- ; πᾶς < 'all, every'. Incidentally, my initial version of the term 'pantoganda' suggested to me a word **pentagonda**.

detail, a world turned to vericide, madness, truth turned into conspiracy, all to create a void.

1) Vericide

In the 1930's the French writer Georges Duhamel visited the US and wrote about his impressions of the place. At one point he discusses advertising and images and wonders if Americans will one day be dominated by their images. In the 1950's in his classic book 'The Hidden Persuaders', Vance Packard expressed a similar worry. Is advertising so powerful that one day it will take over reality itself? I suppose this is also what Herbert Marcuse was referring to in 'One-Dimensional Man' (1964) and Guy Debord in his late-1960's work 'Society of the Spectacle'. The I-D world and the 'spectacle' of Debord is an all-encompassing and artificial reality imposed by society. To be free, you must go beyond the single dimension (Marcuse) or see outside the 'spectacle' (Debord).

With the new propaganda, have we progressed even beyond this point? I think these writers worried about illusion replacing reality, but they were writing about societies that, for all their faults, were not *fundamentally* evil. Back then it was absurd to claim the US was *universally* bad.

What is new now is that the neoliberal and neoconservative movements that have become so powerful and now dominate the West are at least bad if not evil. Which puts truth where? In such a society, truth is a fundamental enemy. If this is so, are we facing what might be termed **vericide**: the necessary slaying of truth. The general and self-organising *spectacle* is long-gone. What has replaced it is a world with no truth value. Whereas the spectacle seems true, the illusion seems coherent, in a society that commits vericide that is no longer the case. There is no spectacle, no illusion. What is 'true' here is 'false' there. True today, false tomorrow. If it is convenient for something to be true, it is

true. Otherwise, it is false.

The rules-based order must be followed by Russia at all times, by Israel never. The government is committed to saving the environment and to fracking. Cutting red tape is an absolute priority and yet byzantine rules about the littlest things spring up everywhere. Communication and clarity is paramount yet by visiting the home page of the official London Olympics web site you are agreeing to a legal document that would print to maybe a thousand pages. Passionate declarations that help is always at hand is made by corporations to contact whom requires a three hour wait on the phone. Simplifying business processes means creating an impossible web of subcontracts. Likewise, expressions of corporate responsibility turn out to be an endless loop of hand-wringing by each subcontracted party. Greening means polluting. Cleaning means dirtying. Community means sink estates. Caring means grasping. Politicians working tirelessly for the people means ambitious public figures ‘partnering’ with private enterprise. Gifts and donations are tax dodges. Passionate speech is saying and meaning nothing (see now Barack Obama *idem*). Passion is acting. Belief is a cloak to be swapped out any time for a better one. Sport is cash. Fitness is an expensive hobby. Health is a chartered street. Happiness is purchased. Ideas are for sale. Manifestos are written with invisible ink. Promises are forgotten. Freedom is ruled by contract⁵⁵. All in all, the rules-based order is governed by those who create the rules it is based on. As a wise man once nearly said, *If nothing is true then everything is permitted*.

⁵⁵ A long’un, but I think interesting’un. When the Saudis caused a dramatic 65% fall in the price of oil in 2020, there was no corresponding cut in pump prices. It was carefully explained that working out the price of petrol was very very very complicated but carefully calculated looking five years or so ahead so prices simply could not be lowered just now. When the price of oil rises though, just watch the pump price jump up immediately.

This is vericide and we see it all around us, yet this vericide presents itself as a truth that cannot be contradicted. The propaganda term 'fake news' is now part of everyday language and pravda sources such as the BBC ('BBC Verify', really 'BBC Vericide') and Le Monde ('Les Décodeurs') have their 'fact checkers'. The pravda presents 'facts' as truth, in contrast to the 'conspiracy theorists' who speak against these. Thus 'fake news' is another layer in the vericide. The pravda merely presents a world without truth value as absolute truth and the verifiers have 'proved' it is true.

In the UK, the symbol of a world committing vericide is the HS2 project, likely to end up costing in the region of £100bn or more (current official guesstimates run to £80bn). Great swathes of land are being dug up in order to construct a railway line from just outside London all the way up to Birmingham. You can ask 'why', but there can be no answer, for there is no truth value to HS2. It just *is*. It is unanswerable as Gaza or the Ukraine.

2) Madness

For perhaps two years, I tried to understand Zionists. Not *Zionism*. Zionists. After a while I realised that reading stuff or learning stuff or knowing stuff or understanding stuff would lead nowhere. Of course, all that is important. It helps in understanding the world at large. You can understand *Zionism* in this way. But not *Zionists*.

Reading and learning and knowing and understanding belong to the world of reason. Zionism is best thought of as a cult. It is not just it *does*, it *must* reject reason. Reason would destroy it. Of course facts can be used to justify Zionism. But reason uses stones to build a path, cults to build a wall.

The blindness of Zionists was fascinating and absolute. The simplest and most basic of facts were invisible to them. The arguments constructed fantastical. For example, the Palestinian people, who exist, do not exist. That thought is

absurd in itself but then you see a Zionist argue it is true because *Palestinians can't pronounce their own name*. 'They' call it 'Filistin'. It is not the absurd argument; it is the unshakeable belief in it. It is widely believed and often put forward. *There are no Palestinians because the word is Filistin in Arabic*. The 1946 bombing of the King David Hotel, the British Mandate HQ, killed 91 people. Fact says it was committed by the Irgun terrorist group, but a Zionist will tell you that as an Irgun woman phoned to warn the British beforehand, *they* as good as did the deed. A Zionist will tell you plucky little Israel was formed after all the Arab states (I have seen this expanded into the entire Islamic world from Morocco to Indonesia!) ganged up and attacked the plucky Zionists who with brave hearts against overwhelming odds won back the land of the Israelites for its own native people. Fact points out there were no real 'Arab States' with powerful armies free of colonial control and that the Zionists militia numbers matched those of the attacking Arab League forces and that the militias were more battle-hardened than the enemy, more motivated, and moreover defending 'their' land. This was no certain victory, but the notion of vast hordes of Arabs being defeated by a tiny number of Zionists is absurd.

With Zionism, on and on it goes, these little myths. Pretty much any Zionist knows most or all of them. They are the stones to build the wall.

Studying the Zionists made me think about the nature of madness. To express things in the manner of someone who sees a thing without understanding it, it seemed they were obviously mad yet just as obviously *not* mad.

Notions of 'madness' are inadequate because they are incomplete. Madness can be seen as an antisocial delusion with no external form⁵⁶. If someone sees a pink elephant in

⁵⁶ See 2.1 'Sense and Memory'.

the sky, for example, then to them there is a pink elephant in the sky and you will find it hard to convince them otherwise. What your brain tells you is there *is indeed there*. The objective onlooker however knows there is no pink elephant. There is no external form. But what if someone believes there is a god living in a stone? Is this any different? If you saw someone chanting hymns to a stone it would be reasonable to conclude they were mad. What then about the communities who built Avebury? Were they mad? There are 'avenues' of pairs of stones still detectable in the 'Avebury complex'. These can only really be interpreted as representing gods and therefore it is likely the gods in some sense 'lived in them'. The difference between the lone hymnologist of today and the ancient communities is that the former is *antisocial* and the latter *social*. The belief of the modern is not communicated to anyone else, while the ancient community shared a common belief. But if the former is 'mad' aren't the latter as well? What we tend to think of madness focuses on antisocial and delusional beliefs. Reasonably so. But many social beliefs are at root based on delusions. Zionism is an example of this (along with many other beliefs). By expanding the definition of madness a little to include social delusions, Zionism falls into this type. It is a form of madness.

To illustrate this, here are various political beliefs defined according to their most basic values.

- Socialism is a communal form of economic production in which the profit motive is ignored.
- Anarchism is a society in which law and authority is replaced by free social interaction between individuals.
- Capitalism is an economic system involving the exchange of money from a buyer to a seller for the best rate of profit.

- Communism is a form of dictatorship in which the government attempts to steer society towards socialism.
- Democracy is a form of government that is run by or for the people.
- Zionism is a belief that wishes to restore the Jewish people to their appointed homeland of Israel, the land promised to them by G-d.

I think these are all fair definitions of each of these beliefs. How much delusion could be extracted from any one of them! How many delusional anarchists! How much delusion in the US belief in capitalism and the Soviet belief in communism! Delusion and belief go hand in hand. But note the difference. Zionism sticks out like a sore thumb. The first five beliefs *are not fundamentally delusional*, no matter how that is true of some of their true believers. They may be idealistic and they may even be unachievable. But that does not make them delusional.

But Zionism.

Jewish people are simply equated with Zionism. This has never been true, particularly in the early days of the movement. For example, religious leaders had a dogmatic view that the Diaspora was the will of God. To return was to defy the will of God. It was blasphemous.

Appointed homeland. The Biblical texts reveal a complex ethnic makeup in and around the Israelite region. A people called the Hurrians lived there (*Horites* in the Bible), and the Philistines. Hebrew is merely a dialect of the west-Semitic family of languages also spoken by most of the surrounding peoples: Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Phoenicians. The very name 'Israel' attests to an old-established worship of the great god El⁵⁷. It is likely the early Israelites worshipped

57 The name is an epithet of the Patriarch Jacob, whose epithet was

El, a figure who gradually merged with Yahweh. The traditions laid down in the Old Testament moreover attest to *Hebrews* as well as *Israelites*. The former group is well-attested in Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts and seems always to indicate nomadic peoples, but the precise nature of the Hebrews ('Apiru' or 'Habiru') is enigmatic perhaps because there was no precise character and the name referred to various nomadic groups. I could go on, but the idea that there ever was a 'pure' 'people' called 'the Jews' to whom God gave a precisely delineated parcel of land is delusional.

The inhabitants of the Roman province of Palestine who stayed put *must* on the whole be the *ancestors* of the villagers of Filistin, those inhabitants of the land before the Zionists came. Many Palestinians, in other words, *must be direct descendants of the very Israelites the Zionists claim to represent!*

What can we say about an ideology based around restoring the Israelites to a land inhabited by the Israelites if not that it is a form of madness?

I have concentrated on Zionism in this section because it is by observing this cult I reached my conclusions about what madness is. However, other ideologies becoming increasingly prevalent today are just as relevant. Here I will mention neoconservatism, as it is so central to this book. The neocons have 'great enemies' (Russia and China) and 'little enemies' (North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Hizbullah, Hamas, Qadhafi, Somalia, Yemen, Venezuela to list most of the major ones). The neocon's idea of great enemies is clearly based around older notions of the 'reds'. These notions are delusional. Each 'red state' magically merged into one single gigantic enemy: the USSR, China, Korea, Vietnam. Because these were 'reds' they were conceptually

'israel' (יִשְׂרָאֵל), the first element most plausibly related to 'שָׂרָה' *śarah* meaning 'to rule').

more or less identical. No thought, no understanding, existed about the historical relationship of China and Vietnam, of the overbearing culture of the Empire, or for that matter Vietnam's overbearing attitude to its 'subordinates'. Worse, China, Korea and Vietnam were 'asian'. Another indistinguishable bloc. If we consider that the term 'red' is a delusion we can see that the neocon view of Russia is the same as before without that particular label. The current story — repeated by many a NATO branch manager throughout Europe — is that Russia is planning to invade 'Europe'. This is delusional, dangerous and quite mad.

So then. The West is committing vericide and as a consequence slipping is to madness at an alarming rate all the while emitting a propaganda that poses as an absolute truth.

3) Truth-as-Conspiracy

Anyone trying to speak truth to power right now is liable to be called a conspiracy theorist. As well they might, because the control over information in the pravda is so great that the narrative is absolutely controlled and public opinion entirely guided. Putin launched an illegal and unprovoked attack on the Ukraine. FACT! You tell the brainwashed this is a US proxy war and they will call you Boris. FACT! The public narrative is sufficiently complete and coherent and free from internal contradictions it cannot be breached with the odd fact or two. These opposing facts will be unknown to the narrative, carefully excluded from it. Basic facts they may be, but being unknown to the brainwashed it will appear to them you invented them. You are obviously a conspiracy theorist.

Conspiracy theories are similar to crank theories. A good example of a crank theorist is Zecharia Stitchin with his planet of Nibiru. The Akkadian poem of creation *Enûma Eliš* says this:

Nibiru is Marduk's star he set in the heavens. Let him guide the stars, let him shepherd the gods like sheep.

Stitchin read texts like this and came to the only possible conclusion anyone could draw from them. Beyond Pluto there is a tenth planet⁵⁸ and it is called Nibiru. Its inhabitants are very advanced with a technology that hides their planet from mere earthlings. But once upon a time they came down from the skies into Mesopotamia and taught men the arts of civilisation.

Great minds crank alike. Take this Norse text from the *Grímnismál* (Odin's Lay):

Huginn ok Muninn
fljúga hverjan dag
Jörmungund yfir;
óumk ek of Hugin,
at hann aftr né komi-t,
þó sjámk meir of Munin.

[Odin says:] "Huginn and Muninn⁵⁹ fly every day over the earth. I fear for Huginn and yet more for Muninn that he will not come home."

This second crank concluded from the Norse myths that Odin was an alien. What you are reading in the above passage – again, no other conclusion is possible – is a description of two probe ships being sent out from Odin's spaceship.

However, try to disprove Stitchin's mad idea. You can't. These theories are invariably unlocked by an invisible key, in this case the undetectable planet Nibiru. How can you prove that something that doesn't exist doesn't exist? You can't. The old Norse poem tells us that 'Huginn and Muninn

⁵⁸ This was the 1970's when Pluto was still considered to be a planet.

⁵⁹ 'Thought' and 'Will'.

fly every day over the earth'. I double dare you to *prove* that Huginn and Muninn weren't small reconnaissance spaceships belonging to an almightily advanced civilisation. With a crank theory you are standing in the middle of nothing brandishing a something detector.

Cranks, conspiracists. The same nothing key. The question Who shot JFK? will be solved with reams of information about ballistics and timelines that add up to nothing. The mere fact that everything about his assassination leads to greater and greater doubt means that we simply do not know what really happened. The same with UFOs. The acronym does not mean 'alien spaceships', it means things in the sky that no one can explain. What this means is that, if UFOs exist, *we do not know what they are*. Enter the conspiracy theorists hot on the heels of the JFK theorists. These are trying to know what by definition cannot be known, attempting to turn a UFO into an IFO⁶⁰. Then there is the Fake Moon Landing squad. These offer up a variation in our theme, for they want to turn a known thing into an unknown thing.

JFK, UFO, FML. You can't disprove what they try to prove because you just can't. There is always that invisible key placed in the middle of a void. Even Sherlock Holmes couldn't solve a murder that wasn't a murder.

In a world of vericide that is the fate of those who try speaking truth to power. Crank, conspiracist.

Here is an example. Try saying this to the brainwashed: Barack Obama played a big part in creating ISIS. Well actually I'd warn against it because you'll never be taken seriously again.

| This is the US we're talking about here, man. And JFK
| Redux. 9/11 anybody? Never forgive never forget. Are

⁶⁰ Identified Flying Object.

you saying President Obama was behind 9/11? It sure sounds like it, man. Did he create Al Qaeda? Man, are you actually insane?

Why wouldn't the brainwashed think you actually insane, man? Just look at you.

- Nibiru is the tenth planet undetectable to us due to its advanced technology whose people came down to earth and created the Sumerian civilisation.
- Obama created ISIS.

You might want to spot the difference from the point of view of someone whose entire knowledge of the Middle East consists of carefully prefabricated propaganda.

If only you could tell them something like this. The CIA under Obama funnelled enough heavy weaponry into the Sunni areas of Syria to almost overthrow the Assad government. The arms mainly went to Jihadists who achieved strategic depth in adjacent Sunni areas to the north of an Iraq controlled by the US. The basic aim of a Jihadist is to create an Islamic State. So, Obama was giving heavy weaponry to Jihadists in Iraq who wanted to create an Islamic State and Jihadists in Syria who wanted to create an Islamic State and it was at this same time the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) had gotten enough weapons to proclaim – waddya know? an Islamic State.

Sheer Nibiru. You actually insane, man? Just look at you.

4) The Void

To envisage a *physical* nothing is perhaps impossible and maybe a physical nothing cannot exist. It is easy enough to envisage a mental void however. It is the default human condition. By default, we know nothing. We are a void who as our life progresses is filled up to a lesser or greater extent

with knowledge and understanding. However much we learn, though, we are condemned to remain largely in the void. The world is so large and there are so many things to know and understand, we can only fit the tiniest of fractions of the whole into our skull. Of most everything in the world — and its history — we know nothing.

The void is an appropriate final stop for this section. We acquire knowledge and understanding, but where from? For all of us, most of what we know is mediated. This is by no means necessarily a bad thing. The periodic table is mediated knowledge. If the source is honest, and we are willing and able to evaluate what we learn carefully, we are simply swimming in the pool of human knowledge and understanding.

But what if we read the news? What if we live in a world of vericide and madness ruled by people whose propaganda is absolute truth? What if that is the news? What is *everything* we know about the Ukraine and Gaza, say, is learned from the news? Propaganda in the middle of vericide and madness presented as unassailable truth? The result of that is that selling cake to raise money for Palestinians becomes a worse crime than a long-drawn out and carefully executed genocide.

What if we learn our truths from vericidal propaganda created by the insanely deluded? Surely, then we learn that selling cake is worse than genocide.

Is that not true and is that not frightening? If the human race is to survive, does it not have to do better? What is left if all is vericide and madness and propaganda?

3.4.5 Propaganda: Countering

How to fight this almighty force? Here are a few top tips.

First, modern propaganda ranges over a huge range of subjects most of which you will know nothing about. It is therefore essential to analyse what is being said in simple and general terms. When it comes to what is obviously power politics, for example, the question always to ask is *cui bono*? Who benefits? Take the Ukraine. The everyday issues are complex and confused. In all the chaos, there is no absolute good or evil or even good or bad. Russia is not the friend of the Ukraine. It is a larger and more powerful country and historically, as the name implies, the latter was simply the border of *Rossiya*. The Ukraine will always exist under an undeclared 'Monroe Doctrine' that means it lies within the Russian 'sphere of influence' and also that Russia will tend to exploit it in so far as it can. The people of the Ukraine have no reason to trust or love Russia. Cynicism and suspicion seem more appropriate. However, when it comes to the invasion and the subsequent war, if we ask *cui bono*, there is no reason to see that an invasion of its southern neighbour is in Russian interests given stable conditions, notwithstanding the fact that Russia has ended up occupying Russian-speaking provinces only. On the other hand, *cui bono* ticks all the boxes if we consider the aims of the necons and their cold warrior origins. Then bear in mind Europe and its NATO branch managers leading all the NATO states and there is a similarly unequivocal answer to *cui bono*. This is not for the good of Europe but it ticks the neocon box. So, *cui bono* cuts through all the crap to leave an *unambiguous* answer to the question of who benefits from the Ukraine situation and leads to the unequivocal conclusion that yes it is a proxy war of the US and both Europe and the Ukraine are its proxies. We can then ask the same question about

Taiwan and China and reach the same conclusions, only now we have found a *pattern*. Ukraine, meet Taiwan. Russia, meet China. We can also see the same neocon buildup: Europe, meet Australia and Japan. Given this, the notion that Russia is planning to *invade Europe* is beyond absurd. The idea that we can ask cui bono to a war in Europe and conclude this is in Russian interests is madness. We can say this is an **invisible proposition**. It is not worth answering, let alone asking. Cui bono a European war against Russia is again ‘no, Europe; yes, the neocons’.

A second line of defence is simply to be aware. Without awareness, you are condemned to be overwhelmed by the pravda. I think a simple but effective way of being aware involves three related steps:

1. observe ;
2. remember ;
3. connect ;

The first step here is the *sine qua non* you can’t do without. It *requires* finding alternative and trustworthy sources of information outside the pravda, these days most likely on the web. As the neocon bloodlust gets worse and the neoliberals get more sidelined on the one hand and on the other accommodate themselves to neoconservatism– as the world gets madder and more out of control in all this chaos – I find that ‘trustworthy’ is becoming an increasingly rare commodity because fewer and fewer people are able to follow what is going on as the facts on the ground alter from month to month. But it is what it is. You have to try to find good information. Simultaneously, I think you do need to look at the

pravda without getting sucked in to it. Often the headlines are all you need to read, together with a skim of the article itself if you need more detail about what the pravda is saying. You need to keep up with the pravda simply because although it is propaganda it often signals what the necons (or neoliberals to a lesser extent) are saying or doing (or saying what they are going to do). So, you observe what *is* going on via your trusted sites and interpret the propaganda via the pravda.

When you observe something, then remember it. It is essential to recall a decent amount of what you observe, though I think not the details so much, for they are transitory. It is the larger view that is particularly important. The price of oil on such and such a date is yesterday's papers, but that oil law in Iraq⁶¹ ought to be remembered. This is where step 3 comes into play. You observe and observe and observe and you remember. Now you connect the things you have observed and remembered. So observing a new 'oil law' in Iraq you recall all the talk about 'liberating' and 'terrorism' as the primary reasons for 'going in', not to mention the '45 minute' claim. Was why 'we' 'went in' for that or for oil? You observe the oil law in this context and sigh 'aha!'.

Here is a worked example.

- In 2011, NATO attacked Libya under the false

⁶¹For example. July 25, 2007: "Iraq's Parliament has approved a law privatizing the country's oil-refining sector. . . a step toward relinquishing government involvement in the refining sector . . . This is a law that will privatize the refining sector in Iraq and allow the private sector, whether it's local or international investments, to be able to invest in refining activities in Iraq, including building refineries," [Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani] said."

pretence that ‘Mad Dog’ Qadhafi was about to gang rape defenceless women. The attack decapitated the government and the country, leaving it in the hands of the usual gangsters, warlords and Jihadists. *Observe* this.

- Shortly after, there was a terrorist attack on a Tunisian beach near to the border with Libya. A Jihadist gunman coming from Libya sprayed bullets at the mostly British tourists sunbathing there. *Observe* this. *Remember* the NATO attack that you observed and its results. *Connect* the results to what you are now observing. Even if you don’t know the details, you *know* that NATO created a buzzing hive of Jihadists in Libya and you *know* the attacker was one of these and so you *know* that NATO is ultimately responsible for the attack. Now you read the pravda and its righteous rage at the attack and note it does not mention – there is no possibility it would ever mention – NATO or the chaos it caused.
- You read the pravda and you *know better than it*. You have observed, remembered and connected.
- It is a small victory to be sure, *but you have defeated the pravda!*

4. Organising

OPS VINCIT OMNIA

But they say again, that though the Principles be right, yet Common people are not of capacity enough to be made to understand them. I should be glad, that the Rich, and Potent Subjects of a Kingdome, or those that are accounted the most Learned, were no lesse incapable than they. But all men know, that the obstructions to this kind of doctrine, proceed not so much from the difficulty of the matter, as from the interest of them that are to learn. Potent men, digest hardly any thing that setteth up a Power to bridle their affections; and Learned men, any thing that discovereth their errours, and thereby lesseneth their Authority: whereas the Common-peoples minds, unlesse they be tainted with dependance on the Potent, or scribbled over with the opinions of their Doctors, are like clean paper, fit to receive whatsoever by Publique Authority shall be imprinted in them.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651 (II.30)

So, most people sleep and are invisibly manipulated and even those awoke *visibly* manipulated. In fact, as I noted, even those who wake live in a twilit world. The manipulation likely gets us all at some point.

Who though does all this manipulation? Of course, the answer is ‘power’. Propaganda is empowering. It at least deflects and defangs. What could do this more

effectively by calling genocide a charity, feeding the starving? Or a war, that is *of two sides*. Six of one and half a dozen of the other they used to say when they caught a bully attacking their victim, back in *them days* before PC. We don't have PC any more⁶² but we are still saying it, and what bully wouldn't to deflect and defang blame away from themselves? What bully wouldn't claim, if they thought to do so, they were helping their victim to get up off the ground out of the kindness of their heart?

In this chapter we are interested in the power behind the propaganda. Power is essentially organisation and beyond that it is politics, defined here as 'organised ideas'. The chapter attempts to define what politics is and how the accepted ideas about politics and politicians are becoming obsolete at an alarming rate. It then follows the development of organisation in human society from a local to a global level. Politics of course takes place within a society and how that society is organised determines the nature of politics. Arriving at a globalised world, the twin towers of neoliberalism and neoconservatism are introduced and analysed. These, in the modern world, represent empowerment. These are the two powers that matter. They are there – everywhere they are there – and yet both are invisible to most people, those who see what they see. These are the two powers and one of their most magical powers is the power to manipulate. To be everywhere yet invisible. To wage invisible wars (Libya, Syria, Yemen) and pluck the public purse strings invisibly. To be heard yet not speak. To rule without being seen to rule. To

⁶² Factually largely true; to right-wing primates it seems to rule the world (along with 'the muslims', of course).

hide behind the screen, the eminence gris charmed out of a hundred thousand or so voices whispering in unison.

Out of the 1960's counterculture there emerged a flood of 'post-' and 'neo' movements, of which two were neoliberalism⁶³ and neoconservatism.

Neoliberalism – both design and circumstance were at play here – rode on the coat-tails of globalisation and to a great extent shaped its form after 1980. After that date, globalisation is in many respects a neoliberal affair, a network of corporations loosely tied to increasingly marginal nation states. Neoconservatism is reshaping the world again, in a sense de-globalising it by dividing it into camps. The underlying pattern of this division seems to be 'the west vs the rest'. The network of corporations is in danger of losing out to a worldwide network of war economies. A fascistic⁶⁴ form a capitalism is being pushed aside by what are more or less 'new nazi' warmongers seemingly intent on maintaining US hegemony at all costs.

It is a testament to the failure of the left and the success of official propaganda (here silence has been golden) that few people have even *heard* of either term, let alone understand the sheer scale of their *existence*. Both are essentially monolithic in their politics. Neoliberalism has shoved aside any serious political opposition to it over its period at the peak of power. Yet most people still think of politics in traditional terms, based around political parties that

⁶³ Neoliberalism precedes the 1960's counterculture by some margin as a *counterculture*, but achieved power as part of the reaction to it.

⁶⁴ Or, just as good, bolshevik. If you prefer.

represent ‘the people’. In the US, the Democrats represent Liberals and the Republicans speak for Conservatives. Yet both are neoliberal parties and now both are full-on necon. Moreover, the flow of power the neo world has moved away from government and even the state. The traditional definition of politics is therefore rendered *meaningless*. It has a marginal relevance to the realities of power.

A primary task for any What is left counterculture is therefore to *get it right* vis-à-vis the neos. Define them properly. Define politics and power properly and clearly and above all *simply*. That done, *make people know*. Get leftists who hate ‘imperialism’ and ‘capitalism’ and big up ‘the workers’ and rightists who hate ‘big gummint’ – get these people to realise that *they hate the same thing expressed in different ways*. These hate the lion and love the tiger and those hate the tiger and love the lion – try make them all see that *they both will eat you if they can*.

4.1 Politicking

In the UK, politics is the BBC’s flagship programme ‘Question Time in which, facing a preselected studio audience who ask politicians⁶⁵ questions about the issues of the day (as defined by the media). This, many would say, is politics. There are political issues that are the concern of the politicians who ‘do’ politics. The natural home of these politicians is Parliament. Parliament is full of politicians. There the politics is done. ‘Question Time’ is a place where politicians stand before the public which can express

⁶⁵ And, these days, minor celebrities.

its opinions before them. This flagship programme is a perfect example of a thriving democracy in action, the public and its representatives together in one room, hammering things out together.

Whether these days many are quite so rejoiceful about 'Question Time', or if they ever were, is open to doubt. However, it is generally regarded as a 'political programme' and it illustrates a widely-held idea of what a politician does and what politics is.

To anyone interested in *What is left*, this idea is one of the first to reject. Of course, it is absurd to imagine that politics was ever magically confined to any parliament building with no outside influences, but once it was a useful simplification to think of politicians and politics and Parliament. If politics took place outside the building, nevertheless there was to be found its focal point. The structure PM > Cabinet > MP > Party had a real meaning.

The problem now is that the outside of the building is more important than the inside. In a globalised world, 'outside' extends outside the state itself. It is a very big place. European states are nowadays part of larger organisations like the EU and NATO.

Thinking of politicians and politics is nice and simple, for while the rest of us can get on with our lives, politicians can get on running the country. Everyone benefits.

If politicians no longer really 'do' politics this attitude becomes a real problem. The main aim of a political party these days is to get elected. Here you say, 'This is as it always was, what else do you expect a party to do?' That is true, but I was going to add – *and nothing else*. A new thing. If parties are election-

processing machines and politicians are cogs in that wheel, that mean politicians ‘do’ elections, not politics.

Which begs the question, ‘Who *does* ‘do’ politics?’, then ‘What then *is* politics and *where* did it go?

Politics (outside of this world of politicians) begins with people in the plural. One person, no politics. **Politics begins with two people, for politics is a clash of wills.**

A person can debate within themselves. Part of them wants to turn left into town, another part to turn right into the countryside, but this internal debate is not *political*. However, when one person wants to go left and the other go right, *that* is politics. They must come to a mutual decision, so **politics is a mutual decision to reach a common ground**. This is a significant advance in understanding our basic question, *What is left?* However we answer it, our answer involves politics: a mutual decision and a common ground.

How they decide which way to go is what defines different forms of politics.

- *Common Consent*. Whatever their own feelings, they freely agree to go left. (Here we find democracy, anarchism, etc.)
- *Guided Consent*. One persuades the other to go left. (Here we find Plato’s ‘Guardians’, bureaucracy, technocracy, etc)
- *Enforced Consent*. One forces the other to go left. (Here we find dictatorship and monarchy.)
- *Exchanged Consent*. One persuades the other to

go left on condition that next time they will go right. (Here we find faction.)

- *Misguided Consent*. One persuades the other to go left because they say it will make them happy. (Here we find propaganda.)
- *Purchased Consent*. One pays the other to go left. (Here we find corruption.)

This is **personal politics**. However, the politics that interests us in this book is **organised politics**.

4.2 Local to Global

Humans are a pack animal and have – a few solitaires apart – always lived in groups. The species is also unique to its planetary host in that it possesses *culture* as well as *instinct*. This culture in particular is characterised by ideas and technology and as these have expanded in scope, human culture has grown more and more complex and as this happens so does the nature of the **group**. Groups develop in complexity first at the local level (tribe to state) and are currently being defined at a global level ('globalisation'). If organised politics is essentially **organised ideas**, its nature – not its *fundamental* but its *pragmatic* nature – must change to adapt to this complexity.

4.2.1 Locally

Pretty much everyone in the world today, apart from the odd scientist in Antarctica, lives in a **state**. For this reason, pretty much everybody sees the state as a more or less natural thing. But it is not. Once there were no states and out of this nothing 1) the state

evolved and 2) everywhere was made into a state. As I write, the form of the state is evolving in the wake of globalisation and perhaps as a result even dissolving. These may be the last days of the state as we know it.

1) Tribe to Province

Our story of the state begins in Latium⁶⁶. This was a well-defined region in which the Latini **confederation** lived. To the north of Latium, a city named Rome was built. In its earliest days⁶⁷, Rome fought the neighbouring city of Veii and local hill **tribes** such as the Aequi and Volsci. But as Rome began to conquer, one of its innovations was to expand the idea of **citizenship** so that defeated peoples and cities were offered it at a limited level. Rome was, in effect, a sort of gang that could grow and grow as each conquest brought in new members. Another extraordinary innovation was the **province**. The first provinces, created during the war against Carthage, were Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. The peoples of these islands were foreign to not only the Romans but the other peoples of Italy, yet an inhabitant of a province was 'Roman' even if they were not a Roman citizen because their land was *Roman land*.

Under Rome then, both the notion of who was Roman and what was Roman land could be expanded indefinitely. A useful contrast can be made with early Ireland, a place of numerous tiny 'peoples' called *tuaths*. A 'tuath' was 'the people of a land'. Each tuath had a chief called a *ri* and one *ri* could attack and defeat another, becoming a 'great *ri*', that is to say a '*ri of ris*'. He did not, however, conquer the *land*. He was still *ri* only in his own tuath. But the tuath of the defeated *ri* was now subordinate to him. The contrast with

⁶⁶ Possibly 'the flatland'. Latin vocabulary supports this (*latus* 'wide') but modern philology casts doubt.

⁶⁷ Archaeologically mid-8th century BCE, legendarily 753 BCE.

Rome is instructive. In Ireland, a *ri* acquired a hierarchy (or '**lowerarchy**') of subordinates while Rome expanded in terms of both people and land. Rome did of course expand and it did so until North Africa, the Middle East and much of Europe had become a vast network of provinces – land become Roman land. In western Europe, the provinces gave the region its basic political structure. Rome fallen, they came under the control of barbarians speaking Germanic languages⁶⁸. It was these kings who had the task of reorganising the provinces in their own image.

2) Realm to State: France

In western Europe, the successor of the province was the **realm**. In this section we will examine how *Gallia* became *Francia* and then *France*.

The new realm was the kingdom of the Franks. *Francia* was created by Clovis (*Chlodovechus* 'renowned fighter', descendant of *Merevechus* of the same meaning), meaning that in its earliest days, France was essentially ruled by a conquering warlord and his allies who had defeated the Gothic and Burgundian warlords and *their* allies under whom the old 'Roman' elite muddled on as best they could. The north west — now called 'Britain'⁶⁹ — remained Celtic. The *Merovingian* kings effectively dissolved after a couple of centuries, to be replaced by the *Carolingians* descended from Charles Martel ('the hammer'). Under the Carolingians, a 'feudal' organisation began to take hold in northern France. Within this system, a hereditary aristocracy evolved based around the benefice or fief that was only enhanced under the succeeding *Capetian* dynasty. In this system, 'France' was the land of the king and his nobles. The nobles in those days

⁶⁸ The most successful of these were the Vandals, Goths, Burgundians, Langobards, Franks and Angles. Only the Franks and Angles stayed the course however.

⁶⁹ That is, Brittany. Its full title was 'little Britain' to contrast it with the 'great Britain' across the Channel.

were as a group more powerful than the king, but the king gave legitimacy to the system. The political system of this realm (< *royaume* 'land of the roi') was based around the king at the head of a hierarchy in which the land was no longer a tribal one. Even the highest most powerful baron was a *subject* of the king, even if the king was (and this happened in the latter stages of both the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties) a do-nothing figurehead.

From these feudal origins, Francia became its modern counterpart through the agency of its *rois*. Over time these gradually achieved dominance over both the land and its nobility. The following sections describe three key developments in this process.

A. France Becomes Romance

Rome never conquered the German-speaking tribes or made their lands into provinces. Apart from the North Sea coastal peoples ('*Ingaevones*') and northern tribes (the later 'Norse' together with the Goths and related peoples) it is more than a little true that the later 'Germany' is basically the same as the great group that called itself the *Suebi* ('free peoples'). The name 'German' is Roman⁷⁰. At the close of the Empire, there were on the one hand those 'Germans' who had conquered Roman lands and in north-central Europe the great mass of once-Suebian tribes. In France, the conquerors were the Franks but the result of the conquest was a Germanic elite ruling over a 'roman' population and facing an unassimilated German cultural area. Charlemagne assimilated the Germans by including them in the substantial empire⁷¹ he built

⁷⁰ It means 'the brothers' in Latin. But it was probably based on an earlier Germanic-language name *Garmani* ('spearmen' ?> 'warriors') which was in turn translation of a Celtic *Gaesatae* ('spearmen' > 'warriors, mercenaries' [source: Pausanias]). (*gar* / *gaisos* > 'spear'.)

⁷¹ King Charles was crowned Emperor in Rome on December 25, 800.

up. But he created the basic polity of continental Europe *not* by this union but by not creating a viable system of succession. The short-lived empire split into two. The west was now an increasingly romanceised kingdom; in the east, it was tribal regions bound together under an emperor. Francia found its identity in forgetting its Germanic origins.

B. Oil and Oc United

There was probably an ancient north-south divide in France. Before the Romans came, the confederation of the *Celtae* seems to be an essentially northern grouping, while in the south (in so far as we can name peoples at all) we find the *Aquitani*, *Iberians* and *Ligurians*. Just so, in early medieval France we find the *langue d'oïl* (from which modern standard French is descended) in the north and the *langue d'oc* (Occitan or Provençal) in the south. This Occitan region was remote from the north — home, of course, to the French kings — and that is in particular true of its culture. How could the king be said to be king of a remote region speaking a different language? This prob was solved by way of the crusading principle. Just as Jihadists today say that such or such a leader is 'not a Muslim', Pope Innocent III said the Cathars ('pure ones') of Occitan were not Christian. Just as a jihad is therefore urged, so was a crusade urged. It was not just the Cathars though, it was strongly to be doubted that even the Catholics down there were all that. Innocent, it was all he could do, therefore sent a sociopath named Simon de Montfort along with a crusading army to destroy the south and thereafter the south belonged to the North. The Occitan culture and language became marginalised. This uniting of north and south was another key to creating modern France.

C. French England and English France

The most complex key to the creation of France lies with the Vikings, or Northmen. Their town Dublin replaced the old sacral centre of Tara in Ireland, their destruction of the great English kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia led to the unification of England under Wessex, their weakening of the 'Pictish Nation' led to its disappearance and replacement with the Scots and their 'Alba'. In France, the effect was a truly long and winding road. In 911, say the chronicles, Rollo (*Hrolfr* > Rolf) gained from King Charles the Simple a dukedom in what was henceforth called Normandy ('land of the Northmen'). The Norman dukes seem to have been keen to ditch their barbarian origins, and so Rollo remains an obscure and distant character. The dukes were, they'll have you know, *French!* Which very much matters because Duke William the Bastard attacked England in 1066, killed its king and became king in his stead on Christmas Day of that same year. He became William 'the Conqueror'. This was not really the 'Norman Conquest' of tradition, for the Norman dukes had made it their task to make alliances with the 'native' nobility (Anjou, Blois, Poitiers, etc). The English nobility was effectively destroyed and replaced by a French-speaking realm headed only at first by a Norman duke. Henry I was the last Norman king, but the change to a dynasty from Anjou ('Angevin' or 'Plantagenet') for example was not a large one. However, under Henry II, who acquired the vast area of Aquitaine by his marriage to Eleanor, we find the curious case of the mere French king having as a vassal another king who possessed a very large part of France. Well, luck came through. Henry's sons Richard and especially the feckless John lost most of the English landholdings to the deeply unfeckless

Philippe Auguste, who is undoubtedly one of the founders of France. With Philippe, France was a complex mass of regions balancing the interests of the kings of England and France. Things unbalanced themselves though with the death of Charles IV. The son of Charles' sister Isabella and the main claimant to the throne of France just happened to be Edward III king of England. Although Isabella advocated for her son, the French nobility stood against him and invented the Salic 'Law' which 'proved' that female relatives were irrelevant to any throne-claiming and Philip of Valois was the rightful claimant. So it was said and so it was done and so it was war. The English-French king invaded France so he could be the French-English king as well and decimated the French defences. The English ruled France, Burgundy⁷² sided with the English and almost became a breakaway kingdom and at times the French king was himself almost ground into the dust. It is perhaps in the end *not* surprising that this war, which almost ended the realm of France, in the end *made it*. For the realm *survived*. The English could — from time to time — crush the French armies, but they could not subjugate such a large territory, especially after Burgundy came back into the French fold. To survive is all the French kings needed to do and time would sort out the rest. The English gradually became more marginal and less French. As the conflict drew to a close, England became self-consciously *English*. By the time of Agincourt, England was an entirely foreign and unwelcome presence in France, whether the long-dead Edward III's mother was the long-dead Charles IV's sister or not. The English were finally driven out and France was unequivocally *France*. The kings, too,

⁷² Then a very large strip of land stretching from the Rhône into the Netherlands.

were unequivocally *kings*. The prestige of the kings never really waned for a long time after, reaching of course a sunny peak with Louis Fourteenth. Louis finally sorted out the problem of the nobility by disarming and defanging them. Under Louis, the King was the Court and the Court the home of *his* nobility. The King was at the centre of the Court just as the Sun was at the centre of the cosmos: the King at his peak; the realm at its peak.

3) Parliament

A key component of the modern state is a **parliament**. If we take the UK as an example, we can observe that the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had their ‘council of wise men’ (*witan*) and the early Anglo-French kings their *curia regis* (‘king’s court’). During the early 13th century, the *curia* became known as a *parlement* (‘talking shop’). The story of this institution is one of ever-increasing sophistication and also independence from the monarch. One way of understanding this is to think of a move from a *sovereign* to the far more abstract idea of *sovereignty*. The King is a sovereign, parliament has sovereignty⁷³.

Some of the main components of the UK parliament are:

- *Operations*. Parliament’s operations are the business of **officials** and **departments** (from the earliest times these included the chancery and the exchequer). Officials may include *secretaries* (originally ‘keeper of secrets’). Historically, these could be set against the

⁷³ To understand the difference here, consider how the Magna Carta spelled out the principles that a sovereign was not above the law and that laws could only be passed by common consent. These principles do not apply to sovereignty, for a modern parliament is the laws it makes and once it has the common consent of an election it needs no more consent until the next one.

nobility by the monarch, for these officials were originally servants of the crown.

- *Architecture.* Parliament has a **place**, a **house** and a **calendar**. In these, the system is reified. If a state is an abstraction its parliament is its reality.
- *Responsibilities.* Among the main duties of Parliament are **legislation**, **diplomacy** and **finance**.
- *System.* Modern parliaments work according to a system of **parties**, **elections** and **franchise**. Those entitled to vote do so for parties in regular elections. MP's can be elected from all parties, but the party gaining the most overall votes forms a government. The franchise includes all adults and voting is private.
- *Leaders.* The leader of the governing party becomes **Prime Minister**, heading a **Cabinet** of **ministers**.

4) Theory

One of the most important bolsters of state development was the **theorists**. The *Treaty of Westphalia* (1648) is essentially a keystone of the theory of the state. It concluded the Thirty Years War (which did indeed begin in 1618), essentially a fight waged across Germany by foreign powers. The treaty emphasised that a state's borders are inviolable and that the state alone is responsible for what goes on inside them. For example, you cannot attack a state just because you don't like the fact that it is too Catholic. The theorists themselves (such as Bodin, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and Montesquieu) influenced the principles of the state's internal workings. Bodin, for example, stressed a definition of the state as a thing in itself, separate from its King or its government. He would say, for example, that

John Adams was a President, but the US was a state. Presidents come and go, the state remains. Locke added the abstraction of the **citizen**. Just as the state had its theoretical definition, so now did its citizens. The citizen belonged to the state and within it had rights and responsibilities. Theory and practice came together with the revolutions in France and America. Here the phrase popularised by Thomas Paine incessantly resounded: *The Rights of Man*. The citizen had **rights**. The new French republic in particular was the land of the *citoyen* ('male citizen'⁷⁴). As per the later Russian revolution, the forces of reaction immediately acted in concert against the revolutionaries but found themselves faced with an effective **citizen's army**. It was out of this force Napoleon built up a military force capable of winning an Empire.

5) Mass

This brings us to the **mass**. Given the profound changes in Europe brought on by the astonishing technological and scientific progress made in the 19th century and continuing into the next, the state ever-expanded. Road, rail, communication, institutions, and so on. A common media, a national education system, a standard language: these were what built the masses. During this period, there remained a considerable amount of regionalism that nevertheless formed a well-defined mass that followed the sinking of the Titanic, the saga of Edward and Mrs. Simpson, the Dreyfuss Case and the assassination of President McKinley. In one sense, the inhabitants of a state were its citizens, but equally collectively they were its mass.

6) Colonies etc

Finally, the newly-industrialised European states finessed

⁷⁴ The campaigner for the *citoyenne* Olympe de Gouges had her days ended under the blade of the guillotine.

their expansion across the globe, which was now covered with their **colonies**. From c. 1870 on, this was the time of a self-conscious **imperialism**. After WWII, however, the European states were unable to hold onto their colonies so that during the 1960's and 70's, the universal trend was for **independence** and each independent colony became a state. By 1980, the world was a patchwork of states, with parties and parliaments and citizens and masses. The paradox being that the species evolved to live in small hunter-gatherer groups now lived in a world that, no matter how everyday it remained, was in the end an alien one. Familiar on the surface, alien at core.

4.2.2 Globally

A globe such as the planet Earth can exist just as well as Bishop Berkley's tree without anyone observing it. Its gravity pinned trees and people down upon its surface long before the explorers explored it and the mappers mapped it. The thing is not the globe itself but that the people pinned on it are *aware* of what it is and where they are. Globalisation is broadly the transformation of this globe from a place of people to the people's place. One world one people the hippies said. No one believed them, but there is a truth in there somewhere. 'One world we all live in' is surely a statement beyond all doubt? Were the hippies so wrong?

1) Travel

In a broad sense, to live is to **travel**. Plants travel. A plant cannot move, but its species can. Take *grass*. If we conjure up the most generic image of the Earth we can think of, we might picture water, sand and grassland. Grass is almost everywhere on every landmass. But it was only during the

colder drier years of the Oligocene⁷⁵ and after that grassland took hold. Take *microbes*. The Black Death was the result of a microbe spreading all over Europe in double-quick time. Take *ants*. A study was made of ants along the Mediterranean coast from Italy all the way up to Portugal, a distance of just under 4000 miles. The study concluded that this was a single colony that had expanded. Take *monkeys*. We find monkeys in the Americas and in Africa. It is an open question as to how this is so, but in some sense the answer must be 'travel'. The basic law of travel in this general sense seems to be that it continues until it is stopped (say by a geographical barrier, or a hostile species). This principle is also true of hominins and humans. There is a sequence of hominins leaving Africa and as it were wandering the world. This pattern was followed about 40,000 BCE by members of *homo sapiens sapiens* who wandered into Europe to replace their predecessor *homo sapiens neanderthalensis*.

So it goes for *species*, but less so for *members* of species. For example, modern humans reached across Europe as a species, but its members settled down once they had found a home. The good people of Star Carr in Mesolithic Yorkshire were not wont to pop off for a visit to the Franchthi Cave in Mesolithic Greece. However, early human groups probably had trading networks and at least at times long-range social networks. For example, it is plausible (and perhaps probable) that the earliest farmer immigrants to Britain had a social network reaching up the east coast to the Orkneys, where a fascinating group of large-scale monuments (Rings of Brodgar, Maes Howe, etc) can still be seen. There is a type of pottery all along the coast called *Grooved Ware* by archaeologists that may be cultic in purpose⁷⁶. Then again, by the time of the early Bronze Age

⁷⁵ About 25 mya.

⁷⁶ Traces of henbane are found in some finds, probably cultic. Henbane is poisonous and hallucinogenic.

there are clear signs of a flourishing trade network extending from Greece to Britain. The good people of Wessex probably didn't whisk themselves off to the palace of Mycenae too often, but the metalworking techniques of the Rillaton gold cup (provenance, Cornwall) are comparable to those found in Mycenaean Greece. DNA proves that a man found buried during the flourishing time of Stonehenge near Amesbury (in Wiltshire) hailed from central Europe, a significant distance. It is likely that while most people were sedentary, there were traders and perhaps metalworkers who travelled over large distances.

2) Familiarity

If we move forward to Roman times, and post-Roman times, we find a very large area that is what we might define as **united in familiarity**. The Roman Empire effectively joined Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East into a functioning social and economic unit. Moreover, beyond Persia lay India and beyond that China. The Turko-Mongol nomads, beginning with the Huns⁷⁷, joined up an even greater area. The two Silk Roads went from China 1) west into Russia and 2) south west into central Asia and Mesopotamia, another joining-up⁷⁸. Chingis Khan was another joiner-upper: his great Mongol-led confederation went south into China, south-west into said central Asia and Mesopotamia (Baghdad sacked, hashishin [> assassin] sect decimated), and west into Europe (Rus destroyed and reduced to tribute-paying). The crusades, too, joined up western Europe and Mesopotamia (paper, gunpowder, zero-based numeric notation, etc).

⁷⁷ As they were known in the west, probably the Xiongnu of Chinese writings, though this is debated.

⁷⁸ Marco Polo travelled along one of these and famously wrote up an account of his travels.

3) Exploring

This was Europe, then, at the time of the first **explorers** in the 15th century. This was a world united in familiarity that consisted of Europe, Russia, Turkey (extending into eastern Europe), Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, Arabia, Egypt, Abyssinia and North Africa. The west, moreover, was united under the vague but real concept of (Catholic, it goes without saying) 'Christendom'. Although this is a substantial area, it drifted off into the unknown along the coast of west Africa.

The 'first explorer' was Henry the Navigator, prince of Portugal. He participated in the taking of Ceuta (1415), a strategic town close by the Pillars of Hercules, and from there launched a series of expeditions in the Atlantic-capable *caravel* ship. First Madeira, then the Azores and more significantly the unexplored coast beyond Cape Bojador where be monsters, so they said. Henry's navigations are important because it was out of them the drive to explore evolved. The Portuguese were soon joined by the Spanish and Dutch and after a very short while the English. The first inevitable development was that the African coast was soon explored and from there paths were found into the Far East (as it became known). What was discovered was soon, of course, mapped. The second much less inevitable development was that ships set sail into what must have seemed possibly the edge of the world, far off into the Atlantic itself. What drove *that* exploration was the idea that, if the world was a globe, it must wrap round itself, as it were. Far over in the east lay India, along the well-trodden Silk Road. It was a good bet, then, that India was also to be found over the other side of the Atlantic. A wrong bet if we take it literally, but land there was and in a wider sense the winnings surpassed anyone's dreams.

4) Conquering

The Spanish reached the Caribbean and central America in the form of the notorious *conquistadors*. Here, Cortés and his tiny band of men and horses (later joined by another tiny band of men and horses) encountered and defeated the imperial Aztecs. Here we see the repeated phenomenon of (unintended) biowarfare: the Americans had no resistance to European bugs, such as smallpox. Europeans met with Americans; Americans died in large numbers. The siege of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital, was greatly aided by the fact that many of its inhabitants were incapacitated by European-introduced plagues.

The Inca empire of Peru, based on its capital Cuzco, met with a similar fate at the hands of Francisco Pizarro and his merry men. The conquistadors, albeit in an extreme way, exemplify the European world-view. Wherever they went, the Europeans found people who were, for a start, *not Christian*. Because to them their religion was an absolute truth to deny a jot of which was abominable heresy, natives who had never even heard of Jesus Christ were beyond the pale in their arrogant and arrant errancy. Then there was the wealth, which the Aztecs and Incas had lots of. So Aztec culture? Inca culture? Such a thing was not even recognised to exist by the conquistadors, who nevertheless feasted their eyes on these empires' riches. The very symbol of this is Pizarro's annihilation of the entire Inca cultural capital in hellish bonfires of destruction. What was worth nothing was flushed away, while gold objects and suchlike were melted down into ingots. The Incas and Aztec were converted into the True Faith and enslaved into serfdom.

The English perhaps lucked out the most, for they made their mark on America, where there were no empires, just endless tribes all the way to the Pacific, which at length they reached and settled. The Far East was also productive and here too colonies were planted. Macao (Portugal), Hong

Kong and Bengal (England), the 'East Indies' (the Dutch) and Indo-China (the French). This was more a place of politicking than conquisting, but by this process the European presence gradually grew. The English in Bengal provide the best example. This foothold into India involved the English with local politics, including relations with the ailing Mogul Empire, but also with French and Dutch footholds. The English won these battles, but in doing so became more and more involved in India. The Moguls fell to the English; the English were now faced with the enemies and rivals of the Moguls. The great Raj was created via this progress. Like Rome long ago, the English were faced with enemies that were defeated until all India belonged to them. Same in America, but here were pioneers facing 'natives'. Because the 'natives' were unable to resist the superior organisation of the pioneers, one by one each tribe (or confederation) fell to them. All the way to the manifestly destined Pacific coast.

5) Imperialising

Following the explorers came **Imperialism**. After about 1870, and the 'Scramble for Africa', this came with a capital 'I'. But the 19th century was in general a time of consolidating and defining European empires. The French were especially involved with Algeria (1830, on) and Indo-China (Cambodia and Cochin China, 1860's), the British had the Caribbean, India, Canada and Australia (having of course lost America), Dutch control over the East Indies was maintained, and Portugal and Spain had, *pace* the Monroe Doctrine, Central and South America, Cuba and the Philippines. In all these places, the idea had developed that European states had a *right* to rule **subject peoples**. The self-righteousness of the holders of the one true faith was increasingly shoved aside at this point by the equally self-righteous belief in a cultural superiority largely based upon an undoubted technological superiority. European states

certainly *could* and this led to a belief that they *should*.

The early 19th century was therefore an incubation period for the outbreak of Imperialism (capital 'I'), the 'scramble' rationalised and refined by the Berlin Conference of 1884-5. As an example of the issues that lay behind the scramble, we can observe West Africa. Here, the French had a focus on the west coast along the Rivers Senegal but also from the north in Algeria (and also Morocco and Tunisia). The subjugation of Algeria was difficult (not to mention brutal), usefully comparable to the lengthy Roman subjugation of Hispania. Once achieved, however, thoughts turned to an ambitious plan. If West Africa were to be 'gained', it could be not only joined up to Algeria (and Morocco and Tunisia) but French expansion could continue to the Nile and so north ultimately into Egypt. The British, meanwhile, took control of Egypt in 1882 and had managed to find routes inland from the maze that is the Niger Delta. So British gunboats began to proceed up the river, making the usual farcical contracts as they went — and in this way Nigeria was born. The British, in control of Egypt, naturally found a pretext to take control of the land to the south known as *al bilad as-sūdān* ('the land of the Black people' > The Soudan > Sudan). The French and the British plans, needless to say, were hardly compatible. These conflicting ambitions came to a head with the drama (or farce) at **Fashoda** on the Upper Nile, where a French military man with a French flag came face to face with a British military man with a British flag, both of whom were there to plant their

Fashoda

It is as if this is the navel of the world
Like Delphi, like Uisnech, like Jerusalem
The fingers are all on the trigger of a gun
And each man, his heart is upon his flag
After the voices are raised will bullets fly?
Each party is keeping all its plans to itself
They've come a long way so far from home
To a place where a flag is all there can be
And shadows harden where there is no rain
These little ants that struggle for their grain
Of dust hold in their hands the shape of fate

treasure into the soil and claim the land for their country. In the end, after a bit of staring and pondering, they both decided war was not for the best — best leave that to their governments, who also thought war was not for the best — and the crisis was averted. Fashoda nevertheless shows the nature of the rivalries that were one of the driving forces of Imperialism. In the Far East, the French in the 1890's created French Indo-China. To their 'protectorates' of Cochinchina and Cambodia, they added Laos, Annam and Tonkin. The modern term I suppose might be termed a 'bundle' or 'package'. Cochinchina, Annam and Tonkin themselves became a bundle called Vietnam. Germany too was now a competitor and took part in the scramble. Namibia, Rwanda and Burundi were 'theirs' (though handed over to France and Britain after WWI). Even the US became Imperialist, in Cuba and the Philippines (where it fought is first 'gooks' and elbowed the Spanish aside).

The conclusion of the process belongs to the post-war period. WWI meant the fall of the Ottoman Empire, but it also led to a British takeover of the Middle East (assisted by France as a junior partner). Here was no Imperialism (capital 'I', and no longer a buzzword) but **indirect rule** in the form of 'mandates'. How these worked can be seen in the following example. Under the Ottomans, we can think in terms of *Mesopotamia*: to the west and along the Mediterranean coast we find *Palestine*, *Lebanon* and *Syria* and to the east Baghdad along the Tigris and Euphrates down to the Persian Gulf and in between these and stretching down the Arabian Peninsula were the Bedouin *tribes*.

During the war, with Britain based in Egypt, much thought was given as to how to destabilise the Ottomans, most of which was focused on the recent phenomenon of Arab nationalism. This nationalism was, like so many others, somewhat contrived. *In strictu sensu*, 'Arab' meant 'Bedouin', but the nationalists more or less transferred the sense of it to Egyptians and Syrians, the two main centres of the new

nationalism. The British soon fixed their eyes on Mecca, which they misunderstood to be the Rome of Islam. An important figure in Islamic culture was indeed the *sharif* of Mecca, for he oversaw the various official and unofficial pilgrimages to the city. At this time the sharif was Hussein, of the *Hashemite* dynasty. If Mecca was Rome, reasoned the British Arab experts, Hussein must be the Pope, so they tried to induce Hussein to make the call for 'the Arabs' to arise. When the inducing became increasingly fruitless, the British turned to the Bedouin, in particular the dashing representative of the ibn Sauds, Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman as-Saud.

That's the necessary background details to the post-war outcome.

The backing of the ibn Sauds led to most of the Arab Peninsular being drawn into the ibn Saud orbit, a kingdom being proclaimed in 1932⁷⁹. Just to the north, it was Mesopotamia that was the land of the **mandates**. Baghdad and the Bedouin lands north of the new Saudi territory became 'Iraq', named after Lower Mesopotamia ('*Irāq Arabī*'). In the Levant, the French were given Syria (which they soon split into Lebanon and what is now modern Syria). Palestine was given the gift of hosting a 'Jewish homeland' by Lloyd George and other converts to Zionism (a Home Office fad largely opposed by the Arab Office and those charged with actually running Palestine). Faisal, son of Hussein the sharif of Mecca, was meanwhile causing problems, for he had allied with Arab nationalists and

⁷⁹ When listening to talk about the ibn Sauds and the Kingdom of Saudia Arabia it is always wise to remember that the Bedouin had no kings and that the Arabic words for 'king' are borrowed from other languages (such as *malik* from Aramaic). The very name of the Saudi state betrays its artificiality. Israel and Saudi Arabia neatly bookend the modern Middle East, a contrived 'Jewish State' and an equally contrived 'Arab State'.

declared himself King⁸⁰ in Damascus. This, it turned out, was easily sorted. Faisal was simply transferred to Iraq and made King there⁸¹. His brother Abdullah, meanwhile, was gifted the throne⁸² of Transjordan, newly-created just across the river from Palestine. Various other minor regions were already in the pocket of Britain: Aden (in Yemen), Oman, the Trucial States⁸³ and Kuwait (under the as-Sabah family planted there by Britain). Even the internal politics here was determined by Britain. In Iraq, the minority Sunni were essentially put in charge (a situation that continued up to the time of Saddam), besides which the three-way division between Kurd and Sunni and Shia Arab was always going to work well for divide-and-rule. This is post-Imperialism but textbook *imperialism*.

There were economic and political causes for Imperialism and these were undoubtedly what made it what it was, but underlying these were attitudes and assumptions that shaped how it worked out in practice. The core attitude provides the main lesson to be drawn here from imperialism (capital 'I' or otherwise): *the west is the best and the rest don't matter*.

6) Colonialising

The result of imperialism was a vast network of territories that had to be controlled and exploited sufficiently to pay their way. This can be called **colonialism**. For example, Algeria was invaded and then pacified and stabilised and *then and only then* could it become a colony. But this colony, though it was similar in some ways to a Roman province (just as Gaul belonged to Rome, Algeria belonged to France),

⁸⁰ Another king!

⁸¹ And another! (Albeit the same man.)

⁸² Oh, and just one more!

⁸³ That is, the Gulf states such as Bahrain and Qatar who had signed treaties — 'truces' — with Britain.

the similarities only go so far. The Roman Empire was one place and all in it was Roman. Illyricum, Hispania, Italia, Gallia, Britannia, etc: all Roman, all part of Rome. Gauls and Celtiberians and Illyrians were to become Roman (and, indeed, after not so long in the Empire's history, full citizenship was granted to all men, so a man from Lugdunum or Contrebia Belaisca or Epidamnus were as Roman as a man from the city itself). The main aim of France was to have Algeria *French* in the sense that *colons* from the home country would be 'planted' there in sufficient numbers to achieve that goal. In *Indochine* there were few Frenchmen and no intention to make the colony French. There, it was a matter of resources and sucking whatever could be sucked from the land and carting it back to France. Here it is almost as if the *land* belonged to France and the natives belonged to the land. In other words, the natives were simply there to work the land belonging to the Empire.

7) Post-colonial

The next stage of globalisation came in the 1960's and 70's with the **liberation movements**. After WWII, the old order collapsed and the colonies fell, one by one. For Britain, it was Palestine, India, Malaya, Kenya; France lost direct control of West Africa, Indochine and Algeria. This happened everywhere and everywhere it happened *a colony became a state*. The result being a world of states.

The final stage, at least as I write this, is the development of **global organisations**. This includes criminals, businesses, institutions (IMF, WHO, World Bank etc), think-tanks, NGO's, and so on. These have developed in tandem with huge advances in technology that enhance communication and travel. Internetworked computers (especially The Internet) in particular make it easy for money to be shoved about the globe, and instantly. These organisations cut across state boundaries, leading to the conclusion that the days of the state are numbered. Or at least — and this is an

observable fact — there is a balance of power between the state and the globe, and it is unclear if the state is winning or even wants to win.

Which is precisely the world of neoliberalism, or rather the world recreated in the neoliberal image.

4.3 Neoliberalism

A fable. There you stand, before the Wheel of Perpetual Motion. What power and beauty lie within it! They used to believe the sun was a wheel. This wheel shines like the sun. It forms a perfect circle whose spokes spin in a hallucinatory blur. The Wheel of Perpetual Motion has been turning since the beginning of time and it will no doubt turn forever. But what is it made of? You gather the instruments that let you see and you see the very atoms of the wheel. Astonished, you realise each atom is a human being twisting and turning in an effort to work the wheel that cannot stop. You put aside your instruments and set yourself down to kneel. ‘O wheel of motion! let you run forever and ever and in your perfect simplicity let you transcend us all’ you cry, the twisted atoms as quickly forgotten as flies in a web.

What is neoliberalism? To most neoliberals it is the Wheel of Perpetual Motion as in my fable. I am not suggesting neoliberals kneel down to some sort wheel, notwithstanding perpetual motion machines have been proved to contradict the laws of physics. What I mean is if you think of the economy as some kind of transcendent force whirring away day and night forever, that seems to be a good match to how neoliberalism sees the world in the abstract. It is this thing you can never see generating profit and growth. Men and women do not exist; they are mere atoms in this unseen thing – this iconscious thing ‘the economy’. A news story a few years back lamented the billions of pounds lost each year through fake sickies. Do you see the machine you can’t see in that story? Each sickie is a man or a

woman, the atoms in the machine. Do these human beings exist in the ‘billions’ the story is worried about? We are all of us, in the neoliberal world, a dot in the matrix of dollars – trillions? a quadrillion? does anyone even vaguely know? – that makes up the wheel. The neoliberals, then, in a sense do kneel before the wheel that entrances them. Individual human weaknesses – illness, even death – are unthinkable to them because the wheel is the wheel whatever atoms come and go. Do you mourn for the death of a cell that once was part of you? Do the neoliberals mourn the loss of an atom? The wheel is the quadrillion not the atom. Neoliberalism is the wheel. If you can’t go on, the wheel must go on.

What is neoliberalism, outside of fable? The obvious answer is that it is a new kind of liberalism. An answer that is almost meaningless, because after all, *What is liberalism?* The answer to that second question has two obvious levels: 1) there is liberal economics⁸⁴ and 2) there is social liberalism⁸⁵. At which point we might simply ask, *What’s in a name?* For in my opinion the key to understanding neoliberalism is that it is neither new nor liberal. Even the name itself has a distinctly Orwellian ring to it.

The starting point for an understanding of neoliberalism is to understand the origins of the United States and the intentions of the Founding Fathers. Two groups, the **democratic** and **federalist** factions, were competing to create the founding principles of the now-independent America⁸⁶. The democrats envisaged the US as a nation of

⁸⁴ *Laissez faire*, the free market and all that.

⁸⁵ Liberal education, liberal values, valuing liberty, etc.

⁸⁶ Which, it should be remembered, at that time consisted of the east coast states only.

smallholder farmers and in their view government ought to be localised and the central government as limited as possible, leaving everyday government to local men who represented the local community. Government was the domain of the **people**. The federalists, on the other hand, believed it was the **economy**, not the people, that needed to be the focus of government. They saw the US in terms of business, not farms. Government must, they believed, prioritise the economy — **business** — before all else. It was not for the people, who had to be kept as far away as possible from those who ran the country. The federal government had to be strong and located in a (yet to be built) capital. The President must have great powers. Not the foolish people, but a set of wise guardians — technocrats, bankers, businessmen, traders — must rule. Business and government are not different things but two different ways of saying the same thing. **Government is Business.**

And the federalists won. The federal government and the President had substantial powers and voter constituencies were gigantic, making the politicians who campaigned in them remote and, after being elected into power, gigantic figures in comparison to the mere citizen. This is essentially what neoliberalism is. It is certainly *not* a belief in the ‘free market’. Although it can be argued that placing great importance on the economy is something any government should do, this misses the merge and transform propaganda here. For when we say ‘the economy’ we mean in everyday existence ‘business’ and when we say *that* we mean ‘big business’. Huge corporations. So, in the world of neoliberalism, **Government is Corporations.**

A formal name for this ideology and in fact mode of government might be: **oikocracy**⁸⁷.

Then there is 'liberalism'. In the 1960's and 70's, liberating (if not **liberation**) movements were everywhere. This was social liberalism, firmly grounded in this or that notion of **freedom**. These movements were, generally-speaking, **popular**. They came from actual people and flourished among actual people. They were not **populist**, fads and ideas and movements created from 'up above' (see Methodism, UKIP, or The Sun or The Daily Mail, or reality TV). These *popular* ideas and movements were therefore by definition *inclusive*. In this social liberalism, the idea was that you *liberated yourself* from the old values. The name of the 'Women's Liberation Movement' says it all⁸⁸.

But that is not the tradition neoliberals follow. *That* begins with the earliest Indo-European-speaking people, probably represented by the archaeological **Yamnaya** culture complex (3300–2600) located in the Pontic-Caspian steppe lands. The Yamnaya people had a hierarchical society at the head of which was the chief and the priest. One upheld the laws of the cosmos and the other conducted the rituals and ceremonies that enabled these laws. The thing that bound the Yamnaya tribes together was these rituals. These defined the Yamnaya people in particular against those who did *not* perform them. The Yamnaya elites had a term for themselves, the **arya** or 'free men'. In the Germanic languages we find the

⁸⁷ To be pronounced *ek-ocracy*, and oikocrat as *echo-crat*. However, *oik-o-crat* is I think an amusing alternative. Derived from Greek *oikos* ('settlement, house, room'), like *eco-nomy*.

⁸⁸ In France, the MLF or 'Mouvement Liberation des Femmes'.

words **free**, **friend** and **frea** ('lord'). A 'frea' ('lord') is 'one who is free' and 'friends' are 'the free men' (or 'lords'). The *arya* is at once *frea* and *friend*.

So, 'free'; so, 'liber' (Latin for 'free'). So, the liberal, a term that began to be used in the early 19th century. Liberal men were *by definition* elite men. Liberal men were *by definition* not from the servile classes. A liberal man was not a *wage earner*. Historically, wage earners were classified as *servants*, a word deriving from *servus* ('slave') and thereby related to *serf*. A liberal man was not a slave or a serf. Liberal men had a liberal education (a bit of Virgil and Horace and a little knowledge of the Battles of Trasimene and Agincourt). Did servile men have an education? Was the Pope a musliman? A liberal man was free because he was above the servile man. In fact, the liberal man *required* the servile man to define himself as 'free' just as the earlier 'friends' and 'aryans' did.

The contrast with the leftist liberating ideas of the 60's and 70's is glaring and blindingly so. These ideas were inclusive. The liberal man is exclusive. His freedom is not universal (by definition!) but peculiar to him and his chums. Which is a good way to conceptualise neoliberalism: chums in charge. Networks of networks of incorporated chums. The servile classes have been replaced by **ordinaries**. If you watch the 'news' with the sound down, you should easily spot who is a chum and who is an ordinary. There are many avatars of the ordinary in older films and television: the working-class person, the northerner, the rustic, the highlander, the Irish, and so forth. These were not people but depictions of people by people who did not know what they were

depicting. ‘Paint me a sparn, which by the way looks a lot like a fish.’ Substitute ‘northerner’ for ‘sparn’ and you get the picture, as it were. To a chum, ordinaries are sparns.

Neoliberalism is a world increasingly divided into VIP⁸⁹s and VUP⁹⁰s. One way of expressing this is that ‘democracy’ is literally being split in two: **the demos and the cratos have been split**. The new normal is a cloudcuckooland of VIPs looking down on the VUPs, the chums on the ordinaries, the cratos on the demos. The oikocracy, looked at from a different angle, is therefore a **chumarchy**⁹¹ (informal) or a **socarchy**⁹² (formal).

Neoliberalism is not liberal in the liberating sense. In fact, it is inherently authoritarian, built as it is around the body of the corporation, the new spiritual home of the chum. Any corporation is *hierarchical* and *organised* and *powerful*. It is not, and does not see itself as being, a democracy. The people who belong to it are resources, not citizens. It exists for itself (and the chums at the top of the hierarchy), not for its resources and certainly not anyone outside its ‘borders’. The principles of the corporation are inevitably those of neoliberalism. A world dominated by corporate bodies beholden to a single ideology is moreover not merely authoritarian but potentially totalitarian. Neoliberalism can be thought of a simultaneously being a mutated form of both fascism and Bolshevism. Neoliberals are not fascists or

⁸⁹ Very Important Person.

⁹⁰ Very Unimportant Person.

⁹¹ ‘Chumarchy In The UK’, anyone?

⁹² Latin *socius* ‘ally, pal’.

Bolshevists but they are like them at core. In both fascism and Bolshevism, the Party represents the people and therefore it is just and right that it governs the state. The people cannot be against itself, so no one can be against the Party that represents the people⁹³, so it was said. With neoliberalism, as we have seen, 'the people' is displaced by 'the economy', which in practice equates to 'the big corporation'. The Bolshevik 'worker' is thus replaced by the capitalist 'business'. Although I find the phrase '**bolshevik capitalism**' a more subversive label, I also like the term 'quasi-nazism' or **quazism** which is also very powerful (and snappier). Neoliberals are quazis⁹⁴.

Wal-Mart, a company with a revenue larger than any other in the world, bets on its workers dying, taking out life insurance policies on its 350,000 shop-floor workers without their knowledge or approval. When one of them dies, Wal-Mart claims on the policy. Not a cent of the payout, which sometimes runs to a \$1m (£620,000) or more, goes to the family of the dead worker, often struggling with expensive funeral bills. Wal-Mart keeps the lot. If a worker dies, the company profits.

Perhaps the earliest detectable glimmerings of neoliberalism date from the time of FDR's **New Deal**. That is to say, its origins lie firmly in a counterculture. I have argued above that

⁹³ Bolshevism has a little twist to this, as it claims to represent the 'worker'. However, as it more or less equates 'the people' with 'the worker', the underlying idea is more or less the same.

⁹⁴ This term, it should be made clear, is specifically saying that neoliberals are *not* nazis, which they are not.

neoliberalism is in the end merely the ideology that won out in the federalists' victory in the battle to determine the path the US was going to take. Of course, after the time of the Founding Fathers there were many unforeseen developments both in the world and in the US. A sort of populist mass politics was introduced by Andrew Jackson in the 1830's and Theo Roosevelt, conservative to the core as he was, launched a campaign to 'bust the trusts'⁹⁵. On the whole though, the structure devised by the federalists held up and the US remained as it was, ruled by the 'east coast elite' in Washington. The New Deal, hardly radical and in fact clasped cleanly to common sense, was a serious affront to what I have called the oikocracy. As heretical to it as Galileo to the church way back when. *It took money out of the grasp of private profit*. To an oikocrat, that is *theft*.

“ALL PUBLIC OWNERSHIP IS THEFT!”

So they believe. There was no very effective business opposition to the New Deal and Roosevelt could not be stopped. But there was a certain amount of organisation against it by big business, the potential beginning of a counterculture. There was a problem noted.

The official beginning of the counterculture is usually dated to 1947, with a meeting of the **Mont Pelerin Society**. From this acorn, many would claim, the neoliberal oak tree grew. This meeting indicates the nature of the counterculture, which was neither

⁹⁵ Roosevelt, though, like the Gracchus brothers in Rome before him, was in fact trying to save the system he believed the trusts were in the process of destroying. Jackson meanwhile was a paid up member of the elite who had no interest in moving against 'the system'.

popular nor populist. It hid itself in the background, a real *eminence gris* gradually gathering up influence and gaining followers. An early centre of influence was the **Chicago Boys** associated with the conservative university there and especially the figure of **Milton Friedman**, whose charismatic personality made him a celebrity and a leading asset to the mainly underground movement. In the background, though, the movement had the enormous advantage of firm support from big business and big finance.

One of the horrors the oikocrats had to face after WWII was the growth of **Keynesianism** and **social democracy**.

Maynard Keynes was a true infidel. He had no time for socialism and he supported capitalism, but. What he did not like was finance let loose (especially international finance via which money leaks out of the state beyond the control of government). Nor did he think basic utilities like water and electricity should be open for profit. Both finance and investment should therefore be fenced in. Control of the money supply ought to be a priority for governments.

The other heresy was social democracy. Marx had defined socialism (in those days for many a synonym for communism) as an international thing. The cause of the worker was the same everywhere in these early days of industrial capitalism. Capitalism knew no borders, so neither should socialism. Moreover, Marx's analysis was built around a model of the capitalist who owns the factory and the worker he employs. Via 'surplus value', the capitalist (or rather capitalism) exploits the worker. Marx therefore

recommended that, as the capitalist is inessential to the running of the factory, a better means of production would be a worker-owned place without the surplus value being creamed off. This leads to the socialism that Marx dreamed of, an industrialised and international network of worker-owned factories. This is why, this network in place, the state itself would 'wither away'. Socialism was not only international, it saw governments and parliaments as an irrelevancy. Social democracy was therefore what socialism was not. It believed in parliament and all the panoply of its politics and it therefore concerned itself with national affairs. Of course, this meant that its socialism was watered down and pragmatic, but even this is heretical in oikocratic terms.

Worse, after WWII the heresies became a part of politics, for example in the UK. It will be noted that Keynesianism and social democracy are eminently compatible ideas. Both becoming part and parcel of government policies, it is best to think of the former being incorporated into the latter. Under social democracy, the idea that all public ownership is theft shifted further and further away, much to the horror of the oikocrats. Moreover, during those heady days of the 60's and 70's a *New Left* developed. There was ecology, anti-consumerism, anti-capitalism — conspicuous opting out vs conspicuous consumption. What to do?

US business certainly organised⁹⁶ and at this time a number of right-wing think-tanks emerged, many with a neoliberal bent. This was the centre of the counterculture from this point: well-funded

⁹⁶ For example, the National Association of Manufacturers was a key player in the neoliberal counterculture.

propaganda units (which is more often than not what a think-tank is) with close ties to governments. The sudden decision of the US to leave the gold standard is significant here. The result was 1) to float (that is, destabilise) currency exchange rates and 2) to turn the global economy away from gold and towards the dollar. It seems clear the 'Nixon Shock' was in many ways advantageous for the US, for gold had become an increasingly precarious responsibility. The advantage was not so much economic as strategic, for in the end the dollar more or less replaced gold as the international currency standard. The Nixon Shock troubled the world economy which suffered a greater shock in 1973, the year of the Yom Kippur War and the OPEC crisis led by the Saudis. The immediate result was an Israeli victory and a Saudi climb down, but the oil crisis led to a pricing crisis and all was not good in the world economy. Now the neoliberal counterculture could hit back at the heretic Maynard Keynes. '*S Keynesianism*, they cried out, while Friedman filled the airwaves with chit about 'free markets' and 'freedom'.

How neoliberalism moved out of its counterculture shadows and into power can be best illustrated using the UK as an example. The story starts with the Centre for Policy Studies, founded by Keith Joseph in 1974 with support from Margaret Thatcher. In those days, neoliberalism was generally called *monetarism*, specifically directed against Keynesianism. Joseph was very influential on Thatcher, who conveniently for the movement became Conservative leader the next year. Meanwhile, as the economy nosedived (see for example the 'Winter of Discontent' in 1978-9) Jim Callaghan's Labour announced a move away from Keynesian economics. Too little too late as it turned

out. In 1979 there was an election and it was won by the Conservative Party.

According to the norms of politics, the Conservatives won, for that is how the system works in a mechanical sense. Voters vote, voters' votes are counted, the party with the most votes wins and forms a government. That is the mechanics. The reality was that in fact *the neoliberals won in 1979*. Not the Conservatives. This becomes immediately apparent in the very public division in the party between 'wets' and 'drys'. That is, between Conservatives and neoliberals. If we understand that the neoliberals were a party within a party, it should also be clear they were also *a party outside the party*. From company to bank to think-tank to trade organisation, it is here we find the diffuse yet coherent neoliberal 'party'. At this early stage in its rise to power, it is easy to see how it bypasses and subverts the mechanisms of standard politics. It is a party in a sense, but it is not a Political Party. Even with a neoliberal government, the main party lies hidden beneath the iceberg.

Under Thatcher and her successors, the Conservative party *became* a neoliberal party through and through. The wets fell by the wayside, the Heaths and the Howes. The next step was inevitable. After the disastrous defeat of Michael Foot and his defiantly left-wing campaign, reformers began their work to minimise or eliminate leftism from the Labour Party. What Neil Kinnock began and John Smith refined was completed by Tony Blair who transformed the party into an electoral powerhouse. Labour was now New Labour, a transparently neoliberal party. The Blair transformation was so complete that the Sun

supported New Labour against the Conservatives. Blair was a much better bet. This effectively ended anything that can meaningfully be called ‘democracy’ in the UK. All that remained was the mechanism through which neoliberalism now effectively ruled. This is more or less **ballot box totalitarianism**. For not only was there no one to vote for any more — aside from this or that neoliberal party — the main bulk of the ‘party’ lies altogether outside the system, beyond the reach of the voter.

That was the UK, but things were similar throughout the West. Ronald Reagan became President a year or so after Thatcher. A not too intelligent man, Reagan had started making stump speeches for General Electric as soon as his film career started to fade. There he went around the US and there with him always a General Electric ‘advisor’ by his side. The new President, then, was a simpleton brainwashed with literally decades of neoliberal propaganda. Later, the US followed exactly the same path as the UK, for Bill Clinton’s New Democrats was also a neoliberal party. Even France, where François Mitterrand (a socialist and former communist) was elected after an aggressively leftist campaign — even Mitterrand ended up more neoliberal than Thatcher. So on on on it went. The Soviet Union fell and the neoliberals all leaped out of the shadows and enthusiastically embraced the US economist Jeffrey Sachs who scribbled out a neoliberal policy doctrine that was immediately implemented and in the blink of an eye Communist Russia became neoliberal Russia. On an on it went until you could paraphrase George Orwell and say, ‘Imagine a bank stamping on a human face forever’.

In my view, though, neoliberalism peaked around 2014-2015. After that time, its place has been gradually overtaken by neoconservatism. If the neoliberals had been successful, the world would certainly be different. There were three near-successes that failed.

- 1) David Cameron launched his referendum to keep the UK in the EU and crush the UKIP-type right-wing.
- 2) The neocon proxy war against Assad in Syria was going well and he was about to fall.
- 3) The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) ⁹⁷ and Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) were more or less ready to be signed.

Although it is impossible to know just what effect the TTIP/TPP agreements would have had, they were clearly a product of radical neoliberal thinking. These agreements would have moved yet more power away from governments towards global corporations. A victory over Assad would have cemented US control over the Middle East and TTIP/TPP neoliberalism across the world.

But it was not to be. Cameron's gambit failed, Russia moved into Syria and saved Assad and Hillary Clinton

⁹⁷ The TTIP provides an example of neoliberalism's contempt for democracy. The treaty contents were effectively secret and no one knew what it really contained. A German MP described her experience of examining the treaty before it was to be debated in parliament. She was allotted a slot of an hour or so in a special reading room. On arrival, she was searched for hidden cameras and told she was not to reveal the contents of any document she read. Then she was shown a computer set up to display the lengthy document, which was written in English despite the fact that many German MPs knew no English and few were fluent. How could they possibly read such a complex document in a foreign language?

lost to Donald Trump who bailed out of TTIP/TPP which became dead air.

These were crushing blows. Detaching the UK from the EU effectively led to the danger of the EU itself breaking up. If the US takeover of Syria would have cemented its control of the Middle East, losing Syria meant very much the reverse, for now America was looking extremely vulnerable in the region. Even if the defeat of TTIP/TPP left neoliberalism where it was before, it was a very significant loss in traction and all that was left there was a sense of what might have been and almost was. A peculiarly neoliberal globalisation was so very nearly created but all that was left was a void of what almost was.

Into which breach stepped the neoconservatives.

4.4 Neoconservatism

The neocon movement first appears after the fall of the USSR in the mid 1990's. I suppose you could say it gave right-wing hawks something to do after the reds were gone. Back then, the neocons were part of the wider right-wing counterculture, for example the religious right, 'popular' often 'working class' right-wing movements and social conservatives. One thing that made the neocons different was that many had either leftist backgrounds or otherwise defined themselves in terms of leftism (excoriatingly against it of course) and another was that it was somewhat of an intellectual movement. The neocons had various ideas about crime, welfare and other social policies. Why they matter though is due to their ideas about foreign policy.

In the new red-less world, the US announced a new

world order and declared itself the world's 'sole superpower' (which to be fair few would have denied to be the case). The neocons meanwhile were cold-warriors with ties to the Israeli likudnik right, which gave them both a global and a regional enemy. The link with the likudniks is I think often misinterpreted, for the fact that the neocons were American is often overlooked. This is a key point because Israel is a *regional* power and the US a *world* power. The neocons view the world through the eyes of a world power.

The key to understanding neoconservatism is that at core *it is fighting an enemy*. Another fundamental belief is that the US *must* retain its hegemony over the world, which means it must prevent any rival becoming a threat. A third core idea is that war ought to be a primary part of US foreign policy. Fourth, the US must 'take out' states that hinder its freedom of action or its strategic interests. To enable all this, military spending must be the main focus of the US budget. The US must become a militarised state.

Who was the enemy? What to call it? The first right-wing attempt at this is often attributed to Samuel Huntingdon who invented the '**clash of civilisations**'. At the time, this idea hardly replaced the reds as a global enemy, but it did end up becoming part of the core neocon narrative. Huntingdon's main thrust was to contrast 'western values' with the I suppose *alien* values of Islam.

The eventual success of recreating a global enemy (via the combination of the likudnik and cold warrior obsessions) can be seen in the quote below, in which can be noted the grand chain of being from Hamas to Iran to Russia to China:

At a meeting in Dundee with constituents on March 25, [Tim Walberg (Republican-MI), and a former pastor] said “I don’t think any of our aid that goes to Israel, to support our greatest ally, arguably maybe in the world, to the feet of Hamas, and Iran, and Russia. Probably North Korea is in there and China, too — with them, helping Hamas.”

9/11 was the necons’ big day. They had the answer to the crisis, the calm to the shock. Thereafter, the US has relentlessly pursued a murderous sequence of attacks on neocon enemies: *Iraq*, *Libya* (via its NATO attack dog), *Syria* (via its jihadist attack dogs), *Yemen* (via its Saudi attack dog) and just recently *Gaza*, *Lebanon* and *Syria* again (via its Israeli attack dog). There has also been a so-far stalled assault on Iran, attacks on Somalia, the creation of the hell that is South Sudan, economic war on Venezuela, shady AFRICOM campaigns in Africa.

Moreover, there is a necon power network beyond the US. NATO is the European branch of the Pentagon and nearly all current European leaders are little more than NATO branch managers. The EU has recently pledged to turn Europe into a neocon armed base (just like the US), with a generous €800bn donation to the military via The ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030 programme. Then there is this: *The European Commission has presented a roadmap for strengthening the continent’s common defense, which foresees investments of around 6.8 trillion euros by 2035, amid the conclusion that “a militarized Russia poses a permanent threat to European security”.* [Cotidianul, October 17, 2025]

INTERLUDE: 6.8 trillion?

Here is a simple way of actually understanding what ‘a trillion’ means in UK terms.

To the mass person, a house or flat is their big expenditure. £30,000 per annum is a reasonable wage for a mass person, and let’s take £250,000 as a basic price for a property. Because, after tax, the mass person’s annual income is a lot less than £30K, it’s obvious that £250K is a gigantic sum of money. The mass person is obliged to resolve the problem by taking out a bank loan, which will take them 20 or 30 years to pay back.

But what about a millionaire (who we’ll assume is someone with £1M to spend)? A millionaire can buy the property outright and still have £750,000 left! The millionaire is already in a much different world to the mass person.

What about a billionaire (ie someone with £1 billion to spend)? A billionaire can buy the property a thousand times, each time keeping £750K for themselves. This is a simple way of seeing just how much money a billion pounds really is. The worlds of the billionaire and the mass person barely connect.

What about a trillionaire? A trillionaire can buy the property a million times a thousand times! The same property it would take a mass person 20 or 30 years to pay for! And remember that each purchase is £250K out of a million! A trillionaire can buy the property a million times a thousand times and they’ve still got 3/4 of their wealth left!

At this level, we see the global strategy at work, the desperate bid to beat back rivals to US hegemony, these being principally Russia and China. So, the Ukraine and Taiwan have been established as bridgeheads. In the far east, Australia is now a US

client state, having entered into a 'partnership' with the Pentagon. Japan and the Philippines are being canvassed for support against China and there is talk of expanding NATO into that region. The neocons overthrew the government of the Ukraine in 2014 and, creating a bridgehead to threaten Russian, armed it, set it against Russian-speaking Ukrainians, provoked Russia beyond all measure (in particular the incessant goading of possible Ukrainian NATO membership with the threat of planting nuclear missiles there) and erasing diplomatic 'red lines' left right and centre. After the resulting Russian invasion, the neocons in their propaganda erased any trace of their involvement prior to the invasion and portrayed it as an unprovoked attack from which the Ukraine needed 'help'. The neocons then began sending young men to their deaths on such an extravagant scale that now there are hardly any left, so the tactic has changed to firing long-range missiles into Russia, which will likely at some point trigger a response that will start the European war the NATO branch-manager head of states seem to be hungry for. Possibly the neocons back in Washington do in fact want to turn Europe into a giant Ukraine that has at least a gambler's chance of 'winning'. In terms of neoliberal trade, there was now a new Iron Curtain between 'Europe' and 'Russia' and until it was neoconned the EU was marginalised in the face of NATO.

What should be apparent, though I do not think it has been widely noticed yet, is that the neocons have transformed the world and effectively stolen it from the neoliberals and that neoconservatism is very different to neoliberalism, not to mention far more dangerous.

- The neocons are US-centric⁹⁸, the neoliberals globalist (for example the neoliberals traded with Russia and China).
- The neoliberals want stability (good for trade), the neocons don't care.
- The neoliberals like trade treaties and associations and agreements (for example IMF Structural adjustment Programs), the neocons are content with NATO⁹⁹ (though military treaties, and associations and agreements are fine too).
- Both the neoliberals and neocons like invisibility but the neocons' targeted violence cannot be hidden and so their presence at least is more detectable.
- The neoliberals are a party both in and outside government where it encompasses a network of corporate and think-tank power, the neocon 'party' is smaller and far more well-defined (crudely, Washington > Pentagon > NATO >

⁹⁸ Their propaganda speaks of 'the west' and 'the international community', but that is a crock. The Europeans are clearly not equal partners and are likely expendable as Ukrainians. A good illustration of this impotence is provided by Emmanuel Macron in France. As the US ratcheted up the pressure on Russia immediately prior to the invasion, Macron was clearly making a genuine attempt to prevent a war he saw no point in. In particular he made a speech pleading with European leaders to see sense. It is not in Europe's interests, he argued, to side with the US against Russia. If Europeans unite, the continent can keep its independence of action by playing one against the other. Then came the invasion and the neocon New Iron Curtain, the cutting off of Europe from Russia and the binding of Europe to the US. Now the pragmatic Macron positions himself as one of the leading branch manager warriors. The only form of leadership left for 'Jupiter'.

⁹⁹ The EU seems recently to have been neoconned too.

branch managers).

- The neoliberals don't really believe in anything outside business; the neocons have a far more well-defined ideology and more focused aims.

As I write, the neoliberal world is in tatters at least on the surface. The neoliberal *structures* still remain, but the surface is now all neocon and war and, most terrible of all, genocide.

5. Rampaging

President Trump on Wednesday issued a threat against the civilian population of Gaza, saying the “people of Gaza” would be “dead” if the Israeli hostages weren’t released immediately.

Once upon a time, there was a Community and a Philosopher. One day the Philosopher, who had been asleep seven hundred years, all of a sudden reawoke. The Philosopher saw at once that they were in the midst of a Community most strange to them. What year is it?, the Philosopher asked the Community. "It is 20XY." Where am I?, the Philosopher asked the Community. "You are in the international community." That sounds to the good, the Philosopher proclaimed. The Community looked on warily awhile. Then asked, "May we ask who you are?" I am a philosopher, the Philosopher told the Community. "That is as we feared from the look of you," said the Community. "We are very sorry, but we must ask that you philosoff asap, for you are not wanted round here." Observing how determined the Community appeared to be, the Philosopher reluctantly left it to stew and hurried away to the stern forest and the stark desert, both of which happen to be nearby. Not a single philosopher ever disturbed the international community's peace since that day and they all lived crappily ever after.

Today, the **Fred West** is on the rampage. Threatening, bombing, killing, genociding, just plain *taking over*. It all started on 9/11, when the neoconservatives gained control of US foreign policy but things have now really taken on with the new twin towers of the Ukraine and Gaza.

This chapter is about this rampaging in which – because these Strangeloves are always ‘at the centre’ and are therefore ‘moderates’ in favour of ‘the rules-based order’ and speak for ‘the international community’ – we live in a world where genocide is *by this definition* moderate and centrist. Those of us awoken enough to have at least a passing knowledge of the old nazis will be aware that even there, in *that* world of death camps and total war, there was a ‘left’ and a ‘centre’ and a ‘right’. I suppose the equivalent division today is that the left wants to send Tomahawk missiles to the Ukraine, the centre for NATO to enter the war and right to nuke Moscow.

But as usual in this book we are asking What is left? in seeking a counterculture that must exist and hopefully flourish far outside this cloudcuckooland of unquestioned conviction in the face of vericide, of unhinged moderation, of – well, let Binyamin Netanyahu speak to us, just as he spoke (to rapturous applause) before the US Congress in October 2024:

‘It’s a clash between barbarism and civilization. It’s a clash between those who glorify death and those who sanctify life.’

This is now a rampaging world of the blackest of black hats wearing the whitest of white hats.

5.1 9/11 to Iraq

To understand 9/11, we first need to construct a rational account of it. Our starting point is the Marxists of Afghanistan. There was a coup back in 1973 in which Mohammed Daoud Khan replaced his cousin the king Zahir Shah (Daoud’s cousin, of course). Daoud’s coup and autocratic rule led in turn

to a Marxist coup in 1978, in the form of the *People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan* (PDPA). These self-appointed 'democrats' immediately began to impose their values on the conservative and traditional¹⁰⁰ people of the country. Waves of resistance quickly flared up. Across the border, by all accounts, the Soviets were horrified. An unstable Afghanistan was a strategic nightmare. In contrast, across the pond American strategists were overjoyed, especially the Polish-American hater of Russia 'the Zbig' (or Zbigniew Brzezinski). Arms were sent to the rebels to help create chaos and induce the Soviets to invade, which foolishly they did. The horror that the US *officially* felt at this unconscionable and indefensible action was in stark contrast to its private glee. Weapons were now poured into Afghanistan and an HQ was set up in the North West Province of Pakistan.

Let us leave the mujahedeen¹⁰¹. A large collective of Muslim fundamentalists gathered around the HQ to help with the jihad, these foreigners generally being known as 'Arab-Afghans' (even if they hailed from Chechnya or Indonesia or Xinjiang). One such was a Saudi national named Osama bin Mohammed bin Awad bin Laden. Osama's father Muhammad was a Yemeni who got a lucky contract in Saudi and got in with the Saudis and so got rich. As a young man, his son was quiet, serious and studious but was appalled by the Soviet invasion. Off Osama went to help, using

¹⁰⁰ Families in those days built their own homes using a construction plan more or less the same as homes unearthed by archaeologists and dated as far back as 2,000 BCE.

¹⁰¹ Always called 'freedom fighters' in the media as if it were a translation of the muj's name, which actually means 'one who performs jihad'.

his connections to raise awareness and support in the name of the noble cause.

When the Soviets left Afghanistan under the new leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, the country folded in on itself as the US right and the fundamentalists both rejoiced in what they saw as their victory. *They'd chased the reds/infidels out!*

If we move forward to the Gulf War we find an Osama back in Saudi and angered at Saddam's imminent invasion of Kuwait. The US was building up its forces to attack Iraq, but nevertheless bin Laden went to the Saudi HQ and offered to sort out Saddam himself with a bunch of Wild Geese fundamental types. HQ looked at Osama and looked at the US and said 'no'. From that point on Osama was an enemy to the Ibn Sauds and to the US. His yaddering and yacking about the Royal Family became so annoying that he was expelled from the Kingdom.

First, he settled in the Sudan and busied himself with gardening and an agribusiness. But the simmering resentment remained and he was drawn into the world of the **Jihadist**.

Jihadists crawled out the swamp about two decades before the neoconservatives, though there were earlier forerunners such as the Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb and his major work *Milestones* (1966). Basically, the Jihadists were in some ways comparable to the leftist counterculture of the time in their critique of the soulless modern capitalist society. Many leftists would find much to agree with in *Milestones*. The vast gulf of a distance between the left and the Jihadists of course lies in the *What is to be done?* question. For the Jihadists what was so very

wrong was the *secularity* of many leaders in the Middle East. They regarded themselves as true Muslims, latter-day *rashidun*. These ‘rightly-guided ones’ were the successors of Muhammad. What the Prophet said was the word of God and was perfect knowledge. The Quran contains perfect wisdom. These new *rashidun* were therefore perfectly righteous and they had a plan. They would create an Islamic State which, based on *rashid* rulers and perfect wisdom, would be a perfect state. As a result, all Muslims would see this perfection and join up with the state. The ummah would now form a gigantic Islamic State covering all the Muslim lands. Of course (*of course!*) the non-Muslim world would realise how perfect this superstate was and convert. The entire world would be Muslim and perfect. So said the Jihadists in their dusty little backrooms.

The first step, then, was these secular leaders: Qadhafi, Sadat, Saddam. Eliminate them. The chosen way was to declare these rulers *excommunicated*. Takfir (‘the art of rendering X *kafir*’). A holy war could now be declared, for the takfired leaders were no longer Muslim and were therefore occupying Muslim lands. Holy war was required, *jihad*. Hence Jihadists.

But bin Laden, in his Jihadism, was different. The US, you may have noticed, is not a Muslim country. Its leaders are not Muslims. They cannot be takfired. Here bin Laden had a cunning plan in which he evoked the idea of the *near enemy* and the *far enemy*. The US was a far enemy. With this logic in place, bin Laden bombs began to go off against US targets with a certain regularity. The government of the Sudan asked him to leave and as luck would have it the

radical Taliban group now held the keys to power in Afghanistan. Off bin Laden went and set up a 'training camp' there, among all the other 'training camps' there. Without a doubt, these were hubs for Jihadism.

The bin Laden bombs continued and the US understandably took against its former ally. It just so happened that was the same time the FBI had just signed off on a very successful prosecution of mafia members. The success was brought about by making mere membership of the group grounds for prosecution. The idea soon came to mind that this might be a good way to get at bin Laden. If bin Laden could be made into a mafia-like boss, the FBI could go after his 'organisation'. In this way, al-Qa'ida was born. The FBI was holding a Sudanese man who had bilked bin Laden of a significant amount of money and who was willing to talk, and talk he did. Soon as now, bin Laden's organisation had all the members the FBI needed. The name al-Qa'ida exists because the bin Laden 'organisation' needed a name. Linking the name to bin Laden himself is difficult, as is for that matter linking any name to his organisation, or indeed proving that outside of a few close companions he *had* an organisation.

What did exist was Jihadists and Jihadism. This had a coherent enough ideology with which to connect like-minded individuals and groups. Jihadists built up a network of individuals and groups within and without Muslim territories and it is *this* (this nameless and decentralised entity) that is best thought of as representing al-Qa'ida.

9/11 was led by two Jihadists from Egypt and Jordan, and carried out with the help of 'the muscle' from

Asir, an outlier region of Saudi Arabia. The relationship between the leaders and bin Laden is unclear, but certainly existed. German intelligence observed visits to bin Laden's camp in Afghanistan. Did bin Laden plan 9/11? help finance it? or was his contribution mere general advice or even just his blessing? I think the nature of the attack, that it was against his hated US, leads to the conclusion it was his idea¹⁰².

We can now return to the neocons. In the wake of 9/11 they had their links to the likudniks (that is, 'the Middle East') and their militarist ideology and so gee, said the Bush Gang, *these are the guys with a plan*. So, sure enough, days after 9/11, Bush II declared without laughing the **War On Terror**. After this attack carried out by Jihadists from Egypt and Jordan, Dubya announced to the world his big list of 'terrorists' that the US would now hunt down in order to defend itself and its people from 'al-Qa'ida':

- North Korea, a country located far far away from the Middle East in which any Jihadist would

¹⁰² The date of the attack — obviously carefully planned — I think is significant, though strangely I have never seen this curious fact mentioned. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) marks the second rise of the Ibn Sauds. The first was linked to the fire and brimstone cleric Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd aw-Wahhāb ibn Sulaymān at-Tamīmī. The alliance of the ibn Sauds and aw-Wahhāb led to a sort of re-run of the initial spread of Islam and mass conversion to this 'unitarian' version of Islam (no icons, no idols). It ended up with a satisfied Ibn Saud family lording it up at their new capital of Riyadh. However, outside forces looked on and were not happy, especially the Ottoman Sultan and the upstart leader of Egypt, Muhammad Ali. Repeated attacks on the wahhabi Arab (that is, Bedouin) tribes continued until the final fall of Riyadh in 1818. On September 11. So, 9/11, an attack on the US and a warning to the Saudis?

find the coldest of welcomes;

- Iran, a solidly Shi'a country ruled by a committee of conservative Shi'a clerics, to whom Sunni Jihadists are fundamentally hostile;
- Libya, ruled by one of the targets of Jihadism;
- Iraq, ditto but maybe even more.

I am sure Bush didn't laugh out loud, I don't remember. I suspect his ignorance of the Middle East and world politics was so great he had no idea what he was saying or its significance. What is clear is that this is a neocon list of enemies. It has nothing to do with 9/11. All the actors marked for targeting were hostile to Jihadism or irrelevant to it.

9/11 begat the invasion of Iraq, but also al-Qa'ida. For it is here we can see – hear? – the propaganda Noise. 9/11 was the initial *stimulus* and the Noise the *response*. All of a sudden, al-Qa'ida was everywhere, everywhere in the media as if it were everywhere in the world. This brought the 'clash of civilisations' narrative into play, with its anti-Muslim bent. The free world, the Noise said, was facing a hostile and global enemy. The freedoms America offers are hated by the enemy. We want to live in peace; they live for violence. We want to build; they to destroy. We shall hunt them wherever they are and they are everywhere. Al-Qa'ida is everywhere¹⁰³.

Everywhere too there was the Noise, incessant and merciless. There were pages and sentences and

¹⁰³ Example. "This is a very important point. Our enemy is fundamental Islam and so many of our citizens seem to believe our enemy is western civilization. The 11th of September was a declaration of war."

articles and think pieces and leaders and opinions and all the babble that made up the buzz, but above the buzz were the keywords that were the only decipherable elements of the buzz. This is effectively what the Noise said to the people:

**SADDAM. IRAQ. AL-QA'IDA. TERRORISTS.
SADDAM. TERRORISTS. IRAQ. OSAMA.
SADDAM. IRAQ. TERRORISTS. SADDAM.
OSAMA. IRAQ. AL-QA'IDA. SADDAM.
OSAMA. TERRORISTS. SADDAM HUSSEIN.
BIN LADEN. AL-QA'IDA. TERROR. 9/11.
SADDAM. TERRORISTS. 9/11. OSAMA. AL-
QA'IDA. IRAQ. SADDAM. 9/11. IRAQ. 9/11.
TERRORISTS. SADDAM. OSAMA. 9/11.
SADDAM HUSSEIN. 9/11. TERROR. OSAMA.
SADDAM. 9/11. SADDAM HUSSEIN. 9/11.
IRAQ. 9/11. 9/11. SADDAM. IRAQ. 9/11.
SADDAM. SADDAM. OSAMA BIN LADEN.
SADDAM HUSSEIN. 9/11. 9/11. 9/11. 9/11.
9/11. IRAQ. SADDAM. OSAMA. OSAMA.
SADDAM. 9/11. 9/11. SADDAM. SADDAM.
SADDAM. SADDAM. TERRORIST. IRAQ.
INVADE. SADDAM. 9/11. 9/11. 9/11. 9/11.
9/11. 9/11. 9/11. 9/11. 9/11. 9/11. 9/11.
9/11. 9/11. 9/11. 9/11. 9/11. IRAQ.
INVADE. INVADE. SADDAM. 9/11. INVADE.**

This is what people who don't know and don't care and don't listen hear. It is the noise above the buzz in response to the stimulus and as here the stimulus was the profound shock of the 9/11 attacks the response was similarly powerful. This is the world of the sleeping who see what they see.

The US invaded Iraq in March 2003 and very few Americans, including the soldiers deployed there,

knew why. It was, the most popular idea was, *something to do with Iraq being behind 9/11*.

Here is a typical example of the brainwashed mind that has absorbed the noise and is responding to the stimulus:

Do you think that the 'average' American realizing that the vast majority of muslims in the world hate them will get down on their hands and knees and scream something like "LOOK LOOK. THEY HATE US SO MUCH. WHAT CAN WE DO FOR THEM NOT TO HATE US? PLEASE!! PLEASE!! DON'T HATE US. WE WANT TO BE YOUR FRIEND. WHAT CAN WE DO TO KISS YOUR MUSLIM ASS??" Is this the reaction you think the 'average' american will have when viewing savages burning american flags and chanting "DEATH TO AMERICA"? If you think this will be the mental reaction you are so naive. The real reaction by the 'average' American will be something like this.

'FINE. THEY WANT TO HATE US FOR NO HONEST LOGICAL REASON WE WILL HATE THEM EVEN MORE. THEY WANT A WAR. FINE WE WILL GIVE THEM A WAR'

We might ask where that confused notion originated and imagine the propagandists sitting back happy as Larry, Moe and Shemp, not forgetting Curly.

5.2 Ukraine

Superficially, we move from 2001 and 2003 to 2022, when Russia invaded the Ukraine. But only superficially. Here is what I jotted down on November 5, 2004, a year after the invasion of Poland:

One article in today's Metro explained that the US sees the Ukraine as a "buffer state", which is why it's

supporting the opposition leader. A different article explained that Putin sees the Ukraine as a “buffer state”, which is why he's supporting the ‘elected’ leader.

I was trying to think of an analogy. The one I came up with is that buffer states are like plankton to alpha states. They have no independent value or meaning and exist merely to be consumed by one or other of said alpha states.

Who cares what plankton think? Who knows what plankton think? They’re there for us to use.

This is ten years later, June 17, 2014:

Meanwhile, Russia has cut off Ukraine’s gas. What will come of that, I wonder? This all seems to be chaos that the chums have at least greatly encouraged and exacerbated, even if they didn’t cause it. Where will it end? What is it the chums have let out the box? Will the hyper-aggressive chum faction get its bombings? The way is certainly being cleared.

I had a scary thought earlier today. A historical parallel struck me, a worrying one. Let me expand. Otto von Bismarck may not have been a saint, but no one can deny he was one of the most effective politicians there has ever been. His risks were always closely and intricately calculated, and he always won. His unnatural successor was the blundering Kaiser Wilhelm. The Kaiser tried to be a Bismarck, but got everything wrong. His clumsy machinations and wrong-stepping caused all sorts of political upheavals and crises. The absurdly intricate web of alliances and promises that was so effortlessly snapped to pieces by a few shots in Sarajevo was the way it was to a significant degree due to the Kaiser. The parallel that struck me was with Obama, not because Obama has

tried to manipulate anybody. Quite the opposite. He appears to have no centre, no self, no ethics whatsoever, and that is the hallmark of his Presidency. He has flitted this way and that, been manipulated one way then another. In contrast to the Bush years, there is no hint of a coherent policy, just a hardcore commitment to keeping the Right happy and simultaneously keeping Democrat tribalists off his back and forgetful just of how right-wing he is. I say “he”, but I mean the manipulated no-one at home figurehead that is Barack Obama. This - the Kaiser’s clumsy manipulation and the clumsy manipulation of Obama - is the parallel that struck me. I worry, just what has Obama done? I observe the chaos and wonder if it can be undone, or if we are now looking at a *process*, one of those that more or less cannot be stopped.

This from August 6:

Look around you. There is war in Libya, Iraq, Syria, Gaza, Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia, Mali, CAR, Ukraine - wars that can all be linked back to the international community and which all in fact appear to be part of the global war.

On August 9, I noted this story:

The UK and US governments have warned Russia not to use humanitarian assistance as a pretext for sending troops into eastern Ukraine.

Any such intervention would be “completely unacceptable” and “viewed as an invasion of Ukraine”, said the US ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power.

‘The Ukraine’ therefore clearly didn’t burst out of nothing, at least if you were even vaguely awoken. The Russian invasion meant that something that was happening *there* suddenly moved centre-stage in full

gaze of all those who see what they see. The real escalation was in perception. This is when the rampage really began to move away from off-Broadway *theaters* like Yemen, South Sudan and Libya. It is when silence became noise, a terrifying yellifying holler mixing fake concern and real belligerence. Cloudcuckooland was on the warpath and the chums seemed angry. And so those who see what they see, well they got angry too. It was as if the whole of the Fred West swallowed a giant angerburger. Mordor was at the borders. Sauron had arisen.

And the *Chumites* cried forth LET THE RAMPAGE COMMENCE! and the land that beareth the cuckoo in the cloud shook within its walls and its heart grew hard.

Although inverting reality is hardly a new thing and is at root simple to do, it has never been done on such a large scale as in the Ukraine. The propaganda here works on so many levels that there is something to bamboozle more or less everybody.

The basic facts, as I see them, are as follows. In a world-historical event, in 2014 the US launched or at least significantly supported a coup in the Ukraine. A system of government in which post-Communist billionaires ran the country ('the oligarchs') and gamed the US, the EU and Russia (who of course tried to game the billionaires) was replaced by ultra-nationalist anti-Russian factions linked to neonazi attack dogs. The US then began busily arming this government to the teeth while the regime itself attacked Russian-speaking Ukrainians, banning Russian-language media and the speaking of Russian in schools. Violent attacks began to be made on people

in Russian-speaking areas, leading to (say official figures) around 14,000 dead¹⁰⁴. Increasing levels of noise was made about the Ukraine joining NATO and there was talk of the new member acquiring nuclear missiles. In fact, nuclear missiles came to Romania in 2021. Just before Russia invaded in 2022, the NATO threat and the nuclear threat were made, as well as a threat to launch a formal attack on Russian-speaking areas of the Ukraine, this all just after full-scale war games conducted by the US had taken place over the summer.

Then Russia invaded. However, while it did indeed 'invade the Ukraine', Russian troops soon retreated from Ukrainian-speaking regions, remaining in Russian-speaking ones where, so it seems, their presence has been largely welcomed. In other words, the Russians have moved in to defend Russian-speaking areas of the Ukraine that the nationalist government had threatened to attack.

Moreover, this all happened against a background of relentless US aggression against Russia not to mention a substantial buildup of NATO. The massive wall of hostile forces in Europe, backed by the US, can hardly be ignored here, the endless demonisation of Vladimir Putin, the threats a 'destroy' Russia.

When Russia invaded, the noise roared louder than perhaps it ever had. It was maybe the loudest roar in the history of the human race. The result was a propaganda narrative something like this. The bloodthirsty tyrant Putin had launched an illegal attack on the people of the Ukraine. The attack was

¹⁰⁴ The total death-toll over the entire period of the Troubles in Northern Ireland is just under 4000.

astonishing in its suddenness and unexpected by everyone. It was a crude act of conquest and was quite unprovoked. It was almost unparalleled in its aggression. The atrocity stories were endless and the deeds atrocious. Putin the baby-raper, as one well-informed witness of the noise put it. This had to be opposed. The freedoms of the democracies in the West — western values — had to be defended from the forces of Mordor. The Ukrainian people had to be helped. Food and clothing must be sent right now. Large numbers of Ukrainian refugees were received by the generous-hearted Tory government fond of locking refugees up in prison boats on the banks of the river Thames. The Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who more or less the entire population of the UK firmly believed was oblivious to the population of the UK, poured out his concerns for the people of the Ukraine. Well, the Ukrainian-speaking population of the Ukraine I suppose. Anyway, aid must be sent to the people of the Ukraine so cared about by Rishi Sunak. Food and clothes. Slava Ukraine! We must save the people of the Ukraine.

What this baneful nonsense actually means can be seen even in the world of the pravda. A pie chart shown much later by the BBC illustrated the proportion of different types of aid. Food and clothing made up an almost microscopically small chunk of pie. Weapons and stuff to keep the war going made up most of the rest.

The noise has created a story so powerful that for many it is an unshakeable belief, of a tyrant launching an unprovoked attack and committing atrocities left-right-centre, of an extraordinary evil (Putin) opposed by the forces of all that is good

(Zelensky). Note this places the West far into the background. This war is between Russia and the Ukraine. The West is offering food and clothes and — no! after a short while the noise urged the necessity of sending weapons. This is good ‘merge and transform’ propaganda. Here, ‘food and clothes’ are suddenly transformed into and merged with ‘weapons’. The message is still the same: ‘we are helping the people of the Ukraine’. This just war is just between Russia and the Ukraine. All the Fred West is doing is helping the people of the Ukraine. At a distance.

One of the masterpieces of all this is the provocation of Russia to invade. Ever since the neoconservatives gained power in 2001, after 9/11, the left has (with increasing feebleness) been condemning ‘invasions’. The *locus classicus* is of course the invasion of Iraq. Apparently, few on the left understand the word ‘context’ and therefore see an invasion as an invasion as an invasion. The provocation is ignored. Then there is the legality of the thing. The invasion of the Ukraine was *illegal*. But what is law when laws are systematically broken? The Warsaw Uprising was entirely illegal, for it was an act of armed violence against a government. Would anyone really pursue that line of argument? It was illegal according to the law, but what law? The acts of the French Resistance were illegal too, but if they broke laws we can ask again, *what laws?* If we recognise the provocation Russia faced and the threat posed to it by the US, who could not notice the contempt the US, and its allies, have for international law? They invoke it when they need it and break it when it suits them. Take, for example, Israel’s nuclear weapons, its occupation of the Golan Heights and the West Bank. The US attack

on Iraq, its occupation of Afghanistan, the NATO destruction of Libya (even the official report said the pretext, a planned gang-rape of women, was a lie) etc. Not long before the Russian invasion, the West was claiming that Juan Guaidó, a man with more or less no popular support, was the legitimate leader of Venezuela, not Chavist Nicolás Maduro the actual leader. Or there was the ‘leader’ of post-Qadhafi Libya, he and his ‘cabinet’ of ten or so based in Rome. How democratic. It is difficult to see the benefit to Russia of following the rules when opposed by such a powerful hostile force that breaks any rule it needs to. Note that, if Russia did not invade when it did, it is highly likely it would be facing a NATO state, an attack on which would be an attack on NATO. Why would the Russians allow that to happen? Why shouldn’t Russia include that basic fact in its strategic calculus?

Meanwhile the same lies turned into unquestionable truth saturated the *pravda*. The typical stock response to what I have written above, aside from a genuine disbelief, would be that I ‘love Putin’, that I am called ‘Boris’, that ‘I should go live in Russia if I like it so much’. But the longstanding and *unprovoked* aggression against Russia by the West is self-evident and note I talk here about *Russia*, not ‘Putin’. For here you have an enviably successful propaganda technique: the *reification* of an enemy. Vladimir Putin is the reiform of Russia. This demon reminds me of a quantum particle, everywhere at once within its waveform. He is everywhere in Russia, doing bad stuff. Russia in fact — its government, its generals, its bureaucrats, its technologists, its people — none of these exist. Russia is *absolutely* reified into Putin. Putin *is* Russia, its reiform.

All this leaves the old ideas of ‘Orwellianism’ standing in the dust. War is Peace. False is True. This new propaganda presents you with a ridiculously complex model in which every element within it that it claims is true, is some degree of false. Mathematically, you are not faced with a simple Boolean switch statement, but a large lattice of nodes any of which might be false or true or anything in between. Perhaps we could call this lattice a **doublethinknot**?

5.3 Gaza

The reality of the Ukraine is more clearly understood when seen through the lens of Gaza. *This* is the world of ‘rules-based order’. *These* are the sociopaths talking about ‘illegal invasion’ in the Ukraine.

Gaza is an unequivocal genocide in the sense of not (yet, as I write) *extermination* but **annihilation**. For the minimal definition of genocide is the destruction of a people’s habitus. Destroy the habitus, get rid of the people. The habitus in Gaza has been destroyed. Gaza is no longer a habitable environment.

So, the leaders of the West, the champions of the people and the people of the Ukraine and people everywhere, after October 7 supported genocide. These are the people who condemned Russia’s ‘illegal invasion’ of the Ukraine. It upset them, the breaking of international law. This law was more or less sacrosanct to them.

On October the 7 the roar was nearly as loud as the roar was when Russia invaded the Ukraine. It was a Holocaust roar. Atrocities. ISIS-like. Animals. Arabs. Creatures. Pure molten evil. An unprovoked attack

on a core member of the democratic West that listens to Beethoven and reads Dostoevsky not like these Arab animals. Baby-killers, woman-desecrators! Gazans! Hamas! NATO states projected an image of the Israeli flag onto this or that national monument. NATO states pledged their support for Israel. NATO states ceaselessly repeated the atrocity stories. NATO states that supported Israel supported the Ukraine. It was not rare to see the two noble causes combined with the cry *Slava Israel!*

There was obviously a long and heart-wrenching period of reflection in the Netanyahu government, but the only possible response to this attack which was, even according to the official story, carried out in such secrecy that only a tiny handful of men knew about it, not the Government of Gaza, not even its military and certainly none of the population of Gaza — no, the only possible response was to wipe out Hamas and Hamas and the people of Gaza are one and the same and so we must wipe out the people of Gaza.

So, the attack on Gaza. The genocidal intent was immediately clear. The government said it wanted to commit genocide for a start. Then there was the small matter of 100,000 troops being gathered. Even at this early stage, Israel had cut off the electric and water supplies into Gaza. Collective punishment. Basic war crime. Sir Keir Starmer the international human rights lawyer? ‘Israel has the right to defend herself.’

If you looked into this for yourself, even in the earliest days you could see terrible things that should have been headline images. For example, what about the video captured from someone’s apartment window that shows white clouds from a phosphor bomb, starting to envelop neighbouring apartments?

Phosphor bombs are illegal period, so what is using one in a heavily populated area? Another example, and this is from the West Bank where Hamas has little traction. Here you might come across a picture of a little boy, about eight maybe, surrounded by seven or so brave large settler men wearing balaclavas and holding guns. How about that for a headline picture (and story)? See how powerful a tool silence is in brainwashing entire populations? For this was even then Israel's noble cause, phosphor bombs in civilian areas and seven gun-grasping strong men far away from Hamas threatening a frightened young boy.

The unfortunate fact is that the atrocity noise and the noble cause motifs gave the genocide the kick start it needed. If you got your information from the pravda, you couldn't possibly know about any genocidal intent. All you 'knew' was that an attack had been carried out that was so inhuman it defied understanding.

As the months went by, the best technique was silence. The pravda never gave anyone watching it a chance to learn about what Israel was really doing. This was then called the 'Israeli-Hamas War'. As if it was or ever has been a *war*. There were side-shows too. Another devilish *Muslim* force was from Yemen — these devils were called **Houthis** and most people would have been vaguely aware that the Houthis were bad enemies of the rules-based order — and yet another was the terrorist group '**Hezbollah**'. Despite rejecting terrorism and never having committed a terrorist act under its leader Hasan Nasrallah, western followers of the pravda were aware that 'Hezbollah' was one of the nastiest most notorious

terrorist organisations in the world¹⁰⁵. The Houthis and 'Hezbollah' were threatening Israel! Luckily, the US and the UK were on hand to bomb Yemen¹⁰⁶.

This is a descent further down into a post-Orwellian doublethinknot.

The next stage came when Israel began attacking Lebanon and Syria in earnest, by which time the massive damage caused in Gaza, and the displacement of its people, were apparent. The propaganda moved here from 'noble cause' to the less ambitious 'defence'. No matter that Israel attacked Lebanon and Syria, to the pravda, these were attacking Israel. The initial attack on Lebanon killed 600 people¹⁰⁷. Israeli attacks are so extremely marginalised that they barely count as attacks to consumers of the pravda, therefore any response can be depicted as a more or less unprovoked attack.

In the end, the Assad government fell in Syria and 'Hezbollah' was crushed in Lebanon. In Syria, the US

¹⁰⁵ The lack of knowledge of the local culture here is indicated by this pravda spelling of the name, containing no less than two vowels that do not exist in standard Arabic, 'e' and 'o'!

¹⁰⁶ Pravda readers were of course barely aware that the US and the UK were heavily involved with, if not the instigators of, the Saudi attack on Yemen in 2015 after the Houthis seized power. It is unclear if this attack led to 'genocide' or 'the worst humanitarian crisis' so and so on the ground 'had ever seen'. The power of silence again. Here we see the bombing of a poor country the US and UK had already devastated put forward as just defence in a noble cause. It is regrettable the Yemen 'possible' and Gaza unequivocal genocides are not connected more often.

¹⁰⁷ I checked the BBC pravda text news that day and it was not even mentioned. Just to be more Orwellian, the main headline screamed out that a Russian attack on the Ukraine had killed two. The same thing when Israel murdered Hasan Nasrallah. The BBC text news did not list this event in its world news that day.

placed a Jihadist in charge and in Lebanon a tame general¹⁰⁸. This was a new phase because here the US appeared as a player. Here we meet a little-discussed but obviously important point that Israel is a local power and the US a global power and these two coups are clearly beyond the capabilities of Israel, which can act as a destructive force perfectly well, but its ability to corral mainstream Lebanese politicians and the Jihadists of the Syrian Idlib province under US control must be doubted.

Here I think we meet with a distraction that so much of what is left has been fooled by. Even articulate opponents of the genocide in Gaza endlessly use the term 'Zionist' and 'Zionism'. This, it seems to me, completely fails to understand what mainstream Zionism is, or was. Which is to create a Jewish state on what Zionists insist is Jewish land, the land of the old Israelites. Once this is understood, it ought to become clear that Lebanon and Syria and Gaza mean nothing to most Zionists¹⁰⁹. Even Gaza, so close to the Israelites, was the land of the Philistines. This people was an apparently powerful one, but it was *not* an Israelite one. Instead of saying 'Gaza', 'Lebanon' and 'Syria' we can change the names to 'Hamas', 'Hizbullah' and 'Assad' and see strategic areas, not Zionist ambition. Moreover, as we can now see the hand of the US in both Lebanon and Syria, this leads us straight to the neocons. That is Washington, NATO and the NATO branch managers heading the

¹⁰⁸ Despite the fact that a general is forbidden by law to become President. The rules-based order, again.

¹⁰⁹ As the dust settles on the new conquests, the outlines of a 'Greater Israel' are becoming visible: Gaza, the West Bank, southern Lebanon and south-west Syria. But this is extreme right-wing Zionism, far from the mainstream (or what once was the mainstream).

modern European states, in particular the UK. As soon as we see Hamas and Hizbullah and Assad, we must surely see that Hizbullah and Assad have now been 'taken out', while the process is ongoing in Gaza. We see a coherent plan being enacted in front of us. The US now controls the Middle East, apart from Iran. Israel, from this vantage point, far from 'controlling the US', let alone Europe, appears more as a thug force, an enabler, like Saudi Arabia in Yemen perhaps was. The leaders of the US, and the NATO branch managers in Europe, are therefore not mere onlookers but active participants. What Israel is destroying they want destroyed. The neocons don't want Hamas or 'Hezbollah' to exist. They don't want Assad to rule Syria.

This brings us to the late stage last-card propaganda motif: *antisemitism*. The notion that criticising Zionism is antisemitism has long been an aim of Israeli (and pro-Israel) strategists and over the past decade the hope has been more or less fulfilled. This is I think a super-potent example of 'merge and transfer' propaganda. Basically, any statement no matter how mild and no matter on what topic can be merged with and transferred to the worldviews of Heinrich Himmler. An Israeli airstrike on an apartment filled with people killed 16? You simply say that is very wrong? You are an antisemite whose main aim in life is to annihilate all Jews. The absurdity of all this becomes clear when you have seen video footage from back in the day of the leader of the settler movement Women in Green accusing Ariel Sharon very vehemently of being an 'antisemite'. Yes, Ariel Sharon. During the genocide in Gaza, of course, the anti-antisemites have been out in force. In the early days of the 'noble response' this propaganda

was very effective and in the following ‘only defending herself’ phase still quite effective. As the genocide marches on it is rapidly becoming a spent force, outside of brainwashed primates and true believers. But in this failure to understand Zionism or recognise neocon involvement in these developments the ‘What is left’ is weakening itself unnecessarily.

One of the strongest indicators that we are living in interesting — say mad — times is the curious one-two of these increasingly insane accusations of antisemitism coupled with *actual* antisemitism even on ‘What is left’ discussion threads. A worrying trend is genuine anger spilling out into dislike or even hatred of ‘Jews’. It is not uncommon to read that ‘the Jews’ control the US, or Sir Keir Starmer. The more specific term ‘Zionist’ is often used as a clear synonym for ‘Jew’. A curious one-two of imagined antisemitism and real antisemitism indeed. The point is that this all misses the shadowy presence of the neocons. Once you understand the basic — a surely very simple and easy-to-understand — structure of the neocon collective (Washington > Pentagon > NATO > branch manager state heads), it’s not difficult to see that, although Israel cannot be described as a neocon state, its aims and those of the neocons coalesce to the nth degree. Far from Israel controlling the US, it seems more accurate to say that it is being used as a thug force by the US (and Europe). It is not a mighty universal power, but a smallish state given weapons to wreak destruction on the enemies of the US. That is one of its main strategic uses.

In the here and now, the neocons have Lebanon under

control, the Jihadist government in Syria is sending out regular missions to crush its enemies (1000 dead after one such raid), Israel has wiped out all of that country's defences and is occupying large swathes of the south-west and building permanent garrisons there, Iran has now been attacked in a disturbingly blatant manner. Here the neocon bloodlust was echoed in the headlines, which might be a warning that the days of sugarcoating violence are mutating into a celebration of it. Here you tune in to the midnight news on the radio and listen to a repeater reading out a boastful-sounding list of Iranian scientists who had been murdered that day, along with threats to kill an 86-year-old man¹¹⁰. Like 'Hezbollah', Iran is demonised and the essentially *conservative* ayatollahs transformed into bloodthirsty tyrannical Dark Lords¹¹¹.

Meanwhile in Gaza, as I pointed out above, the genocide is really not going well. The annihilation is done, but the people are still there. Transfer or extermination are the only two options 'going forward'. Therefore, a daily round of murder and mass starvation. Israel has put the control of food aid in an organisation whose two factions are 1) extreme ISIS-type jihadist gangsters who charge extortionate prices and kill people like flies if they look funny at you and 2) far-right US thugs such as the man who despairs that these days men are not man enough to cleave a man's skull in two. The word 'capo' comes to mind. This is where we are at. Even the pravda has

¹¹⁰ The Iranian 'Supreme Leader', Ali Khamenei.

¹¹¹ A sub-motif here is that the ayatollahs hate women and that slutwalkers everywhere in the Fred West should rise up and fight for the right of conservative Muslim women to slutwalk.

shown pictures of skeletal children. At this most obscene moment of the genocide, we meet with its obscenest propaganda motif. It may be this that might make future generations — if humanity survives the neocon onslaught combined with the obnoxious and arrogant ten-year-old boy in nominal charge of the US — register these people among the true monsters of all history. Here, there is silence (or at least distraction) about the killings, nothing about the nature of the men put in charge of food distribution, nothing to indicate any systematic *plan* here, or the plan was *executed* in the first days after October 7, thus rendering the idea of a ‘noble cause’ null and void and in fact indicating that when the NATO branch managers projected the Israeli flag onto their various national monuments they were knowingly flying the flag of genocide — here there is silence and that is as might be expected, but there is also a what must be called *noise*. There is now a noise propaganda campaign full of talk about food delivery and helping the starving and helping the people of Gaza and helping the children of Gaza and just all-round helping everyone all around. As a final desperate resort when even the antisemitism charge is almost all used up, *genocide is charity*. The genocidists *starve* human beings and then *pretend to offer them food*.

What is to be done? What will the genocidists now *do*? It seems hard to believe this genocide-as-charity idea can mean anything other than putting a stopper of the genocide. ‘Thus far and no further’ and all that. The genocidists must though be thinking about what to do. Perhaps they might persuade the Donald Trump he can be a real tough man if he — does what? The mind boggles. But he wants his ‘Gaza Las Vegas’.

Las Vegaza? With these annoying human beings — annoying is what they are to these monsters — what is to be done? Genocide-as-charity is a good stop-gap solution to the problem. But it is not a final solution.

6 Opposing

The problem of capital, it should always be remembered, is merely the problem of sable furs, havana cigars and fine food at one remove.

iLife

An iMan and an iWoman iExecute the iCoupling iRoutine and iinitialize an iForm that is immediately iAssigned an iAvatar. After i9 months, the iWoman iOutputs an iChild, which is immediately iAssigned an iSubscription. At i4 years of iAge, the iChild is iUpgraded into an iYouth, against which the iLearning iRoutines are iExecuted. The primary iFunction of iLearning is to iOutput an iCitizen into iWorld, but it also iAssigns the necessary iMeaning packages (or iPacks). After iLearning, the iCitizen is fully iinitialized, and thus ready to iInterface with iWorld and iInteract in iLife. The iPower of an iCitizen typically lasts for i60-i80 iYears. When the iPower of an iCitizen runs out, its iSubscription iExpires. The iExpired iForm is then iOutputted into an iBox. In the last iStage of iProcessing an iForm, ijobs ('the Creator') iValues how much the iCitizen spent at the iStore during its iSubscription term, and after this iValuation its iAvatar is iOutputted to iHeaven or iHell (aka 'open source'), as appropriate. This is known as iAfteriLife.

In a neoconned world, the question What is left? becomes simply, *Who wants to survive?* It is not a matter of making a *better world* (however you or I perceive that) but of *saving the world*. In other words, 'left' and 'right' lose all of their accepted meanings.

Simply put, it must include people who are not utterly stupid, utterly brainwashed, utterly evil, utterly hopeless, utterly sectarian or utterly inhuman. It must be a party of human beings who believe in humanity. Can the human race do that? That one simple task? Can it agree to want to survive?

There are no complications, then, for a What is left? to neoconservatism. The rest of this section, and those that follow, discuss the far more complex issues relating to any opposition to neoliberalism. The movement has been around and in power for so long that a significant amount of criticism has been flung its way. Yet still here it stays.

Neoliberalism, then. The first thing to realise is that *most people do not even know it exists*, let alone what it is. Any What is Left must remove its cloak of invisibility before it can be opposed.

There has been a lot of good work describing the damage that neoliberalism has done since its rise to power, but the theoretical opposition to it has been poor. I think this is because the left is trapped within its own traditions but neoliberalism is new. The left is attacking a new enemy with old ideas. Socialists talk about the workers and the working class. Most of the left targets capitalism itself. The comparisons between neoliberalism and fascism are made ineffective by crude notions of what fascism actually was. Then again if – as I think so – neoliberalism is at least potentially totalitarian, what does ‘totalitarian’ in fact mean? Lastly, yes neoliberalism is imperialist, but what is imperialism?

These ideas are also difficult to understand for most people: ‘worker’, ‘imperialism’, ‘fascism’,

‘capitalism’. Of course, they can easily be understood in a vague sense, but what *exactly* capitalism is, is not an easy question to answer. In return, neoliberalism *exists*. In most places in the world it is, if not quite yet reality itself, the chief shaper of reality. It is all around. It *is*. How then can you compete with something that *is* by talking about complicated things such as ‘imperialism’ or ‘the working class’? It is an unfair fight.

The intrusiveness of neoliberalism around the world cannot be overstated. Its language, its ideas, its messages, its structures, its effects, its rules and its laws, its believers. Education is business. Sport is business. Sport is played against a backdrop of corporate logos. Health is business. In the UK it is all about selling off the NHS under the NHS kitemark (so few notice what is going on even as the service deteriorates). Music and films are business, the ‘culture industry’ of the Frankfurt School in excelsis. The music and film industries produce entertainment that is rigidly policed and stripped of any serious meaning. Distraction is everywhere in the form of brainless cheap TV and just as brainless pop music. Messages are the most intrusive arm of neoliberalism, for they are everywhere, in the new streaming channels and on the Internet. Take something as seemingly far away from neoliberalism as an obituary in a regional online paper. In this obituary for a local man, each paragraph of text is swallowed up by videos and flashing messages telling the reader they’re the boss and we’re a team and everything is free. The obituary has itself been buried, in a neat bit of neoliberal irony.

This phenomenon that is everywhere *is*

neoliberalism. You read about Egypt or India or an article about post-Mugabe Zimbabwe, same thing. Same damage to the economy, same concentration of wealth achieved by the same methods. You read about the slums of Cairo and Addis Ababa, same thing. People unable to live traditional lives forced into the city to survive and barely able to. Same in the Congo (in particular Kinshasa), in Haiti, in Kenya (Nairobi), Mexico (Mexico City). You read about beaches, same thing. Same waste, same toxic water, same piles of plastic garbage. You read what leaders say, same thing. Same messages, same 'growth', same austerity, same cutbacks for anything the benefits the ordinaries, same boondoggle for the local chums. Everywhere *the same thing is happening in exactly the same manner* and the thing is neoliberalism.

But simply saying 'this is neoliberalism' is not enough. Neoliberalism is everywhere but it is not everything. Underlying it is the foundation stone of physical reality that even its own propaganda cannot deny. Nothing in neoliberalism is exclusive to it and nothing directly created by it. It is best thought of as the guiding force of the world over the past forty or so years since Thatcher and Reagan came to power. What neoliberalism has done is to remove the institutional and moral constraints to greed and the power acquired by wealth in order to create a world of greed that speaks propaganda to power. Moreover, it speaks with a special cult language that is as instantly recognisable as it is ubiquitous (in the new normal cloudcuckooland, anyway).

Neoliberalism is everywhere and it has powerful critics (in moral terms) but that means nothing unless the What is left makes its definitions of

neoliberalism clear and transparent. How do you argue against a foe at once so gigantic yet so invisible, so there yet so far, in short just so hard to define or pin down? Neoliberalism took over the world and its reality but this very fact implies a left must focus on neoliberalism and not its supposed 'reality'. Is for example neoliberalism 'capitalism'? Let us begin here, for I suggest the simple equation of the two is a big mistake for any new left counterculture.

6.1 Neos and Capitalism

Most critics of neoliberalism give a prominent place to capitalism. Not unreasonably, as neoliberalism is an extremist form of capitalism. A problem arises when the two are more or less equated and therefore the critique takes on a necessarily *fundamentalist* turn. For this reason, it is important to define capitalism and then to understand its relation to neoliberalism.

Underlying capitalism is what we might term the **economy**, and underlying that **resources**, so we start with these fundamental ideas.

We can in fact begin with the most fundamental thing we know, the **universe** itself. The universe is a sea of vacuum energy in which are clustered particles of **matter**¹¹² that interact via **forces**. Even at the highest level, it seems that a life-cycle is the underlying principle of the universe, even for the universe itself. But this is **cold life**, the life of raw matter. The 'atom' of the universe is the **galaxy**, basically a clump of matter drawn together by fundamental forces. Each

¹¹² Which are themselves made of the same energy as the vacuum.

clump is made of the sub-clumps we call **solar systems**. At the centre of these is one or more **stars** about which orbit **planets**. Each solar system has its own 'little big bang' and each star is destined to be extinguished, leaving behind a small dead core¹¹³. Throughout each galaxy, stars come and go. Eventually, however, the universe will be able to produce no more stars and it will be its own graveyard. Nothing within me can continue forever, says the universe.

While our Sun lives though our planet is host to **warm life**. Microbes, octopuses, okapis; fishes and flowers; bonobos and humans. These all follow the same principle of the universe but in a much more complex way. Moreover, unlike the universe and its galaxies, they reproduce themselves. Individuals die; species remain. If we compare a pike to a star, we see that the latter is absurdly simple in its structure. It is basically a lump of hydrogen that fuses into helium¹¹⁴. This is why stars die: they run out of puff. You can think of a star as a battery that recharges itself while it can. A pike, however, is an unimaginably complex mesh of cells and molecules and elements. Pike *eat*. The life processes quickly use up the stuff they are made out of that needs regularly to be replaced. Eating is replacing, a constant exchange of atoms and molecules. Warm life like a pike is more complex than

¹¹³ In the case of the most powerful stars, this will be a black hole.

¹¹⁴ Elements are electrons bound to protons (and incidentally to neutrons). Hydrogen is the simplest element, with one electron and one proton. Add one of each, you get helium. The forces within a star are strong enough to 'fuse' two hydrogen elements into one helium element. The force required to tear a telephone directory in half is nothing in comparison.

cold life like a star.

The current thinking on these matters suggests that death is built in to the life process. Genes possess *telomeres* ('end bits'). These can be compared to a candle. It is lit at birth and each time a cell reproduces, the telomere 'melts'. In old age, the telomere is mere stump of what it was and the life processes start to break down. In the end the body effectively self-destructs. Without death, life could not survive¹¹⁵. The species survives the individual, but for the species to live the individual must die.

This brings us to **resources**, the fundamental principle the underlies the economy. The life-process requires resources. The stuff that makes up the body of warm life is used up by the life-process and must be replaced to avoid dehydration and starvation. Here, *resources* refers to this replacement stuff.

At this level, we see warm life seeking for and competing for the resources needed to keep the life-processes going and ultimately keep the species going. Parasites, predators, prey, symbiosis, herbivores, carnivores, omnivores: the battle for resources is a complex system. Take predators and prey and go back to the earliest surviving fossil evidence of marine life. This has been described as an 'arms race'. For example, first *teeth* were invented and then shortly after *body armour*, just as in human history the invention of the *cannon* was closely followed by the invention of the *bastion*.

The point here is that the economy overlays the world of the resource. The question then is, *At what point*

¹¹⁵ The Earth could not support quadrillions of rabbits, for example.

does an economy begin? It could be argued that ants and squirrels have simple economies. Ants bring their food into the nest and store and distribute it very carefully. Squirrels also store food in preparation for winter, just as Joseph wisely stored the corn of Egypt. However, neither of these examples really fits the notion of a genuine economy. They both are really extensions of a resource-based society.

The same can be said for early human culture, particularly at the hunter-gatherer stage. Humans used tools, expressed themselves spiritually (ornaments, cave paintings, etc), gathered and no doubt stored resources. But in general hunter-gatherers cannot be said to have lived in an economic society. They made tools to live and they made art for free.

Even with farming and settlements, there was little that can be called an economy in small and self-sufficient villages. However, it is with farming that something that can be called an economy first materialises and, ever since then, humanity has been an economic species. The transformation is clearly related to and dependent on **surplus resources**. These were an inevitable result of farming. In fact, in the Middle East, the core area of early farming, we very early on find towns, which cannot exist without a significant resource surplus. By about 4000 BCE in south Iraq, we find the Uruk Culture wherein the first cities were constructed.

We can define an economy, then, as **the processing of surplus resources**. We can also observe that it is a human phenomenon requiring a human sensibility. For another way of describing ‘surplus resources’ is **wealth** and here is a key point. Wealth is more than

mere food (though it is that). Wealth is power and pleasure and freedom and status, and so on. It takes us far beyond 'resources' in the basic sense of stuff to replace the matter required to survive. The nature of wealth is complicated and contradictory (for example, it can rain down misery as much as pleasure). Those without it may desire it and if they achieve it, regret it. Wealth *can* get you anything, but often it doesn't. How wealth is processed is moreover often opaque. Economies are often complex, even early economies. The resources in an economy often come from afar and go afar. Precious amber, beloved by the Greeks, came from who knew where? *The Hyperboreans* was the best guess (that is, 'from the super-far north'). It is not surprising that wealth was often linked to the fates or fortune (*Fortuna* in Latin, whose wheel spun you up into the clouds or down into the dirt).

Wealth then, the offshoot of economies, is a complex thing both in its process and its reception. In a city or a tribe, not only the individual but the community has wealth, which is distributed (invariably unfairly) among its members. The attitude to wealth becomes even more complex taking into account the communal attitude to it. The poor, for example, may be envious of the rich or contemptuous of them but that contempt may be sincere or a rationalisation. How can anyone be sure of their true attitude to wealth until they have acquired it?

In some cultures, nobility counts for more than wealth in terms of status (which does not mean wealth brings no status). In Republican Rome and Confucian China, wealth meant less than birth. The Cornelii, Aemilii, Julii, Claudii had by birth an eminence no tax farmer could ever acquire. As the

Catholic Church looked down on usury — and bearing in mind that it was *supposed* to encourage the spiritual life — diatribes against riches were common amongst churchmen. A common motif was the transience of worldly wealth as compared to the eternal bliss of heaven.

Here are two diatribes against earthly riches:

From 'The Seafarer' (10 c)

	Forþon me hatran sind
dryhtnes dreamas	þonne þis deade lif,
læne on londe.	Ic gelyfe no
þæt him eorðwelan	ece stondað.
Simle þreora sum	þinga gehwylce,
ær his tid aga,	to tweon weorþeð;
adl oþþe ylðo	oþþe ecghete
fægum fromweardum	feorh oðþringeð.
	. . . Dagas sind gewitene,
ealle onmedlan	eorþan rices;
næron nu cyningas	ne caseras
ne goldgiefan	swylce iu wæron,

In truth the joy in God fires me more than this dead transient life on Earth. I do not reckon earthly riches will last forever. One of three things will be experienced before the uncertain final moments: disease or old age or the hateful sword will rip out life from the one doomed to die. Done are the days of glory and sovereignty; no kings nor emperors; no gold-givers as there once were.

Walter of Chatillon (12 c)

Ecce mundus demundatur:

Totus enim vacuatur

Mundus a mundicia.

. . . At vos certe plus iniquos,

Plus dampnados dico, si quos

Vexat avaricia.

. . . Opes mundi vos voratis,

Sed cum archas impleatis,

Mens est tamen vacua.

. . . Vos habendo non habetis:

Opes enim quas fovetis

Servient inopie.

Nec jam vobis famulantur,

Immo suis dominantur

Dominis divicie.

Behold the world unworlded, the whole world emptied of its worldness. It is you who are the most iniquitous, most damnable I'd say, you who are tormented with greed. You devour the wealth of the world but when you fill your coffers your soul is no less empty. You possess without possessing, the things you own serve only your ennui. Your riches are your masters not your servants.

As these compleyns indicate so vividly, economies existed before **capitalism** ever did. Capitalism is really only a new layer above the fundamental processes of an economy. In general, it shares the plusses and minuses of any economy. It adds new things but shares all the advantages and problems of wealth.

Capitalism is not just money, but money is the *sine qua non* of capitalism. It is the exchange of money, its economic process the flow of money. But it is not money. Coin was said to be¹¹⁶ invented in Lydia (a kingdom situated in the centre-west of what is now Turkey) in the 7th or 6th C BCE and soon spread throughout the region. It took to 150 BCE before coins appear in Britain and seventy years later, around 80 BCE, local kings began minting their own coins. Here is proof coins do not equal capitalism for although these coins signified wealth, they did so in the same way as a smart cauldron or a dashing sword or shield. Furthermore, they only appear in the south-east and midlands. Peoples beyond this region had no use for coins. In Greece and Rome, a money economy developed. Here, money was not merely an expression of wealth, it was a vital means of exchange. Were Greece and Rome capitalist societies, then? Not in a modern sense, for in general money was the measurement of wealth. If you had 100,000 sesterces, you had that amount of wealth. If you got lucky and now had 200,000 sesterces, you doubled your wealth via your coin. Coin equals wealth.

We can certainly see capitalism in the late Middle Ages and the city states of Renaissance Italy. In these city states, lenders laid their money out on a table, or *banca*. Hence 'bank'. If the lender ran out of money, the table was symbolically smashed (> 'bankrupt', literally *bench-broke*). So even the basic terms of modern capitalism begin to appear here. With the German bankers of the Fugger family¹¹⁷, we also see

¹¹⁶ By Herodotos in his *Histories*.

¹¹⁷ Opponents of capitalism can take comfort that the earliest mentions of this family spell its name 'Fucker'. '*The Fuckers of Augsburg have arrived!*,' cries out the emcee. In terms of Irish genealogy,

close ties between finance and industry. Copper was their choicest investment, the market for which they effectively cornered. Here we definitely see not only wealth but *money as wealth*. Money as a desirable thing in itself. This is the essence of capitalism, leading to an economy in which $w = s + m$ ¹¹⁸.

When we see the outline of the modern world becoming clearer, in the 1700's and 1800's, we observe the increasingly rapid growth of science and technology and both these being used to turn a profit. This is Marx's **capitalism**: the **capitalist** who buys a **manufactory** and pays workers a **wage** to work in it and who makes a **profit** from their **labour**. This is a social contract based on money. It is a world now populated by myriads of banks and therefore capital (money) washing through the economic process. Here I think the perception of money also becomes 'modern'. To have wealth is *to make money*. Money encroaches on wealth until it *becomes* wealth. If you had £100,000 having £200,000 means you have doubled your money. Things become **commodities** (Marx's items of fetish). These bring satisfaction bought with money. Once surplus corn was stored in silos, now the banks are effectively silos for money. Now $w = m$.

This is the root of capitalism. Is it all that bad? If there are bad aspects to it, isn't that so of pretty much everything else in the world? If we observe that *capitalism* overlies the more fundamental *economy* and even more fundamental *resources*, we can see that many of the bad things about it are found in and

capitalists are the O'Fuckers or MacFuckers.

¹¹⁸ That is, 'wealth equals stuff plus money'.

dependent on these more fundamental layers. For example, we are unlikely to believe that ‘money is the root of evil’ if we know firstly that wealth was just as much a part of pre-capitalist economies (so we need to think in terms of *wealth* rather than *money*) and secondly, we also see that pre-economic societies based on mere resources which had no wealth would be anathema to most people. *Where there are no rich, all are poor*. Of course, people living in these societies would not consider themselves ‘poor’, but few of us would choose to live in a society where there is no wealth. However it is distributed, *an increase in wealth increases the wealth of the community*.

At root, we can define this core version of capitalism as an essentially manufacturing affair: sellers selling what buyers like to buy. Though even this is open to profound criticism (the fetishised commodity, consumerism, products people are persuaded to like, etc), it is not a fundamentally wicked thing, which is where a fundamentalist critique of ‘capitalism’ seems so misguided to me, this merging of ‘capitalism’ and ‘neoliberalism’.

I have outlined my interpretation of the nature of neoliberalism in the previous section, but I think it has few things in common with root-level capitalism I mentioned just now. I believe that neoliberalism is very very bad, if not in fact evil. But it is unwise to concentrate on capitalism which is not inherently bad and which most people broadly support.

One thing — and such an important thing — that this conflation masks is that neoliberalism is very much a political movement that hides within economics. In fact, neoliberalism is a new kind of party. It exists both in and out of parliament but also in and out of

the state itself. It is both local and global. Neoliberalism is therefore not actually a movement which favours 'free market capitalism' but a political party that aims to impose a 'new world order' across the globe using the state and international bodies such as the IMF and the World Bank.

This has little to do with simple capitalism but *everything* to do with a bolshevik form of it that wants to take over the world and subdue it with laws and rules and hide these laws and rules with unprecedented levels of propaganda. *That* is what the What is left *ought* to oppose. Not a fundamentalist and abject war against capitalism *tout court*.

6.2 Neos and Imperialism

The word 'empire' comes from Latin *imperium* and 'emperor' from *imperator*. These words in turn come from the verb *imperare* ('to command') which leads us to the root *parāre* ('to decide, arrange, get'). This means the word 'empire' is built from the same root as *appear*, *compare*, *prepare*, *repair*, *separate* and *vituperate*. The word itself, clearly, is as innocent as most other words.

The concept of 'imperium' was key to the early Roman political system. It meant 'the power to command'. Imperators had greater or lesser levels of imperium, so an imperator with a greater level could command a lesser one. The obvious example of imperators under the Republic were the two consuls elected every year by the senate, for except within the city itself they were granted a general *imperium*. The core meaning is clearly remote from anything to do with empires or imperialism. It was a power invested

in a magistrate and it was not a permanent power.

The origins of ‘empire’ are probably to be found in the Middle East. The first empire was built by the city of Akkad when it established its power over the Sumerian collective of city states. Akkad was a centralised authority that imposed a common law and culture over all its territory. It was the template for later empires in the region.

The empire of Assyria was based brutal conquest – and then reconquest after reconquest. The kings of Assyria represented the god Ashshur¹¹⁹. These kings – instinctively I suspect – knew all about unthinkable propositions as they flayed and sliced and chopped their way to domination with the utmost righteousness. The empire hated by everyone else gloried in itself. Horrific atrocities are still today proclaimed on imperial stelae stood in silent museums for tourists to gaze at.

The empire of Persia, which effectively succeeded the Assyrian one, attempted to appear more benign. Perhaps it was, but hostile accounts have come down to us that attest against this being entirely true¹²⁰. However, the Persian empire seems on the whole to

¹¹⁹ Strictly speaking, the kings of Ashshur worshipped the god Ashshur whose home was the city of Ashshur. This in fact illustrates the ideology of the state – the empire – most clearly.

¹²⁰ The Greek historian Herodotos seems to preserve genuine and deeply hostile Egyptian traditions about the entry of the Persians into the land of the Nile and of course there are the Greek accounts of the Persian invasions of the mainland, which depict a more or less transcendent tale of Greek and Other that has remained a core myth in Europe for millennia. The reality, also revealed in Greek writings, was far more nuanced, less heroic and more pragmatic. Not the least nuance was the transformation of Athens, after its great victories over the invaders, into an imperial power via the Delian League.

have been a well-run and constructive force. It replaced local kings with governors (who however were often themselves local) but generally left local regions intact, still holding to the example of Akkad.

Empire, in the ancient Middle East, therefore meant a common rule and a common law over all its subject peoples. These subject peoples retained their identity but lost their independence as long as the empire could maintain its control over them.

Rome took this a step further. Rome was essentially a city but it developed two very important innovations. First, citizenship was granted to defeated enemies. Second, provinces granted defeated land to Rome. This expansion of *romanitas* and the acquiring of provinces was the basis of the city's empire. Conquered territory 'became Roman' under the 'imperium' of Rome. It should be stressed that the Republic was fully imperial. The innovation of Augustus was to establish a monarchy, usurping the power of senate and consuls¹²¹. The monarch now had *imperium* over all his provinces, but universal citizenship was soon granted too and so *romanitas* followed *imperium*. Rome therefore was far more than mere conquest; it was to a large extent an *assimilation*. The advance of Rome was the advance of *romanitas*. And *imperium*.

This is in contrast to the British Empire. In the first place, that empire emerged over a long period on an ad hoc basis and secondly over a large and dispersed area all around the world. There was never a conquest of India and never an intent to conquer India. There are however similarities. The expansion of Rome is

¹²¹ In the name of tradition, of course.

best thought of as *in the main* a defensive one¹²². So too the expansion of Britain, certainly in India. The original East India Company was based in Bengal, but this base quickly became involved in not only local politics but imperial politics with its rivals the French and Dutch. Britain defended itself by attacking and its victories set it against the remnants of the Moghul empire. Moghul defeated, borders expanded, the British now faced such enemies as the Rajputs. These defeated, we enter the Great Game where Britain now faced¹²³ the Russian Empire via the buffer zone of Afghanistan.

Britain was not Rome. It created no provinces and offered no 'britannitas'. Rather, the British Empire was ruled by functionaries who everywhere tried to create a subaltern class capable of dominating the mass of the people. British rule profoundly altered the culture of its subjects but it did not attempt to make them *British*. Around the time of WWI the tactics changed to mandates and 'indirect rule', where power lay in the hands of British officials but was nominally given to 'the natives'. This was cheaper by far than *direct* rule. Egypt and Iraq provide examples of this form of Empire.

¹²² Julius Caesar's conquest of Gaul and the invasion of Britain are both purely aggressive expansions, though Caesar's invasion can be explained in terms of Roman politics and the battles of the triumvirs. Caesar however presents his actions as defensive as he proceeds into Gallia. Each attack and plot against him is an attack against Rome, as if he brought the city with him in his pocket.

¹²³ In its own paranoid fantasies, that is. There is no evidence that Russia ever planned to invade India or aimed at controlling the Afghans. These fantasies are of great interest today as it is easy to see in them the equally paranoid fantasies of the cold warriors and the contemporary delusions of NATO.

Direct or indirect, the British were always a presence that no one could, or wanted to, deny. But there was no *romanitas* (natives remained natives) or province (colonies remained separate from Britain) nor even imperium (the chain of command led back to the monarch then later to Parliament). It was Rome without Romans yet believing itself a new Rome, but in many ways comparable to the Middle Eastern empires of HQ and governors.

Another example of Empire can be seen in China. The Chinese are a Tibeto-Burman speaking people originally located on the Huang-Ho ('Yellow') river. They developed an agricultural society that at some point became under the control of a single family – the first Emperors. These said that the land belonged to them and was granted by a Mandate from Heaven. The centre of the land – of the cosmos – was the imperial palace. Legend has it there were three ancient dynasties, the Xia, Shang and the Zhou. These – whatever the truth of their legends – established the basis of Chinese culture. China was civilisation and beyond it lay the barbarians. Curiously enough, these emperors gave away too much power to local forces and this led to a lengthy period of 'warring states'. The victor of these wars was a western state named Chin, originally a barbarian land that may not even have been Chinese. In its victory, however, it was now undeniably so, for it gave the land its name to the peoples of the west. The lands to the south of the Huang Ho were also 'barbarian' and equally doubtfully Chinese. These too became part of the Empire and these too were assimilated. Thus China, thus the land under which the succeeding dynasties ruled over.

We see a superficial comparison with Rome here. This empire offered a *sinicitas*. But Rome was provinces and China was a monolith. Chin was not a province in China, it was part of it. Just so with the south. China is therefore far more Chinese than the Roman Empire was Roman. Once 'China' was established, there seems to have been little thought given to expansion. The Chinese Empire has never been a relentlessly expanding blob. It was however, decidedly imperial. China saw neighbouring powers not as territory to be conquered but inferiors to be dominated. The Viet, for example, were unruly clients. They owed obeisance and tribute to the emperor. If they rebelled, armies were sent to set them right, to punish. Suitably quelled, all was right and the rebellion could be forgotten. The most terrible example of such disciplining involved the Mongol-speaking Dzungar people whose Khanate became troublesome. Between 1755-8 the Qing dynasty Emperor sent an army that committed what must be the least-known genocide in history (70-80% of the population killed). The very definition of truth and justice.

Akkad, Assyria, Persia, Rome, Britain, China – empires all. But is the US an Empire?

If we begin with the *literal* meaning of 'empire' derived straight from the Latin, the US is not an empire. The US President does not have imperium¹²⁴.

¹²⁴ Not historically. In recent years, Presidents have made war surreptitiously. For example, the US wars against Assad (2012 on), Yemen (2015 on) and Russia (2014 on or 2022 on, take your pick) have been undeclared. Likewise, the 2024-5 wars against Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Iran. In fact, the second Trump administration seems to see a US moving toward rule by decree, which would provide the President with something very like imperium.

Moreover, the US does not have provinces. It does not extend its territory. The idea that the US would invade a country and make the defeated party a new US state (in Roman terms a province) is unthinkable. This makes it profoundly different to not only Rome, but also the Middle Eastern Empires and Britain.

Perhaps a clue to the nature of the US's foreign policy lies precisely in its condemnation of colonialism and championing of self-determination. A colony is a 'closed' place and shut off to the outside world by its imperial power. One way of imagining how the US sees things is to picture the world as a hive and its states as flowers. The US wants to gather their honey. If a flower is 'open' it can, if 'closed' the honey is hidden and inaccessible. Open states are 'partners', closed ones are enemies. The goal is a world of 'partners' ¹²⁵. Within this worldview, self-determination opens up a state. We should not therefore see the US's anti-colonialism as anti-imperialism. Rather, in metaphorical terms, US imperialism is all to do with getting access to honey in the flower, not owning the flower. The colonies of the old empires were closed flowers in terms of US domination of them. Self-determination for the colonies necessarily meant the end of colonial control and access for US influence.

The roots of US imperialism lie in the roots of the European — we might say Anglo-Saxon — colonisation itself. The earliest colonists were faced with that mostly unwelcome sight the 'native'. To live — to establish themselves — the colonists had to displace the natives, wherever they went. It is true

¹²⁵ The *fear* is other hives.

that the very first settlers — when the New World was almost Anglo-Saxon-free — sometimes tried to live alongside their natives and were even helped by them. But when the flood of colonists began, there was only one option. As is well-known, this was greatly helped by the relentless wave of plagues the colonists providentially brought to so many of the native people they encountered.

For the natives to be displaced it was necessary to deny they had the right to possess the land they inhabited. One of the favourite arguments here was that natives merely *occupied* their land. Effectively this meant that the colonists were merely taking over common land. The natives were not *productive*. The land was wasted on them. In any case, they attacked the colonists and were therefore *savages*. The colonists in general were entirely disinterested in trying to learn about the beliefs and culture of native societies, so it appeared to them as if all the savages had was wigwams, tomahawks and scalping. What is more, they did not follow the True Faith laid down in the Bible. It was as if this early culture war was between the Truth of the Bible and tomahawkish scalper when seen through the colonist's eyes. The relentless progress of the colonists across the continent up to the Pacific Coast confirmed these beliefs a thousandfold. It was of course mere manifest destiny.

On a larger scale, the US ended up a gigantic place of 50 states, roughly as big as Russia but dwarfing the British homeland. It was proud of its political system, its industry grew and grew as did its economy (frequent crashes notwithstanding), its rail network, its inventions, its immense resources — at this

gigantic scale, contests with local natives seemed barely worth remembering (while of course constantly *re*-remembering in the ever-popular western novels and later films). At this scale, the US looked back on the old continent and saw it as a place of decay and decadence. It was yesterday's place and the US was to be tomorrow's place.

Around the turn of the 19th-20th centuries the US went through a brief period of proper Imperialism directed against Cuba and the Philippines. Both these places were held by the Spanish who lorded it over the natives. The US had contempt for both. The Spanish had no 'right' to lord it there, just as the natives had no right to self-rule. This attitude can be plainly and repeatedly seen in US foreign policy as it turned outwards after WWII. An early expression of this can be seen in the idea of 'Wilsonian liberalism', named after Woodrow W. This is a term for a foreign policy that spreads US 'values' which represent truth and justice. It is more or less imperative this be done and that the whole world (ideally) accept these values. The US, almost, has a *mission*. Although this has rarely been the *basis* of US foreign policy, its presence is often detectable as set of guidelines lurking in the background.

It should be obvious this is a characteristic found in both Assyria and China, especially the latter. In fact, we may *contrast* the US and Assyria, for the righteousness of the latter was entirely lost on everyone outside the Assyrian HQ. For a long time, the US managed to convince most of the world that its righteousness was something that the world could share in. The US, in this respect, seems close to China. If either of these acts, it acts for truth and

justice, not for its own self-interest¹²⁶.

This is a subtle form of imperialism, an imperialism hidden away. Even more insidious is the fact that US ‘values’ are at root not values at all. In fact, they add up to the US form of capitalism. In other words, the neoliberals would like the whole world to be connected to US business. All the world’s honey to the hive.

This is the difficulty of US imperialism, then. Every Empire is different, and so in the first place the US — if it is an Empire — is going to be different, but the second point to make is it does not act like an Empire or in a conventionally imperialistic way. It does not by default conquer and hold land or appoint governors or impose its laws. Its client states are nominally independent and often equally nominally democratic. It tirelessly proclaims a passionate belief in ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ and international law and due process. Much of its international control comes from global – and extremely neoliberal – organisations, in particular the IMF and the World Bank. Then there are US corporations themselves, seeping into client state after client state. Here we find a global corporate power, what with its treaties and organisations and networks and propaganda – all bound together with its neoliberal ideology. This corporate power is what makes US imperialism so enigmatic, for *it moves power away from the US state*.

¹²⁶ No one could possibly believe that of Assyria. The Persians seem to have tried and somewhat succeeded to do something like this in the early days of their Empire, to appear to offer a milder and kinder government than their hated predecessor. However, when the Empire expanded, the people of Egypt, Turkey, east Europe and most definitely Greece saw no truth or justice or lack of self-interest in the Persians.

There is the US on the one hand and corporate power on the other. It is palpably obvious that the US people (like people everywhere) be damned. The comparison here seems to be with Rome, but in a modified manner. Rather than *romanitas* here we observe *divitas* – not citizenship but *wealth* (Latin *dīvēs*). Under neoliberalism then, perhaps we see the US creating a global corporate power outside of US control, a world not of provinces but resource centres managed by local branches on behalf of HQ and ruled by a remote elite who have been granted *divitas*. Certainly, at the height of neoliberalism, which I have placed about 2015, the balance of power between the US and global corporations was not so clear.

In short, if you want to point out the extent of the US Empire on a map you would look foolish because you would be colouring in a whole load of nominally independent states. The US empire effectively says to its clients, ‘all for one and one for all’, neatly hiding the fact of its existence. The Empire is there but the links that bind it are almost invisible. The US doesn’t govern states, it controls forces within them. It *directs*. Moreover, these forces are increasingly able to control *it*. The possibility of a US empire evolving into a corporate empire is grim but real. Not quite *likely*, but possible.

A close look at US policy over the years reveals – many would be surprised at this and find it impossible to believe – how much it dislikes, even hates, democracy. It may be hard to believe for those who see what they see, but in fact it is not only transparently true but the reason for the dislike is easy to understand. If you look at democracy in terms of intent not mechanisms, you will conclude

something to the effect that democracy is at least government for the people. Any democracy must therefore in a broad sense nationalist. It follows that democracies work for the economic interests of their own people. Therefore, the US dislikes democracy¹²⁷. QED. As neoliberalism has taken hold, and neoliberal states spread and flourish, this dislike is spreading and flourishing. Here, the mechanical definition of democracy can be used to misdirect. A neoliberal government can be installed that opens its economy up to global corporations and as long as it follows the mechanics of democracy, it is a democracy. QED.

Let us now enumerate some of the most important methods the US uses to hold its invisible empire together so effectively.

1) Institutions and Agreements

The US dominates many international organisations, such as the IMF, World Bank and World Health Organisation¹²⁸. The IMF's 'Structural Adjustment Programs', for example, have an obvious agenda, for they almost always impose 'austerity' on the victim state and compel it to open up its economy to foreign business. The US also produces agreements such as NAFTA, which enforce and expand neoliberalism. Also, we must not forget national but global US military organisations such as CENTCOM and AFRICOM.

2) Interference

The US regularly interferes in the affairs of other countries, up to and including coups. Well-known examples of coups are Iran (Mossadegh), Chile (Allende) and Guatemala (Arbenz). The US also relentlessly interferes with states it

¹²⁷ It is of course the underlying nationalism it really dislikes.

¹²⁸ Which, under President Trump, the US has now withdrawn itself from.

does not like, such as Nicaragua under the Sandinistas, Venezuela under the Chavists and Haïti under Jean-Bertrand Aristide¹²⁹.

3) Intervention and Puppets

The US 'interventions' in Korea (1950), Vietnam (1964) and Afghanistan (2001) are well-known. Each resulted in puppet governments touted as the avatars of the sanctified Founding Fathers themselves. There are repeating patterns here. In the Buddhist land of Vietnam, the US planted a Catholic, Ngô Đình Diệm, in charge. In the Pashtun land of Afghanistan, the US planted a Tajik, Hamid Karzai, in charge. Interventions are atypical, though. They are too much in plain sight and need a good deal of effort to neutralise public opinion.

4) Military Bases

One of the most important keys to the US Empire is its globally-reaching network of military bases. These are dotted about the globe, but each dot represents a considerable local reach of force. Some of these bases are designed to deliver long-range air attacks.

5) Attitude to 'Natives'

In a sense, a globalising US has lost its colonial attitude to its 'partners', a good example of which is India in the software industry. The notion of 'native' is subtly changing as corporations expand and its senior employees become part of the 'we' group. Many senior execs of US software companies, including CEO's, are Indian¹³⁰. It is a mistake these days to assume any fundamental colour prejudice in neoliberalism. Rather, it is more a matter of class. India has its elite class and its ordinaries, as with everywhere in the

¹²⁹ A saintly figure transformed into a true demon after the propaganda got to work on him.

¹³⁰ For example Satya Nadella of Microsoft.

neoliberal world. It is among these ordinaries we might find 'natives'. Countries outside the neoliberal orbit, such as Libya under Qadhafi or Iraq under Saddam, have no elite connected to the US are therefore all-native. Just like the natives the colonists met in the early days, current-day natives have no rights. They occupy their land but do not possess it. Iraq and Libya are thus acquisitions as much as anything, at least to the US elite.

6) Media Control

It is said that the CIA owns at least one major newspaper in every European state. One well-known German columnist, newly-retired, made a bit of a splash recently by announcing he had been paid by the CIA for most of his career. Media control however is best-served by think-tanks and organisations that create neoliberal-friendly propaganda and pump it into a receptive media via the Dietrich Model of Delivery¹³¹.

7) Financial Control

Sanctions and boondoggles are a useful means of control, of course. Possibly the most egregious cases right now of financial warfare is against Venezuela and its Chavistas. The US will not relent in its struggle to get rid of them. A while back the Saudis dramatically lowered the price of oil, Venezuela's big export commodity, resulting in the country struggling to stay afloat and inflicting severe economic hardship on its population — and of course a reduction in the popularity of the Chavistas.

8) Charity

Charity is a good home for spooks to hide in. USAID, NGO's — these embed themselves into the victim and work their will for the Empire. Of course, the point is not that USAID

¹³¹ That is, the news is delivered 'from above' to its reporters and not created by journalists. Translated to jargon, push not pull.

and NGO's are spook organisations, but that they are a perfect cover for spooks. Or, indeed, for any kind of imperial influencer.

That is a very brief sketch, but the point is to illustrate at a high level how the US Empire works. Invisibly. For example, the very visible Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal erected inscriptions, which still exist today, telling the reader how he impaled his defeated enemies, cut the noses and lips of some, the hands of others and the feet of yet others. The Reaganites, on the other hand, told the US public of the wickedness of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas and of the nobility of the freedom-fighter Contras. The small matter of the jolly 'Columbian necktie' jape¹³² beloved of these Contras? On that there was the silence of an invisible empire.

The US is an Empire that is not an empire. The imperial bits of the US are often hidden under the hood. The US is very good at perceiving what constitutes 'news'. In recent years what is 'news' is increasingly defined from the top, but this refinement depends on the elimination of real journalism. In the 'good old days', the US had to cater for *some* kind of genuine journalism. Invisibility was still the aim; it just had to work a little harder for it. The explosion of outrage in 1979, for example, after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, was never countered by reports that the Soviets were appalled at the Marxists who couped Kabul and that the US rejoiced at the chance

¹³² To make one of these, a Contra would take a man (this is the sort of man who would 'never hurt a woman') and slice his throat open. He'd then — and this is hilarious *ne c'est pas?* — thrust his hand into the innards of the neck and pull the man's tongue down until it poked out of his throat so it looked — like a tie! The essay topic here is, *What is the moral difference between the Assyrians and the Reaganites?*

to mire its enemy in its own Vietnam. The western media stuck to the narrative of the Evil Empire launching its Imperialist attack and being defended by the morally horrified forces of freedom. The real US was as invisible as it always was.

You can see old Empires in the US if you look closely but even if you do it all fades away into nothing. This is because the US *is* the Invisible Empire. It *is* invisible. You can see its shadow; you can't see *it*.

6.3 Neos and Fascism

The foundation of Fascism is the conception of the State, its character, its duty, and its aim. Fascism conceives of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State. The conception of the Liberal State is not that of a directing force, guiding the play and development, both material and spiritual, of a collective body, but merely a force limited to the function of recording results: on the other hand, the Fascist State is itself conscious and has itself a will and a personality -- thus it may be called the "ethic" State . . . The Fascist State organizes the nation, but leaves a sufficient margin of liberty to the individual; the latter is deprived of all useless and possibly harmful freedom, but retains what is essential; the deciding power in this question cannot be the individual, but the State alone.

Benito Mussolini (or his ghost-writer), 1932

Some bad thought or party, for the longest while, can be described as 'fascist' or worse 'nazi'. Not just on

the left. The ‘woke’¹³³ brigade’ is often said to be ‘fascist’. Neoliberal propaganda has for some years been transmitting messages about the ‘far right’ (words like ‘extremism’ and ‘radicalisation’ are often added to the sauce). The suggestion is always there this ‘far right’ is at least a bit ‘fascist’. Moreover, this ‘far right’ is mirrored (in the propaganda) by a ‘far left’ (also ‘extremist’ and ‘radicalised’). Do these too betray a taint of ‘fascism’?

If ‘capitalism’ and ‘imperialism’ are vague terms, ‘fascism’ is more or less meaningless. It pretty much means ‘bad’, with a strong hint that it stops you doing what you want or thinking what you want to think (this latter generally most applies to right-wing types incapable of thinking, so it really means ‘feeling what you feel’ particularly if you feel sexist, racist or homophobic’).

So, if neoliberalism *is* a new form of fascism, as I think it is, this vagueness in the meaning of the word allows it to hide in plain sight — and neoliberalism is so well hidden anyway that few people are aware that it even exists. ‘Neoliberalism is a new form of fascism’. To most people that is saying, ‘A thing I have never heard of is bad’. Powerful stuff.

So what is fascism?

Just as Rome forged France (< Gaul) and England (< Britannia) it also created Italy. But just as Gaul and Britannia collapsed with the end of Roman rule, so too did Italy. The successors of the *Galli* in the Po Valley were the Lombards (that is, the particularly warlike Langobards). The rest of Italy became highly

¹³³ ‘Woke’ being the latest term for ‘political correctness’.

regionalised. Over the years, various foreigners set stall there. Sicily, for example, was taken over by the ‘Saracens’, then the Normans and then the German Emperor himself, the philosophical foe of the Papacy Frederick II. In the centre of the peninsular was the Papal States, governed by Popes determined to prevent a unified Italy and in the north the city states that gave birth to the Renaissance, as it were. In the end it was Hapsburg Austria that dominated Italy, its network of spies listening out for unwanted talk.

Then came Romanticism and nationalism. The notion of a united Italy existed before this, for example in a passionate poem written by Francesco Petrarch in Avignon. Petrarch rails against the way the peoples of Italy are selfish and apathetic against the repeated and terrifying attacks of the barbarians (that is Germans) from the north. If only they could unite and become a proud independent nation again. This is basically what the later nationalists said, except their oppressors were super-sophisticated not ‘barbarian’ Germans. These nationalists were different to Petrarch though, for they formed a movement that tapped into a powerful 19th century zeitgeist. In 1870 they won, when an independent and united Italy came into full existence.

This is the key to understanding the origins of fascism, for the nationalist dream had been realised and, as in all such realisations, it was soon shattered. A unified nation was, it turned out, a land of disparate regions. The main contrast was between the poor and agricultural south and the industrialising and wealthy north. Politics was in the main a matter for the north, fought out by bourgeois business factions remote from ordinary people. A world, in

fact, of chums and ordinaries. Business reflected politics: chums employed and exploited ordinaries. There were capitalists and workers.

The word 'fascist' comes from Italian *fascio*. This is in turn from Latin *fascis* (plural *fascēs*). In early Rome, the rex was accompanied by twelve *lictors*. The fascis was a bundle of rods used to inflict punishment on criminals and was a prominent symbol of power. The fascis symbol has been widely used over the years without any suggestion of fascistic beliefs. It is often used as a symbol of law and order. For example, the House of Representatives' mace is effectively a fascēs. A comparison can be made with the entirely benevolent swastika warped into the symbol of nazism.

In fact, the first fascists were leftists located in the north and they fought big business. The word *fascisti* (singular *fascista*) here actually means something like 'union' or 'bund' (a fascista being 'a union member'). The fascisti were popular and had a recognised presence. They were a thorn in the side of business. One fascista was an intelligent young man from a working-class background called Benito Mussolini. He was an anarchist who turned to socialism but he was first of all *ambitious* and neither anarchism or socialism was ever going to fulfil the dreams of the ambitious. Mussolini therefore started to re-think. The result of this was a move towards a new fascism moulded in his own image.

The problem was the dream of nationalism and the reality of government. On the one hand we have 'the people', on the other a remote collective of self-interested petty bickerers. Fascism was both the renewal of nationalistic dreams and the vehicle for

satisfying Mussolini's ambition. According to the new fascism, democracy was precisely this remote petty bickering. *Democracy did not represent the nation*. What was needed, it was argued, was a party that *would* be a national representative. One single party that worked for the people would be a huge improvement over remote factions representing themselves. It should be a single party, of course, because there was but one nation, one people. Fascism would be the party of Italy. It was the party of the people that would rebuild the nation.

Mussolini was the kind of fascista that big business liked. A good part of his new ideas about the nation rested upon union, and here he argued that *capitalist and worker were on the same side, the side of the nation*. Of course big business liked that. They liked it even more when they found they could pay Mussolini's fascists to beat off the leftists, which they did to great effect. The leftist fascisti — the original fascisti, remember — have been largely forgotten. All that remains is the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento*, Mussolini's mob. This was founded after WWI and its name reflects the paramilitary nature of the new fascism, fuelled of course by the war.

The early fascists (of the Mussolini type) are hard to classify politically though. The movement was radical — it was primed to *do* something, not just talk, so reformists were attracted to it — and had leftist roots. Probably the safest thing to say about it was that it was not liberal. It did not attract liberal voices.

Moreover, fascism spread throughout Europe, especially after the Fasci Italiani gained power in 1922. This leads us to a key point. It is impossible to define what fascism actually was. At least no scholar

of fascism has managed to do so. The main problem is that fascists popped up all over Europe all bursting with ideas and policies but only two fascist parties achieved power, in Italy and Germany¹³⁴. The principal problem then in defining fascism is that it had little chance to define itself.

However, at least if we take into account the two parties that did make it into power, we can define one aspect of fascism that strongly characterises both. Both in Italy and Germany (and to a far greater extent with the latter), the Party integrated itself into the State. A key word in Fascist Italy was *Corporatism*. This actually meant a collective of corporate bodies that are close to a workers *union*, except that they were part of the State. This was Mussolini's idea of the people being one and boss and worker equally part of the nation. If you imagine a banker's union headed by CEOs, that is kind of what a fascist corporation was and why the Italian elite didn't really mind the Fasci Italiani too much. This corporatism was narrow in its definition, but I think if we widen its sense, we see the connection to neoliberalism. In this wider scope, the one party is merged with the state and — despite all the claims — remote from the people. Likewise in the Germany of Hitler, except more so. This is what we get with neoliberalism, in a mutated form. Here, we have parties, but only neoliberal parties. Moreover, as I have argued above, the actual neoliberal party exists *outside government*. In a sense, these parties are a mere bridgehead for the actual party. Structurally

¹³⁴ General Franco in Spain was absolutely not a fascist, but a conservative authoritarian. Almost his first act as dictator was to liquidate the Spanish fascists.

and conceptually, then, fascism and neoliberalism are more or less identical in this sense.

It has long been recognised that Hitler and Stalin are in many ways very similar. Lenin's idea of the *dictatorship of the proletariat* is conceptually identical to Mussolini's idea of a national government led by his party, except Leninism goes much further. There, *the party is the government*. Essentially too, 'the workers' and 'the people' are the same, for in Leninism there is only the Party and the Worker. *The workers are the people*. And then Stalin. What is his 'socialism in one country' if not 'national socialism'? Neoliberalism can be thought of as *bolshevist* as well as fascist.

So, QED. In this sense we can point to neoliberalism as **fascist capitalism** or if we prefer, a **bolshevist capitalism**.

A couple of other very significant points must be made. It seems an odd question perhaps, but How evil *was* fascism? Another yet more provocative one, *Was* fascism evil? From here we can ask if it is useful to the What is left to follow the propaganda motif of *demonising* nazism so that nazis become literally *demonic*.

This section so far has deliberately kept its focus on fascism in Italy. Now if we rephrase the above questions as 'How evil was nazism' and '*Was* nazism evil', these are I think *unthinkable propositions*. That is, the question should not be answered, but the statement itself rejected. With regard to fascism in general and Italian fascism specifically, these are in fact reasonable questions and the merging of fascism and nazism is bad for any sort of leftist message.

The first point to make is that we need to look at history and even prehistory. Here we find a long tradition of central European invasions into at least the Po Valley. The only ones we need consider here is the relentless sequence of German invasions during the battles between the Emperors and Popes. To the collective Italian memory, these are equivalent to the Norman Invasion and the Spanish Armada. An analogy would be the cold warriors' absurd conflation of Red China and Red Vietnam, as if imperial domination of the latter by the former never happened. Mussolini, far from celebrating Hitler's rise, was worried by it and why not? Would any Italian really relish the aggressive rise of the old invader? Then there is nazi racism, based on the idea of the *Nordic German*. How many Italians really relished the resurgence of a Germany run by racists with a thing for Nordic supremacy?

It is a fact that early (pre-alliance-with-Hitler) fascist Italy was inclusive. The nation included all¹³⁵ Italian people. Jewish Italians were included, and joined the *Fasci Italiani* at about the same rate as Protestant or Catholic Italians. This alone would be shocking to many people who associate fascism with racism. As soon as you see that Italian fascism was not nazism, the shock should soon fade. So when we learn that the founder of right-wing Zionism, Vladimir Jabotinsky, was strongly influenced by fascism, as long as we understand that this was the early Italian type, we should not be surprised.

¹³⁵ As is always the case with this sort of ideology, which cannot be opposed, those who *do* oppose it are utterly othered. An opponent of the people was by this definition not 'of the people'. So at all times *we-the-people* were included, the *Other* excluded.

The next point to make is that the ideas I have outlined above, disagree with them or not (and I profoundly disagree with them), are hardly *evil*, or at least I cannot conceive how they are evil. The idea that petty bickering faction should be replaced with a national government is illiberal, not evil or even necessarily bad or for that matter worse than government by remote factions. It is hard to see much *good* in fascism from a liberal point of view and therefore a reasonable conclusion is that for a liberal fascism is inherently bad. But bad is not evil and not everyone is a liberal.

Italian fascism was however thuggish and machist. Here we veer towards — certainly this is so from a leftist perspective — a negative judgement. But even here, *evil*? That seems a strong word. It is worth remembering that the Fasci Italiani state murdered a few hundred people over the period of its existence. That is a few hundred too many and anyway, any leftist who reads about Anton Gramsci (and they should) and his fate in prison will be aware of the fate of those who opposed the state in a serious way. But if you consider that Israel in its current assault on the Middle East, has killed that many in a single day (600 killed in the first attack of Lebanon, 400 killed breaking the ceasefire with Hamas for example) in a world-historical scale the number is small. This can be compared with nazi Germany. Within the nazi state the first work camp was established when Dachau¹³⁶ was opened to great fanfare in June 1933. Such work camps sprouted up all over Germany. In a terrifying way, they worked similarly to a Cistercian monastery which might spawn a whole network of

¹³⁶ On the outskirts of Frankfurt.

child foundations. These camps were hellish places in which the life, let alone the comfort of inmates was worth nothing. These inmates were the *asozial* (anti-socials). Lives unworthy of living (*lebensunwertes Leben*). One of these camps, Flossenbürg, has been studied in detail. Flossenbürg was a small village of just 1200 souls and its camp was modest in size but by 1945 it had 92 subcamps in which 100,000 people were interred and 30,000 died. Just one of the smaller camps, but there were many others. How does Italian Fascism compare to that and why compare it? Because the communist Laos of the Pathet Lao was an oppressive place does that mean it should be placed side by side with the communist Cambodia of the Khmer Rouge? No, surely.

Which brings us to our final point, which is to warn against accepting the demonisation of nazism. The nazis were not demons. Demons exist only in the mind and there all sorts of demon. In fact, as I pointed out earlier in this book, the nazi 'Jew' was himself as a demon. All a demon is, really, is a name for primal human fears. So, all demons, if they are not exactly the same, share many similarities. The difference between one demon and another depends on which primal fears they were built out of.

The reason any What is left should reject the demonisation of nazis is that new nazis can crawl out of the woodwork very easily simply by not looking like the spawn of hell. A nazi demon is a brutish man covered over with swastikas, but the new nazi standing before you is a woman in a smart suit whispering corportygook at you. It is the old magician's trick. Misdirection. Be scared of the non-existent demons, you ordinaries. We'll protect you. So

you look out at the invisible demons and away from the new nazis. You notice the nothing and ignore the thing behind you coming to get you, but there is no one to shout out *Behind you!*

6.4 Neos and Totalitarianism

In 1923 the anti-Fascist journalist Giovanni Amendola wrote an article in *Il Mondo* that contains the following passage:

Veramente la caratteristica più saliente del moto fascista rimarrà, per coloro che lo studieranno in futuro, lo spirito «totalitario»; il quale non consente all'avvenire di avere albe che non saranno salutate col gesto romano, come non consente al presente di nutrire anime che non siano piegate nella confessione: «credo».

In truth, the chief characteristic of the Fascist movement for its future students is the 'totalitarian' spirit; in the future no new day will be greeted without the Roman salute, just as the present shall not feed the soul who does not kneel to proffer an 'I believe'.

It is that 'totalitario' that is the first use of the term borrowed into English as 'totalitarian' in 1938. As can be seen, the meaning is vague yet perfectly clear. It describes a movement bound by a belief that brooks no contradiction. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Fascist supporters such as the prominent thinker Giovanni Gentile gladly adopted the term themselves, of course in a positive light. Here we move to an Italy ruled by a party that represents the nation and speaks for the people. It is a 'total' party, and that is a good thing because the party is good.

However, the word is generally given a more specific meaning. If we say that Hitler's Germany and Stalin's USSR are 'totalitarian states', we are narrowing its definition. For example, India or Mexico were hardly 'totalitarian'. Even Spain under Franco, doubtfully. For narrowing the definition in this way separates totalitarianism from, say, simple authoritarianism, for 'total' indicates unlimited power. With Germany's notion of 'nation' and the equivalent 'worker' in the USSR, there seemed no limit to what the state was empowered and entitled to do. Although both systems claimed to hold the key to absolute truth to deny which made someone 'anti-social' or a 'saboteur', both these regimes give textbook examples of the destruction of truth-value. This, as Hannah Arendt argued, gave them their entitlement, but it went much further in the USSR than in Germany. For 'the German' was clearly defined against 'the asozial' and it was this latter they pursued, but in the USSR anyone could be accused of anything at any time and by stranger, friend or family. No one could feel safe, the elite least of all.

We can now ask, Was Rome totalitarian? Were absolute monarchs such as Louis XIV? The answer quickly comes back in the negative as soon as we realise that totalitarianism is a modern phenomenon. It requires a modern state with its communication networks and its common institutions. Neither Rome nor Louis had these; neither was capable of creating a 'total' culture.

If this is so, it raises the disturbing question as to whether modern states are not inherently 'total' cultures as, after all, it is these communication networks and common institutions that are shared by

all of them. We can think of them as **partial-total** societies. This apparently contradictory term says that there certainly are **total elements** in a modern state but they are not by default focussed or organised. For example, in the UK there is the BBC, the national syllabus and a national rail network, but these are a very long way from leading to 'totalitarianism'.

But there is the clue as to what totalitarianism really is. It is **a system in which total elements are focussed and organised**. We can see this was the case in both Germany and the USSR under Hitler and Stalin. There we see a central binding force – 'the nation' and 'the worker' represented by a monolithic 'party' – that works to *coordinate* the components of the modern state and to *control* them and indirectly to control both people and opinion.

It is in this sense that neoliberalism can be seen as at least a potentially totalitarian system and moreover with a global reach. Neoliberalism is best viewed as a *political* system rather than a form of capitalism, let alone a free-market one. It is oikocracy, government and corporation working as one. In an oikocracy, corporations do not in any sense *control* government: they *are* government. To put it another way, government is merely a node in a larger network of power. This network of power is coherent enough to provide the central binding force for a totalitarian system. Moreover, neoliberal ideology is more or less cult-like and has infiltrated into almost every aspect of society. In the UK, our 'total elements' – education, the BBC and the national rail network – are all fully neoliberal now. Even if you need a plumber, once such a stronghold of so and so and sons, you are likely to

be directed toward some or other national franchise.

If we look at totalitarianism in this way, we can ditch the idea that a formal Party and a Big Leader and a Logo¹³⁷ are necessary for it to thrive. Neoliberalism is an informal and undeclared party and it has no leader. Perhaps we can see an HQ in Washington, but it has no real centre. So, it doesn't *look* totalitarian, until we look closely. As usual, until we open our eyes we just see what we see.

6.5 Neos and Workers

The most coherent left system of thought is I think due to Karl Marx. That I believe, but I do not believe Marx is so useful any more to a What is left.

The followers of Marx are easy to spot. Every tenth word they utter is 'the working class'. *Capitalists must face the fact our future lies with the working class*, they say. This word 'the working class'¹³⁸ is a sort of incantation. It is as if Marxists are in a sense Rapture Ready and waiting for 'the working class' to descend from the skies and save us all.

The problem lies not with Marx but his modern followers. Marx's utopian vision of workers of the world uniting isn't much use to anyone, but his analysis of the capitalism of his day is worth a very great deal. His basic model of capitalist and worker make perfect sense in that context. Capitalism was manufactories. A capitalist acquired a factory and

¹³⁷ Swastika or Hammer & Sickle.

¹³⁸ Few Marxists, I think, are working class and few working class were ever interested in Marx.

employed workers to make things to sell. Marx's notion of paying attention to the capitalist system not the sentimental values of capitalists seems to me a universally valid observation. System not sentiment. Capitalism exploited workers via extracting surplus value from their labour. Look there for the exploitation, at the system, not at whether that or that capitalist is generous or ruthless.

Marx's model of exploitation and his model of capitalism seem very sound to me *for then*. But what about now? Did Microsoft build a factory and employ workers to make things? Can Microsoft workers ditch the capitalist and own the factory themselves? The sheer absurdity here is palpable. Microsoft is not a factory of workers. It is an immensely complex web — a global web — of cogs that make up the wheel that whirls to work the corporation. There is no 'capitalist' and, really, no 'workers' as a single recognisable unit. Corporations like Microsoft typically contract out a lot of work, meaning you can work for Microsoft without working for Microsoft. The same goes for pretty much any other large corporation.

Who in this brave new world is 'the working class'? The term for a start is confusing, for there is the Marxist notion of an economic class and the popular concept of a social class. Even in terms of social class, what is 'the working class'? It *was* what was once known as the 'servile classes', or 'wage earning' classes, then the 'labouring classes'. The 'working class' dwelt in 'working class' areas of industrial cities. Stepney, working class. Toxteth, working class. Salford, working class. Then there was the way 'the working class' talked, so far from the 'received

pronunciation'¹³⁹. '*Ee by gum! Gor blimey mate! Och aye tha noo! Look you!*', working class.

This 'working-class' belongs to the past, to a white and British place made up of archaic regional provinces. This no longer exists. The UK is no longer a white country and many of its inhabitants are transients. The old identities are gone for good, including that of 'the working class'. For example, a whole accent evolved in London during the 1990's at the latest based on the speech of black Londoners, a sort of blend between Cockney and Caribbean. The most exciting music, for example, was made by black artists and had a large vocal component. It was hip, it was emulated, its black London speech patterns assimilated¹⁴⁰. It is harder to place this accent in terms of social class than the good old accents.

Even if you can point to 'poorer' areas (often of course older 'working-class' areas), what is gone is 'class', which has not survived the atomisation of society under neoliberalism.

So if social class is problematic these days, what about economic class, the especial business of Marxists? Same thing, I would say. What *class*? Work too has been atomised. You can say, for example, that these workers earn £14,000 a year and are therefore 'the working class', but it can be repeated *What class*? How does earning £14,000 a year put you in a class with others in that class. Is there 'the tall class' of

¹³⁹ This point though is confused by the fact that 'provincials' often 'had an accent' even if they were not working class.

¹⁴⁰ The unpleasant and racist term 'wigger' — 'white nigger' — is sometimes used in this context, which crassly inverts the obvious fact that the accent is colour-blind.

people over 6' 5" in height? Is there 'the bungalow class'? A 'the people named Smith class'?

The solution to neoliberalism cannot be class because class is not the problem. Marxists, worse, set 'the working-class' against 'the bourgeois', which simply creates a meaningless division where any What is left movement demands union. For what I have said about 'the working-class' applies equally to 'the bourgeois'. The latter was *defined* against working people as a social class. The old definition of the middle class was just as based on a white British culture as was that of the working class. Things have changed so much since then that these old definitions are almost meaningless now.

Marx created a coherent belief system for the left, but the definitions that the coherency of the system relied on are no longer there. It is as if Marxism is a cultural reference *everyone* understood at the time but now no one gets.

Why did the clepsydra cross the road? Water silly question.

6.6 Isms and Iz

Anyone who thinks about politics and ideology and beliefs must look behind the curtain and discover **the wonderful wizard of Iz**.

Iz *is*. It is reality. You mightn't like it, but it's always there and will be after you're gone. There is no wizard of Izunt.

We have neoliberalism and we have the wizard of Iz. There is neoliberalism and there is Iz. It is easy to talk about neoliberalism and the evils of

neoliberalism and forget about Iz. Iz is, for example and especially, *technology*. Neoliberalism is not technology, but it *uses* technology. This basic fact is so easy to forget. We can be describing how this or that bad thing is caused by neoliberalism but in fact we are pointing the finger at a technology. The one is an **ism** the other an **iz**.

The problem of confusing **ism** and **iz** lies in misunderstanding the relationship between them. Take microchips, for example. If we talk about the **ism** of growth and profit and shares and CEO's, fine and dandy, but behind all that lies the **iz**. I said 'the **ism**' just then to illustrate that any and all **isms** face the same **iz**. How do you design and make a microchip and constantly improve its design? That is what AMD and Intel do, year after year. We — and AMD and Intel — live in a neoliberal world. These giant corporations no doubt greatly favour this world. If nothing else, neoliberalism hearts giant corporations. But. Another **ism** is socialism. Faced with this **iz**, what can socialism *do*? Here, the **iz** is making microchips and improving them. At the least, that is manufacturing and R&D. This is the **iz** of microchips. It is not negotiable. You cannot go back to the neolithic Grime's Graves mines and make microchips out of flint. The wizard of Iz won't allow it. The point is, how much **ism** is there in the **iz** of making microchips? The **iz** is not only in the business of making chips but the inventing of better chips. Making and improving. The **iz** gives us a choice of 'microchips or no microchips'. To understand the **iz** means to observe the system not the sentiment, just as Marx suggested we do. Look at the **iz** not the **ism**. Say, as a rough guesstimate, the **iz** makes up 90% of microchip manufacturing. That leaves just 10% for

any ism to work with. How can you change the microchip industry with socialism or anarchism or feminism? You might as well try reforming it via onanism.

The world of tech is more iz than ism. How misreading that leads to gross misunderstanding can be seen in a case study of Bill Gates. Gates is a billionaire, a super-capitalist and a neoliberal in excelsis. During the COVID-19 years, covid-sceptics endlessly obsessed about him. It was as if he was some demonic force who, like Vladimir Putin, somehow controlled everything. With his links to the WEF, he — it seemed the sceptics were saying — more or less ruled the world. He created a fake scare, covid, with a dastardly plan to corner the market in pharmaceuticals and cull the human population of the globe (implying that covid actually was deadly, but ho hum). He was a greedy billionaire who would stop at nothing to get more billions. Gates (and the WEF) represented the aim of neoliberals to rule the world.

Is that really Bill Gates? Not if we take a look at the person behind the demon. Here we find, in the beginning, a solidly middle-class boy who stands out for his extraordinary intelligence. When Gates took his SATs, he got a mere 99%. Not good enough. He took it again and achieved the perfect 100%. What we observe in the young Gates is a young man of high ambition, who wanted to *do* something. But what? He did not know, but the sheer scale of his intelligence led him to believe he could do anything. Math was what he chose to achieve greatness, for mathematicians often achieve greatness while they are still young. But oh dear, there was

disillusionment soon after starting at Harvard. He quickly recognised how far he fell far behind the true mathematicians and that he was not anywhere near good enough to achieve glory in math. This is key. Gates is not a genius. He is *clever*. His superb brain can learn things very quickly and retain the necessary facts. In this he far outstrips your average math genius. His cleverness makes him a generalist and it is probably true he *is* a genius at this somewhat ethereal level. After his mathiphany he drifted a little and returned to his old hobby of computing. Here he noticed a curious and interesting development. In a world of room-sized computers available only to huge companies and universities, someone had developed a kit for a *personal* computer. When the kit became available, Bill read, you would have to build it yourself and program it yourself using machine code. What if, he wondered, it came pre-packed with a BASIC program¹⁴¹? It would be much easier to get going with it if you had the head start of a BASIC assembler¹⁴². So, he got the spec for the kit and with his friend Paul Allen he wrote a BASIC program. On paper, as there was no computer yet to run it on. Paul wrote the code and Bill optimised it. Before he took the finished code to the potential buyer, he formed a company, MicroSoft. Luckily the code worked, the buyer bit, MicroSoft had a product.

The thing to note in this story of how Bill Gates started out is how remote it all is from 'neoliberalism'. The story exists more or less entirely in the iz. Outside of that, we see not an ism but a

¹⁴¹ BASIC being a very simple programming language.

¹⁴² An assembler translates computer code into the machine language a computer understands.

burning ambition, and a very focused one too. It is likely Gates had the strategic business sense that personal computers had enormous potential, but it must be recognised that he had sold a piece of software for a *product* that did not yet exist, let alone a *market*. At this stage, even if personal computers took off, it was quite unclear how they would do so, or what a commercial PC would look like, let alone what MicroSoft's role would be.

I think that is the thing in understanding Bill Gates. The drive is to *do* something, to *succeed*, to *be a someone*. This is what made Microsoft. If Gates was primarily a neoliberal capitalist his company would have been nothing. It wouldn't even have gotten started. Gates was a technologist who was smart enough to understand business. But he made Microsoft as a technologist. As the company grew, he was like an Eye of Sauron at the centre, watching and judging and deciding. The development of the PC, after a slightly hesitant start, soon took off at a fine pace. The deployment of a BASIC program to the PC kit was a good start, but the PC soon outran that. The next step was to write an *operating system* (a suite of software that runs the hardware — in those days, keyboard, monitor screen, disk drives and printer). Gates made sure his company was in at the forefront there, the result being MS-DOS ('Microsoft Disk Operating System'). There were other companies doing the same thing, but Microsoft won out. MS-DOS was the operating system bundled with nearly all PC's. The PC and Microsoft became more or less synonymous. If the basic principle of capitalism is that you can make a million either by selling one thing for £1,000,000 or a million things for £1, the secret of Microsoft's financial success is

transparently clear. The growth of the company was the growth of the PC.

In other words, Gates made his billions for being in the right place at the right time and making a product guaranteed a mass market. What Gates was good at — and here we see his generalist genius come into play — was consolidating his business. Gates made technologies but he also built up an effective corporate structure. People, for example, bought Microsoft products tied to Microsoft contracts. Microsoft, if you like, effectively became a ‘place’, even in the early days one that was situated globally.

As he built up his company, we see burning ambition burning more intensely with each success. Each challenge was overcome. An early challenge was a new kind of PC called the Macintosh, made by Apple. This had a mouse that was used with a ‘windowed’ user interface. It was much easier to use than MS-DOS. It took Windows 3.11¹⁴³ before it had its own rival mouse-driven system. Then came the Internet, which Gates initially ignored. As soon as he saw its significance, all hands were on deck and that little problem was overcome. All down the line, then, we see technology as the key, not mere capitalism. Iz not isms.

In the end, Microsoft became a sort of presence in the world. It was just *there*. At this point, Gates let go the reins of the company as if it could offer him nothing further to satisfy his ambitions. He had achieved all he would with it. This would explain what he has done since, which is to become a sort of statesman without a state. His big interests are pharma-tech and agri-

¹⁴³ That is, after three and a half versions.

tech and the reach with both of these is global. It is here the demonic gatesian force lurks in the minds of his detractors. However, the real Bill Gates is not a billionaire wanting more billions but someone who wants to *be someone* trying to further his ambitions. Successful beyond all measure in technology and business, we are now moving into the realm of the global influencer seeking to be a figure of *historic importance*. Instead of seeing billions, pharma, agri, see 'world health' and 'feeding the world'. See *doing good*. *Capitalism saves the world*.

'Bill Gates, the entrepreneur who devoted his later life to providing medicine and food to developing countries . . .', he no doubt sees his obituary as saying. Seeing him as a demonic figure who moreover has supreme power is a misdirection.

It is in fact *here* post-Microsoft we see ism override iz. Big-pharma and big-agri are the iz here, not Bill Gates the idealist, who is not a pharma or agri technologist. By missing Gates' idealism and therefore equating him with pharma and agri corporations devoid of idealism the actual reasons all this is truly bad are left unconsidered.

Take big agri. It is incontestable that technological advances in agriculture have helped humanity. This is a resource thing. Humanity gains more food resources with better agriculture. Beyond a certain point this benefit becomes increasingly equivocal. Enclosure in England caused a social revolution and was a more logical use of agricultural land. However, it moved agriculture towards a new economic model of the big landowner employing workers to farm the land. With the big owners taking all the land, the little people had no land on which to eke a living, city

or vagrancy the result. Under big agri, this phenomenon is occurring on a global scale as neoliberal-driven capitalist farming practises are being introduced everywhere. This means for one thing a world of slums, slums and more slums. The brave new big agri world means cash crops. People no longer farm to feed themselves but for profit, for *export*. Then there's big chem big agri. Pesticides. It is not controversial that these deadly chemicals are wickedly destructive both to people and to wildlife, not to mention the earth itself.

It simply cannot be claimed unequivocally that big agri or big pharma are a boon to the world. Big agri reshapes societies and big pharma throws out the health of humanity to the wolves of profit. The point here is the *Bill Gates believes in big agri and big pharma*. He *believes* that technology can solve the world's food problems and provide it with the medicine it needs. This belief — the belief of a true believer in capitalism and neoliberalism — is clearly dangerous. It is meddling with nature in the case of big agri and basic well-being in the case of big pharma. Gates' belief is also a belief in corporations, that capitalism is ultimately a force for good. How can a corporation that enables people to eat or makes medicine for them — how can these be bad? Capitalism anyway made him a billionaire. It must be good surely?

With agri and pharma, we can note two things. Firstly, we can see how an ism *can* help drive the iz in a specific direction. Secondly, we see that agri and pharma are dominated by giant corporations who do the real driving. In the everyday world of the iz, these follow profit rather than isms. This provides us with

another clue as to what neoliberalism is, more or less a *process in the iz*.

A while back, James Lovelock introduced the world to his *Gaia Hypothesis*. This idea — still a hypothesis, but one found plausible by many scientists — speculates that the world itself can be considered as a sort of life form. It consists of an almost infinitely complex system of physical processes, including living species. Lovelock argued that there is a sort of supersystem to all of this. Gaia adapts to survive. Above the system lies Gaia. I suggest that neoliberalism is best understood if we introduce a comparable supersystem, the **Mammon Hypothesis**. Above the world economy lies Mammon, who is the supreme wizard of Iz. Mammon, like Gaia, is everywhere and nowhere. We all belong to Mammon, but the most enthusiastic servants are the billionaires and their bigcorps. Profit is the bait of Mammon and the bigger the bait the more devoted and debased the servant.

However much neoliberalism needs to be fought by any upcoming What is left, it must always be remembered that behind it lies the iz and Mammon the wizard of Iz. Iz *is*. To change it you have to change the iz not the ism and often the iz is not open to change. Can the world economy can be made to hand itself over from Mammon? Perhaps at least to Fortuna or some more agreeable figure.

6.7 The Age of Man

Victor Hugo summoned up the dangers of the belief that the saviour of humanity is the engine of scientific and

technological progress in a poem about creation¹⁴⁴. In the poem, creation is under way. God is busy and Satan looks on green with envy. God sees Satan scuttle off in his workshop. There is a sound of furious activity. Bangs and clangs and flashes and bashing and crashing and hammering and pounding and pummelling. The noise stops. Satan steps out the workshop and shows God the results of his labour. A spider. God smiles. He takes the spider and casts it high up into the sky where it bursts into flame as it is transformed into the Sun.

That is some metaphor but here Satan is not a symbol of evil but of limitation. He strives, succeeds. But at a low bar, the spider. The power of God is glorious, of Satan wretched. If we replace God with nature and Satan with humanity, the poem shows us a humanity not incapable but limited and suggests the wisdom of recognising that. Nature, the glory of the living cell; humanity, sheets of polymers we call 'plastic' and 'polythene'.

The little figure at the centre of all this, the gnat in the shadow on Mammon, the custodian of the iz, is the human being. We can define three ages of humanity.

- 1) The Age of **Nature**,
- 2) The Age of **God**,
- 3) The Age of **Man**.

This last is almost at an end. Perhaps we are gradually entering the Age of the Machine.

The Age of Nature was a time of what might be termed **powers of nature**: spirits and gods (plural). These inhabited the earth as much as humans and

¹⁴⁴ From his epic 'La Légende des siècles' ('The Tale of Time').

animals and plants, it was just they were invisible. You never saw them, but you saw their effects. Harvests might be good or bad and this was due to the powers. Storms, thunder, lightning, winds and breezes, these were powers. Water in rivers, lakes and seas were all controlled by powers. Just look at poor old Odysseus on his way home from Troy and tormented by Poseidon.

God was a whole other matter, for He was everything, the world and the cosmos both. In other words, God was merely an abstraction of ‘nature’, with the proviso that there was now a text defining what God was together with a theology that added libraries of footnotes filling in the details of that notion. In another context, God was an idea that gave the world meaning and purpose. The world was made by someone and for a reason. In fact, for Man.

But then came science and technology and enlightenment and **Man** took over. Man was, I think, a replacement for a God who could barely survive the onslaught of reason. Now it was Man who gave the world meaning and purpose. He kept on finding out more and more. Man was now poised to overtake Nature, to mould it to his wishes. Of course, God was omniscient and Man was not, but the potential of Man seemed limitless. Might he one day know everything? Who would deny the possibility? God had fallen and Man was on the rise.

The difference between God and Man was that

- God was invisible but infallible, while
- Man was visible and fallible.

In a sense then, the invisible God was a more

plausible thing to put your faith in than Man. This problem can be resolved if we understand that Man's infallibility lay in the far distant future and was therefore as invisible as God. In any case, Man was the God that was now worshipped.

In recent decades, Man too has fallen. Hopes that Man would create a perfect world in which want was eliminated by science and technology, people would be served by gizmos and gadgets and far-off planets would be colonised like the US was colonised and Man the ruler of the galaxy itself — these hopes began to vanish. Technology, in fact, began to upset Nature and its powers. The ecology movement of the 1970's at least acknowledged this, even if capitalism and especially neoliberalism did not. A world of concrete, steel and tarmacadam began to look like a bad bet and to many it seemed if Nature was dying. In death, Nature reveals its greatest power, for Man cannot survive Nature's death. This destruction seemed to be an unavoidable result of Man's 'progress', a progress measured mainly by economic growth. Moreover, the vast expansion of knowledge brought not certainty but doubt. Space travel yes, but how? It is easy to imagine such a thing, but science as yet is agnostic about its practicability. The possibility of inter-galactic travel seems doubtful given our state of knowledge and we now know that the universe is so vast it may be beyond Man's grasp. That alone is enough to cause a loss in faith. Any deity must have the power to fulfil the hopes of its follower. Man is not just limited. No, he always will be. He knows nothing — anyone who has reached the ABC of thinking knows that. The point is that he *must know nothing*. His intelligence is limited. Finally, we must mention the damage to the cult of Man caused by

feminism and the introduction of women into the public sphere and the insistence that women are human beings too. In the first place, this makes the notion of Man and Mankind obsolete. More important is that Man was defined against Woman. The power of Man was set against the impotence of Woman. Simply by including women within the general conception of humanity, the myth of Man has been made meaningless, because its fundamental belief in Woman's weakness and stupidity and ignorance renders it absurd. A belief with cognitive dissonance *at its core* cannot survive.

I think the end of the Age of Man is important for it seems to me it has a subtle influence over all of society. Man was the ersatz God, after God died. With the fall of Man, where is the meaning and purpose? Who made the world and why and who for? These are no longer meaningful questions. Men made Man their own deity to make meaning and purpose because these are useful things to have. The immediate replacement for Man is Mammon. But that is no replacement, for Mammon is not much more than Samuel Beckett's *unnameable* carrying on an eternal conversation with itself in the void¹⁴⁵.

A key problem for the What is left, is that the death of Man brings humanity face to face with the *iz* with no intermediary. There is no single meaning or

¹⁴⁵ "I'm all these words, all these strangers, this dust of words, with no ground for their settling, no sky for their dispersing, coming together to say, fleeing one another to say, that I am they, all of them, those that merge, those that part, those that never meet, and nothing else, yes, something else, that I'm something quite different, a quite different thing, a wordless thing in an empty place, a hard shut dry cold black place, where nothing stirs, nothing speaks, and that I listen, and that I seek, like a caged beast [. . .]"

purpose. There is only death, which defeats all meaning and purpose. But before death there is life and in that space we can find meaning and purpose, not at a universal scale, but in the meanings and purpose of each day. That is our limitation. We have a limit and we always will both as a species and as individuals. This I think must be the basic understanding of any new left, that the death of Man is the shedding of a vain¹⁴⁶ dream of omnipotence. A new left must try and work within human limitations and try and build a world where life is a thing where each day has a purpose because society makes it possible and each individual can find their own little purpose and their own little meaning and face the iz as far as possible without fear. Left politics is thereafter a matter of how to move Mammon to a state in which this is achievable.

¹⁴⁶ Both vain and in vain.

7. Assimilating

NEOFEMINISM

“This is as pitiable picture of wretchedness as Dickens could have imagined. All the more surprising because almost half these women had not been in prison before. What are they doing there now, rather than getting the care and help they need and learning there are other ways to pay their debt to society? The ordeal of prison, too, is entirely different for women. As the pivotal figure within any family group, a woman's absence creates immediate dangers for others.”

Home Secretary Priti Patel: “I want criminals to feel terror”

Systematic women's oppression is to blame for a survey finding that half of women believe rape victims should “take responsibility” (The Socialist Worker)

I like men to show emotion but a crybaby? I'd have to shoot him.

Neoliberalism came to power around 1980 (Thatcher, 1979; Reagan, 1981) and that power was truly consolidated during the 1990's with the rise of the neoliberal New Democrats (Bill Clinton) and New Labour (Tony Blair). In the early Thatcher years, it was still known as the 'radical right' and seen for what it is, a right-wing political force. Its main target back then was 'socialism' (which implied red commies but in fact was primarily focused on social democracy, which after all was the form of government that emerged post-war). The neoliberals also sought support from the more conservative right. The Reaganites linked themselves to the emerging Christian Right and, while largely ignoring it in its governance, helped solidify it as a countercultural force. In the UK, law and order and immigration were old standbys our neoliberals could rely on to bolster conservative support. But it is New Labour and the New Democrats, achieving power, that began the move that is the subject of this section, the move of left-wing values steadily to the right. Appropriation is what this is called. Assimilation is what it is.

A good New Labour example of this is the takeover of the respected *Demos* journal by Marxists. *These* Marxists though were New Marxists who had thought long and hard about how to make leftist values popular, just as Blair had made Labour popular. The

results of that thinking, it seems, was to make Marxism itself more or less neoliberal. After the New Marxists had taken charge, the writing became, to paraphrase one observer, full of Marxist terms turned into a text almost indistinguishable from a neoliberal one. Overall, New Labour allied itself to the conservative right much as the Conservatives had done. Law and order and immigration (including ‘asylum seekers’) were constantly evoked and close links established and fastidiously kept with both *The Sun* and *The Daily Express*. Clinton went after ‘Welfare’. However, the problem of actual leftists was largely contained and in the main the left was simply ignored.

Neoliberalism more or less peaked around 2015 with Syria (which almost fell), the ‘Brexit’ referendum (which looked a sure bet) and the TTIP/TPP agreements. These turned out to be a triple hammerblown defeat, but the significant thing here is that Brexit and Hillary Clinton fell to the very right-wing forces the neoliberals had nourished and nurtured as allies against ‘socialism’ (and ‘the left’). From this time neoliberal propaganda began to *target* the right and to do so its best weapon was to use *left wing language stripped of all its left-wing content*. During his first presidency, Donald Trump was constantly attacked by every means possible. Even in the earliest days of his term the world was introduced to the Orwellian joys of ‘fake news’. This insinuated that ‘Putin’ along with Trump had manipulated the elections to defeat Clinton. Soon, genuine leftist concerns about right-wing extremists, racists and fascists were assimilated into neoliberal attacks linking Trump to far-right ‘fascists’. The point is not that far-right fascists do not exist or are not worth

worrying about, but that this is *pure propaganda* which we have seen *has no truth value*. The point of the propaganda is clear: *all Trump supporters are right-wing fascists*. The same inference was later applied to Marine Le Pen in France, Giorgia Milani in Italy and Călin Georgescu (no relation) in Romania. We might add Brexit supporters to the list.

As this book is attempting to ask What is *left*, it might be wondered why this is of any concern. However, it is a question that drills down to the core of what this book is about. First, it is important to understand this is neoliberal propaganda and classic *merge and transfer* stuff. It merges Le Pen or Trump supporters with fascism. What does propaganda aim to do? Shape opinion. What is *this* propaganda likely to do? Mobilise the ‘left’ against the ‘right’. That is, *divide the left from the right*. Which is where the merge bit works. We have seen how powerful this technique is with the example of *jiḥad* and *Jihadist*. An innocent, literally every day, term is merged with a frightening one. Here we see it in reverse, where the frightening term ‘fascist’ is merged with the innocent term ‘right’. This effectively annihilates any criticism of neoliberalism emanating from the right. Worse, it pens rightists into a ‘safe zone’ of anti-welfare, anti-big-gummint, ‘common sense’, ‘real world’ and most especially anti-libtard chatter. Trump supporters are *wingnuts* and the libtards are their critics. The feedback loop is endless and harmless. To neoliberals. For the thing to prevent at all cost is that wingnuts and libtards both lose their trust in neoliberal parties (the Republicans and Democrats) and never realise that all critics of neoliberalism (left and right) necessarily have many things in common.

So, for many years neoliberals forged links with conservatives — whose values the former is in many ways fundamentally opposed to — but around 2015 or so these conservatives were in danger of breaking out and becoming an independent force. The alliance had certainly been effective in crushing a true left, so now a fake left was invented to oppose this new threat. The remainder of this section will focus on feminism because 1) this is at the core of the old left counterculture and 2) it is perhaps the most affected by the great transformation of all the cogs in that counterculture and 3) the transformed neofeminism is still a core part of the left in all its aspects. Here I try to define what feminism was, what is a patriarchy and how feminism has been transformed into a set of beliefs that gel neatly with the new right and in fact act as useful tools for the misdirecting what a patriarchy is and so are aiding and abetting its restoration.

In neoworld, feminism has shifted from counterculture to mainstream. The once-powerful feminist term ‘patriarchy’ no longer describes the facts or the ideals of neo society. It is not a useful term. A big deal has been the breakdown of *segregation* and *separation* between men and women and the idea that there are ‘male roles’ and ‘female roles’ and ‘separate spheres’ a thing of the past. Even astronauts are often women these days and that is worth noting because to be an astronaut is to be near superhuman¹⁴⁷. In general, many of the fundamental

¹⁴⁷ It needs a curious mix of tech-savviness, intelligence, fitness, temperament and fearlessness few people have. If you spot a silly man bloviating about how useless ‘women’ are, a good trick is to imagine a woman astronaut in one spaceship and that technonuthin dimlit

supports of patriarchy are gone.

In the meantime, feminism has both lost its focus in mainstream culture and lost its way in the crumbs of counterculture that remain. 'Feminism' these days is I think a curious mixture of something that calls itself feminism, which is invariably the sort of feminism that can easily assimilate to the mainstream, or what has been called 'post-feminism', which is not feminism but claims to be, or simply stuff that sneaks in because no one is looking because palaeofeminist analyses didn't consider them.

For example, feminism can assimilate to the neo world in two ways. First, it can use feminist beliefs to 'get on in the world' by emphasising the need for a greater presence of women in things neos like. For the neoliberals this is of course 'politics' and business. This is feminism but it is not left. Likewise, neocons support warmongers. Feminism but not left.

The second way, a subtler way, to assimilate is to promote feminisms – especially the 'radical' kind – whose analyses are a mere rewiring of the patriarchy. Although the aims are certainly different, these feminisms are often hard to tell apart from patriarchal beliefs in their emphasis for example of motherhood and the goodness of women. These feminisms, bear in mind, reach the public in their mediated form so even if there once was a subtle difference between a patriarchal feminist message and patriarchal beliefs, the mediated form is likely to be converted into a purely patriarchal message and the subtle feminist overtones silenced. If you have read a text for a feminist campaign to keep women

fatfed angerburgered panicking man in another.

out of prison and a Daily Mail text to keep women out of the workplace (MOTHERHOOD! they both cry at you) you will know what I mean.

Post-feminism can be thought of as a special case of 'political correctness'. PC is where the right speaks for the left. What is said is never left but a caricature of leftism. There is many a bonehead on the right who is convinced something called 'liberal fascism' exists. Post-feminism likewise is the right speaking for feminists but what is said is always anti-feminist. A well-studied example is the film or TV show in which a working woman in a tough job quits to 'return home' where she can find peace and of course a man to look after ever after. PC is invariably much less subtle than post-feminism. The former makes the left look absurd and dangerous and the latter makes the right look appealing. But both speak for the left in order to turn people to the right.

One thing to note is that patriarchal feminism and post-feminism are effectively the same thing. One is *filtered* into a right message, the other simply *is* a disguised right message. The former will talk about the saintliness of women and the holiness of motherhood and the latter will – well, exactly the same thing.

Another thing is how these two redefine feminism. It can at least be said that patriarchal feminism is a genuine voice whereas post feminism is not. But to the mediated audience this does not matter. People elect to watch films or not and choose to like them or not. There is no reason to expect them to recognise a film as having a 'post-feminist message'. In this way, post-feminism *becomes* feminism for many people. It is the most extreme form of assimilation because it is

the right speaking to itself, but in the guise of a progressive liberal voice. To most people therefore, post-feminist ideas *are* progressive liberal ideas.

I think feminism is a veritable case study in how the right has been co-opted, assimilated and effectively nullified. The following sections and next two chapters outline how I think feminism has been overturned – overruled could we say? In a nutshell, it argues that feminism turned right but also the many chinks in the analyses of palaeofeminism have allowed a whole host of anti-feminist ideas to swarm their way back into the neo world. Some of these are anti-feminist, but many – like post-feminism – claim to speak for feminism in various unwise and wonderful ways and some just allow fundamentalist patriarchies back into the fold. Like post-feminism, these are steadily working to redefine what feminism is in the mediated world and what it is isn't feminism. In fact, you can fairly say these days that feminism is feminism in the sense of a Christianity of the Quran or a Roman Empire of Athens.

7.1 Palaeofeminism

Imagine three young American men visiting Cambridge and taking a ride along the river Cam on a punt steered by a young woman student earning a bit of cash. This is a picture of what feminism is. A century ago, this scenario would have been *inconceivable* not least because what gentleman would allow a lady to steer him? Yet now it is inconceivable these men would offer to do the job they've paid the woman to do.

This swapping of inconceivabilities is what feminism

is and this metaphor of steering neatly symbolises the enormous social changes feminism has brought to the world. The idea that a woman cannot steer a punt is so absurd that no one would hold to it today. Yet a century ago it was an unbreakable social law.

Feminism is a young woman steering a group of young men up the river Cam on a punt. It is a movement at one and the same time profound and banal. After all is said and done, in a general sense feminism represents a basic common sense once hidden in a labyrinthine mist of insane beliefs, rules and laws. All the rest is detail.

As with many ideals, feminism is hard to define precisely. It is not even easy to determine when feminism began. Is it a feeling that something is not right? or an idea about women's rights? or a movement for women's rights? or an advocacy for women? I think it is fair to say that its origins, its history, its current status and its future are all hazy in terms of definition. Therefore, I begin with outlining my understanding of its origins and history.

7.1.1 Origins

Christine de Pisan (1364-1430) was rare in her time in that she was a woman who was a professional writer. One of her major works is *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* ('The Book of the City of Ladies') in which she imagines a city being built in the image of the achievements of illustrious women. This was not a typical (male-scribed) work in 'praise of women' which invariably focused its praise on the virtues of being beautiful and dutiful. Rather, Pisan concentrates very much on *active* attributes such as

intelligence and learning. She suggests that education at the highest levels ought to be available to girls and women and even that women were perfectly capable of *ruling*. On the other hand, in her *Le Livre des trois vertus à l'enseignement des dames* ('The Book of the three virtues in teaching ladies') she recommends a girl should be taught always to be 'cheerful' towards her husband, a recommendation to be found everywhere in the etiquette books of the super-patriarchal US of the 1950's. Was Pisan a feminist or not? Her ideas and attitude seem

to me remarkably advanced, for she avoided arguing for the *superiority* of women¹⁴⁸ merely that women should be offered the same opportunities as men.

The **French Revolution** provided, briefly, a time of great optimism and the idea of the Rights of Man thundered through the land. In England, **Mary Wollstonecraft** wrote a volume called *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* but soon followed it up with the more radical *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Her thesis — that girls should be offered the same opportunities as boys — was similar to that of Christine de Pisan but had the advantage of not being set in an imaginary city populated by mostly mythical women. Now too there was the idea of civilian and civil rights, which Wollstonecraft forcefully argued

The word 'female' in context

d^heh₁(y) ('to suckle, nurse')

Latin: **fēmina** ('woman')

*d^heh₁-tu-s

Latin: **fētus** ('offspring')

*d^heh₁-no-m

Latin: **fēlīx** ('happy')

*d^h(e)h₁i-l-yo-s

Proto-Italic: ***filios** ('son')

Proto-Italic: ***fēlājō**

Latin: **fēlō, fellō** ('to suck')

¹⁴⁸ Most 'debate' back then, such little there was, based itself around whether 'men' or 'women' were better.

should not be the exclusive privilege of men. Around the same time in Paris, **Olympe de Gouges** wrote her *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*. But the vindication of women was guillotined by a deafening silence and de Gouges was just guillotined.

Next, we should mention the **anti-slavery** movement in the US. This is significant here because women were now political activists. Although it sounds absurd, a momentous event occurred in 1837 when **Abby Kelley Foster** spoke at the first Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women¹⁴⁹ in front of an audience of women – and also men. The absoluteness of the segregation of the sexes and their ‘separate spheres’ made this like a strike from a lightning-bolt. To break this separation in any way was to leap across a vast chasm. As with any such chasm, once the leap has been made, it then closes as if it never existed. Things turned out just so here, for this public activism once performed very soon became normalised. Women were now political activists *in the public sphere*.

This became more pronounced with the **Seneca Falls** Convention of 1848. The campaigners against slavery were able to call upon the concept of the rights of man, that is in modern terms *civil rights*. In Marxist terms, they placed structure above sentiment. A slave had no civil rights and it was this lack that made them a slave. It was not too hard to see that this applied to women. A woman had no civil rights either, as she was not considered an independent individual in her own right.

¹⁴⁹ The Convention itself, first held a year earlier, was of momentous significance, as it was nothing less than a *political movement of women*.

I'd say then, that Christine de Pisan, remarkably for her time, held something like feminist beliefs, and Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges were certainly feminist forerunners, but I don't think they can really be called feminists simply because there was no *feminism*. No movement. It is Seneca Falls — itself a small meeting in a small hall located in a small place — that is all-important. Like the talk of Abby Kelley Foster, it created something permanent. *Women were now public activists for the cause of women's rights*. The term 'feminist' (dating from 1895) is anachronistic here, but it is the best general term for the movement over its history.

7.1.2 Victoriana

The main point to make about early feminism is that it was fighting an enemy that was simultaneously everywhere and invisible, rather like neoliberalism today.

First, the idea that man was owed dominion over woman simply *was*. It was universally accepted. Here we see the importance of the early activists, for they questioned this idea of dominion in the public sphere and they planted a nagging feeling in some that there really were questions to be asked.

Second, the invisibility was due to the fact that what was wrong was everywhere, which made it difficult to express precisely what was wrong. So many things! Until the women's libbers of the 1970's named it '**patriarchy**', the wrong had no name.

The earliest feminists wisely concentrated on individual issues. **Education** was one, **exercise** and fitness for girls another. Legal and political rights

were less of a focus at first, for these were somewhat remote aims. Although the process was quite slow initially, it built itself up. Activism for women's rights became a permanent feature in society and its advocacy became familiar.

So much so that by the 1890's in the US we find the **New Woman**. The New Woman was not a feminist, but a social phenomenon. The earlier campaigns for education were now resulting in women qualifying as lawyers and doctors. The world had now moved far beyond the lonely public intellectual Christine de Pisan. The female public intellectual now had a public presence and a public voice. The New Woman — all more the subversive for being an *ordinary* person, not a doctor or public intellectual — enjoyed new freedoms. There were for example two crazes at that time that sprang up so quickly there was no time to ring-fence women from them. These were *bicycling* and *tennis*. Bicycling fitted nicely into the palaeofeminist ideas of exercise for women. Tennis was exercise too, but here we find shock and horror, for the tennis clubs that sprung up everywhere were for both young men and women. The 19th century ancestors of Miss J. Hunter Dunn bashed balls about and met men while Professor Stanley Hall launched a well-publicised campaign to revive the nation's morals via a desperate call for American boys to beat each other up.

After WWI it got worse in the form of the **flappers**. New Woman was rebellious by default, but the flappers were self-consciously rebellious. They smoked and drank and fucked (and said 'fuck'), they drove fast cars (if they could afford a fast car) and they did what *they* wanted. What is interesting about

the flappers, is that they owed their existence to feminism but can hardly be called feminists. In fact, the relationship between flappers and feminists was not a smooth one. If feminism was about 'improving' women (as many feminists believed), flapperdom seemed to rejoice in dragging 'womanhood' down into the gutter.

It is in the latter half of the 19th century that we see a conspicuous public activism in favour of women's civil rights, the **suffrage** movement, which is often misunderstood nowadays. The movement was *not* about women's 'right to vote'. *There was no 'right to vote'*. Rather, the right to vote was granted by property ownership. If you met the criteria, you could vote. One of the most powerful mechanisms to disempower women was **coverture**. This meant that a man who was 'head of the household' *covered* the rest of the family, including his wife. This was the 'rights of man' in excelsis, as it excluded women from the official ranks of humanity. It was also why women could not vote. They could not own property because of coverture and therefore could not possibly meet the property-ownership criteria. This means that if women were given the 'right to vote' this would have been an entirely new concept and a right not given to men¹⁵⁰.

The vote was achieved piecemeal. For example, in

¹⁵⁰ This perfectly illustrates the tangled web of beliefs and laws that the feminists were faced with and it is an aspect of the suffragists a veil is often drawn over. The attitude of the bourgeois to the 'servile classes' was not a generous one. The attitude of suffragists to the vote was therefore somewhat nuanced, for a 'right to vote' would mean the servile classes would be able to vote and would that be decent or proper? The campaign for 'women's suffrage' was not always as inclusive as might be thought.

Britain women found a loophole that meant they could sit on local council meetings. This moved women from being political activists to active participation in politics. Meanwhile, of course, there were the Pankhursts, Emmeline and her daughter Christabel, who are a fascinating case study of palaeofeminism. Sylvia Pankhurst seems much more socially-aware and agreeable than her sister. Sylvia understood the connection between women, workers and colonial subjects and campaigned for all of their rights. However, although she lived a full and rich life, her precise achievements are moot. It is Christabel who drove the suffragette movement¹⁵¹. The suffragettes planned ever-more outrageous stunts and were always in the news, though they did *not* 'win the vote for women', for their campaign was ended by WWI¹⁵². However, they were instrumental in winning their cause. First, they turned women's political activism into a roar that could not be ignored, second, in their extremism and aggression they overturned Victorian views about 'the gentle sex' so that now gentlewomen did not represent all women¹⁵³.

¹⁵¹ The word 'suffragette' was coined by The Daily Mail in 1906. It is a derogatory diminutive and means something like 'little voter'. It also appears somehow to have gazumped the grown-up term 'suffragist' in modern usage.

¹⁵² When Emmeline and Christabel got busy supporting men being killed and just to make sure of the job distributing white feathers all round.

¹⁵³ And indeed, Christabel Pankhurst was not gentle. After WWI, a former subordinate described her as a 'fascist', a label not implausible for a supporter of Oswald Moseley and his British Union of Fascists. Pankhurst is not a likeable character, unlike her sister Sylvia. But who achieved something and why? That Pankhurst achieved something was due to her flinty character. Which illustrates one of the conundrums

7.1.3 Liberation

By the 1930's, the notion of a **working woman** was normalised in the US. Working women were frequently portrayed in Hollywood films ¹⁵⁴. Then when US entered the war, it was all **Rosie the Riveter**, *brandishing her muscles*. In other words, between the wars at least in the US there was more or less a revolution in the position of women. Perhaps you could say it was a strongly patriarchal society in which women now had a significant presence in the public sphere. The *image* of Woman was also now more complex, what with flappers and riveters and workers.

Then the war ended and The Greatest Generation came home to its quietly and patiently waiting women. Hence the **1950's** and the days of the **Housewife**. According to the sociologist Talcott Parsons, the male breadwinner culture was a natural one for the modern (that is 1950's) world. The modern workforce needs to be mobile, to move to where there is work. This is easy in a household with the one wage earner. The family simply moves where the husband can find work. The housewife became a

of feminism. Is it here to improve women or to free women to be themselves? If the latter, why *should* Pankhurst be likeable? Does a feminist have to be a saint who exemplifies traditional feminine values? Can't she be an unpleasant and ruthless woman who achieved far more for women's rights than her humane yet flaky sister? This is why the suffragettes and their unreasonableness are still so interesting today and still raise questions.

¹⁵⁴ The Hollywood marketeers were convinced, wrongly, that women made up the majority of cinema goers. Films for men (the violent gangster and western ones) were marginal. This explains the fact that, the masculist moguls notwithstanding, these films had (on the whole) strong female leads their intended audience could identify with.

universal fact (exceptions be damned). Once again, it followed that man was owed dominion over woman. He earned the wage; it was his household. Coverture regained.

In the 1950's a flourishing **counterculture** existed which however remained largely underground. By the mid-1960's what evolved out of this had become mainstream as the Beatles became bigger than Jesus. This counterculture was not feminist, but its underlying principle was to question and therefore to rebel. The universal housewife was swept away by it. She still predominated, but she was becoming old-fashioned in the wake of dashing figures like Emma Peel in *The Avengers* who made the drab housewife doing the dusting and cooking look a sad figure as she went running for the shelter of her mother's little helper.

The real revolution, of course, came in the early 1970's when the world came face to face with the **Women's Liberation Movement**. I see two important and complementary forces underlying this. First, the foundations for women's lib had already been built. This was a social movement as much as a political one, unlike the earlier suffragettes (the visible wing of suffragism). Second, the values of the 1950's provided a stable base against which to revolt against which meant that unlike the earliest feminists of the 1840's, the libbers had a very visible enemy that now had a name, **patriarchy**. It was now feminism versus patriarchy. There was also a wider counterculture within which feminism was able to work (and out of which it emerged). Perhaps 'women's lib' can best be understood as a fad within the history of feminism. For a brief while feminist ideas were on everyone's

lips and they were, for many, new ideas. For example, the term 'male chauvinist pig' quickly became a part of the language and, while some men took it as a badge of honour to be a pig, many were ashamed to be considered one. If women's lib *was* a fad, its ideas seeped into the culture as a whole. Moreover, outside its faddish elements, it deeply affected feminism. Feminist intellectuals, theorists, books, studies and courses sprouted up and out in the wild feminist groups, protests, marches and so on were organised. In other words, the fad made feminism *mainstream*.

The subsequent history of feminism is usually discussed in terms of **waves**. More generally though, with many of its ideas now in the mainstream and blessed with familiarity, after the 1970's society moved in a steadily feminist direction as women moved into the public sphere in sufficient numbers that the idea of 'separate spheres' vanished. Pioneers moved into more or less all areas of the public sphere and this meant that in the end there was no artificial limit to what a woman could do or be thought able to do, aside from joining the golf club. It needs to be understood here that, under the patriarchy, women *could not do things*. They were institutionally unable to them on the one hand and on the other (and as a result) neither men nor women could conceive of a woman doing them¹⁵⁵. One of the most significant results of feminism between the early 1970's up to c. 2000 has been to make the inconceivable *conceivable* then *normal*. The notion of waves, then, while internally important for an understanding of feminist

¹⁵⁵ For example, a college friend of James Joyce was the excellently-named Standish O'Grady who was always up for a good cause. Joyce one day teased him by asking him when he was going to campaign on behalf of women policemen. Such a thing was inconceivable to him.

intellectual history, masks the gradual and constant progress that has made in the public sphere.

This feminism had very strong roots in the counterculture and the left. Most people would say that feminism is very much on and of the left. An interesting case study here is Margaret Thatcher. Was she a feminist? From the sketch of feminist history given above, it should be clear that feminism did not begin with the 'women's lib' movement and so it should be obvious that a rejection of women's lib was not a rejection of feminism. Consider that the earliest feminists placed a lot of focus of education and arguing that girls ought to have the same educational opportunities as boys and this was a *fundamental aim* of feminism. So now consider young Margaret Hilda. Grammar School; Oxford; *taking up a Chemistry degree*. Then there's the suffragists campaigning for women's involvement in politics and an older Thatcher joining a party, becoming a minister, then its leader, then Prime Minister. That is, achieving what earlier feminists would have found more or less inconceivable. By what definition of feminism then was Thatcher not a feminist? Her attitude to women's lib was likely informed by a notion that to her they were a bunch of dirty hairy smelly hippies in the first place and when you got past that were what any 'radical rightist' would conclude to be toxic dangerous lefties. It is easy to imagine Thatcher and the real Germaine Greer having a fascinating conversation with each other. But the *public* Greer? I think Thatcher would carry disinfectant for such an encounter. Did feminism *really* begin in 1973 with the release of The Beatles' first compilation LP?

7.1.4 Gender

It is easy to forget that palaeofeminism had a close relationship with **gender theory**, which therefore strongly influenced how many feminists of the day developed their beliefs. One thing I think ‘gender’ gave to palaeofeminism was a sense that the *relationship* between men and women was of some significance, that women did not live in a vacuum or spend the course of their lives in homosocial bliss. Moreover, there was a deep understanding that the gendered model of the patriarchy was a complex mesh of interdependent motifs and stereotypes. It was also understood many of these stereotypes could be used by women to their advantage and more importantly often implied a sort of superiority in women. For example, said the patriarchy, women are good and kind and nurturing. What gender taught the palaeofeminists is that these ‘superior’ attributes are intimately linked to the general model of Woman. This model renders Woman best suited for a passive quiet life protected by her man in the four walls he has built for her. The harsh realities of the outside world are not for Woman, for there she might stray outside the reach of her Protector. The palaeofeminists were very much aware that if you accept the ‘positive’ attributes of Woman you are half way to accepting the whole model. Moreover, these ‘superior’ attributes are designed to deny to women the negative and aggressive aspects of human nature that are essential to being a rounded human being.

So, a curious thing happened. Under the patriarchy, the extreme delicateness of women was such that even touching a hair on her head was beyond all conceiving, yet as feminism seeped into society this

attitude was profoundly countered. All sorts of chivalries were cast aside because feminists had worked out chivalry was there both to control and to limit women and not least to signal the powerlessness of Woman. In other words, *women were treated more gently (and kindly) under than the patriarchy than feminism.*

The main of thrust of palaeofeminism was a slow but sure movement of women into the public sphere. Separate spheres meant separate roles for men and women that were rigidly upheld. By about 2000, the peak of palaeofeminism in my view, it was difficult to speak of 'roles' based on gender and gender theory itself, with its distinction between 'man and woman' (biological) and 'men and women' (cultural) supported this breaking down of barriers. Sealing the chasm. Were men and women really all that different, many people asked? This I think is a much untrumpeted result of not just feminism, but in great part due to it. The binary division of humanity into male and female — an unbridgeable and unleapable chasm — had been a constant and fundamental belief of human beings since forever. The possibility men and women may share a common humanity was new and thought the once unthinkable.

If you take all the types of feminism throughout its history, I think there is one common thread that binds them all: feminism is the freedom of women to evolve their own selves.

I do not see how any palaeofeminist would have disagreed with that, though of course it tells you nothing about socialist or liberal or radical feminisms. But it is a profound idea in a world of men

and their coverture and I think it is a sound *sine qua non* of the ‘rights of women’. Consider equality. Having a self by no means indicates equality, but how can a woman evolve a self if she does not have the social freedom to develop? If women can take Math classes, can they match Karl Friedrich Gauss? Unlikely. If woman cannot take Math classes, can they? Impossible. The self is the key because to evolve it needs all the possibilities of a society to be available and accessible.

7.1.5 Post-feminism

So then. Feminism, I think, up to the period of the palaeofeminism, can be viewed in two contexts. 1) The domination of man owed by woman and 2) the absolute separation of male and female. It is these that feminism opposed and to a large extent overcame by about 2000, backed by a sympathetic leftist counterculture.

The counterculture though — including feminism — was hated by many. As a result, a new counterculture grew up. By the turn of the millennium in any case, now that the original counterculture was being assimilated the term had become anachronistic. The new rightists *were* the counterculture, dreaming of a time before the ‘liberals’ had ‘taken over’.

It is at this point, I think, that feminism lost its way and a neofeminism began. In a pattern we have seen already, this neofeminism often looks uncannily similar to the patriarchy it claims to oppose and moreover is driven in large part by women *in* power and *at the heart of power*. For example, the highest wage-earner in the UK is said to be Denise Coates, CEO of Bet365 (£270 million p/a). One way of

imagining neofeminism is to imagine a furious Coates demonstrating outside her local minimum wage supermarket and screaming at every man as he came out, *‘Just shame on you, you patriarch who earns so much more than us women — down down down with the patriarchy!!!’*

An important way in which feminism has harmed the left is that it has taught it to think in terms of ‘men’ and ‘women’, as two distinct groups. The issues that palaeofeminists tended to campaign against were indeed ones that affected all women. The problem is that this way of seeing things doesn’t apply to gender issues when they affect both men and women in ways that offer both advantages and disadvantages to each party and neither does it apply so much in a world where feminism has become mainstream.

For example, how can you think of men and not women being sent to the Trenches in terms of women’s oppression? The social and psychological issues affecting each individual are so complex and variable that no generalisations about winners and losers can be made here. Even the obvious fact that women didn’t have to suffer and die is so ringfenced with the cultural norms that underlay this fact, all of which were driven by a furious belief in the inferiority of women. But it does serve to illustrate the absurdity of thinking about feminism through the prism of ‘men’ and ‘women’ and how patriarchy works exclusively against the latter. In fact, it shows that the patriarchy was a system of swings and roundabouts, of checks and balances. In other words, seeing patriarchy as a system that exclusively disadvantages women ignores how it disadvantages men and can work to the advantage of women.

Here is an interesting quote that illustrates the tangled knots of post-feminism today:

Iryna Gerashchenko, a Ukrainian MP and member of the European Solidarity party, said the new bill will raise minimum fines for people trying to avoid the draft from \$13 to \$218. The maximum fine for people who have repeatedly violated mobilization laws will increase to \$5,200. According to Reuters, the average monthly wage in Ukraine is about \$560.¹⁵⁶

How is feminism to evaluate *that*? A woman in authority, a member of parliament, forcing men to fight in a war that – we are going back a hundred years here – exempts women from the trenches. This is *women* in the modern world, but how is it feminism? How is it different to the Pankhursts sending out their white feathers?

This was a significant chink in the armour of palaeofeminism, one which anti-feminists could take advantage of. For example, if the aim of palaeofeminism was to fight against the patriarchy, foregrounding the disadvantages of it for men would have been a wise tactic in the period around 2000, when palaeofeminism needed to adapt to becoming mainstream. This could have been a movement of men and women against a set of values, rather than a movement of women against ‘patriarchy’ (which at this time was becoming redefined as ‘men’)¹⁵⁷.

The second chink was that, as the notion of a ‘sisterhood’ of all women began to become an article

¹⁵⁶ Note the inappropriate gender-neutral term ‘people’.

¹⁵⁷ Because the men in such a movement would be against the same values as the women in it, there is little danger of it being hijacked by men for ‘their own’ aims if there was one common aim.

of faith, this ignored the way in which the patriarchy worked to the advantage of women – for when it did it was still the patriarchy – and thus by including all women in the movement, a decently large amount of patriarchy was now injected into feminism by women who held at least some patriarchal beliefs. This meanwhile was super-enabled by a rigid belief that patriarchy *oppressed* women, which meant that, due to this misdirection, those equally patriarchal beliefs that worked to women's advantage in a sense became part of feminism.

The insistence of the left in maintaining this division of humanity into 'men' and 'women' is one of the most powerful forces destroying it today. It means the left is simply going with the flow of the right. It is a paralysing decision that means left criticism falls in on itself on practically every issue that matters. On the one hand, the warmongering of bidenazi women are invisible to a left still living in a world of 'the Patriarchy'. On the other, the relentless revival of a male 'warrior cult' is simply seen as not a cultural phenomenon tied to an ideology but as a natural part of this same 'Patriarchy'. So, we have invisible women and immutable men. In a left of 'oppressed women' there is no room for nuance. Women are oppressed, end of. But this is not our world. The palaeofeminism that looked to a world of men and women would be able to have figured out that the public sphere *is* now made up of men and women. Because too it believed in the common humanity of men and women, it would be able to figure out that women in power would be as human as men always have been. But we have a left that – because it tends to view men and women as two discrete blocs, one of which oppresses the other – seems to revel in a

worldview that sees warmongering, powerful, wealthy, hyper-capitalist women as an oppressed class. That is, within the neo elite there are a great many powerful women and to the left these oppressors are the oppressed. To put it another way, these right-wing extremists (who place themselves at the moderate centre of the political spectrum) are magically mighty-morphed into by-default leftists, for are they not feminist women?

As the right is busy re-dividing society into warrior men with warrior values and glammed-up women all beauty and nurture, the left is busy condemning patriarchal power and, by implication, associating the oppressed poor with women. For, *within such a division*, if power is male and men have power it *must* be true that powerlessness is female and women do not have power. The right creates a division; the left supports it by working within its framework.

‘Toxic masculinity’ is the best the left can do, especially combined with the figure of the ‘incel’¹⁵⁸. The left thus implies there can exist a *non-toxic* masculinity. In this way, it shuts out men from old-left values such as peace and love¹⁵⁹, for these values are increasingly associated with the female side of the divide. It is a basic fact that masculinity is male and that the male is the not-female. Ergo nurturing is *by definition* not-male for if it was it would – *by definition* – be not-female. You can say

¹⁵⁸ ‘Involuntarily celibate’. Male, of course.

¹⁵⁹ Incidentally, peace and love were hippy terms that the punk year zero stamped out from the counterculture, says conventional wisdom. Didn’t the Clash have a song ‘Hate and War’? But that song condemns hate and war. Both John Lydon and Joe Strummer have proclaimed emphatically in favour of peace and love.

that men are nurturing, but not masculinity. The lowly incel, meanwhile, is simply a rebranded un-man, implying that a real man is an un-incel. Not necessarily a male chauvinist pig, but – *by definition* – a cocksman. This is all pure wingnut versus libtard pantomime. It says liberals are the real men, wingnuts are not real men. A liberal got a big hard dick, a wingnut got none. Liberals are most assuredly *men*. So says this pantomime ‘left’ as it walks straight into the tarpit.

The following sections and the next two chapters examine how anti-feminism – anti the old ‘palaeofeminism’ that is – is being undermined at a fast pace. I argue that gender, essentially a modified palaeofeminism, *ought* to have a prime place in any What is left? counterculture. A society of men and women not as separate species¹⁶⁰ but as human beings transforms the very notion of what it is to be human. To take a simple example, a boy is no longer a ‘mini-me’ of his father, but a product of both his father *and* mother’s genes and in equal proportion. This transformation has the effect of overturning and subverting all most commonly accepted notions of society, in particular for a What is left, man the warrior. At a time when war and warriors are moving ever closer to centre-stage based on the notion that war and men are immutable companions – well, what if men are human like women? Are women immutable companions to war? If men are human like women, are men companions if women are not? Is this an immutable social law or a customary one that is socially engineered? Is war itself engineered? Is it

¹⁶⁰ An idea that revives the notion of ‘separate spheres’ as far as possible in a world revolutionised by palaeofeminism.

that the nature of war is immutable, not men? If men and war are one and the same, why is there ever peace? How can there ever be one moment of peace if men are built for war? If women are humans like men, how can we even ask these questions if we believe women are not built for war? Are these not unthinkable propositions we ought not to answer? Is war inevitable? Is war glorious? Is death glory? Are these even questions that basic morality ought to answer?

Without the perspective of gender, the left is helpless, let alone those who see what they see. Why is there war? There just is, say those who sleep. There is the weather and there is war. It is, say those who sleep, human. To war is human, to win one divine. So, I argue that to consider gender is to find a key to open the eyes and let the light flood in. To awake. To see war as a cultural artefact of a male culture in which power is violence. Artefacts are not immutable; they can be made or not made. Ergo it is at least conceivable that a culture can exist in which war is not made. To conceive this is to see this will not be a neoconned world in which war is moving towards centre-stage. To sleep is to see neoconnery as natural; but a left that is awoken will see the strings and the puppets and will want to break the strings and free the puppets.

When it had achieved most of its basic aims, then, feminism took a wrong turn. Having helped create a society of men and women, it turned right and made itself up into a society of women set against men. The neofeminists have their roots in the ‘radical’¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ In my view ultra-reactionary in most respects.

feminism of the 1970's. It is these neofeminists who have undone at least *leftist* feminism. Great were the successes of the palaeofeminists and for that reason numerous their enemies. It is these neofeminists that I think have allowed the enemies of feminism to gradually unravel what it had achieved. There is now a consensus that the Patriarchy (now requiring the initcap) is maintained by violence and rape and policed by Male Chauvinist Pigs.

This is a classical misdirection, for who would now even think to consider that the most effective destroyers of any meaningful form of feminism would be women? Yet here we are. Little Mix — feminists! Really, they are. Said to be. There can be no greater example of how the left has been wiped out and its values gutted and repurposed than the 'feminism' of Little Mix.

7.2 Neofeminism

Misogyny and misandry

Go hand in handry

Feminism was always about women and, as a counterculture, that made sense. But there came a point where the failure to concentrate more on gender issues and the relationship between women and men began to matter. This is where **neofeminism** steps in. I define neofeminism as a form of feminism based around the idea of a Patriarchy that works by inflicting violence on women — femicide, beatings and rape. For neofeminists, 'men' can do no right and 'women' can do no wrong.

Neofeminism ignores the absurdity of the patriarchy,

instead treating it with deadly seriousness and the utmost respect. Opinions of the ideology that brought you such gems as the cleric who forbade women from learning Latin because they are the daughters of Eve are pored over like sacred texts.

Radical feminism took **masculism** and rewired it. Masculism lives in a male world dominated by the **Hero** and the **Adversary**, the **Ego** and the **Anti-Ego**. The Ego can do no wrong and the Anti-Ego can do no right. Sound familiar? With regard to Woman this world mutates into the **Protector** and the **Rapist**. Sound familiar? The trick of radical feminism was to mutate this triangle of actors. Here, the Ego is now Woman and Man is a combination of Adversary and Rapist.

It should be obvious this is simply a rewired patriarchy, just as Stalin was a rewired Tsar. However, while radical feminism was marginal, neofeminism is mainstream. This is bad in a neoliberal and, worse, increasingly neoconservative society. Although neofeminism is not directly patriarchal, it is built around such a similar model of men and women to that of the patriarchy that it can be silently adapted into reactionary neopatriarchal ideologies.

Neofeminism is above all (as per radical feminism) about *women*. Every neofeminist represents all women. She *is* all women. Women are a sisterhood. An Inuit woman and an Ashanti woman and a Uighur woman are more sister to each other than to their own brothers, for every woman is a daughter of Eve. Neofeminism therefore is inherently binarist and essentialist, thus subverting any progress made long ago by gender-based palaeofeminism.

7.2.1 What Is It?

The trivial little issue discussed below I think illustrates the nature of neofeminism as well as anything. Here we meet Julie Bindell, the neofeminist in chief at the Guardian for some while. Just in case you didn't get that she was a bigot who disliked men, she even wrote an article in which she outlined why she disliked men. But here let us consider a dashed off article she wrote about punk rock.

The butter merchant John Lydon had just been interviewed on Australian television. During the course of the interview, the female presenter interrupted him, leading him to exclaim 'You shouldn't interrupt a man when he's talking'. To the casual observer, this clearly means 'It's rude to interrupt someone when they're talking'. Of course, the statement was taken up for a brief while as a 'feminist issue'. So much so that Bindell herself wrote a short article about it.

Punk, she said, was Patriarchal and Lydon had just proved it. The Sex Pistols and the Clash and all the other Patriarchal male punk groups were simply frightened of women and their opinions. How frightened the Patriarchal Lydon must have been when Feminist punk bands like the Slits appeared on the scene, women who expressed their opinions freely!

Note how a notion of Patriarchal Men versus Feminist Women is baked into Bindell's brain. Note too how all she knows about the Slits – whom she claims as fellow sisters in the sisterhood – is 1) their name and 2) they were women.

Who were the Slits? They were founded by Viv

Albertine, on the rebound from a band called The Flowers of Romance, whose name in fact was suggested by the Patriarch Lydon. Albertine wanted to form a band with other women in order to focus on the music without the emotional hassle of enflamed sex hormones. The main reason for this was probably that, after she formed the Flowers, she asked her friend Sid Vicious to join and then he sacked her from her own band on the basis that her guitar playing was shit. Looking back, Albertine reflected that she'd never seen a boy talk like that to a girl, *as an equal*. He was right too, because her playing was shit. Hence the Slits, who were intensely serious about their music. Their playing abilities were limited, but the point of punk was you used what you had and that is what the Slits did to great creative effect. Their recorded efforts during the punk period are two incendiary John Peel sessions. Signing to Island Records, they released a small but potent number of reggae-influenced post-punk songs.

So that's the Slits, a group of young women whose gender politics was all over the place and who were perfectly capable of declaring that they didn't like feminism.

Meanwhile, during 1977 the Patriarch John Lydon went to a recording company 'do' at which he met a promoter he rather liked. She found him repulsive. However, not long after when they met again and got properly talking the promoter discovered *she* rather liked the singer. In fact, a couple of years later they were married. The name of the promoter was Nora Forster, mother of Ari Up singer of the Slits, whose real name was Ariana Forster. So, the lead singer of the Slits was the niece of the Patriarch Lydon! After

the Slits broke up, Ariana moved to Belize where she had two sons. However, she soon found she couldn't cope and so asked her mother and Uncle John if they could bring them up, which they gladly did. Uncle John sometimes talked about the stresses of Parents Evening in press interviews. In the Noughties, Ariana formed a new version of the Slits which she took on tour. However, what she refused to let on until the last days was that she had breast cancer, from which she died in 2010. A devastating blow to her uncle and mother. Nora herself later developed Alzheimer's, her husband looking after her. He even used his minor sleb status to appear on 'The Masked Singer', a programme Nora loved, and he entered the Eurovision Song Contest with a song for her about a place they had fond memories of, Hawaii. The end came in 2023 when Nora succumbed to her illness.

So, you read *that* and then turn to Bindell and her repugnant article in which she claims John Lydon is a Patriarchal monster who would be frightened of his own niece who he had recently lost to breast cancer and whose mother he married and whose sons he brought up. Welcome to how a neofeminist thinks¹⁶².

7.2.2 Reprotecting

The Protector is all-important to masculism (a resurgence of which is patently obvious in so many right-wing groups throughout the west), and therefore so is the Adversary. With neofeminism at

¹⁶² An addendum. In the preface to Lydon's first autobiography, *Rotten – No Irish No Blacks No Dogs* – and prominently placed at the end of it, Lydon emphasises that the punk movement was empowering to women and gives pride of place to . . . the Slits.

its side, the masculist neopatriarchs can sit back and watch while neofeminists create an Adversary for them to Protect against. The tough on crime right is quids in with neofeminist campaigns against rape and ‘violence against women’ and the anti-foreigner right can count on neofeminists to obsess about ‘sex slaves’ and ‘grooming’ (especially ‘Muslim grooming’).

7.2.3 Repurifying

Nineteenth century patriarchs insisted that man is **bestial** and woman **pure**. Like everything patriarchal this idea was there to big up patriarchy, for it is based on the idea of the three-tiered masculist magic male power (physical, will, intellect) and woman the empty vessel. It was the iron Will that was the one ring to rule, the magic power that made a civilised man. The iron physical strength was still there but kept in check by the iron will. The bestial nature of man, in other words, was central to the idea of manhood. The eternal **virtue** of Woman was meanwhile praised, a virtue she had because she lacked the magic male power. In fact, Woman was so righteous she was the **moral guide** to Man. Woman is moral because of Her gentle feelings¹⁶³.

So, in step the neofeminists with *their* notions of the righteousness of Woman, fished straight from the depths of the patriarchal core. In a time of neopatriarchal masculism, what better allies than

¹⁶³ Note the masculists, having devised this wonder, could rail against the wickedness and cruelty of Woman at the drop of a pin. The division of Woman into devil and angel was long ago noticed by the palaeofeminists. The idea of the pure and gentle Woman is as usual insincere crock. Note also the difference between sentimental **morality** and intellectual **ethics**, the latter reserved for Man.

neofeminists?

Take the case of **Sally Challen**, a neofeminist hero who in 2019 killed her husband by hitting him over the head with a hammer twenty times and walked free from prison after an appeal. Challen, it must be said, had an unlucky marriage to an unpleasant and controlling man. However, the key thing here is that the murder was committed when she went to visit him at their former marital home (hammer in her bag) to confront him about an affair she believed he was having. There was no question of self-defence and no doubt about premeditation. Challen was sentenced in a trial by jury but later released on the say-so of a psychiatrist¹⁶⁴. However, the press focussed on the issue of '**coercive control**' even though this was marginal to the verdict overturning the original conviction. It was this idea of 'coercive control' (incorporated into UK law with the Serious Crime Act 2015) that excited the neofeminists. This was domestic violence and Sally Challen had hit back at the Patriarchy! As super-neofeminist Julie Bindell said in the *New Statesman*, 'The Sally Challen appeal will give hope to abused women'. But step back a bit, won't you? On the one hand, we have David Challen (the murdered man) who seems to have been very

¹⁶⁴ The psychiatric evaluation effectively argued that a woman who deliberately does something bad doesn't know what she is deliberately doing ('**diminished responsibility**'). Women don't know what they're doing. You can't expect a woman to be responsible for her actions, can you? As a leading neofeminist organisation *Women's Aid* put it 'she was taught to live with, care for and even love her abuser'. Note that 'taught'. Women have no more self to neofeminists than they do in a patriarchy. Note too how Challen is said to have 'cared for' and 'even loved' a man she killed by hitting him twenty times with a hammer and see how neofeminism is in many ways a reheated hash set of Victorian Values. Sally Challen, meet **Lizzie Borden**.

unpleasant and controlling and on the other Sally Challen *who murdered him*. In other words, we are being told by 1) the justice system itself, 2) the press and of course 3) the neofeminists that David's 'crimes' (for which he was not charged under the legal system) were *worse* than Sally's.

A man who has not even committed a crime
deserves the death penalty and a woman who has
committed murder should be set free. QEwtf.

In other words, pure neo-Victorian values about women are reported in the press and claimed to be feminist. Not only that, these neo-Victorian values about women are literally now embedded into UK law. Neo-Victorian ideas about innocence and purity and gentleness in women and the bestial nature of men can now be twisted into 'diminished responsibility' and the masculist notion of men's magical power can be conjured up to magnify a husband's actions over those of his wife's.

7.2.4 Revictimising

At the core of neofeminism is **rape**. *Men rape women*, say the neofeminists. The universalism is merely implied but to neofeminists it is an iconscious reality.

Consider the following fable.

There are twin siblings, a man and a woman, the sort of twins who read each other's thoughts and finish each other's sentences. One day the sister is brutally raped and the hospital contacts the brother who in a devastatingly distraught state rushes to the hospital. When he approaches his sister's room, he is met by an angry group of neofeminists brandishing placards. These women who

have never met his sister drive away the twin who has a telepathic connection with her, swinging their placards menacingly. It is days before they leave and he can see her.

I suggest this fable depicts how many neofeminists feel about rape. If you are a man, if your wife or your daughter or your mother is raped, no matter how devastated the real you is, to a neofeminist you are guilty. Men are rapists, they imply. Rape is about power. The Patriarchy is about power. Patriarchy is rape. It is the power of men over women. All men are guilty. *They* created *their* Patriarchy. It is *them*. Even the weeping man beside his suffering partner. Because that is the thing. Neofeminists turn rape into a woman's affair. Men are cast out. But a man is not the outsider if a woman he knows is raped, neofeminists are. However, that is essentially – essentialismically – what neofeminists are saying, that rape is simultaneously nothing to do with 'men' and everything to do with 'men'. 'Women' oppose rape and 'men' support it. Men a-culpa¹⁶⁵. But do men really support rape? Isn't the natural human reaction, learning about something horrific, to be horrified? How does it help rape victims, or women in general, to be told that there is a universal rapist at large they better be feared of? How is this universal

¹⁶⁵ Two women close to the poet Ted Hughes committed suicide, his first wife Sylvia Plath and the woman who moved in with him after that, Assia Wevill. By the early 1970's he became the target of a 'feminist' campaign claiming he was basically a sort of double murderer. This extended to death threats. In a documentary, his daughter angrily describes the mental anguish this caused her father. He would do a reading and a mass of 'feminists' would be out there. 'Murder! Murderer!' **They** created **their** Patriarchy. It is **them**. Even the weeping man before his suffering partner. For neofeminists **are** Woman.

rapist different to the patriarchal universal rapist that men had to protect women from twenty-four hours a day?

7.2.5 Resilencing

Next, we have the old idea that **women should be seen and not heard**, leading to women's ideas not being taken seriously and any serious talk from a woman being ignored. How to reintroduce this idea? Bring in the neofeminists! I would have thought that any serious feminism would stress that a woman should 1) have a voice 2) her voice should be listened to and (very important) 3) *her ideas should be challenged*. Neofeminists don't seem to like that last bit. Women are right and men are wrong, QED. 'Listen to a woman', they say. You *receive* what a neofeminist says, you don't *challenge* her. A man who commits this grave sin is a *mansplainer*¹⁶⁶. He has offered up a contrary opinion and as neofeminists are always right, to contradict a neofeminist is a logical fallacy. In this way neofeminists encourage the view —

¹⁶⁶ Mansplaining undoubtedly exists and, if the concept is defined carefully, it is well-named. My problem here is that mansplaining can so easily be redefined metalogically (using my own terminology) and in this way politicised. Besides which, when you come across an example of genuine mansplaining it is usually so blithely stupid it cannot represent a widespread phenomenon. The concept was originated by Rebecca Solnit who provided a textbook example of mansplaining in which a beyond stupid man 'corrected' her on a subject she is a recognised expert in using a quote from a book written by a 'man' who turned out to be her own good self. Beyond stupid and beyond annoying, but Solnit is a widely respected thinker — I think she is one of the most interesting leftist writers — so how can that be if all men are that beyond stupid? Surely Solnit is better as a symbol of women's progress as public intellectuals than an oppressed victim and surely her story works as an example of mansplaining *precisely because she is a highly respected public intellectual*.

remember that they represent all women — that you should *never* listen critically to what women say. As neofeminism is broadcast through a neopatriarchal filter and in a neopatriarchal context, the message will be received in a neopatriarchal way. Job's a good'un.

Can women challenge women? In the iconscious world of neofeminism, no. Of course, a woman can do what she wants, but the thing is the sisterhood. In the basic paradox of group-think, what is allowable in general is disallowed in the instance if it goes against the group. Because the sisterhood is one, how can one sister go against another? To go against one sister is to go against all. The basic principles of neofeminism¹⁶⁷ are unchallengeable.

To be a real voice, it is not enough that women's voices are merely *heard*, they *must* be challenged. Neofeminism hearts the former, hates the latter and is thus at least indirectly working to resilience women.

¹⁶⁷ Cue list of things no one could disagree with far removed from what neofeminists actually campaign against. So, we start with the idea that beating a woman to death is wrong, but swiftly move to the meat and drink of insulting social media posts and suchlike. A good example of this concerns the superior quondam Australian TV series *The Doctor Blake Mysteries* that starred Craig McLachlan. This was kyboshed when charges of sexual assault were brought against McLachlan. He was in the end acquitted, but you read the charges – all relating to the time he was working in the sexually-charged alt musical *The Rocky Horror Show* – and how can you not get the impression neofeminists are literally turning the law into a sort of daddy that protects helpless women from the nasty men. One of the charges was that “Mr McLachlan was also accused of grabbing CD [one of the allegators] by the jaw on stage, instead of gently touching her face, as the show required.” That is a matter for the law? Into just how helpless and weak a soul will neofeminism remould Woman into?

7.2.6 Recaging

The 19th century patriarchy was a **gilded cage**. Not a hair of a woman's head should be touched and a true woman ought to live her life untroubled by care in the home her husband made for her. Here again, step up the neofeminists. Neofeminist campaigns use a universal language such as 'violence against women' which in iconscious terms clearly means that there must be no violence directed against any woman any place any time. So, women are protected. Violence from a sister, unthinkable; violence from a brute, policed.

Consider a comment from an actual woman faced with these ideas that are always spoken in her name. When she heard stuff like this, she said, she always remembered the time she was attacked by a group of girls at a bus stop who proceeded to beat the living shit out of her until a man stopped his car and chased them away. Consider too an interesting little quote from a *Salon* writer reviewing a stand-up gig of a Charlie Sheen in the middle of a meltdown dominated by unpleasant digs at his wife. *No woman, said the writer, should ever have to experience abuse like that.* The thing to note is not the justified criticism of an unpleasant man, but the *absoluteness* of the statement. It imagines women living in an absolute bubble whilst implying life outside its protective sphere is unendurable for them.

Neofeminists, then, get very excited over the tiniest of cases of women being upset or sad. Women must never be upset or sad. Neofeminists convert the world into a gigantic drawing room in which sisters support each other and the brute man is kept out and they can live out their lives without being upset or sad.

7.2.7 Intersectionality

Then there is **intersectionality**. This introduces **class** into feminism. During the feminist third ‘wave’ white middle class women were made aware that black and working-class women exist and so intersectionality was devised. In typical neofeminist fashion, this meant that a black woman was doubly oppressed, first by white men then by black men. A working-class woman of course was oppressed by working-class men. To see the absurdity of this, consider an alternative model of intersectionality. First, we make **class** a fundamental abstraction for the social groups in a culture. Second, we say each individual belongs to a **category** within each of these classes.

Consider a simple model of medieval society. It has two classes, **Rank** and **Sex**. **Rank** has two categories, Noble and Serf, while **Sex** has Male and Female. Each class has a **priority** and here **Rank** has a higher priority than **Sex**. The top of the pile here is of course a noble male and at the bottom a serf female. However, *a noble female rates higher than a serf male*. That is the intersectionality in this model and that is precisely how medieval society worked: a noble female ladied it over a serf male.

The model can easily be expanded to cater for race. We simply add a third class **Race** that contains the two categories White and Slave and we modify our **Rank** class so it now contains categories suitable for the southern slave states of the US: Aristocrat, Bourgeois and Worker. Our class priorities now follow the sequence **Rank > Sex > Race**. Who then could deny a bourgeois white female outranked a slave black male? If you have seen the public notice

in which a woman is asking for the capture and return of her male slave, could you deny it?

The neofeminist caricature of intersectionality revolts against the very thing it is claiming to define, for you will note it defines itself using two classes, 'Man' and 'Woman', then defines the relationship purely in terms of the dominion of the former over the latter. The intersectional model I introduced above expresses perfectly well the relative rank of the noble female over the serf female or the bourgeois white female over the bourgeois slave female but such a relationship is unthinkable within the neofeminist model. But then, that model confirms the idea of a universal sisterhood that is no doubt its primary aim. Class and its inequalities must surely be key to any What is left and so way to go yet again to neofeminism for devising a model that entirely masks its existence.

7.2.8 Neocolonialism

Then there is neoliberalism and neoconservatism and the revival of **colonialism**. Slava neofeminists! Take female circumcision, or **FGM** ('female genital mutilation', as neofeminists call it). FGM is a serious issue for neofeminists. But why, what business is it of theirs? Female circumcision is a criminal offense in the UK so it is hard to see why there needs to be a campaign against it. The campaign, however, allows neofeminists a global reach. But anyone with any knowledge of other cultures will be aware that at many times and places humans have held to the objective onlooker objectionable beliefs and rituals. But they are *their* beliefs and rituals and, whenever you examine the ideas behind them, you generally see how they make sense in their own terms if and only

if you have studied their cultural beliefs in at least more than cursory detail.

Coming of age is perhaps the most important time of life in many cultures and therefore there are many examples of rituals relating to this. The purpose of these is to reinforce the importance of the event. They are designed to have a profound emotional and or physical impact. Hence circumcision, a painful procedure. So it should be, its practitioners would say, for another way of putting it is that it is *an intense experience*. Through the ritual, a girl feels she is becoming a woman in the most intimate way. After the ritual, she *is* a woman and *feels* she is a woman. She will never forget the experience. If this is the most important moment of her life, it feels like it. She is relieved and proud to have endured. She is strong. But to neofeminists, natives do not have beliefs. Neofeminists don't interest themselves in the cultures of the natives they are rescuing. So neofeminists wander over Africa looking for FGM or any other native rituals that 'oppress women' eyes wide shut at all times to the natives.

Here is a text from the web site of ActionAid, UK:

A lot of **progress** has been made over the past two decades to **end FGM** - **global** rates of FGM prevalence have fallen everywhere, and particularly dramatically in East Africa.

...There is now more evidence available on what works to **end the practice** and **more political will and investment in stopping it**.

The **progress** on ending FGM has been **driven by feminist activists and grassroots organisations in affected communities**.

ActionAid believes that **we can end this practice within a generation. To do this, we need to work with whole**

communities to establish an open dialogue and change attitudes and behaviours. We are working in partnership with community leaders and with women's rights networks and activists to help bring an end to this practice.

ActionAid provides direct support to girls and women escaping violence through our safe spaces and safe houses.

ActionAid also provides girls' clubs where girls learn about their rights, gain confidence, build their self-esteem, and learn valuable life skills.

ActionAid provides training to community and religious leaders in the specific skills they need to speak out and influence others so that eventually whole communities say no to FGM.

FGM is a harmful traditional practice, a social norm, and a form of violence against women and girls.

The reasons for practising FGM are complex. It is a practice that goes back 2000 years, and it is deeply embedded in social, economic, and political structures.

FGM is illegal in many countries, including the UK, but laws are not always well-enforced and not always known about.

In some cases, communities are aware of the law but choose to keep practicing FGM as it is understood to be a social obligation and a necessary rite of passage for girls.

FGM pre-dates major faiths and is not required by any one religion. However, it is practised among various religious groups, under the misconception that it is a requirement.

So, I won't ask *Can you spot the racism in this?* for the question is really, *Can you not spot the racism in this?* There is not one iota of moral progress from the nineteenth-century women who set up schools for Cherokee girls – Cherokee women being property owners, independent of men, sexually free and productive farmers and providers – to teach them obedience, chastity, ladylikeness, manners,

submission to her husband in his property and of course the patriarchal Christianity their ancestors had been quite okay without for generations. The idea that the Cherokee had any values of their own worth considering was – well, just not considered.

If you examine the language of the above document, is there any difference in attitude to the neoliberals and neocons who look at the world in terms of *resources* and conclude these belong to them? That is to say, that the world belongs to them?

7.2.9 Neoimperialism

Neo-imperialists like neofeminists. When US-backed Jihadist shock troops toppled Assad in **Syria**, the neofeminist Guardian told us how ‘women are weeping tears of joy’. Were they? Are they now, now that Syria is ‘governed’ by a US-sponsored Jihadist puppet state launching killing sprees against Alawites and its southwest region is under permanent occupation by Israeli troops after the IAF¹⁶⁸ wiped out all of Syria’s defences, leaving it wholly unprotected. Tears of neofeminist joy!

Neofeminists are always there to condemn **Iran’s** fanatical¹⁶⁹ and sexist leaders. In **Afghanistan** too neofeminists and colonialism went hand in hand. Ignoring Afghan women, whom neofeminists know nothing about — natives who you can make an educated guess did not like their country being occupied for twenty years by western powers —

¹⁶⁸ Israeli Air Force.

¹⁶⁹ In fact, Iran’s government is deeply conservative and transparently *not* fanatical.

neofeminists campaigned tirelessly against the 'Patriarchy' in the form of 'the Taliban' (really after all these years more or less a code-name for resistance to the occupation).

A Channel 4 'documentary' (that is, propaganda) about 'women' in Afghanistan provides an interesting example¹⁷⁰ of neofeminist imperialism. The official overview for the programme describes how the presenter interviewed pupils at a school for girls and how she 'soon discovers that their enthusiasm for education is not shared by their fathers and their employment prospects are bleak'. According to a journalist working on the documentary, the presenter, who did not speak Pashto, talked to one girl who said 'My father doesn't like that I go to school. He hates seeing me study at home. But my mother and grandmother encourage me to study so I come to school'. The presenter reinforced this in her narration: 'Men in Afghanistan don't encourage their daughters to study'. But the journalist on the team asked the girl, 'Do you think it's your dad or all Afghan men who don't like their daughters to study?' She replied, 'Well, my dad's just illiterate. But look around me; there are a lot of girls here whose fathers encourage them to study.' The journalist translated this for the presenter, but by then she and her cameras were already being packed up. Clearly, she'd gotten her quote. Men were identified as a monstrous force for women to battle. It is worth wondering if the real difficulty in the education of these girls lay less with their fathers than with the brutal occupation of Afghanistan.

¹⁷⁰ Example from the long-gone *Angry Arab* blog by As'ad AbuKhalil.

An obvious case study of neofeminism and the right is the **burka outrage**, conveniently situated within the glory-days of anti-Muslim propaganda noise. The burka became a ‘feminist issue’. This canny garment is at home in Afghanistan and neighbouring regions in Pakistan. Women don’t wear burkas all the time, only when they go out in public. Also, women don’t wear burkas in a cultural vacuum but in a world where the public space is a male place in which women don’t belong. A woman in a burka looks a bit like a tank and I think no wonder. Rather like a nosegay during the Plague and a mask during covid, it is a welcome protective prop. It makes women feel more secure in a public space. Neofeminists don’t think about what women feel. Neofeminists are part of a gigantic worldwide sisterhood. Neofeminists don’t need to think about what the natives are feeling. Neofeminists *are* women. Therefore, the burka is just plain *wrong*. Islam is Patriarchal. The Patriarchy forces women to wear a burka¹⁷¹. It is men oppressing women. The brutal twenty-year occupation of Afghanistan by the US and NATO is thereby turned into a liberation force against the burka and Patriarchy.

In a wider context, the neofeminist fight against Patriarchy via the burka fed into the ever-present insinuating noise of the fear propaganda against Muslims. Despite its narrow and remote provenance, the burka became a symbol of Islam and its oppression of women. In **France**, the fear of ‘Muslims’ was the fear of immigrants, especially from North Africa. The ideological device of ‘**secularity**’ was moved to the centre of discourse. France is a secular

¹⁷¹ Note how this removes agency from Afghan women.

nation open to everyone who adheres to its secular values, it was repeatedly said. Now the ‘**veil**’ was added to the discourse. This ‘symbol of the Patriarchy’ was henceforward a symbol of the subversion of secular France.

To illustrate the depth of feeling on this issue, consider widely and approvingly-reported controversy of a story in which two Muslim women were removed from a beach for the dangerous act of wearing a **burkini**. What is a burkini? Well, an Australian woman had a daughter and this presented a problem at the swimming baths, where the daughter had to have her head covered according to her Islamic beliefs. As the mother was a designer, she set to work and created a suitable swimming costume. This was basically a one-piece suit attached to a bathing cap. She wittily called her design a ‘burkini’. So: 1) nothing to do with Afghanistan; 2) nothing to do with burkas; 3) perfectly ordinary costume; 4) utterly un-fundamentalist reference to bikinis. Yet the burkini at least for a brief while led to a moral panic in France.

Neofeminists, though, speak for women¹⁷² and this fear of the secular merged neatly with fears of Patriarchy. All during the moral panic and fear propaganda against Muslims there was the feeling this was a fight against Patriarchy. The bonanza in this was that, as the Patriarchy is about male control, no ‘blame’ needed to be attached to the woman who designed the burkini or the women on the beach who wore one. They were just being controlled by the Patriarchy, simple victims of male power. A woman

¹⁷² Which, as they *are* women, means themselves.

has no more responsibility for her actions now than she did then.

Le ministre de l'immigration, Eric Besson, a signé un projet de décret refusant de naturaliser un étranger qui est marié à une Française et qui l'oblige à porter le voile intégral, a annoncé, mardi 2 février, le ministère.

"Pour répondre à certaines rumeurs, Eric Besson confirme avoir contresigné et transmis aujourd'hui au premier ministre un projet de décret refusant l'acquisition de la nationalité française par un ressortissant étranger marié à une Française", selon le communiqué. "Il est apparu, lors de l'enquête réglementaire et de l'entretien préalable, que cette personne imposait à son épouse le port du voile intégral, la privait de la liberté d'aller et venir à visage découvert, et rejetait les principes de laïcité et d'égalité entre homme et femme", justifie le ministre.

7.2.10 Assimilated

Lastly, let us consider politics in a neo world. For neofeminists, neofeminism is about women 'achieving'. This is a genuinely feminist aim, but the leftist palaeofeminists were very clear that aiming for achievement should not be a *blind* one. If palaeofeminism was critical of the patriarchy, it was critical of its values. The aim of palaeofeminism was therefore to transform it, not leave it as it was.

We might compare the fate of mainstream socialism, coopted into New Labour. Likewise, the woman who becomes a neoliberal CEO. This is much worse than all the previous instances of neofeminism because *here we see feminism itself turning to the right*. Many of the psychotics starting and threatening wars are

neocon women and alongside them there's the neoliberal women CEO's and right-wing women think-tankers in the intellectual home of the two neo's, the women in the military (NATO and the Pentagon) and women in the WEF. If we include these women in the ranks of feminists, it is only sheer blindness that could claim that feminism is still a fundamentally a leftist movement. But then, say some, Channel 4 and the Guardian are left-wing and the BBC is a 'cultural Marxist' organisation.

7.3 Femininism

June 1918 article from the trade publication Earnshaw's Infants' Department said, "The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl."

We have seen the powerful propaganda method of merge and transform and here we have a perfect example, the merging of feminism with **femininity** with such relentless insistence that to many femininity *is* feminism. I call this **femininism**.

Femininism is comparable to post-feminism except it is even more subtle and beguiling. It expresses something absolutely opposed to feminism in such a way that it convincingly claims to *be* feminism.

The main force behind femininism is undoubtedly the gigantic 'beauty industry' (including the slightly less huge 'wedding industry' and the similarly huge cosmetic surgery industry). As early as 1977, Judith

Williamson in her classic *Decoding Advertisements* noted how advertisers, at a time when nearly all their productions were deeply patriarchal, had just begin to incorporate women's lib ideas into a few of their adverts, warped beyond recognition of course. Nowadays, these ideas — warped beyond recognition of course — saturate not only advertising but the entire mediated world as well.

First, let us consider what is one of the most fundamental ideas of feminism, the *self*. In a patriarchy, women are forever the 'other'. That is, a projection made by men. This *other* has no self. Feminists argued that women need become a part of civic society — just as men were — and in so doing would be able to have an independent self. She'd have her own life, her own money, her own property, her own ideas and with this she could develop her own personality. Second, femininity. I think this can be defined as (in its ideal form) **woman's feminine power over man**. Masculism has its magic male power. Femininity is based around a **magic female power**. As an ideal — a fantasy — the two powers are more or less identical. Masculism gives men power and femininity gives women power. Note however this is true *only in an androcentric world*. Given such a world, a man can smash his way to what he wants and a woman can make men get her what she wants.

If feminism is centred on the self, *femininity is wholly dependent on men*. It is a **secondary power**, whereas masculism is a **primary power**: *man makes his own fortune, woman takes it*. This is the general rule of femininity.

A basic insight into femininity can be gained from the words of a Shi'a mullah from the south of Iraq,

speaking during the most terrible period of violence after the US invasion. He was expressing his views about gender. Men and women are different, he smiled in a sinister way. Women are here for our pleasure, for a woman is like a painting or a statue, he added. She is pleasing to look at, he concluded. He was saying this at a time when a woman who dared venture out the house – outside the place where this mullah was saying she belonged – she was very likely to be killed. If you look at feminine women, aren't they truly like paintings and statues made up to be looked at? In all essentials, isn't what the mullah said and what feminists say the same thing?

Feminism flourishes in a world of androsexuality, which works by distorting one of the most primal human drives, the male libido, into a magic power¹⁷³ via which women can enchant and control men. With androsexuality, a woman is an object; with feminism, she is a subject who makes herself into an object. A man looks at a woman; a woman looks at herself in the mirror. The former is a guy thing, feminism claims to be universal. Because it is built around the male libido it is easy for it to appear to be entirely natural as isn't a pretty lady a natural thing?

Feminism is, in an androcentric world, completely invisible¹⁷⁴ in plain sight¹⁷⁵. But the technology invented to adorn and dress Woman is extraordinary

¹⁷³ The word *glamour* is derived from *grammar*. In this sense 'grammar' is essentially a spell book (*grimoire*, also from 'grammar') that is often written in Latin (or Hebrew or Aramaic or whatever 'secret' arcane tongue). Glamour is literally a sort of magic spell.

¹⁷⁴ An impressive achievement for a movement whose basic premise is built around being seen.

¹⁷⁵ Like neoliberalism and neoconservatism.

in its scope. So much so that this adorned picture or statue is taken to *be* Woman, rather than the unadorned creature underneath it all. The ideal is real; the real is banished.

Let us therefore deconstruct this ‘work of nature’. Imagine before you stands the raw material for the piece of living art that is Woman, a woman in her natural form before she has been glorified. Even her naked body can be adorned and sculpted. Her hair can be shaped and dyed in countless ways; her eyebrows painted; her eyelashes, her eyelids; the eyes themselves coloured or dashed with kohl; her cheeks rouged; her lips painted in who knows how many shades; her face mascaraed; the nails on her fingers shaped and coloured; likewise, her toes. Now she is painted, she is ready to be adorned. Her ears, earrings in infinite forms; rings for her fingers; bracelets for her wrists; necklaces for her neck; even rings and bracelets for her ankles and her feet; even these days rings for her nose, lips, navel and genitals – and in how many shapes and forms and with how many precious materials, minerals and metals, rubies emeralds jades amethysts diamonds sapphires silvers platinum and golds! See how there are millions upon millions of ways to adorn her and, now she is adorned, she is ready to be dressed. For her head, hats; for her neck, scarves; for her hands, gloves; for her body, dresses tops blouses trousers skirts jackets coats, shoes, of course: silks and cottons and nylons and woollens in patterns and plaits and folds and lines and shapes and shades, revealing and concealing and inviting and exciting, soft or sharp or sheer, uncovering and othering. Even with the hidden garments, we dress her carefully. Socks, bras, lingerie – all shapes, colours, sizes. Already we have billions

of combinations available to us to shape our living statue. But still there is more. There are the accessory bags, there is the perfume, there is deportment, there are manners. All is now in place and now before you stands Woman no more just like a *woman*.

The con trick is that this is not artifice and that it is what women *want*. Because femininism is what women want, it is the heart and soul of feminism and the forces of oppression who oppose femininists are profoundly misogynist.

One of the pioneers of femininism is **Madonna**, who also epitomises how femininism *triangulates* feminism, which is to say adopts some of its ideas while adopting other contradictory ideas. Perhaps we could call this **strategic feminism**. Consider Madonna in terms of masculism. In this context Madonna was subversive, a young woman with an iron will and a sharp intellect. But she also exploited femininity and even, in the post-punk era of her rise to stardom, made it respectable to an alt audience. Her subversive elements (will and intellect) render her femininism *more* effective, for this is merge and transfer. Her strategic use of feminism only makes the merge more convincing. The surface of her image was a very lucrative femininity.

Perhaps the most important early femininist propaganda *theme* was **girl power**. This term was taken from a punk-pop song by Shampoo, whose lyrics boasted of a fondness for knives and guns and being a slob, but *taken over* in the name of the manufactured (by men) Spice Girls pop sensation. The phrase is ambiguous. It doesn't specify exactly how girls should acquire power. The most obvious

meaning of the phrase though implies *femininity*. The band itself is difficult to place, for it seems to have been most popular amongst girls and its image wasn't particularly sexualised. However, the Spice Girls were all about fashion and clothes and their five different 'personalities'¹⁷⁶ were in a sense selling five different clothes ranges. It might be unfair to label the Spice Girls as femininists. The band was manufactured but the men who created it well knew the people in a 'band' made up of five different personalities had to *have* personalities. Nevertheless, the phrase the Spice Girls gave to the world out in the wild was quickly used for anti-feminist purposes. *Femininity, fun! power! Crabby palaeofeminists, oppression! Cloves and shooz, freedom! Girl power!* Femininism now had a good slogan.

To consider the significance of all this, look at Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe*, the classic feminist text feminist written in the 1940's. The 1100 or so pages of its two volumes are full of analyses of the *vedette* ('star') who masks herself in glamour. Great chunks of the work could be quoted that describe the femininist women of today. In a *femininist* world, far from being a core *feminist* text, Beauvoir's work is transformed into a satanic grimoire that wants to prevent women from 'being free'.

The beauty industry is the driving force of femininism. The industry is probably the most mediated corporate body of them all, joined at the hip with tabloids that are rapidly becoming more or less simian in their intellectual scope. The Sun and The Exprail are not much more than brochures for the

¹⁷⁶ 'Scary', 'Sporty', 'Posh', 'Ginger' and 'Baby', as if they were different models of a brand of dolls.

beauty industry and femininism. These ultra-right-wing and super-anti-feminist publications constantly insinuate that femininity is power and feminism is politically correct hairy-arsed oppression. They create a society in which femininity is always a winner, for women who play the game get the fame and the geld and the glory (for their allotted five minutes, at least). On TikTok or whatever social media channels, there they are with their makeup plastered faces and their 16 trillion views. There they are on the Hollywood catwalk, on at least page 8 of the Sun/Exprail getting out of the taxi with their skirts riding up.

Femininism is difficult to argue against, not least because it presents itself as a natural and therefore unquestionable force. Nevertheless, here are some I think effective anti-femininist arguments:

- Femininism is **mercenary**;
- it is a **secondary power** dependent on men;
- it is **not sexy** and has nothing to do with sex;
- it is backed by incessant **propaganda**, so ‘what women want’ is questionable;
- the inevitable consequence of being a **sex object** is being treated like a sex object so go ahead and be a sex object *but accept the moral consequences*¹⁷⁷.

Of course, neofeminism has replaced the

¹⁷⁷ After reading this phrase back (originally without the ‘moral’), I realised it looked rather threatening. After all, the notion that a scantily clad woman is ‘asking for it’ is commonly held. However, femininity is about *controlling* men. It is not in the slightest bit submissive. No scantily clad woman is ever ‘asking for it’.

palaeofeminism, so not only are these arguments not used, no public argument is offered against feminism. Instead, there are Slut Walks where the neofeminists wander about in their sexy clothes and shooz, placards proclaiming that 'all women are beautiful' thus effectively arguing that 'beauty is a duty' for all women, and then there is the #MeToo movement which is a Protector's paradise that focuses the issue of sexual harassment in the most feminist places in the universe, in particular Hollywood.

According to neofeminism, the problem of sexual harassment is simply a problem of men not looking not women who want men to look at them.

Right-wing women raise a point that goes straight to the core of the What is left question. *It is not true that right-wing women are necessarily anti-feminist.* For a proud working woman, say on a minimum wage at Walmart, feminism provides her with an opportunity to build a self-image of toughness and resilience. She buckles down and works hard. She is a good worker. Like many US workers, big government and 'socialism' are anathema to her and her wish is for her country (of which she is a proud and full citizen) to retain its freedoms and be great again (for she agrees it is in a mess at the moment). She even has a MAGA tee shirt. This I suppose is **riveter feminism**. This woman would see a lot of Rosie in herself. If you smile at her ignorant grasp of geopolitics and naive faith in her country, at least she stands by proper feminist principles. What are the levels of sheer stupidity involved in ignoring this woman? We can compare her to the 'liberal' weffer

planting chips in a woman's brain to monitor the loyalty of her thoughts. In the world of the 'liberal left', the weffer is feminist, the magariite not.

Now consider this gem of a WEF 'think-tank' video. It was shown in a presentation by a woman to an audience of **weffers**. The clip showed two women at work, a boss and a worker. The worker, we were told excitedly, had a chip implanted in her skull that could read her level of commitment to her work via her brainwaves. Cut to the boss and we were now told the chip was connected over Wi-Fi to software that recorded the worker's levels of commitment. The boss could therefore monitor her worker's thoughts hour by hour and day by day and presumably print out an annual report. This is neofeminism — but is it feminism?

Neoliberal propaganda has not only redirected feminism towards the right, is has detached potential rightist allies from the left by implying all rightists are neo-Nazi racist misogynist wingnut men.

8. Reclaiming

...it is truly fun to simply stand up and empty a full box magazine for an m249 into a group of enemies...The M3 and Uzi make you squeal with joy!... you get infinite ammo, so youre encouraged to do the 'destruction' objectives - ie, shoot everything up!...The amount of stuff you can destroy is incredible!... when you kill the enemies I like the fact that their bodie remain on the ground and don't just disappear in three seconds... The supply of guns and ammo are plentiful, as you collect dead bad guys equipment en route...You always feel good as you see your enemies fall whilst being pumped full of lead...Have you ever just wanted to un-load a magazine into someones face, with this game you can...i was disappointed at the amount of weapons and the damage value, one enemy took a clip of AK bullets to the face and another was still alive after 3 shotgun blasts to the chest from 2 metres away...In this game you are fighting for the US. Hunting down those who no one else can stop by any means necessary... Later on, the enemy troopers become more difficult not through advanced AI, as no AI exists in this game, but by being more resilient to kill. It becomes ludicrous as for some enemies you have to empty a clip and a half of bullets into them to kill them, at point blank range. It's not exciting, it's tiresome...If you're into destruction without much thought then this is a game for you...Another fault is no blood or gore. This game would be top of the charts for months if EA and criterion added blood to the enemies...in BLACK you can destroy most nearly anything

Zinn is a pacifist, a morally reprehensible position.

The problem with feminism for quite a while has been that what worked well for feminism as a counterculture no longer did so as a mainstream belief. For example, the earliest feminists argued for educating girls to the same level as boys, yet when society had assimilated feminist ideas to a large degree there were endless tabloid crises about boys falling behind in the education system. It should be obvious here that the original feminist aim has lost all its meaning. How can you argue for the patriarchal oppression of girls in the educational system when the media is crying out that *boys* are being denied? The point here is not about the facts but the message.

Women's Lib became a fad and feminism became popular because it stood for reasonable and common-sense ideas. It is the patriarchy that is unreasonable, if not actually insane. For example, in the Middle Ages a noblewoman wrote to a learned cleric asking if she should learn Latin. The reply came back that Woman was a daughter of Eve who caused Mankind to fall, so no she could not learn Latin. How many *levels* of insanity are there in that¹⁷⁸? In fact, the patriarchy is a fascinating example of an insanity that

¹⁷⁸ For example, 1) men are the sons of Eve and 2) because Man has dominion over Woman and is responsible for her, Adam was responsible for the Fall because he was responsible for Eve. Besides which, 3) Eve never existed and the Fall never happened.

was widely believed, perhaps comparable to the Holy Trinity or the deity in the stone. Furthermore, whisper it not, it is not as certain as the patriarchy claimed that men benefited from it and it may be suspected that the notion of man's dominion over woman was quite often more of an emotional prop than a fact. If we compare the 'breadwinner patriarchy' of the 1950's to the current norm of a 'domestic partnership', which benefits *men* more? A partner who serves or one who contributes?

In my view this is the secret sauce of feminism's success. It was a common-sense movement up against an unreasonable if not insane ideology.

This chapter attempts to examine the old patriarchy in terms of the standard idea of dominion, but looks at some of its other equally important characteristics as well. The second section looks at the various ways and means that patriarchal values and attitudes are being reintroduced into our culture.

8.1 Palaeopatriarchy

The old patriarchy was what the palaeofeminists lived in. The winners were, surely, in the end the palaeofeminists who at least achieved the dismantling of the basic structures of the palaeopatriarchy and undermined the acceptance of its ideology and attitudes for many people.

As a result of palaeofeminist analyses, the Patriarchy is generally viewed in terms of power and of man's dominion over woman. However, there are other ways of looking at patriarchy and I believe that, precisely because of the changes palaeofeminism has made to

society, it is in fact these the deserve most of the attention of any What is left counterculture. It is almost as if these are the patriarchies that time forgot.

8.1.1 A History of Dominion

To understand the old patriarchy, we first need to examine its origins.

We can start with the very early neolithic town of Çatal Hüyük in south east Turkey. This was claimed by an early excavator, James Mellaart, to be a matriarchal society based around a Mother Goddess. This idea is now questioned, but it is nevertheless likely that property was owned by women (matrilocal) and descent was through the female line (matriliny). Artwork, such as wall paintings, depict male activity such as hunting while there is clear evidence of a cult of a great female deity (or deities). In other words, the evidence points to roughly equal separate spheres, women in the home and men off hunting. In other words, a settled hunter-gatherer society.

It is generally recognised that farming was introduced into Europe (via Greece) from Turkey. The colonists were probably related to the people of Çatal Hüyük, but the resulting cultures of Old Europe (stretching roughly from Greece to Hungary) have left little trace of any specifically male culture. Rather, there are extensive remains of a rich and sophisticated society based around very long-lasting villages whose art is dominated by female figurines. These cultures can be explained if we believe they too were matrilocal and matrilineal and also characterised by roughly equal separate spheres, of which the remaining artefacts belong to the female

sphere.

Herding cultures (for example the Nuer or Bedouin) are generally very different to early farming ones. Here the sexes are more segregated, because the males follow the herds (and the females follow the males). Herding cultures are also more volatile, typified for example by cattle raids (still a part of many a wild western story line). So not only do herders attack other tribes, they are themselves attacked. In Herder societies, males control the main wealth, descent is carried through the male line (patriline) and society is dominated by male violence. These societies are usually patriarchal.

One of the most important events in the story of Europe is the acculturation of the Pontic-Caspian steppe peoples to herding, including domesticating the horse for the first time. It is now accepted by many that these people spoke 'Indo-European', the language from which nearly all modern European languages are descended. It is also increasingly agreed that the steppe people intruded into Old Europe and then central Europe (via the 'Cord Ware' culture complex, stretching from Belgium to Lvov). In the early metal age, we find the complex Beaker Culture. The details here are obscure, but there is now convincing evidence via DNA that Indo-European speakers came to dominate Western Europe during the Beaker period (mid-third millennium BCE). By that time, then, Europe was dominated by peoples descended from a patriarchal herder society in which men controlled the herds and the wealth and fought each other for control. We have met with the *aryas* ('free men', 'confederates', 'friends', 'bros'), the elite men who joined together to

conduct the 'aryan' ceremonies and sacrifices.

The Indo-European speakers of Europe were immigrants, not steppe people, so we must not assume their culture remained unchanged over time, but all the Indo-European-speaking peoples we know of were patriarchal. For example, the Roman *paterfamilias*¹⁷⁹ was patriarchal to the extent he could legally execute any of his sons, even if the son was an emperor. Bronze though was probably the true father to European patriarchy, for it begat war and the warrior. By the time Greco-Roman writers cast (an often dim) light over Europe and we see that 'warlike peoples' were everywhere. The Thracians were 'a warlike people'. So were the Illyrians¹⁸⁰. And the 'Celts'. And the Germans. And the peoples of Spain. The peoples of Italy were warlike, the Romans more (or better at it) than most. So were the Hellenes of 'classical' Greece, to the north of whom lived the warlike Macedonian kings.

Perhaps a perfect illustration of this culture is offered by the 'Pictland' of Dark Age north east Scotland. The story of Pictland is one of the warlike Picts fighting the warlike Norse and the warlike Northumbrian English and the warlike Scots and the warlike Britons of Strathclyde and even on occasion the warlike Welsh of Gwynedd and the warlike midlands English of Mercia. To the warlike Norse, *heaven* was Valhalla where heroes wake up whole each day, hack each other to pieces and enjoy each

¹⁷⁹ Meaning 'father of the extended family' and comparable to 'godfather' in the Mafia sense.

¹⁸⁰ Roughly speaking, the Illyrians lived in the area of the former Yugoslavia while the Thracians inhabited an area stretching from Romania to Bulgaria.

evening's feast served by saucy wenches.

It should always be remembered that these tribal and little-kingdom wars were infrequent and decidedly small-scale in the main. Most people would have been unaware of them. If one medieval Welsh king attacked another Welsh king, people in Kent would neither know or care. War is probably best thought of as a lurking presence rather than an everyday reality.

However, tribes begat little realms that went on to become big states. So. Once upon a time there was Picts, Norse, Britons, Scots, Northumbrians, Venedotians and Mercians. Then there was English, French, Hapsburgs, Germans, Ottomans and Russians. Same thing on a different scale, at least when this rivalry resolved itself in WWI. The barbarism of the former was simply no match for the latter.

This is what might be called **primal patriarchy**. It will be noted this is in many ways a *rational* outcome of society. This is a society of men, of fighting men, of fighting. War can be infrequent, but a man (at least a free man) must be ready to fight. Both the words 'folk' (via Germanic) and 'people' (via Latin 'populus') mean essentially the same thing: an army of the fighting men gathered to fight. It would be expected that at some point in most men's lives they would find themselves assembled in a folk or populus ready for battle, as would a man in an Athenian *demos*. On a grand scale, the trenches of WWI can be considered a gigantic *folc*.

In other words, there is one sex difference that can lead to male dominance over females. Although human sexual dimorphism is small, it is significant.

There is a significant difference in size and strength between male and female. This means that any society based around strength *and* violence will be male-dominated. Now, in this section I have repeatedly use the phrase ‘dominion of Man over Woman’ or similar to describe the patriarchy. This is apposite, but that is so because it captures the *idea* of patriarchy. As far as the *reality* of patriarchy goes, it is misleading. **A patriarchy is not ‘the rule of men’ but a society in which the ‘rulers are men’.** The difference between these two is profound. In the former model, all men are rulers; in the latter — clearly true of every patriarchy ever — men in general are *ruled*. In fact, for much of human history, very many men were *slaves* or *serfs*¹⁸¹. This is why any primal patriarchy will be dominated by men and why its rulers will be men. For these are not an abstract ‘men’ but by definition the strongest actual men.

A good example of how this works can be seen the figure of Agrippina, wife of Tiberius and mother of Nero, who herself was granted the title *Augusta*. Agrippina had all the qualities of a strong leader, ambition, ruthlessness, ability to think strategically and make alliances, and so forth. What she lacked was title, meaning she was close to authority and when Nero was young could speak through authority, but she could not oppose him when he turned against her and her opposition cost her her life. It is not her success that makes Agrippina interesting here, but *the fact she existed at all*. For a time she really was a powerful figure — as wife to the amiable and somewhat otherworldly Claudius and mother to a young Nero — she indicates that a woman could

¹⁸¹ The Finnish word for ‘slave’ is *orja* perhaps borrowed directly from Indo-European *arya*!

compete in the world of patriarchal politics. For a brief while at least. What we can see if we stand back is that Agrippina was a woman of her time. Her power derived from the power of the imperial family that ruled in the earliest days of the Empire. Augustus was the first emperor and his immediate successors were his descendants. During the Republic, with its senate and consuls (not to mention the many other officials), women are barely heard of, if at all. The intimacy of central power with its ruling family did not exist. Whatever influence wives had over their consul husbands must have been minimal. Power was simply spread too diffusely and politics too remote from the domestic sphere for women to participate in it. With fall of Nero came a period of the rule by generals, a military world from which women were utterly excluded. Although not every Emperor was a military man, most were and all had to keep close to the military. The days of the imperial court being the court of the imperial family vanished after Nero's demise (as unhappy as his mother's). It is clear that women again were excluded from power — indirect, that is — because they were too remote from it.

That I think illustrates broadly the way in which women are excluded from a primal patriarchy and also shows how a patriarchy is ruled by men and not the rule of men. Rome ruled over most men just as much as it did women and most men were more remote from power, such as the men of Lugdunum (Lyon) or Serdica (Sofia), than elite women in the imperial court.

Beyond a certain point in any culture's development a **secondary patriarchy** will develop and this form of patriarchy is *irrational*.

To see this, we can look at Victorian England. The

notion of a warrior king was long gone (perhaps Henry VIII was the last at least pretend warrior king, who bankrupted his realm in a series of long-forgotten petty wars). However, although kings and queens alike were now remote from war itself, wars were at the core of English politics. Throughout the 1600's, 1700's war (large-scale wars and 'little wars') were a constant backdrop to the everyday life of English people and the might of Britain was built out of its military strength. The first two decades of the 19th century too were dominated by the Napoleonic Wars and the celebrated victories of Trafalgar and Waterloo. But then came the Congress of Vienna and for a while, as so often after a catastrophic war, the peacemongers enjoyed a brief flight into the light. They did a good job too, although the dogs of war after a while began to yelp then bark and then let loose in 1914. But there was a century or so of peace (aside from 'minor wars' in far-off colonial lands). There was the Crimean War, there was the Boer War, and these were major wars, but on the whole there was peace and many thought that war might have been banished forever. All during this time of peace however, all sorts of encounters were made with 'native' peoples who happened to also be 'warrior peoples'. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, England as it moved into the main stream of the century was definitively a nation of clerks not warriors, but nevertheless a nation of *fiercely patriarchal clerks*. This is our secondary patriarchy.

For as we have seen sexual dimorphism in humans is small but significant. The difference in size and strength between men and women is an obvious means to achieve a society in which men dominate women and rule is by men. A warrior culture in which

men rule is *rational*. But a clerical culture? That is a patriarchal problem and I think it was solved in a very clever way. To understand how we need to understand what I call **masculism**.

At the core of masculism is a belief in a *magical male power*. Prescientific societies believed in all sorts of powers[. In particular, there was the power of the wind or water (in sea, lake or river) or the Sun. These were mighty magical powers to be appeased and feared. Male power is *exactly* such a magical power. Its fundamental form is **physical**, all-powerful and all-enduring and indestructible. The man who is *rock hard*, the *iron man*, the *steel man* ('Stalin' for example literally means 'man of steel'¹⁸²). But above that lies the **will**. Equally magical, equally steely hard. At the top of the pile, we have the **intellect**. The intellect of a man is hard, driven by cool solid reason.

The first neat trick of the patriarchal clerks was that they *moved the fundament of masculism* to layers two and three. These were the mark of a civilised man. This solved the problem of the 'native'. A warrior he may be, but his will and intellect were weak and soft. Of course, the Englishman still had his own magical physical power, as great if not greater than that of a 'native' warrior¹⁸³. But as a gentleman it did not define him, it was there if he needed it. The second trick was to *redefine Woman*. The magic power is only found in Man. Woman lacks it, so her three layers are built on no foundation. Woman's body is weak and frail, so it logically follows her will and intellect are equally weak and frail. Women are utterly helpless,

¹⁸² 'Lenin' means 'lion-man', the lion over the centuries being perhaps the symbol of male power, he being after all 'king of the jungle'.

¹⁸³ Specially when he got his Gatling gun.

argued the patriarchal clerks. They invented, these clerks, the ‘breadwinner patriarchy’ and the idea that **a man is not a man who cannot stand on his own four feet**. They made up a rule that the wife of a self-respecting man should not have to work. Even a low scale clerk must employ a maid. Those with slightly more resources will have a live-in maid. Then a maid and a cook and next up a whole household of servants and gardeners. The life of a respectable woman must be a life free of work, even housework.

Behold, then, the culture analysed so acutely by John Stuart Mill in his work *On the Subjection of Women*. Subjection by being imprisoned in a **gilded cage**, he argued. The result was that men and women lived in a secondary patriarchy governed by insane rules and women began to fight against these rules.

8.1.2 The Old Normal

The notion of patriarchy as man’s dominion over woman is useful if you are part of a counterculture in which man has dominion over woman, but not so much if you have won your battle and men don’t have dominion over women.

I think though the word can be given a second chance. We can begin by resaying the obvious that the 1950’s was ‘patriarchal’. Although the ‘dominion’ definition is still as true but no longer useful outside helping our historical understanding of the times, how about taking the statement as-is? ‘1950’s society was patriarchal.’ All of it. In this definition, ‘patriarchy’ simply becomes all of 1950’s society. It is **the old normal**. If we define ‘patriarchy’ as the reality of a deeply patriarchal society, we see that it is

everywhere and nowhere. That is because it just *is*, just as in any society where values go unquestioned. This is a patriarchy no one in the bubble can see. But we can, and we see it everywhere. At the highest levels of law and rules and roles mapped out for boys and girls and men and women, and again in the most banal everyday actions. At which point we must define 'everywhere'. This does not mean 'all places at all times', but the more limited 'at every place'. For example, this patriarchy could be found in every household but not all the time. Families could and did speak to each other about all sort of things for which 'patriarchy' in any sense has no relevance. Where to go on holiday? Who does that Nasser think he is? Did you hear what Mary Hansen did last night?

The patriarchy isn't literally everywhere but bursts out intermittently in every nook and cranny of society. There it is constantly emasculating girls and toughening up boys, forbidding and forcing men and women to act like men and women, controlling their appearance with male and female 'uniforms', sending men out to work and keeping women at home (sons listening to the radio while daughters help with the dishes), husbands eating food wives have cooked, men minding their language in front of women, women only using 'ladylike' language, opening doors, fetching, carrying, looking pretty, pretending to know about politics, pretending to not know about politics, manly control of wife, feminine control of husband, controlling the purse (wife), controlling his money (husband) . . . and so on and on.

This definition of patriarchy as a world of men and women is what I think is useful today. It is the world in which they live. It is their culture. Men are

patriarchal. Women are patriarchal. Both equally patriarchal. It is both of their cultures. They both live in it.

This redefinition is particularly important now because the palaeofeminist model of dominion implies that the patriarchy was a male place of male dominion. Feminism is a matter of women stepping out into the light from under male domination and becoming feminists. But if we define patriarchy as men and women living within the same culture and accepting its values, would we expect feminism to result in feminist women stepping out into the light? Women, yes. But feminist women? Sometimes, yes. But as a rule? By my definition I think we would expect that very many women stepping out into the light would not be feminist. A woman stepping out into the light and becoming a worker or a politician or a scientist is certainly acting against the patriarchy at a fundamental level. But, generally speaking, women steeped in patriarchal values stepping out into the light might make society *more* patriarchal, not less. In a myriad of subtle ways they are likely to bring their patriarchal values with them into the world outside their home.

This is clearly a serious problem if the left more or less ignores it and sees 'feminism' and 'patriarchy' as discrete and opposing blocs and so believes that women entering the public sphere is 'feminist' and acts to defeat 'the patriarchy'. If women who see what they see *are* the patriarchy, the left is basically *programmed* to miss the consequences of this. This is especially so because in the patriarchy men are men and women are women and so the patriarchal values that women are likely to hold are unlikely to remotely

register to this left, even though they are hundred percent patriarchal. Trivial but telling example. Women hears report about a navy ship referred to a 'she'. She points out this is sexist. Surely it's more of a compliment, she is told. She thinks and nods her head. One of the most patriarchal things imaginable – men othering objects as female – yes a compliment to women. Ships are shes. She ships. Sounds feminist. She ships – the most patriarchal thing imaginable – *must* be feminist. It's a compliment, not an oppression. Ships should be shes.

8.1.3 Masculists

So your little son starts to act a little girlish when he is four years old and instead of squashing that like a cockroach and saying, 'Man up, son, get that dress off you and get outside and dig a ditch, because that is what boys do,' you get out the camera and you start taking pictures of Johnny acting like a female and then you upload it to YouTube and everybody laughs about it and the next thing you know, this dude, this kid is acting out childhood fantasies that should have been squashed.

Dads, the second you see your son dropping the limp wrist, you walk over there and crack that wrist. Man up. Give him a good punch. Ok? You are not going to act like that. You were made by God to be a male and you are going to be a male. And when your daughter starts acting too butch, you reign her in. And you say, 'Oh, no, sweetheart. You can play sports. Play them to the glory of God. But sometimes you are going to act like a girl and walk like a girl and talk like a girl and smell like a girl and that means you are going to be beautiful. You are going to be attractive. You are going to dress yourself up.'

What I call **masculism**¹⁸⁴ is the cult of a magic male power and we met with it in our 'History Of Dominion'.

There is a movie scene everyone should recognise where X points a gun at Y. The scene viewed through masculist eyes provides a simple and vivid illustration of what masculism is. It invariably runs as follows in countless films:

1) *Man*. X points a gun at Man, Man sneers *You ain't got the guts*.

2) *Woman*. X points a gun at Man, Man steadily approaches trembling X, Man takes gun from X.

Masculism offers a different perspective of the patriarchy to the idea of dominion. It is a male world and strictly homosocial. Fascism was fanatically masculist. It was a world of men. A virtual wall was erected to keep women out.

The core of masculism is what I call **the hitting culture**. It is not a very complex thing to understand.

1) *Beating another man makes you a man*; 2) *Taking a beating makes you a man*. That might be primal and simple but you will note how it creates an unbreakable cycle. Win or lose, beating makes men. To a masculist hitting is the fundamental determinator of all values. This is why you can always

¹⁸⁴ Just to recap. This magic power has three tiers: the physical body, the will, the intellect. A real man is filled with this magical power that gives him his adamantine body and his iron will and his steely intellect. Woman meanwhile is an empty vessel that lacks the magic power. This is an abstraction and no one goes around hymning the praises of these three-tiers or recognises their existence even, but the cult of an iron body and a steely will can be seen everywhere. Masculism can happily exist without being named just as the patriarchy once was.

tell a misogynist when he says ‘*You should never hit a woman*’. That is a sort of masculist catchphrase. The slogan of a man who *believes hitting defines status* is saying *women should never be hit*. Which is why it is a catchphrase. It confirms that Woman is an empty vessel and only Man has that magic power to hit. The man who defines status by hitting is confirming that Woman *has no status nor any hope of getting it*.

Masculism — really a form of religious belief — is apocalyptic in extent. It endlessly plays itself out as a battle between the Hero and the Adversary (שָׂטָן *satán* in Hebrew). In psychological terms, this devolves to the Ego and the Anti-Ego and in terms of the psychology of pronouns, I and They. The anti-ego is that which is outside the ego or detached from it or dissociated from it: *them*. The ego is the self plus that which is pulled into the skull to become ‘we’ the extension of ‘I’. With masculism the self is built out of the magical power of man and so therefore are the ego and the anti-ego. The power infuses both the extensions of the **Iland** and the detached things in **theyland**. The Hero and the Adversary are locked in an eternal cosmic battle of beating and being beaten. The Hero is all that is good and the Adversary is all that is evil. Underlying it all is the endless struggle for manhood, to be a man.

This cosmic battle extends to Woman. Of course, Woman takes no active part, simply being the object of the battle. *This* battle is between the Protector and the Rapist. Woman is eternally threatened by the Rapist and so has to be eternally saved by the Protector. In psychological terms, this can be explained as the Ego and the Anti-Ego and the Libido.

The key thing to understand here is that *the ego and the anti-ego are the same self*. The Protector and the Rapist, the Hero and Adversary — these are one and the same. The man who writes stories about protecting women is fantasising about threatening women. The man who appears to be the hero *is* the adversary for the adversary is vital for the hero and cannot exist without the hero.

The spiritual home of the masculist is the **playground**, where he can be **master of the universe**. The universe, for the masculist, is a playground.

A typical brag goes something like this, from a seal of Lugal-ushumgal during the glory days of Akkad:

Naram-Sin, the mighty God of Akkad, *king of the four corners of the world*, Lugal-ushumgal, the scribe, ensi of Lagash, is thy servant.

How many masculist film fantasies revolve around adversaries who want to take over the world or — in science-fiction — the galaxy or even the universe? These fantasies in fact prove that masculism is built on a magical foundation stone.

Imagine you have a little magic in you too. There is the playground and there is the master of the universe. He can see everything (in the playground). There he is and there is his gang. No boy can oppose him and of course girls don't count. He is the master no one dares dare disobey, for (in the playground) he sees everything and is everywhere. You zoom out. Now you are looking down on the globe of the Earth with your magic eye which has the power to 'sense' the playground wherever you are. You sense how small it is, how small an area the master of the universe is master of. You zoom out. You are now at

the edge of the solar system. You sense the Earth and within it the playground and how small the Earth is and within the Earth the tiny playground. You zoom out. Now you are at the edge of our galaxy and as you sense the solar system and the Earth and the playground — how infinitely tiny each of them seem. You zoom out. This is the farthest distance you have travelled as now you find yourself at the edge of the Visible Universe. You sense the sheer size of the place and when you look at the playground on the Earth in the solar system in the galaxy, how tiny even the galaxy is! you think as you sense galaxy after galaxy floating before you. You zoom out. 100 billion light years, 1 trillion, 100 tn, a trillion tn, a quadrillion tn. Even the Visible Universe is now inconceivably small. You are positioned a quadrillion tn light years away from the playground of the master of the universe. If he was a blade of grass who thought he was a lawn or a drop of water imagining himself to be the ocean — what do those claims compare to his claim to be the master of the universe? How can his realm of 500 square meters or so be considered the equivalent of a quadrillion tn square light years? Even the mere galaxy, solar system, Earth?

You see what is impossible not to see, that the master of the universe is merely master of the playground. Yet to the master of the universe this is impossible to see. To understand that is to understand the religion of masculism.

8.1.4 Androcentric Worlds

Women have overstepped the mark.

If they want to intrude on a mans last bastion they

should expect a vicious fight.

We need somewhere where we can get away from them.

I didn't choose a job in construction so i can listen to a woman whining all day.

Stop invading our sacred space.

We chose it for a reason.

Your not welcome.

There is another way at looking at a patriarchy: it is **androcentric**. It is a world of men. It is not homosocial as per masculism (with fascism as an example). Whatever judgements men might pass on Woman in an androcentric world, the world itself is not a judgement on Woman. To use a phrase we have met before, the androcentric world just is. For example, the fact that women do not study for the trivium let alone the quadrivium is not in itself a judgement on women because it is simply an unquestioned social fact that men alone undertake these degrees. In other words, it is not that men exclude women from doing things but that women do not do things.

So, in an androcentric world 'you' are male. Humanity is male. A human being is male. Mankind is men. That is a world that just is. Woman, meanwhile, stands set against Man in any of three states: 1) she is a different species; 2) she is a different form of human; 3) she is a lesser form of human. Whichever, she is not human

To understand androcentricism, read any history book up to 1970 or so (and many after that date). You

will see a world of men depicted inside its covers. All its protagonists will be men just as humanity in the abstract will be male. Women, quite simply, do not exist. Don't expect anything different if the writer is a woman. The world of 'The Origins of Totalitarianism' by Hannah Arendt is absolutely male. The only woman mentioned in the entire volume is a Jewish salon host called by her first name like a pet lapdog. In an androcentric world you might be invited to consider what men thought of tobacco after Walter Raleigh brought it back from the Indies, how a man endured slavery, how men first communicated, how men can live in peace, when men first tamed fire, how man circumnavigated the globe — even progressive Erich Fromm¹⁸⁵, in a chapter about the self, quotes (and it is a lengthy quotation) a wonderful passage (written by a man) describing how a little *girl* realises a self that is distinct from *her* body and, quote ended, Erich immediately starts talking about how *men* realise a self.

The Androcentric man is not a Patriarchal man (in the sense of dominion). How can he have dominion over something which does not exist? In fact, you could almost say this is extermination not dominion, but that is probably unkind. Confusing Patriarchy and androcentricism is unwise for a What is left. The exclusion of women from society is surely different kettle of pish to the dominion of man over woman.

8.1.5 Androsexuals

The **androsexual** is begotten within an androcentric world and is an inevitable product of it. What do I

¹⁸⁵ *Escape from Freedom* (1941).

mean by ‘androsexual’?

First, a definition of sex. *Sex is a mutual erotic act between all its participants.*

Second, we can say sex can be **heterosexual** (when the participants are male and female) or **homosexual** (when the participants include at least two members of the same sex¹⁸⁶). *Heterosexual sex and homosexual sex are mutual.*

Third, we can now define androsexuality as **something men do to women**. It is not mutual. It is selfish. It is not even sex. In fact, an informal term for it might as well be rape¹⁸⁷.

Androsexuality can be seen most clearly in pornography, the target of the early radical feminists. Much porn and most corporate porn is men doing to women and something imposed on women. Women are bent and shaped and exposed and splayed like plasticine for the male gaze and they have to perform acts that excite these men. The criticism and anger that the radicals had for pornography is understandable and their criticism important. The problem is that it makes the basic logical error of mistaking the instance for the whole. That is, arguing *Because there is bad pornography, pornography is bad*. Digital cameras have revolutionised many things and one of those things is who can make and distribute pornography over the Internet. Given this,

¹⁸⁶ Note that the latter definition includes bisexuality and merely describes the act itself and ignores those who are purely attracted to the same sex. That is not the purpose of the definition.

¹⁸⁷ Provided it is fully understood that here the usual meaning of the word is more or less its *reductio ad absurdum*. In general, this ‘rape’ is everyday humdrum, which is precisely why it is dangerous.

outside of ultra ideologues, it is absurd to say that pornography *tout court* is androsexual let alone that it *must* be. If the body is not shameful and sexuality is not shameful — especially, in feminist terms, female sexuality — why is pornography shameful? If a woman is not ashamed of her body or her sexuality, why shouldn't she *enjoy* making pornography? If she *does* enjoy what she is doing it is mutual, not androsexual.

If we realise that pornography is not *inherently* misogynistic, we can concentrate on *androsexual* pornography where we observe the credo in its most primal and, as it were, naked form. What it *is* becomes transparent as we observe interchangeable *brunette*, *blonde* and *raven-haired* beauties in their plasticine poses. To see the most obvious least respectable level of androsexuality is to then recognise it everywhere in contemporary mainstream culture, in films, book covers, magazines, adverts, pop singers, Hollywood stars — and we can note how a significant majority of mediated women are androsexualised these days. At least pornography is honest and lets the male gaze get to see the object of its desire. Not so the respectable levels of androsexuality where all is tease and suggestion. These respectable brunette and blonde and raven-haired beauties simultaneously flaunt and hide their 'treasures' as if palaeofeminism never happened.

Confusing sexuality and androsexuality has allowed the enemies of feminism to step in to the breach. Without a distinct concept to target, it is necessary for all feminist critiques to aim at sexuality (invariably male sexuality) itself. If you consider that reproduction is the numero uno concern of nature

and that like it or not that goes for humans and that in turn means nature has made the libido an almighty powerful drive (in men and women), it is a hard task to attack sexuality without appearing to be going for the libido *tout court*, whereas to attack *androsexuality* is to remove this ambiguity.

As an example of how far the palaeofeminist critique of sexuality has failed, take a TV show dating from 1994. Here, the satirical presenter Alan Partridge judges a beauty contest and every viewer when it was broadcast would understand that Alan is a reactionary chauvinist and that beauty contests were being satirised. These days the sketch can be seen on the Internet and *now the commenters themselves judge the contestants out of ten*¹⁸⁸.

Is ‘steamrolling’ too strong a word for what has happened to the palaeofeminism?

8.1.6 Binarists

THIS REMINDS ME not so much of the folly of women police officers as the folly of a world where women raise children without men. Our cross-dressing society – and that’s what a female police officer is, a cross-dresser – hasn’t figured out that trick¹⁸⁹.

CHOOSING A QUEEN instead of her younger brothers will lead to civil war. At best, her only shroud of legitimacy might be to serve as regent for a while. Once her brother comes of age he will be empowered to end the regency and claim his birthright as King and head of the House of Windsor. If she refuses to

¹⁸⁸ No not ironically, since you ask.

¹⁸⁹ That is a woman writing, by the way.

depart, she will be overthrown. Even if her younger brother lacks the will, resolution or courage to do this; the existence of a higher right in blood to the Crown will not just simply go away. When events turn adverse to the usurper, as eventually they will, she or her descendants will be challenged. For England's sake I hope there is no need to fight the Wars of the Roses all over again.

Of all the things feminism (and the left in general) has missed, **binarism**¹⁹⁰ has to be one of its biggest mistakes. Here is how seriously it can be taken. A Saudi cleric said recently anyone who even *suggests* that men and women should not be segregated in public should be *killed*¹⁹¹.

Palaeofeminism had a close relationship to gender theory and these both greatly complemented each other. Now, because feminist thoughts were so fixed on Patriarchy, they viewed the *backlash* to feminism also through this prism. The backlash against gender theory was a marginal affair and anyway seen in terms of men's dominion over women.

¹⁹⁰ Dualism in everyday language is a subtype of binarism in which X and Y are opposites. Here, I take 'binarism' to be implicitly dualistic. If you prefer, it is a shorthand term for 'dualistic binarism'. To save paper and pixels, I use the quick version.

¹⁹¹ A prominent Saudi cleric has issued an edict calling for opponents of the kingdom's strict segregation of men and women to be put to death if they refuse to abandon their ideas. Shaikh Abdul-Rahman al-Barrak said in a fatwa the mixing of genders at the workplace or in education "as advocated by modernisers" is prohibited because it allows "sight of what is forbidden, and forbidden talk between men and women"... "Whoever allows this mixing ... allows forbidden things, and whoever allows them is an infidel and this means defection from Islam ... Either **he** retracts or **he** must be killed ... because **he** disavows and does not observe the Sharia," Barrak said.

The basic idea of gender theory is that **male** and **female** are *physically* defined and **man** and **woman** *culturally* defined. They are ‘**social constructs**’. Looking back at the social construct of the 1950’s breadwinner patriarchy it seems hard to see how a reasonable person could deny that gender theory is a very convincing one. *But gender theory is more threatening to many people, men and women, than feminism.* These are the **binarists**. They believe that this distinction between man/male and woman/female does not exist. Simply put, men are men and women are women. Men and women are **identically different**, say the binarists. Imagine a Venn Diagram with two sets and no intersection. That is how a binarist thinks.

Compare these two quotes:

- Binarist) There is no crisis. There is no need to redefine masculinity. Each of the two sexes need to understand who they are, their purpose and their nature. It is their destiny to control who they are and embrace the good with the bad. What is not needed is any redefinition or merges of the sexualities.
- Non-binarist) There's no such thing as masculinity or femininity, and certainly there should be no gender based guidelines on how to behave. The best thing to do is just to act in the most ethical manner as possible to the benefit of humanity within your own personal situation.

Binarism is a far more slippery customer than its simple beliefs let on. For example, one of its subtler linguistic tricks is to always say less than it means, using simple rules of logic. To a binarist, men and women make up a dualism. Therefore, to say ‘M is X’

is to say ‘F is $\neg X$ ’¹⁹²:

Y = $\neg X$	
M = X	M = $\neg Y$
F = Y	F = $\neg X$

Example:

<i>stupid</i> is not-intelligent	
all men are intelligent	all men are not stupid
all women are stupid	all women are not intelligent

In other words, when binarists are saying that ‘men are something’ and ‘women are something’ – which they are always saying – they are deploying this logic table. Using the table, we can see through their little trick. So, they say something like ‘women are stupid’. This is what we can call a **semantic island**. It exists in and of itself. But our logic table tells us this is not really an island, but a **sematic archipelago**. It is a cluster of islands.

- In this example, the binarist is either saying ‘some women are stupid’ or ‘all women are stupid’.
- The statement ‘some women are stupid’ means that logically ‘some women are not stupid’. This is a reasonable statement and for precisely this reason we conclude this is not what the binarist is saying.
- The logic table shows us that the binarist in saying ‘all women are stupid’ is also saying ‘all men are intelligent’.

¹⁹² \neg is the logical symbol for ‘not’.

- However, we note it is also stating that ‘all men are not stupid’, so if there is just one stupid man in the world, the original statement ‘all women are stupid’ is invalidated according the logic table.
- The trick of the binarist is revealed. They use an imprecise expression that conflates ‘some’ and ‘all’. They mean ‘all’ but imply ‘some’ and in doing so sound reasonable. But their actual meaning is proved false by their own reasoning if we conduct a simple analysis of its logic. But who uses truth tables in everyday conversation?

There are three pillars of binarism: two *worlds*, two *species*, two *standards*.

- 1) Two **worlds**, the public and private spheres. Here be **segregation**.

The separate spheres have already been discussed. Here we need only note that they affected more or less every aspect of society, men and women being effectively bricked up inside their own sphere. With their obsolescence, the binarists lost a powerful method of social control.

- 2) Two **species**, ‘Venus’ and ‘Mars’. Here be **separation**.

John Gray’s book ‘Men Are From Venus, Women From Mars’ was perhaps the most successful propaganda tool of the binarists. A veritable hurricane of **venusmarsist** stories flooded the media over an extended period. The TV show *Desperate Housewives* was an early example of embedded propaganda that more or less acted out Gray’s propaganda out on the small screen. Without the benefit of the two *worlds*, the two *species* is still a very powerful way to get the binarist message across. The main message is that, if men

and women do the same things, they do them differently¹⁹³.

The old idea of separate spheres has been, for now, broken into the tiniest of pieces. What to do? Replace it with the idea of separate species of course silly! How can the right revive separate spheres? It can't, so this is the next best option and this is what it has been gunning for.

And what has the What is left? been doing to oppose this revival of one of the pillars of the patriarchy? Well the left-as-is has more important stuff to consider. There is the Patriarchy, there is the oppression of Woman. There is femicide. There is slut walks. There is #MeToo. There is the burka, the mullahs of Iran, the Taliban of Afghanistan, there is FGM, there are vulnerable women everywhere in the world to rescue and protect. This is the left these days.

Tied to patriarchal values while one of the pillars of the actual patriarchy revives in its Petrie dish fed with the nutritionalest nutrients.

What is left? Fuck all.

3) Two **standards**.

Like separate spheres, this is less powerful in a world where feminism is mainstream. For feminists opposed chivalry and treating girls and women differently. Equal opportunities

¹⁹³ An example of how two-species works can be seen in two TV show trailers. The first was a programme about women gamers and it was going to tell you how women game and the second was about two women who were rat catchers and it promised to let you know how women rat catch. How does a woman do X? That is all that is needed, for men and women are identically different and therefore all women are the same. All women game the same way in the same different way to all men.

meant equal responsibilities meant equal treatment meant one standard.

The two standards are I think poorly understood and rarely recognised. The talk is generally of *double standards* but these are profoundly different to *two standards*. Double standards are only applicable to *equals*. For example, if you give one employee a bonus of £1000 and a second, equally performant, employee one of £5000, that is a double standard. If you praise the referee sending off one of *their* players and condemn them when sending off one of *yours*, that is a double standard. Two different standards are to be applied when there is *inequality*. For example, if you condemn a thoroughbred racehorse for being slow but not your pet tortoise that is two standards. If the portrait you paid £1,000 for looks like the one your six-year-old child painted, to criticise the one not the other is two standards.

Two standards were everywhere in the patriarchy and at every level. In general boys and men were treated — *sternly* might be the most generally applicable word — and girls and women kindly and gently. We can call this **Sparta vs Harem**¹⁹⁴. For example, at many schools' boys were regularly beaten and girls exempt not just from physical punishment, but often any punishment. In many schools it was a lucky boy who went through school without being beaten and an unlucky girl who was. Boys were called by their surnames and girls by their first names, one of the more overt illustrations of how the whole culture of school — its basic value system — was to be stern to boys and kind to girls. However, these same schools

¹⁹⁴ For the Bedouin Arabs, the harem ('protected' or 'sacred' place) was where the women of the tribe lived.

were invariably ‘owned’ by boys and men (who made up the teaching staff). These were boys’ schools that girls attended. These schools taught girls to be obedient, silent and secondary beings, seen and not heard.

The main thing misunderstood about the two standards is the notion of fairness. For example, treating boys and girls differently is unfair to the enlightened person, but not to a binarist who believes boys and girls are separate species. Which is where the two standards become tricky to navigate, because if we find a case where boys are discriminated against, we can easily ignore cases where girls are discriminated against. When we consider that the two standards were universally applied and that they never stopped working, trying to work out what is fair in a world designed to be unfair seems a fool’s errand. On its own terms binarism was fair, for boys were puppy dogs’ tails and girls were sugar and spice and the binarist would brook no argument over that fact.

The point is that if the left — and feminists — push for equality of treatment and the common humanity of men and women, the two standards is doomed and the binarists will have lost a potent weapon.

A good modern example of the two standards is the collar and tie, an issue apparently of no interest to the left. This is something that appears to be a trivial issue because each individual instance is trivial, but is in fact significant because it is a general rule applied throughout western society and employed as a binarist marker that encodes ideology just as much as opening the door for a lady once did.

Although many men do not like having to wear ties, other

men make a point of wearing ties. Here is the nub. It is obvious enough from observing bigmen films and ranked arrays of modern politicians that the tie is a symbol of power. Powerful men wear powerful suits to express it. The tie is male. Ergo the suit is a symbol of *male* power. Women's dress code is vastly less restricted. So, *this* office becomes a catwalk of outfit parades¹⁹⁵ and *that* office applies rigid dress codes for men not women¹⁹⁶. This is patriarchy seeping in while the left ignores it. The suit is there to advertise the power of men using a symbol denoting 'male', its uniformity signalling the universality of this power.

But unfortunately, neither feminism or the left is interested in this phenomenon and we are now in a world of the neofeminists — the women who control the narrative in their Guardian, Independent and even Times enclaves. These are aggressively Woman and exclusively concerned with everything that makes a woman. A neofeminist work such as Caitlin Moran's *How to be a Woman* will not say anything about collars or ties.

An important characteristic of binarism is that the army of binarists consists of men and women. The same can be said of anti-binarists. Binarism isn't 'male' or 'female' (in an amusing irony). The What is left might want to have a little ponder over its rigid adherence to the idea that feminism is about 'male oppression'. Binarism isn't patriarchy, but it is a major component of it. At some point – and I say let it be sooner rather than later – the left is going to have to realise that women are playing a large part in

¹⁹⁵ Getting ahead means looking good.

¹⁹⁶ Sparta vs Harem.

the right-wing counterculture that is now the mainstream *and that includes gender and feminist issues.*

What binarism is in practice, is *this*:

Experts say men and women process air - scientists call this 'breathing' - very differently. 'There's a world of difference in the way men and women iron', said Dr Pug. Women drive in significantly different directions to men. Men's and women's eyeballs are significantly different, scientists have discovered. A new study claims that an infinite number of women typing for an infinite amount of time would eventually compose 'Hamlet', whilst a corresponding number of men would compose 'The Merry Wives Of Windsor'. A recent study found that men and women prefer vastly different sorts of pullovers. The average man reads the first 24 pages of a book quicker than the average woman, but women were found to read pages 65-83 far more quickly. Some numbers have female aspects (irrational), but others are male (rational), a mathematician claims. Car doors are opened very differently by men and women, and for very different reasons, a recent poll has found. Men and women like significantly different songs, women preferring 'My Way' by Frank Sinatra, with the men professing a liking for ABBA's 'Waterloo'. Men and women have significantly different socks. 'The way men and women hold paintbrushes is very different', Prof Pug said. Gnats bite significantly more women than men. Significantly fewer women speak Xhosa as a second language than men. Men and women live in significantly different countries. Experts have now found that hopping is clearly gender-related, and that men and women hop at significantly different rates and for vastly different reasons. More women prefer air conditioning to less men. Some transgendered transexuals have a transexual transgendered brain, experts say. Men do things significantly differently significantly differently to

women. Women and men fall off cliffs for very different reasons, research has discovered. Men prefer aubergines while the women enjoy tomatoes. Women were significantly more hostile to the Millennium Dome than men. Light particles - called photons by scientists - affect men and women in vastly different ways. Men like velociraptors significantly more than women. Women look at the moon significantly more than men. Men like Switzerland significantly more than women. A recent poll has discovered that women are significantly more in favour of Angelina Jolie than men, while the men favoured Christina Ricci. Men are significantly more fearful of being guillotined than women. Women hold hoses and small ornaments very differently to men. Women and men have vastly different attitudes as to whether the druids were beneficial to ancient Celtic society or not. Men and women catch significantly different trains. Women say the word 'the' twice as much as men, but the study went on to prove that men said 'twice' significantly more often. The men liked mountains but the women liked the seas. Men nod their heads much more than women, while a woman shakes her head significantly more. Men's brains are a significantly different colour to women's. Women drink vastly different milkshakes to men. Women have different atoms to men. It is common knowledge that human beings share 98% of their DNA with chimps, but a remarkable new study indicates that the amount of DNA shared by men and women is surprisingly small, weighing in at significantly less than one fifth of one per cent. A recent poll discovered that Newton's Laws Of Motion are applied in a vastly different way to men and women, with Newton saying that men 'in a state of uniform motion will tend to remain in that state of motion unless an external force is applied to them', while women simply have to follow the prof's rule that 'For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction'. Finally, research indicates women think men think men and women are significantly different significantly differently to the way

men think women think men and women are significantly different.

8.2 Neopatriarchy

Feminism certainly lives in interesting times these days. I don't think palaeofeminism has much traction in the mediated world right now. There, all is neofeminism. The result of this is that the status of women – of men and women – is enigmatic. That is, in certain ways, feminist attitudes are becoming more and more normalised but on the whole feminism is being rolled back in a host of subtle ways. It is impossible to see how this enigma will pan out. In my view the gazumpment of neoliberalism by the warlike neoconservatism is highly dangerous to feminism and now the primates of the second Trump administration are here this warmongering is likely to become increasingly gendered¹⁹⁷. Feminism can be rolled back by brutishness, but also by kindness.

The Tory rallying cry used to be *Church in danger!* Maybe it would be wise for the left to rally around a cry of *Feminism in danger!*

The **neopatriarchy** is an enigma in the process of becoming, of chipping away here and there at the foundations of feminism (much like palaeofeminists once did with the palaeopatriarchy). But enough little

¹⁹⁷ 'Secretary of War' Pete Hegseth appears to be a true believer in patriarchy. He has repeatedly supported a pastor who advocates the idea of a 'household'. Under this system it would be the household that voted, not the individual, and the household would be represented by the headman. He also hearts war and reckons it is a purely guy thing and he seems to be launching a campaign to remove women from the military.

nips in any structure and a firm push is likely to bring it down.

The following sections outline various ways in which feminism is being undermined by stealth. Consider that, in the mediated world the only feminism is neofeminism – well, surely there must be a left that can do better than this?

8.2.1 Masculism

Here are two ‘masculist’ tales that perfectly illustrate masculism on an everyday scale.

1. A masculist posted to the Internet a funny, to him, tale about a High School class. The students are paired off and told to take it in turns to write a story, with each continuing from where their partner left off. One of the pairs was a girl and a boy, the masculist explained. The girl was chosen to start the story, but the boy ruined whatever it was she wrote. She had another go, same thing, maybe a third then complained to the teacher. The masculist *love love loved* this. In fact, to him, these are the very *archetypes* of female and male.
2. A sports jock masculist writing for some local west coast local paper wrote an article¹⁹⁸ about a woman who (said the

¹⁹⁸ “But Manal al-Sherif just haaaaaad to get behind the wheel. Just had to show the world that a set of tits doesn’t mean you’re a terrible driver. Wrong! I bet she was putting on makeup and eating PinkBerry and tailgating the other drivers too. Fucking chicks, can’t do anything. Am I right, guys? Am I right?! Someone give me a high five...If you don’t find this funny then you don’t have even a semblance of a sense of humor. Like this is high comedy at its finest. Maybe it’s a little bit sad that she died, but if I were to say I didn’t laugh out loud when I read that headline then I would be lying.”

This is in response to this: *A Saudi woman who defied a driving ban in the kingdom was injured and her companion killed when their car*

news) been a campaigner for women's right to drive in Saudi Arabia who had been killed in a car accident. The one and only point of this article was to let men know how snot-producingly *funny* this was. This masculist, like the first one, could not imagine any man not finding it snot-producingly funny. All round the world, he seemed to imagine, men were rolling around the floor at the fact this woman had been killed. Perhaps he should have bought air tickets to film the funeral. Comedy gold¹⁹⁹.

What this tells us is how masculists view themselves. You can draw the same conclusion by watching any jackass type video. A man is a crass, in sensitive and somewhat stupid creature.

A more high-level illustration of masculism is provided from man-stories in books and film. These valhalla fantasies are always about prisons, gangsters, soldiers, criminals, 'hoods, police, gangs, wars, special forces. The latest masculist opuses — seen in films and computer games — focus as much on the stuff that kills as the men who kill. Gigantic killing machines and magnificent bombs swoosh across the screen in orgasms of magic male power. Immense explosions spunk over their rapt audience of masculists. Death and power, power in death, power over death, victory through death,

Teddy Roosevelt
'the megaphone of Mars'

War and men
Men are war
What they for
For evermore
War, more war
An open door
To blood and gore

That's it, then
You men
War, often
War, weapon
War, war, men --
Then death, then --
What then?

overturned in the northern Hael province, a police spokesman said on Monday. "One woman was immediately killed and her companion who was driving the car was hospitalised after she suffered several injuries"

¹⁹⁹ The woman who was killed, it turned out, was not the campaigner but a woman with the same name. Probably just as hilar though.

death and men: the masculist death cult.

It is of considerable significance here that only men face the call-up in the Ukraine and although army service is compulsory for Israeli women, only men may serve in Gaza. The **masculist death cult** made real? If you doubt this, consider this unfathomable speech I saw by a rabbi who preaches to the soldiers in Gaza. He started by saying he believed Hitler was right. About what? you ask. About the Holocaust. What? why? The Jews of Europe acted like they were led by women; they were like women²⁰⁰. They had lost their manhood. They deserved to die. What Israel can do in Gaza is retrieve its manhood. I will let you pause for breath. He really did say that. *That* is the masculist death cult.

The well-known masculist catchphrase ‘bros before hos’ is a good way of understanding how masculists think. It is classic merge and transfer stuff. It appears to say ‘men before women’. It claims to be universal. A brotherhood of man. But it is a gang saying. It is not universal. The bros are the gang. It is affirming the gang as male as male can be. No hos, no women. But gangs *fight* gangs. Gang members (*our* bros) *kill* members of other gangs (*their* bros). They *beat* them. They *torture* them. Gangs *celebrate* killing, beating and torturing men. This is masculism. You say bros before hos and that means sure as night follows day you enjoy hurting men. Your brotherhood of man is you and your twenty homies. All other men – the **otherhood of man** – are your sworn enemies. This is masculism, the otherhood of man.

In this context, do we find a feminism interested in

²⁰⁰ Note how Jewish women *aren’t* Jews. Androcentricism 101.

gender relations and therefore deeply disturbed by these definitions of ‘men’? Course not. What we got is neofeminism and its notion of Patriarchy that oppresses women with rape and violence. That is, we get an ideology *that looks away while the masculist death cult is resurrected*. I do not know how many men have been sent to their deaths in the Ukraine. I recently saw a figure pitching the number at 1 million²⁰¹. What seems to be a fact is that there are no new men left to send²⁰².

Even the left that notices gender can do no more than see patriarchal violence against women even in the face of this. The eye that looks away can never see. While a million men may have been killed over *there*, *here, look!* a man has fondled a woman’s breasts! Selling cakes for Gaza is far worse than genocide!

Interesting times. Interesting priorities.

8.2.2 Homophobia

Chanting the slogan ‘God Hates Fags’ is homophobia. Queer bashing is homophobia. Well, anything to do with hating or disliking queers²⁰³ is homophobia.

But this is yet another term that needs re-investigating, for the neo right-wing has co-opted gay rights in a big way. What then *is* homophobia? I think

²⁰¹ Which I mention because even if the true number is a half or a quarter it is still huge.

²⁰² Now with no men left to send to their deaths, the neocons have switched to long-range weapons and the US and Europe are effectively now firing missiles deep into Russia.

²⁰³ Dykes? We are discussing male homophobia so the attitude of men to gay women is not really relevant except to say that it is highly ambivalent. The ‘lipstick lesbian’ and ‘girl on girl action’ attest to that.

it is triggered by the working of the libido which obviously has two basic functions. The first and most powerful of these is **attraction** but a secondary function is **repulsion**. From a dudely pov, *woman phwoargh man blech*. My intuition²⁰⁴ is that this repulsion is built on top of the attraction rather than being a separate process. In other words, it converts attraction into repulsion. Observing homophobia in the wild repeatedly confirms that, in my experience, for homophobes seem to be quite obsessed with what might be termed **desexualising** men as if men have been in the first place sexualised.

This, at any rate, is my definition of homophobia here – the repulsion (desexualising?) by men of men. This type of homophobia goes unnoticed. *These* homophobes don't want to kill queers or send fags to Hell. They just find the idea of other men disgusting. I said 'these homophobes' just now but if I am correct the primal drive will be present in all non-gay (or bi) males. It implies too that the same thing goes for females and one of the most impressive achievements of androsexuality (if I am correct) is persuading all humanity that women are not just not homophobic but *attracted* to other women, by an amazing coincidence just like androsexuals are.

Not noticing homophobia is bad for the left as for one thing it lets binarism run rampant. The old counterculture had rock and pop music at its core and that was a major component in the rebellion against binarism. A woman remembers, for example, the early days of mod in 1963-4 and telling how it was a striking sight to see a young mod boy walking about

²⁰⁴ Unfortunately, I am unlikely to get the £10 million grant needed for a proper study of the hypothesis.

in white jeans or other bright clothes. It was a daring thing to do. Nowadays we have ‘hipsters’, an essentially right-wing hate target all-too acceptable to leftists. Hipsters are, if you look carefully, men. Specifically, men who like to take care of their appearance and wear bright clothes. They are a sort of last redoubt of the mod, but rather than being a liberating counterculture element, they are nowadays the target of a restrictive counter-counterculture that says it is a politically correct guy code men must follow that they dress down drab. Short hair, beard, dull coloured ugly clothes – just nothing too queer. Menswear versus hipster-wear. Don’t hate on fags, just nothing too queer okay²⁰⁵?

8.2.3 Menimism

You’s met with feminism so now meet **menimism**, its male counterpart. Menimists rebadge the patriarchy as feminism. It is the smiling face of masculism, yet more post-feminism posing as feminism.

As a trivial example, a menimist might support a woman’s feminist campaign to bare her breasts in public (‘tits oot fer the lads!’) or if he is a CEO he might sing the praise of women’s business skills until he has his little harem of women senior managers (all twentysomething brunette, blonde and raven-haired beauties, of course).

1) TV and Menimism

Menimism has been a constant in TV and cinema over recent

²⁰⁵ These men in their drabwear live in a world of feminist women bright as birds of paradise. A binarist paradise, too.

decades. It is what you get if you put patriarchal and masculinist men in charge films or programmes that offer a 'feminist' or 'strong woman' message.

The following TV plot is an example of menimism in its purest form. I neither know nor care what this D-movie was called, but I saw it and here is what happened in it.

A writer lives in perfect bliss with his wife and chickens in a perfect house in a little town. He has just finished his latest and best book and is preparing it for publishing. Then trouble (would you believe it?) strikes. A female ex-con arrives in town whom he taught creative writing while she was in prison. By the end of the film, the following has been revealed: she killed the writer's beloved chickens; manipulated him so she could make a formal sexual assault charge against him; made his wife leave him; trapped him into signing the rights of his book over to her; she was in prison because she had taken a creative writing class with a man she then murdered after he rejected her advances; she murdered the local sheriff, a good friend of the writer; she kidnapped both his publisher and wife at gunpoint and was going to kill them; she was going to kill the writer. Whole lotta phew! Then in the final drama there is a struggle and the writer wrests the gun from her and calls in the cops. What does he do? Well, there's a laptop there and he sits her down and kindly gives her a lesson in creative writing while they are waiting. The final scene shows the woman in prison. We see a large, clean cell with a TV, two shelves full of books and a plush desk on which sits a laptop she can write with. Bless.

A) *Buffy*.

A famous TV series that illustrates menimism on a grand scale is *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003). Buffy is a High School girl²⁰⁶ who is a 'slayer' of vampires and interesting here because she is often declared to be a 'feminist symbol'.

²⁰⁶ In the first episodes, later on she is a college student.

It is easy to see why. You can read comments on the Internet by women who were inspired by Buffy. The series works because of the powerful central character (perfectly played by Sarah Michelle Geller). Buffy is a slayer and looks and acts like a slayer and confounds many stereotypes about girls. In that sense the series certainly deserves a place in the annals of feminism. However, suspicions as to its genuine feminist intent arise if we consider that the basic premise of the show is centred around 1) a 'hot chick' and 2) the masculinist fundamental of fighting.

Buffy can be favourably compared to another 'strong female' series, *Dark Angel* (2000-1). Here are menimist warning signs from the first, as Max, the 'dark angel' and a 'super-warrior', is a childlike waif. From that unpromising beginning, the series — well, let one male reviewer speak: *'If pouty faces and sexy walks could destroy, the highly arresting Max would be wiping out the entire planet.'* That is menimism in excelsis, where men control feminism. Call it **rapunzel feminism**. Buffy is nothing like that. She is not a Rapunzel.

If you dig a little deeper though, you will see menimism everywhere in the show. I find the first episodes of Buffy the truest to feminist ideas and where the menimism is kept at bay. Buffy joins a new High School (after being expelled from her last) and makes friends with the geeky best friends Willow and Xander. Of course, her new home town Sunnydale happens to be situated right on the Hellmouth, home to many a vampire that needs slaying. At this stage, the programme seemed keen to defy stereotypes in all the main characters. Xander and Willow are best friends and, with sharp writing, we see it is perfectly natural for a boy and a girl to be just best friends.

By season two, however, things had changed and we now see a more or less constant advert for patriarchal values dressed up in a 'girl power' uniform. Menimism, in other words.

- The first sign of this was the now repeated intimation that teenage boys are feral animals and generally speaking emotionally retarded. I illustrated earlier how masculists like to view men and the show here is in perfect agreement with this perspective.
- Just as boys become feral, so Buffy and Willow become more 'girly'. Their girliness becomes a part of their characters.
- Xander, meanwhile, suddenly becomes super-conscious of his 'manhood' (and super-protective of Buffy).
- By the time of seasons 3 and 4, Buffy has been *surrounded* by protectors. A 'reformed' vampire called Angel is there to look over her, as is Giles her 'watcher'. Riley her boyfriend in season 3 is especially protective of her: gee! my! boy! how protective he is! Xander, too, let's not forget.
- From the second half of season 1, almost all the vampires and demons are male, effectively reducing the series to the level of any other masculist fantasy of grinding men into the dirt.
- Xander hooks up with a girl called Anya who is in fact a thousand or so year old demon trapped in a girl's body, but as a demon she spent these thousand years gleefully *torturing* bad men. That's two menimisms in one: women torturing men for badness and men forgiving women no matter what they done (*Look at that sweet face!* etc). Women are never responsible for their actions at a serious – meaning *manly* – level of ethics.
- The programme, as Buffy gets more girly, becomes more and more concerned with her 'outfits' and at times she is made up to look like a living doll.

- A second slayer is introduced, the wayward Faith. Faith often ‘patrols’ with Buffy killing vampire men but on one patrol she accidentally kills a human man. She then turns bad, having found killing fun, and is now second-in-command to the demonic mayor of Sunnydale. The mayor treats her like daddy’s little girl. Yes, really. His own lieutenant. At one point he tells his male vampire henchmen if they fail, he will ‘take them to the woodshed’, which is presumably what you do to boys who are feral animals, but Faith (like any daughter) is his little sugar plum fairy to be given sweets and presents. *Sparta vs Harem; Woodshed vs Pedestal*. As the sugar plum fairy becomes more sadistic and murderous, she is constantly forgiven by Buffy. We seem to be encouraged to feel sorry for her. Bless.

Buffy, then, exists in the middle of an almost *fundamentalist* patriarchal society. Menimism *in secreto*. You can sense the way the masculinist writers, having (successfully, mind) created a ‘strong female character’, gradually try and protect her. She is a slayer and she remains a slayer but she’s also her writers’ daddy’s little girl who her daddies want to protect, a superhuman fighter a hair on whose head you should never ever harm. A menimist conundrum. Buffy is therefore essentially a menimist not a feminist show. Outside the narrow window of its main character, it reveals an essentially masculinist world stuffed with masculinist values.

B) Murderesses

Menimism is also often on display in crime dramas, for which the basic plot²⁰⁷ conflicts in the most fundamental sense with masculinism if the murderer is a woman. How, from a dramatic point of view, can an empty vessel of gentleness and kindness be a murderer?

²⁰⁷ Hero (detective) versus Adversary (murderer).

Here is how²⁰⁸:

1. The kind and gentle murderess is literally too stupid to know the difference between right and wrong;
2. The murderess is mentally ill, so not matter how appalling her crimes, underneath is all she is gentle and kind;
3. A wicked man is behind the murderess' crimes, controlling her, her real self being kind and gentle;
4. All the evidence points to the murderess, but at the reveal we learn a man did the terrible things, so how gentle and kind is she now proved to be;
5. The murderess is driven to commit a terrible crime against an unspeakably evil man so really, she is kind and gentle;
6. The murderess did commit a heinous crime but, when caught, bursts into tears and says 'sorry', proving how gentle and kind she really is underneath it all;
7. In the last resort, when the murderess did the crime and is unrepentant and not kind or gentle, she is either killed or kills herself, thus avoiding punishment — that is to say a sense of *responsibility*.

C) Tools And Codes

Two more examples of menimist TV must suffice. Though they both involve simian levels of entertainment, they illustrate the ambition and scope of menimists.

First, *Tool Academy*, a programme there to help girlfriends tame their male chauvinist pig boyfriends. Its word of

²⁰⁸ Menimists *do* allow women to be wicked murderers under one circumstance: a wicked women uses her feminine wiles to induce a man to commit the murder. This is allowed because she uses a feminine not a masculist power.

warning to the left is that the right has twisted and turned feminism about so completely that *the male chauvinist pig can now safely be used for anti-feminist propaganda*. Tool Academy suggests the tools are just average guys but they haven't been domesticated. They don't know how to treat a lady. The academy will try and teach them how to treat ladies with proper respect. Of particular note is how similar are the tool, the masculists' notion of the snot-shooting man laughing at a woman being killed in a car crash, the boys in Buffy and the idea that guys are insensitive brutes who need to be taken to the woodshed.

Second, the US reality series *Guy Code* (2011-15). A programme called Guy Code for primates who call out 'political correctness' even as their eyes are glued to five seasons of *actual* political correctness.

2) Limiters

Misogyny²⁰⁹ is the hatred of women. But is that all it is?

The commonly accepted view these days seems to be that misogyny is a core component of a Patriarchy that is based on rape and violence against women and femicide. But is it so central? In my view, misogyny was never popular and misogynists were not well-liked in general. They were seen as a type of misanthrope and does anyone think misanthropes were ever popular? Misogyny – *hatred of women* – was marginal to the patriarchy.

Misogyny in fact is one of those words that gets silently expanded in meaning so that in the end it implies a man who has shouted at or criticised a woman or touched a hair on her head. How patriarchal. For example, mid-1960's Rolling Stones lyrics (mostly written by Mick Jagger in his pre-Sir days) are invariably dark, angry – yes, sometimes hateful – songs about women and so to this day are constantly cited

²⁰⁹ From μισογυνία (misogunía), 'hate' + 'woman'.

as being *misogynist*. But they are *not* misogynist because they are directed against *individuals* not *women*. Calling these lyrics misogynist tells you more about the caller than the song, that the caller would like a world in which all songs have to pass through some sort of Star Chamber so that only songs about how pure and kind and beautiful women are get released into the world and women are never upset or sad²¹⁰.

Misogyny is often confused with chauvinism and for sure these tend to merge with each other as red merges into orange. The core difference is that chauvinism isn't fundamentally misogynistic. Chauvinists don't tend to *hate* women, more *downgrade* them (and upgrade men). Misogynist: *women are bloodsucking leeches*. Chauvinist: *women are incapable of parking a car properly*. Misogynists, also, rely on outlier notions about women (seeing as their views are extreme), while chauvinists use popular stereotypes. Chauvinists in my view are much more of a threat to women in general than misogynists who are more of a threat to individual women.

However, if we interpret the word 'misogynist' as meaning 'anti women' we can introduce a new and I think very useful definition for it. This misogyny **limits women**. In this definition, the target is Woman not women and the issue is *confinement* and not *hatred*. This misogyny is built around notions of the limitations of women. Take a common scene in countless dramas where a woman is off to try sort out a problem. A man grabs her saying 'I can't let you go it's too dangerous' and so she stays. This is misogyny because the woman is assumed (it is assumed for her) to be incapable of facing danger, either by overcoming it or dealing with it. It limits women. This sort of misogyny is always based on a

²¹⁰ To see for yourself how menimist or neofeminist these accusations are you just have to watch a gay woman performing 'Under My Thumb' to see it's a nasty angry vindictive lyric not a misogynistic one.

widely-held idea (like chauvinism) and is therefore stereotyped. It is not chauvinistic however because it is not overtly contemptuous.

A good way of understanding this sort of misogyny is as follows. Imagine a bitterly cold evening at a football ground. It is a match in the women's FA Cup. The 22 players come on the pitch into their respective halves. Then all of a sudden 22 men burst onto the scene. Each man is carrying a coat and each grabs a player and wraps his coat around her. Without much ado the 22 players are escorted off the pitch by the 22 men out of the freezing cold to 22 nice warm rooms each heated by a blazing fire.

If you believe that is an absurd scenario, I say reconsider. Think back to 1860 or thereabouts and how impossible it is to imagine 22 Victorian ladies stepping out onto a football pitch on a freezing January evening. Metaphorically, their gentlemen *have* effectively kept them nice and warm and safe and sound and limited to their gilded cage they will never think to fly out of. Metaphorically, the scenario is exact.

And that is the limiting sort of misogyny is a nutshell. These **misos** don't hate women, they smother them.

3) Idolators

If you search the Internet for 'female supremacy' you will – should any of this be a surprise by now? – find men not women. These are the **idolators**²¹¹. Female supremacy is, far from what it says it is, in fact the *reductio ad absurdum* of androsexuality. Woman, to an idolator, is a sacred spell with the divine power to control the libido of a man and render him a helpless subject of his goddess. In other words, although the object burns as bright as the Sun himself, she is nevertheless a sex object who is moreover *defined entirely*

²¹¹ There are women 'supremacists' who like to be idolated but these I suppose count as extreme feminists.

in terms of a sex object. She has moved – no, been moved – from the gilded cage to a gilded throne.

Many idolators see Woman as a cruel dominatrix ready to deliver a fearsome woodshed whipping, but the later Dante elevated Her to the highest heights of Heaven near to the Virgin Mother herself. Whatever the level of idolation they offer, they illustrate a paradox at the core of masculism. The idolator's worship is as sincere as it is intense. It is real. It is also a fundamentalist form of limiting misogyny. There is the paradox, **misogyny as worship**.

A classic text for the meaning of this type of misogyny **is a poem by Dante Gabriel Rossetti**. It is a narrative poem set in an Italian village where a young man is pleading to the village priest. He is frantic and tells at length of his lady and how he worships her and her beauty and how he would do anything for her and how he is her slave and how she is perfection and what should he do? He has just stabbed her to death. What should he do? Why did she stab her? She didn't want what he wanted and was going to do a thing he didn't want her to do. So, he stabbed her to death. This goddess he is swearing he would do anything for he was her slave and she wouldn't do what he wanted he has stabbed to death. *That* is an idolator.

If you look at menimist made films, idolation is a common ingredient in them. Because in this world menimism is feminism, idolators are feminists. To not see that is a paradox lost and an open door for anti-feminism.

4) Kind Chauvinists

Neofeminism says that the Patriarchy controls women with femicide, beatings and rape. The patriarchy (the real thing) controlled women with the gilded cage. You can see the misdirection, can't you? In the gilded cage, women were to be provided for and revered and protected. So, the What is left is busy looking at something marginal no one agrees

with while looking far away from something omnipresent many people think is a good thing. It is like campaigning against big energy inflating prices while declaiming statistics about the sales of kiwi-fruit.

If you look carefully, there are all sorts of cases where men are 'kind' to women in a way that seems to be anything but kind. This is kind chauvinism²¹².

A good example of kind chauvinism can be found in a letter to a commuter-bait paper called *The Metro*. The letter was an angry rant from an exasperated man. Why, he asked, didn't men let women get on the train first anymore? Why didn't men show women *respect*? This is misogynistic spew, but how and why? It seems so — kind. How can being kind be misogynistic? The key lies with the word 'respect'. Respect is what is due to great people and it is a powerful feeling. You might respect Martin Luther King, Neil Armstrong, Enid Blyton, Fidel Castro or Milton Friedman. Is that what our letter-writer meant by 'respect'? How could he? Fellow commuters are anonymous and besides, who would *assume* they have done anything worthy of the sort of *heroic* levels of respect? No, our man was talking about respect for all women simply for being women, a respect so lukewarm it wouldn't melt an ice cube. Furthermore, such a man cannot feel any powerful respect for any individual woman. If he felt that he would not suggest his lukewarm respect.

And *that* is kind chauvinism. A man on TV listing the things that annoy him takes us a bit further in understanding this. It makes his blood boil to see a woman standing on the London tube on his commute from Paddington into central London (a few stops). There was thunderous applause from the audience. We can understand the meaning of this anger

²¹² Since noticing this 'kind chauvinism' I discovered the fairly well-worn term *benevolent sexism*, but here I use my term because it's my book and I think my term is much better to be frank.

when the host said he was a sixty-something, would his guest be so angry if it was him left standing? The guest had to think about this obviously previously unthinkable scenario. Then he came back. You, he enthused, are a virile man. The key. What made this man's blood boil was that *a symbol of women's weakness and helplessness had been taken away*. The natural order of the masculist universe had been overturned. Take Mina Guli, an Australian woman who ran a hundred marathons in a hundred days. Can she — could she — would she be — able to stand up on a tube train for say *five stops*? Surely not. She would need a strong virile man who could bear the weight for her. Wouldn't that be one of the things that most make your blood boil in the whole wide world if you saw this delicate creature having to *stand* for five minutes?

Opening doors, giving up seats, wrap coat around, sleeping on the sofa, carrying things, never raising voice, arms around, buying dinner, buying a drink, smiling, flowers, gifts, 'I'll do that, sweetheart', jewellery, perfume, diamond rings, frocks, shoes, silk, sexy underwear, holidays, yachts, sweetheart, honey, baby, doll, angel, my precious . . . kind chauvinism. Kindness not really kind. In fact — you can sense it from that list — *controlling*. A gilded cage if ever there was one masculists are desperate to be able to imprison women in again. Again too, limiting misogyny.

If you criticise kind chauvinism, though, you'll see that it is remarkable how something as simple as the concept of *opening a door* is so very difficult for many people to understand. Palaeofeminists made a simple point. They rejected the *symbolic opening of a door for a 'lady'*. At no point does feminism argue against holding a door open out of common politeness. But look at furious discussions about 'feminists' and 'opening doors' on the Internet. You will find a general incomprehension of this very simple issue. Why do feminists want doors slammed in their faces why do I get dirty looks if I open the door for a lady what do women

want can't live with them can't live without them why *me*?
Is the gist.

As the right rampages and the need for a What is left grows, I'd say kind chauvinism — an almost invisible force — is one of the greatest dangers to a new left. As an example, a while back a woman was killed in one of the neocon battle zone areas. Immediately a man from *Médecins Sans Frontières* (Doctors Without Borders) suggested banning women from entering high-risk zones. The statement was ignored but it is significant enough that it was made. Kind chauvinists are fundamentally opposed to women being endangered. We can summarise their attitude via a simple metaphor:

1. Girls are not allowed to climb trees. [Patriarchy]
2. Girls are allowed to climb trees but *not* fall out of them. [Neofeminism, Menimism]
3. Girls are allowed to climb trees *and* fall out of them. [Palaeofeminism]

Note that 2) is a 'liberal' equivalent to 3). Quite simply, you cannot climb a tree without a chance of falling out of it. So menimists (and neofeminists) passionately believe in 1) but in subtly disguised form.

This begs the question, Just how much damage can kind chauvinists do to women's rights and any new left in an increasingly dangerous world? If you march these days, you are likely to be discomforted in some way (kettling, for example) but recently the threat of arrest is increasing dramatically. Then there is tear gas and police violence. It makes kind chauvinists' blood boil seeing women discomforted or hurt. You should never hit a woman. Should women be exposed to such danger? Let me carry that for you. You don't want to do that it's dangerous you might get hurt. Authoritarian governments are rarely rational and are always protecting what they see as their interests. They are unjust and commit injustices all the time. This is kind

chauvinist manna. If women start being arrested for no just reason, kind chauvinists can start the calls to remove Woman from the public-political sphere. Just too dangerous, they frown earnestly. They'll put their coats around their women and if they think they can put their arms around her too they'll call it feminism even though it is just menimism.

5) Agreeability

It is easy to misunderstand androsexuality and its sex objects. This is because the sex object is actually a little tricky to define and I suggest she exists in increasing levels of complexity as follows.

- The most basic level of sex object lives purely in the imagination. You summon her, she appears, she is fucked, you dismiss her.
- Stepping into the real world, no matter how inhuman your views of women might be, you face a problem because you know you cannot summon or dismiss a real woman. After she's been fucked, she must be put somewhere and fed and clothed. It is hard to imagine this sort of sex object appealing to anyone.
- So, annoying as it is, you know you have to deal with her somehow so you picture a woman who does what you want when you want and doesn't talk back but at least you don't have to put her away somewhere when you've finished with her. This type of object might appeal to some, but not very many, I think.
- Thus we arrive at the **companion**, the geisha. The secret to understanding the nature of the companion is that although her basic role is to be a fucking device, she needs to be someone you can live with. She must be **agreeable**.

This word 'agreeable' is, unlikely as it may seem, a powerful one. Note it does not in any sense mean 'one who agrees to everything'. That's not someone good to live with. To be agreeable is an endlessly complex task. For example, the man might want to talk or he might be concentrating on the Game²¹³. See the problem? To be silent when he wants to talk or talk when he requires silence. It is an endless maze, this agreeability. Take the fact that some men adore tattoos but other men hate them. You simply just cannot be agreeable to both men. But agreeability describes what the companion must aim for no matter what it is, whether he wants a gentle waif or a tough mama – whatever he wants, to meet his wishes is to be agreeable. More limiting misogyny, for **an agreeable woman is never herself**.

If the core of feminism is self, agreeability is the exact opposite of feminism. But it is a core of menimism and as usual ignored by the left.

8.2.4 Femenenism

There are right-wing women who allow us to avoid the misdirection that 'the right' is made up of 'patriarchal men' because they show how far right some women can go. Two examples will do.

First, there is an American woman who actively campaigns against women *having the vote*. Why? I'm only exaggerating a little, but apparently until women make up 50% of sewage workers, they are not equal and therefore have no moral right to vote. Note that this places sewage workers right at the centre of the western power elite, suggesting they hold the keys to power. This is a novel idea I have heard nowhere else. Note also that as soon as you stop thinking about

²¹³ A mysterious activity sacred to all real men.

‘men’ and ‘women’ as Jack and Jill, you realise that the proportion of sewage workers in the US must be very small. At a generous 1%, that means 99% of men are not sewage workers. So, although women only make up about 4% of the sewage workforce, out of the total US population this is more or less meaningless statistically. Yet on this basis our friend is campaigning to remove the vote from all women in the US.

Second, there are the ‘rapture²¹⁴ ready’ women. Back in the days of the George Bush II, I studied these women’s opinions on their rapture ready discussion board. This raptured little community was so enthusiastic about segregation that men and women each had their own boards. It was a wholly patriarchal community in which men worked and women kept house and husbands had dominion over their wives. But were these women unhappy or oppressed? They were very happy and did not feel oppressed. In fact, it was more than obvious they were *not* oppressed in any way. They lived a free life largely protected by their husbands from the worries of the world outside the home. They cared for children, had hobbies that filled in their days most pleasantly (like making jam), enjoyed the support and friendship of other wives in the community and to top it all loving and supportive husbands. What might be surprising is that the relationship with their husbands was clearly one of equals. Okay, the dominion thing. But that seemed to mean the husband had a somewhat distant authority to make

²¹⁴ When God sets things in motion for Judgement Day, the saved will be floated up into the sky in an ardent rapture as they look down at the fate of the sinners below. Those preparing for this moment call themselves ‘rapture ready’.

decisions. But not after consulting his wife and discussing things with her. No never no! These were women who expected to have a say. I got the impression too, to have the final say.

I suppose you could call these women **femenenists**. It seems quite absurd to hide them away from feminism and pretend either that they don't exist or that they are oppressed and unhappy. They make the neofeminist depiction of a Patriarchy of rape and violence by men against helpless women even more absurd. The rapture ready women – articulate, confident, happy and assertive as they are – really do live happily in a patriarchy.

9. Faking

They wear the garments of the left
But they are from another place
And what I see is patent theft
It is a mask and not a face

Behind the mask it's still the same
Same wealth and power win the race
It's a change of name same old game
Just played at a different pace

9.1 Identity

Lucy Parker is a **typical teenage girl, obsessed with clothes, boys, make up and shopping**. But there's one thing that sets her apart from the others - Lucy was born as Richard and she is a transsexual. At just 17, she's determined to surgically transform her body from male to female.



Transsexual robber is sentenced

A transsexual robber who twice held up a petrol station wearing a pair of knickers over her head has been jailed for two-and-a-half years.

Chloe Bradley raided a Texaco garage in New Malden, south-west London, brandishing a knife and stole cash.

The court heard that after one of the raids, Bradley was stopped but let go because they were under the impression they were looking for a man.

Bradley is undergoing a male to female sex change.

We have looked at gender theory and its nemesis

binarism, so now let us examine **identity politics**²¹⁵. This is a super-duper danger to any new left. It is literally right-wing fundamentalism dressed up in leftist clothing and yet most people even on the left seem to take it as being genuinely leftist.

Gender identity is a media obsession at the moment, what with *trans*, *woman*, *man*, not to mention *LGBT+*, endlessly newsed in a recycling loop

It all seems so liberal. That gay man in drag, a dating show for gay women, a man who is now a woman, a woman and her gay friends, straight men, straight women. It is a socially liberal thing, right? These straights and gays and transes endlessly marching across our screens. Look, right? There's *The British Sewing Bee* and there's its contestants, two gay men and a woman and the host is a gay man, and it must be — surely it is — a liberal thing?

But. Consider gender theory, consider binarism. The right hated gender theory as much as anything that belonged to the old leftist counterculture palette. Socialism, feminism, anti-consumerism, civil rights, gay rights, anti-war — beyond ghastly of course. Gender theory wasn't even a movement, was it? No, but it was there quietly in the background (like say menimism and femininism today).

²¹⁵ To stress, this chapter targets identity *politics*, not identity. It claims in fact that real searches for identity are being mediated into something that exists merely to confirm old stereotypes. Look for example at pictures of the old underground band Hüsker Dü. Three men, two gay. If you knew nothing about them, you'd never guess who was straight. He is the one who 'looks gay'. Two gay men who don't 'look gay' or 'act gay' but are gay. Bearing that in mind, note how gay men on TV invariably 'look' and 'act' gay. Conforming to old ideas about queer has nothing to do with finding identity. Has it?

Take rock music. In early 1963, an underground group from the provinces called the Beatles suddenly appeared. It is hard to believe today how outrageous their appearance was, but it was. In early 1964 an underground London group, the Rolling Stones had a hit and went pop. By then the Beatles had become respectable and it was the Stones who were outrageous. Their raw music didn't help, but the real revulsion (and the revulsion amongst many adults *was* real) was their long hair, which no one had seen the like of in pop culture before. The Stones were quickly followed by the Pretty Things who were completely beyond the pale when they first 'went pop' in late 1964. A fascinating article in a local paper gives a powerful insight into the controversy, written by a perceptive reporter. He immediately saw that the band — the actual people — were polite and well-brought-up grammar school boys who were simply playing the (raucous) music they loved. He met them and they went into a pub for the interview. The reporter was astonished at the effect their appearance had on men in the pub. When the group entered there was a hushed silence and scowls and glares. There was a mixture of disbelief, curiosity (of the sort there'd be if a UFO had landed) and anger (that something like this could exist). The reporter had never seen anything like it.

The problem, of course, was a dangerous androgyny. Phil May, lead singer of the Pretties, had *shoulder-length hair*. Although their pop success was minor compared to that of the Stones, they were a pop group and they appeared in the pop press and on pop music programmes. A young man with shoulder-length hair *had a visible public presence*. Worse it was fashionable at that time for young women to have

short hair — world upside-down alert! I think part of the issue was that the Stones and the Pretties performed a raw and aggressive music that was overtly sexual (examples, *I'm a king bee buzzin' around your hive*, *I just wanna make love to you*, *I am the little red rooster* etc) — and equally overtly *heterosexual*. Were they men? were they queers? right-wing reactionaries asked, but however much it would have been easy to say no then yes, there was something there that made it hard to deny they were men or believe they were queers. They *looked* like queers but they didn't *seem* like queers. This explains why polite young men like the Stones and Pretties²¹⁶, unlike the volatile if not violent Who, were so shocking. *No one* would call the Who queers.

This is what gender theory studies but it is not itself gender theory, which is better thought of as an invisible force behind the social changes which in turn gave gender theory meaning. Just as the feminist word 'patriarchy' gave that movement the word it needed, gender gave a key word to the counterculture.

To reiterate, the right hated gender as much as anything in the counterculture. The ideology the right offered up to counter gender was what I have called *binarism*. So let us repeat, gender theory defines male/female as *physically defined* and men/women as *culturally defined*. Binarism denies this distinction and claims male/female is all there is. Gender theory, to a binarist, is defining something

²¹⁶ It should be noted that Brian Jones ('sweet lil innocent Brian' US fans called him) *did* live up to the Stones' 'bad' image and Viv Prince of the Pretty Things certainly *was* what they used to call a 'wild man'.

that does not exist.

First let us note that if binarists actually believed what they claim to believe they'd be the most chilled people on earth about men and women. The first thing you notice about anyone is whether they are male or female. A true binarist seeing Phil May of the Pretty Things, with his shoulder-length hair side by side with a short-haired woman would not — could not — blink an eye. It would be obvious he was male and she was female. But binarists do not think like that. We have seen binarists in action as they see the Pretty Things was into a pub: jaw-dropping hostility. I repeat, no true binarist could possibly think like that, they would simply see a group of young men.

Binarists are not only not sincere, they are the best proof that gender theory is entirely reasonable in its belief that gender is a **social construct**. What binarists really want, what they really really want, is to re-engineer society so that it has one rule for men and one for women. It wants to make society *seem as though male and female are separate* and that, therefore, men who have shoulder-length hair *are in some mysterious sense women*. Men have short hair. Men (but not gay men) are men. Men who do not conform are women ergo all men are men²¹⁷.

Hence the obsession with trans. Trans *reduces gender to male and female*. Thus, the argument is reduced to not whether men and women live according to social constructs but *whether male and female are different*. Which gender theory absolutely does not deny. No longer is the argument over whether a cultural role

²¹⁷ Likewise, women who do not conform are men ergo all women are women.

such as being a lawyer or politician is a ‘he’ or a ‘she’ but *whether an individual man or woman is he or she*. Is a man a he or a she? A woman a she or a he?

These rightists use crude — and old — propaganda techniques to ‘prove’ their point. For example, an advert for a washing powder that was endlessly repeated over a long period presented an image of two middle aged men with stubble dressed as women, basically the ugly sisters of pantomime. The purpose of this is to *confirm the difference between men and women*. It goes back to Carnival, the old European festival where ‘the world is turned upside-down’ and men ‘become’ women. It is the Roman Saturnalia where the owners of slaves served their slaves. This was not in the least a social revolution — no one could believe that. It was a *confirmation* of the correct social order. Slaves were slaves, owners were owners. The world turned upside-down is a brief moment after which it rotated back into its proper axis.

Trans narrows down gender into sex, just like binarists. These reduce humanity to Jack and Jill while gender theory expands it into 7 billion individuals. Which is more restricting? Two or 7 billion? But binarists don’t put it like that. They say gender theory reduces humanity to one person. They say they are the liberals, the campaigners for freedom. They say they offer the choice of being a man or a woman but the ‘woke brigade’ wants to make everyone the same. You just can’t be yourself anymore if these fascists get their way. Let men be themselves, women be themselves. They say.

The LGBT+ movement can be seen in this light. Here the pravda offers a message that pretends the counterculture never happened. Remember Larry

Grayson? or *Are You Being Served?* with Mr. Humphries? or Dick Emery? Consider again *The Great British Sewing Bee*. Presented by a gay man the contestants being two gay men and one woman. Consider again women and their gay friends, with the autosuggestion that gay men are women. Consider the endless drag queens and think on the Ugly Sisters and the 'world turned upside-down' that is immediately realigned to its proper place. Consider the transgender men who look like men in drag. More 'world turned upside-down'.

Binarism is so hard to defeat because its natural habitat is what I have called *iconsciousness*, the twilit zone between consciousness and subconsciousness. The main characteristic of iconsciousness is that its presence can be felt but nothing in it can be seen directly, it can only be moved into full consciousness and in doing so becomes a different thing. These 'men' and 'women' are shades in their twilit home, waiting to be summoned into the light. It is these twilit shades that are identically different and these that lie behind the binarist ideology. Binarists do not recognise this twilit iconsciousness, so to them 'men' and 'women' are real. They say 'women hate action movies' and 'no straight man would ever pay to see a musical' and both these statements are 'true' because they have been fetched up from the twilit zone where everything is true because in there 'men' and 'women' are entirely separate but half-realised representations. So, if you point out a straight man you know who is passionate about musicals it won't make any difference because he exists in the daylight conscious zone. 'Course not *all* men hate musicals I did not say that did I', they chuckle.

A very powerful method of upholding the binarist credo is what I call the **Artemisia Syndrome**²¹⁸. Consider this scenario:

A mother and a father are standing before a burning house in which their child is trapped. They both stand there panicking then the mother leaps into the house and shortly after emerges carrying the child.

A binarist would say the mother was a brave as any man and the father acted like a woman.

This was a thought experiment until I read about Artemisia queen of Halicarnassus²¹⁹ who led her fleet against the mainland Greeks on behalf of the Persian emperor Artaxerxes. She fought bravely, but lost. When the emperor heard the report of the battle, he said that she fought like a man but her men fought like women. Hence the name of the syndrome. Anyway, here we see that the binarist idea of Man and Woman is almost unassailable, for even if it is contradicted in the most undeniable way – well, we see at least that this ‘Man’ and this ‘Woman’ are twilit categories and do not represent human beings in the physical world. People who don’t fit ‘their’ category are simply shunted into the other one, so you end up with a male woman and a female man.

Finally, consider *identity* itself. The *point* of gender theory is that gender is extremely fluid. Your sex does not define who you are. You should define who you are. So, ‘identity’? Identity claims your sex defines who you are. You identify with your sex. You have two

²¹⁸ I have since found out this is the True Scotsman Fallacy. Oh well, it is not every day you get to discover a new logical fallacy, even you weren’t first.

²¹⁹ On the west coast of what is now Turkey.

choices. You are a man or a woman. Pick a side. Choose a team. Define your identity. Wear your badge. Slip on your uniform. Gender nothing. Set your sex and get on with your life as Jack or Jill. Choose and be free. Defy political correctness. Break free.

9.2 PC and Woke

"The Retreat of Reason". "The Assault on Liberty". "The New Thought Police". "United in Hate: The Left's Romance with Tyranny and Terror". "The Abolition of Liberty". "Liberal Fascism". "The Truth About Mohammed". "World Turned Upside Down". "Why I Am Not a Muslim". "The Road to Serfdom". "Our Culture, What's Left of It". "Politically Incorrect Guide to Socialism". "Flying Free". "The Abolition of Britain". "Complete Infidel's Guide to the Koran". "The Force of Reason". "Infidel". "Treason: Liberal Treachery from the Cold War to the War on Terrorism". "Demonic: How the Liberal Mob is Endangering America". "The Clash of Civilisations". "How Civilization Dies: And How Islam is Dying Too". "Spoilt Rotten: The Toxic Cult of Sentimentality". "Civilisation: The Six Way the West Beat the Rest".

Political correctness must be one of the most successful propaganda campaigns ever. It has reached across the globe²²⁰.

220 *French*: politiquement correct; *Catalan*: políticament correcte; *Galician*: corrección política; *Spanish*: políticamente correcto; *Portuguese*: politicamente correto; *Italian*: politicamente corretto; *Romanian*: politic correct; *Dutch*: politieke correct; *German*: politische Korrekt; *Danish*: politisk korrekt; *Norwegian Bokmål*: politisk korrekt; *Swedish*: politisk korrekt; *Czech*: politicky korektní; *Russian*: političeski korréktnyj; *Macedonian*: politički korekten; *Hungarian*: politikailag korrekt; *Finnish*: poliittinen korrektius; *Georgian*: poliṭiṭurad ṭoreṭṭuli;

Political correctness can be *defined* as 1) adhering to the party line or 2) forcing adherence to the party line. For example, in the 1950's Jean-Paul Sartre said he would publicly support pronouncements by the Comintern because he was a member of the Communist Party. Likewise, once upon a time members of the British Cabinet supported its decisions whatever their own opinion. The Laotian communists ('Pathet Lao'), after achieving power in 1975, are a good example of a government enforcing adherence to the party line. In 1950's Romania the magnificent but not socialist-realist poet Tudor Arghezi was subject to an attack entitled *Poezia Putrefacției sau Putrefacția Poeziei* and sent to bed²²¹ for three years. Rome enforced political correctness on the Christians over sacrificing to the Emperor, just as Christians were later to enforce political correctness on many occasions (Galileo Galilei being made to publicly recant being textbook example). The Taliban, gaining power in 1995, were nothing less than *brutally correct*.

Political correctness, then, can be a practical method of achieving public agreement but more often it is linked to authoritarianism. However, in the early 1980's it was *redefined* to describe leftist beliefs. It became a purely propagandist term.

It will be noted from the example I gave above that political correctness applies to any and all politics, right as well left, reactionary and progressive. The redefined 'PC' *only* applies to leftist views. It implies

Japanese: poritikari-korekut.

221 Well, placed under effective house arrest until the whims of political change decided he'd be an asset to the system and awards and prizes began to flow thick and fast in his direction.

these are in the first place absurd ('loony') and secondly utterly oppressive.

What political correctness is can be understood very easily by considering an anarchist and a Catholic. The former is, you say, surely a free thinker while the latter belongs to an authoritarian faith that squashes any free thought. Intuitively clearly true, but actually so?

The Catholic faith is a scriptural one backed by scads of theology, true. There is no anarchist main text and anarchism is the belief in freedom from law and government. That is the baseline, that Catholicism is *inherently* more demanding than anarchism in terms of belief. But in its most liberal sense, is it that demanding? To be a Catholic you must believe in God, in the Trinity, in transubstantiation and so forth. These are hardly demanding asks. There are many Catholics who do not want to burn anyone who does not follow exactly their faith, in fact who are perfectly okay with people not being Catholic. I believe what I believe, they believe what they believe. God will judge them, not me. The church is in essence a guideline, a framework, for their beliefs and their deeds. There are a few things the faith forbids but in everyday terms you are left to do as you think fit.

But an anarchist? A key difference is that there is no guideline, no framework, no church. For an anarchist there is nothing but their own belief. A liberal anarchist will believe what they believe, happy for others to follow their own judgement. But the liberal Catholic has their framework and their Church to reify their beliefs, the liberal anarchist only belief itself. For many that is not enough as they look out at the lack of anarchism in the world. These take to activism and try to make the world more anarchist. But how far have anarchist activists ever gotten? They campaign and *still* look out on a world without anarchism. This leads to

the idea that the world must be made to be anarchist. A totalitarian anarchism is unlikely to happen, but it would have to be the most totalitarian thing imaginable, for the world is so empty of anarchism the anarchists would need to control everything in society. These anarchists in thought would not be anarchists in deed, for in trying to impose anarchism on humanity in anarchic force would be involved.

So a liberal Catholic holding to the very basic tenets of the faith and following their own path outside of that and perfectly happy for others to believe what they will is barely politically correct at all outside of a few simple rules. The anarchist who wants to bring anarchism to the world on the other hand is the most politically correct monster it is possible to imagine.

Political correctness can be found where you least expect it and absent where you feel sure to find it. A useful rule to remember, I think.

Consider feminism. What was feminism opposing? The patriarchy, as it called its foe. This was of course the 1950's patriarchy. Which was what? One of the most formidable systems of political correctness it is possible to imagine. Its rules poked their noses into every aspect of society and remember that *the 1950's patriarchy was less politically correct than earlier patriarchies*. Feminism on the other hand was a liberation movement. It called itself *women's liberation*. Feminism was not politically correct. So much so that it is often said we should talk of *feminisms*, in the plural. If you consider these basic facts, the redefinition of political correctness is impressive in itschutzpah. According to the new definition, *feminism* is 'politically correct'! Here we glimpse at the underlying ideas behind the redefinition. Right is *true* and left is *false*. Ergo the

pre-counterculture world was *right* and the counterculture is *wrong*. Ergo as counterculture ideas are accepted by more and more people and the pre-counterculture world crumbles, wrong is replacing right. As right ideas are increasingly rejected it becomes more difficult to express them because people just don't relate any more. Women should make themselves look sexy. Women should stay at home. Women should cook my dinner. Women are unintelligent. You say these things and people get angry with you or laugh at you. You open the door for a lady or offer to help her carry her bags and you know what she glares at you what is the world coming to. Its political correctness gone mad. The loony left has taken over. The cultural Marxist BBC. I am right I know I am right I cannot say what I want any more they want to control my mind with their loony ideas and their politically correct world²²².

Political correctness lives in a world where the right imposes its political correctness by railing against political correctness. This is, basically, the deadly merge and transfer form of propaganda. A thing that exists is merged with another thing that doesn't but which is said to exist and is merged back into the original thing. Given the intellectual calibre of people that hate 'political correctness' it is doubtful if they could possibly understand what is happening to them even if it was explained to them. The results are simple enough though and repeated endlessly in exactly the same way all over the right-wing hangouts of the Internet. The ideas they hate are loony and loonies are taking over and good common-sense truth

²²² Please note I have amended the spelling quite a bit in that rant, for these people are anything but spellitically correct.

is under siege.

More and more however, ‘political correctness’ is being replaced by ‘woke’, whose monosyllable is good for the tiny brains which are everywhere exploding with rage in its wake. The woke wake.

The very word ‘woke’ invokes ‘enlightenment’ and the **Enlightenment** (initcap) was one of the mainglories of all progressive movements throughout history and so the anti-woke crew scream out their anti-enlightenment attitude with every cry they utter against ‘woke’. The opposite of ‘enlighten’ is to extinguish the light, to darken. The opposite of waking is sleeping. That is what woke implies – blindness and darkness. Woke is enlightenment seen in the rear-view mirror parked in the shadows on a sunny day’s noon. Woke and anti-woke are two corpses feeling their way down to the deepest pitch of the pit. To be enlightened is to look up at the light and invade it with the colours of reason. Enlightenment is a lease for some and a leash for others. Those for whom it is a leash hate the woke for whom it is leash. As the woke wake, the leash tightens. As the woke step forward, the right charges and the left vanishes.

Woke is an improved version of political correctness that achieves full spectrum dominance for the current crop of right-wing propagandists. In fact, woke can be best understood by a key characteristic of political correctness, which was a made-up left that had little to do with any real left. One of the most infamous ‘loony left’ stories was the one about the nursery school that banned *Ba-ba Black Sheep*. A repeated cause of outrage is the left’s imaginary obsession with renaming ‘Christmas’ to ‘Winterval’. The anti-PC people say something and then say you can’t say what they just said any more. Woke is that but on a giant

scale. It is a great carbuncle of un-leftism that exists purely to give the right something to foam about. It discredits the left and distracts the right. Full spectrum dominance.

Take for example the woke **pronoundrum**, one of woke's best weapons. Both feminism and gender are concerned with pronouns, so this is a significant left issue. In an androcentric world, 'you' are male so everyone is 'he' and so 'he' is the pronoun to use. In 1650, a lawyer or a Member of Parliament would be a 'he'. But when the pronoun was extended to all of humanity, even then its usage often stretched too far. 'If a plague victim was wandering the street, he –', 'Each member of the congregation, he –', etc. In a world no longer androcentric, using the word 'he' is a political act. 'If an economist is honest, he –', 'He is no honest politician who –', etc. Gender-neutral terms such as 'he or she' or 'they' are preferred. This is nowadays such a standard usage that even conservatives go gender-neutral. Which most people agree is sensible. Calling a group of men and women – let alone a group of women – 'he' seems simply silly.

So, enter woke, which has reduced gender to binarism and introduced the pronoundrum. Now 'he' or 'she' or 'they' refer to an individual, for according to woke (that is, the binarist right and its useful idiots on the left) a person's sex is difficult to determine. Is a man a man? Is a woman a woman? How do they *identify*? A man could be a woman, a woman a man. It is a conundrum *whether a man is a man or a woman is a woman* so you need to ask yourself *is 'he' a 'he' or 'she' a 'she' or 'he' a 'she' or 'she' a 'he'?* Or *are they 'they'?* In other words, the sensible ideas of gender are reduced by the binarists to a farce. What woke

really does is to help restore the absolutes, the chasm between male and female. What it also really does is to gel to the nth degree with the reactionary right. It reduces the issue of gender to their level, to a simple world of Jack and Jill and to the idea that the loony left is trying to make everyone the same. This is something so many on the right get really angered by. The woke anger them more than anything else with this issue. These 'lefties' going on and on about he and she it's [RANT OMITTED] it is. The pronoundrum is propaganda gold.

But woke I think also illustrates the increasing sophistication of modern propaganda for it seems to be at least based on something real. There really are woke people. Mediated 'woke' is imaginary because it woke ideas are not genuinely leftist and therefore the media's frequent use of 'woke' to represent the left is clearly propaganda. Woke is harmless to the neoliberalism that introduced it into the public sphere. It seems left without being left. That is why woke has been actively promoted by the media.

Two woke examples.

A) There is an online rant about the TV series *Xena*, a series known for its strong following among gay women who often interpret the relationship of Xena and Gabrielle²²³ as a gay one. The rant? It was one long angerburger raging at how *bi* characters were excluded and it is unacceptable Xena is gay not bi. To exclude bi characters like that how could the writers think of such an unthinkable thing? Etc. The funny thing is, I think the idea Xena is gay is itself wishful thinking in a nice way. Gabrielle is better thought of

²²³ The show's two main characters.

as the annoying little sister who as the series progresses becomes Xena's inseparable friend and eventually equal. Which makes the insane entitlement that the writers had committed a devilish faux pas in not making Xena bi even more insane.

B) An online video posted by a – I don't know, a woman? a man? How can I say? You or I would identify her as a woman and if They existed, I think the THE LORD GOD himself would too. 'They', then. *They* were a High School teacher and they were in their car at school half angry half weeping. A fellow teacher had called them 'she' again. 'How could she do that? How could she do that?' Etc. How could she say such an unsayable thing calling a female 'she'?

You could say woke has replaced the imaginary of political correctness with the real, but as the mediated world is not real, I think we are seeing a subtly different thing: the real become the imaginary and merged into it. In other words, woke is PC with an army of actual adherents for the right to spit at²²⁴.

So woke then is the old imaginary-left stuff propagated by actual woke folk. The wokists, endlessly fêted by the media, all the while feel themselves growing stronger. They call for ever more authoritarianism, severer measures and stiffer penalties for lesser and lesser imagined wrongs. They want more laws to allow them them live without being upset or sad. *She shall never call me a she again!*, he wails. No Gaza, go trans!, they cry. *All eyes on us!*

224 In fact, it is my suspicion this is an almighty example of grass-roots propaganda, for it is certainly the job of that to conjure up armies of useful idiots to declare the surface message while advancing the intended one.

they command, such is their sense of their own significance after all these years of media attention in which the words of a few wokists burst forth from a million tongues.

With feminism and menimism and binarism mixed into the mediated left, what hope is there to provide an alternative to woke? Woke *feeds off* these even as it helps destroy the What is left by making it seem oppressive and lunatic. With its full spectrum dominance, the propagandists have created an at once real and imaginary left that *is* politically correct. Woke *is* political correctness gone mad.

In this mediated world, What is left is woke. Surely if this is all there is, it is time for a real left to wake. As always, sleeping we see what we see, awoken we see. But never awaken woke, for that is to wake straight back into sleep.

10 Countering

I am not mad; my head is just not like yours.

Diogenes of Sinope

Oh! why was I born with a different face?
Why was I not born like the rest of my race?

William Blake

The basic answer to the question as to what the left is to be is: **counterculture**. The right currently enjoys full spectrum dominance which means that any opposition must begin from a position outside the mainstream.

What is a counterculture? It is more than an opinion or a movement that goes against the mainstream. Perhaps that can be explained via the ‘pro-life’ movement. If we go back to the 1980’s, to be anti-abortion was to have an *opinion* that very much went against the grain of mainstream society. The religious right — politically very savvy — was looking for hot-button issues and abortion was one of these. Finding such an issue, the religious right went with it and the ‘pro-life’ grew and grew into a powerful *movement*. The main reason though that the movement grew powerful was because it was part of a larger *counterculture*, that of the religious right itself. During the terms of Presidents Reagan and Bush II, the religious right had strong connections to government itself, particularly the latter, where it had real influence. Under the first Trump administration, one of their own, Mike Pence²²⁵, was

²²⁵ Pence, among other things, believes women are subhuman and should be removed from the public sphere. Did the pravda ever mention this? Did the neofeminist army? No.

even Vice President. Now we are in the interesting times of a second far more aggressive Trump term, genuine extremists like Mike Huckabee are at the centre of power. The counterculture is now mainstream.

A vivid example of the scale of this is supplied by *The Omen* (1976, film and book). Both the film and the book were huge successes and both unequivocally belonged to the *horror* genre. This means that in 1976 no one watching knew that the plot was an outline of the basic beliefs of the more apocalyptic sectors of the religious right. They²²⁶ just assumed it was pure hokum. Now consider the *Left Behind* franchise (1995-2007) developed by the ultra-fundamentalist Tim Le Haye, swamping the world with books, films and even a computer game. Same story as *The Omen* but productised for fundamentalist Christians and sold in great quantities. From pure hokum to burning belief in twenty years or so. Counterculture to mainstream.

A counterculture then is outside the mainstream and is a collection of beliefs and movements. Literally so, but this ‘collection’ is better thought of as an *association*. These beliefs and movements must have an underlying thread that connects them. This can be seen clearly in the 1960’s counterculture, where we see rock music, civil-rights, anti-war, anti-capitalism, mysticism, acid and so forth – movements that were strongly associated into the following decades.

A left counterculture must be more than a movement or an opinion. If such a counterculture develops it will be observable but not precisely definable. It will be

²²⁶ ‘They’ includes me, as I read and enjoyed the book at the time.

legion.

10.1 Countercultures

Three ancient events.

- 1) In the mid 1600's BCE a nomadic people called the Hyksos invaded Egypt and overthrew the Pharaohs, establishing a precarious domination of their own for a couple of centuries from their new capital of Avaris in the Nile delta.
- 2) Around 1200 BCE the Mycenaean warlord culture collapsed in Greece to be followed by about four centuries of 'dark ages' then a growth of the city state from about 800 BCE.
- 3) In 622, the Assyrian Empire fell, shortly to be replaced by the Persian Empire.

A hundred thousand comparable instances of this could be taken from the pages of history. Pharaoh > Hyksos > Pharaoh; Mycenae > Athens; Assyria > Persia. These neatly illustrate the typical way cultures often changed over the course of history. The Hyksos and Persia were hardly 'countercultures' in the sense I have just described. The four hundred years between Mycenae and Athens makes it absurd to think Athens was a counterculture to a culture that had been dead four hundred years. This shows us that **a counterculture lives within a society**, it is not like the Hyksos and Persians an outside force and it cannot exist centuries after the culture it replaces.

For a counterculture to exist at all it must exist in a society that allows it to develop. Such a society must be a complex one, for if a counterculture is itself an

association of beliefs and movements, it must be only a part of society as a whole. That is to say **a counterculture is a complex within a larger complex**. It is hard, then, to conceive of a counterculture in a hunter-gatherer group or a village. The beliefs of a society also need to be complex enough, and flexible enough, to fit a countercultural complex within them. The host society needs to allow interconnections to develop within it.

What about a **global counterculture**? Can such a thing develop? The 1960's tells us 'yes'. Various strands of the movement had a worldwide grasp.

- Rock and soul music seeped into everywhere. In Czechoslovakia, the *Plastic People of the Universe* released their strictly underground 'Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Club Banned'²²⁷, in the mid 1970's. There was Witch from Zambia. Os Mutantes from Brazil. A whole 'Anatolian Rock' genre from Turkey. Shonen Knife from Japan.
- Gender influenced the world. Rosemary Sayyigh in her 1979 study²²⁸ about the experiences of Palestinians in Lebanese refugee camps describes how the young generation were overturning rigid gender roles. Fred Halliday²²⁹ observes the radical ideas about gender among rebels in Oman. Misplaced as it was, the Afghan Marxists of the 1978 coup were committed to reforming gender. Qadhafi in Libya was a

²²⁷ Egon Bondy was a Czechoslovak poet affiliated with the group.

²²⁸ *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries; A People's History*.

²²⁹ *Arabia Without Sultans*, 1975.

progressive on gender issues.

- Leftist politics spread like wildfire. Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Chile, Iran, Oman (as just mentioned), Yemen, Tanzania, Ghana.

That is enough to illustrate that ideas can cross borders if they are general enough to **appeal to different cultures in similar circumstances**. Neoliberalism is global as anything, so a left counterculture ought to have a global appeal.

What then does a counterculture look like, if we turn back to history?

We can point to two probable countercultures in ancient **Athens**. Firstly, the democratic revolution of *Kleisthenes* looks like a counterculture. As it grew in wealth, early Athens recognised important reformers such as *Drako* (620's) and *Solon* (590's), who instituted a proto-democratic political framework. Drako provided a written code of law and Solon an assembly (ἐκκλησία 'ecclesia'). Then between 561 and 510 Athens was in the hands of tyrants, Peisistratos and his son Hippias. Enter Kleisthenes (508), after Hippias' expulsion from the city. Kleisthenes is generally credited with the creation of Athenian democracy. What interests us here is not so much what he did, but that this was not the sort of revolution that destroys what went before or an outside force that takes over what is there. The democratic movement was, or became, a veritable complex of beliefs and movements. In a nutshell, Kleisthenes removed formal power from the elite and moved it to the demos²³⁰. This so fundamentally

²³⁰ An approximate equivalent to the English rural *parish* or urban

transformed Athenian society that the complex of ideas can be thought of as a counterculture. The opponents of democracy, moreover, themselves created a counterculture.

Within classical Athens itself something at least vaguely like a counterculture can be seen in the **philosophers** *Socrates* and *Diogenes*. In the case of Socrates, we know he was put on trial and executed (famously by being made to drink hemlock) for having a 'bad influence' on the youth of Athens. From what we know of his beliefs, he appears to have had no specific message, rather an attitude of intelligent questioning about anything and everything. *What is Law?*, he might ask a famous brainiac. The brainiac would provide an eloquent answer, but Socrates always had more questions. In a short while, the eloquent definition of Law offered up by the brainiac would be in ruins, its contradictions brought into plain sight by the shabby old man. If we consider a counterculture as a thing that can be observed but not precisely defined, the waves created by Socrates were perhaps such a thing. Diogenes, meanwhile, was also influential among Athenian youth. He was called a *cynic* κυνικός (*kunikós*), doglike. We might compare the terms *hippie* and *punk*. He lived, like Bilbo Baggins, in a large tub and he rejected all 'civilised' values, money and wealth and respectability and learning and prudery. This looks like a counterculture, albeit a rejectionist one.

It is hard to find any signs of a counterculture in Rome, whether during the time of the kings or the Republic or the Empire. This is likely due to the fact

ward.

that, although the Republic and Empire lasted a long time, they were both incredibly unstable. Under the Republic, although after c. 390 BCE there was a long sequence of victories and conquest, these meant that Roman society was always adapting and changing. Around the period when Republic became Empire²³¹ there was a huge influx of people (and their cultures) into Rome. The definition of who was a Roman and what was *romanitas* was revolutionised. Among the poets, there was Catullus the Celt, Virgil the Etruscan, Horace the Samnite (born in Venusia), Martial the Celtiberian. Pillars of Rome all of them, however. But the people with strange-sounding names flooding into Rome? These people were not a ‘counterculture’ as this was the *process* of immigration not beliefs or political movements. But maybe the opposition to them was a counterculture. The historian Tacitus, in his *Germania*, clearly holds up the Germans — in general worthless barbarians — as epitomising a primitive ideal Rome has lost. The poet Juvenal seems to agree with this way of thinking in his severe satires on Rome, the old manly frugality versus the effeminate luxury of the new people with the funny names. This may be what the novelist Petronius in his infamous *Satyricon* is saying too. The *Satyricon* describes all sorts of depravity in a location somewhere in south Italy. The funny foreign non-Latin names are crawling all over Petronius’ novel (what remains of it). Here we find Trimalchio (absolutely a non-Latin name²³²), an ex-slave who thinks *he is a true Roman!* He is emphatically not.

Here we may have found a counterculture within

²³¹ During the decades around ‘year zero’.

²³² It is Phoenician.

Rome, though reactionary of course. Outside of that I don't think even Christianity warrants the term 'counterculture'. Simply put, it was persecuted by the Empire until an Emperor ²³³ converted. The Christians were never a counterculture to Rome, just a marginal belief that one day went mainstream.

Rome is, therefore, a warning to countercultures and to the What is left. *Do not simply assume countercultures will be able to develop if the primary culture is constructed so as to hinder this.*

It is hard to recognise any counterculture in the Middle Ages. Peasant revolts were, we can say for a start, *never* countercultures. They were *always* revolts against peasants' rights. The idea of a counterculture against *society* seems to have been unthinkable. Medieval society seems to have been too fragmented for a counterculture to develop. For example the Lollards and the Goliardic poets were widespread movements only within the Latin-educated cultural elite.

However, we can possibly find something like a counterculture in Italy. Sicily was conquered by the 'Saracens' then reconquered by the 'Normans' and then ruled by the German Emperor Friedrich II. The Normans adapted to the 'Saracen' culture and Friedrich adapted to the Norman culture. One result of this melting pot was a poetic culture in the vulgar (popular) language. This idea of writing poetry in the vernacular travelled north and soon you had the *Dolce Stil Nuovo* particularly associated with Dante and his circle. This poetry was secular but highly intellectual, learned in astronomy and philosophy not

²³³ Constantine.

to mention theology. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a miracle of learning. This secular culture of learnedness developed into what we know as the **Renaissance**, which was a counterculture of sorts against the ring-fenced learning of the Church and its tri- and quadrivium. This is an interesting counterculture because it was never self-conscious. Dante was not, for example, rebelling against the learned doctors of the Church. The doctors and the Renaissance scholars generally existed happily side by side. At the height of the movement, we even see 'Renaissance Popes'. However, secular learning in the end doomed Church learning and slowly dwindling down to the little cubbyhole at the far end of our contemporary industrial workhouses of training²³⁴.

As we leave the Middle Ages, we meet with a very self-conscious counterculture — **protestantism**. Like democracy in Athens, this provoked a reactionary counterculture amongst Catholics, the *counter-reformation*.

In 1517, an Augustinian friar named Martin Luther pinned up his 95 'theses' on the door of a local church in Wittenberg. His immediate gripe was a campaign by Johann Tetzel, a Dominican friar who was busy selling indulgences²³⁵ to raise money for grand building schemes and paying off the debts of the Archbishop of Mainz. To a devout man such as Luther, this was very bad. His theses outlined his grievances and thus embarrassed the notables for

²³⁴ You can still take a degree in theology today, but few do.

²³⁵ With an indulgence, you give money to the Church and in so doing God will forgive you. A modern Tetzel would be selling indulgences for the HS2 project.

upsetting their indulgences campaign and as a result they wanted to silence this annoying fellow. I think — and this is interesting because it indicates one way a counterculture can grow, when the authorities are caught unawares — Luther's enemies made a grave error of judgement in going after him. They did not understand printing or the printed book. Luther's theses were printed and read. People came to hear him preach. But the problem was not his protest against Tetzels and the selling of indulgences. He had puzzled long and hard over the problem of the relationship between humanity and God. His conclusion was that faith is the key to this relationship. A person is connected to God via faith — *sola fide* 'only by faith'. Note this is not in any sense a direct criticism of the vast wealth of the Church, *but it inevitably questions that vast wealth*. If faith is within you, what does the Pope *do* and why do we pay his wages? The Church authorities seized on Luther's dubious theology and summoned him. This placed him in the same situation as John Hus about a century before. Hus was a reformer; Hus had been summoned — and Hus had been burned at the stake. Luther followed the summons, expecting the same fate. But here is where the Church miscalculated. First, it ignored that Luther was German and that Germany had had a lengthy struggle with the Popes. It turns out Luther had a protector, Friedrich III, Elector of Saxony. Luther was whisked away from danger by his protector. He was not silenced. Far from it, he wrote and as it turned out he was a formidable writer. His works were printed and printed again, and again. His words resounded around not only Germany but Europe. Here his core belief was his best support, more so by being sincere. *He* wrote out of faith. *He* believed in faith. *His* faith

brought him close to God. What did the Pope have? Money and power and ambition. Luther was helped by the fact that corruption in the Vatican was a well-worn theme of medieval writers and often he was preaching to the converted²³⁶.

With Luther, then, we see a true counterculture. It is observable but not quite definable. The idea of *sola fide* was Luther's that others did not necessarily share, but that didn't matter because what was important was Luther's *questioning* of the Church. Printing brought his questions to a wide public across Europe, with which we see the importance for a counterculture of the means of delivering its message. We might compare printing with the Internet, each being a new medium of communication for which there was a brief window during which the authorities did not understand it or know what to do with it or how to cope with it.

A good example of how the counterculture worked can be seen in Luther's translation of the Bible into German. It is obvious that a Latin language Bible was a Bible few people could read and had to be interpreted and its texts delivered by a specialist in the language. The translation meant that the Bible for the Doctors was now a Bible for the People. This illustrates how a counterculture is not an opinion (*sola fide*, say) or a movement (Luther's own protest, say) — it is a complex association. In the case of Protestantism and its centuries-long fight with its Catholic counterculture, the after-effects of Luther's protest had a profound effect on Europe, from the St. Bartholemew's Day Massacre in France to the Thirty

²³⁶ A modern parallel would be to criticise Boris Johnson for perfidy, about which few people would need much convincing.

Years War even to the ‘Time of Troubles’ in Northern Ireland²³⁷.

The next great counterculture we encounter in Europe can perhaps be defined as a stand against ‘the modern world’ and it is observable (but not quite definable) from around the beginning of the 19th C. This was a world of bourgeois values, of the rise of science and technology and of capitalism. This counterculture is most certainly an associative complex. Here we find the *romantics*, *impressionists*, *bohemians*, 1848, *socialists*, the early *nationalists* and so on. What could be more anti-capitalist than Théophile Gautier’s art-for-art’s-sake? Who could be more alien to the ‘protestant work ethic’ than the dandy Charles Baudelaire? Or more agin the world of pure reason than William Blake? They achieved little, but the revolutions of 1848 offered hope both at the time and to those who came after²³⁸.

What is interesting is how this counterculture was never at all organised or self-conscious of itself as a unified force. Rather, these various movements often influenced each other. To paraphrase a joke about economists, if you gather twelve artists together, you’ll get thirteen art movements. But the impressionists begat art movements in a ceaseless chain of being — a complex of association *extending over time*. In the main, these movements were

²³⁷ With this last we see the fiercely burning embers of a counterculture where the two side are the native Irish and the descendants of English ‘plantations’ of people. The battle was between these groups in a division created five centuries earlier by a man who believed in *sola fide*.

²³⁸ It could in fact be argued that the 1960’s counterculture was in fact a continuation of the 19th century one.

questioning ²³⁹. Just so with poetry, forever questioning the latest movement and in fact what poetry itself is. Many poets at least flirted with socialism, some with nationalism. This earlier nationalism was romantic in this sense offered something the cold numbers of science and accounting did not. In the end though, this counterculture is interesting because *it had no overall purpose*. There's no reason it should have had one, but the fact is it did not. A second point is that it was essentially artistic. Socialism yes, nationalism yes, but these were countercultural — as opposed to mere movements — because the artists were linked to them. This was essentially *not* a political counterculture.

In the 20th century there was rebellion but not counterculture until 1963 and the release of the Beatles' first LP.

10.2 Problems

There are various problems in creating a counterculture. The first and not least is ineffective critical positions such as **cynicism**, **nihilism** and **utopianism**. The *cynic* is a critic without a heart standing outside Nuremberg sneering at the logical flaws in a Hitler speech. The *nihilist* is reduced to nothing by believing in nothing, having nothing left to believe in. The *utopian* walks in endless circles about the block believing in what is just past the next corner. But a future left counterculture must have a beating heart, strong beliefs and tangible aims.

²³⁹ Like Socrates, like Diogenes, like Dante, like Luther.

Another problem for a counterculture lies in what I call **stupid-IQ**. The type of intelligence measured by IQ tests is called *convergent thinking*, where there is only one correct answer. This is opposed to *divergent thinking*, which is linked to creativity. These two types of thinking are not, it should be stressed, mutually exclusive. I see IQ as basically a test of the brain's processing power, which is a very narrow definition of intelligence. Which is where stupid-IQ comes in. The world is a big place and is where any counterculture now must inhabit. But can a stupid-IQ inhabit it? A stupid-IQ has – this is what defines them – small empathy or creativity or imagination. These stupid-IQs are excellent at focussing on the minutia of a problem (that is, converging) but the wider picture is beyond them. For example, in a recent discussion about 30 stupid-IQs earnestly went into the details about why Israel can have nuclear weapons and Iran can't. Laws and rules and international and national bodies were invoked and explained in great and careful detail as if this is reality and not the actual reality of brute force. All is i-dotting and t-crossing, for stupid-IQs are IQ and nothing else. While the cynic is sneering at Hitler's speech in Nuremberg, the stupid-IQ is frowning as they wonder just what was meant by 'Bewegung' and whether the Chancellor was implying National Socialism really was a 'movement' rather than a party and if so just what he meant by that²⁴⁰.

A similar danger on a grander scale can be found in science. Of course, science is wise to have a narrow

²⁴⁰ It might be duly noted that a neoliberal world is a perfect home for stupid-IQs, in which they can hone in with laser-like precision on nothing while the world burns.

and precise focus. When faced with neoliberalism, however, it *is* a sort of largescale stupid-IQ. Of course, science is here facing a world of propaganda without truth value against which scientists are pretty much doomed to be helpless. It is a noble stupidity, of course, but scientists are *condemned* to be stupid at a propaganda without truth value. See how *fast* the propagandist is to speak and how *slow* the scientists are, what with their studies and their analyses and their thinking and their proofs. See how politically savvy the propagandist is with their endless well-funded networks of think tanks tied to powerful corporations and how politically stupid scientists are as if they do not even think of science as politics. See how effective the rhetoric of the propagandist is as it carefully expresses what people want to hear and how stupid the speech of the scientist is as it lists accurate (as the scientist sees them) facts and data. All this is painfully obvious in the one-sided battle between environmental scientists and neoliberal propaganda. Any left-counterculture must recognise science is its ally then figure out how to use it effectively against propagandists.

But how can you use something that is all truth value against an enemy that has no truth value? By understanding truth is strong, at root stronger than propaganda, and that therefore the problem is one of selecting the right truths then communicating them well. Then at least the truths will be packaged as well as the propaganda. All that needs to be done then is to deliver them. But if you ask 'how?', Hamlet would say *That is the question*.

Any counterculture faces the danger of co-option. A good example is that of the idealistic anarchist

architect John Turner hired to help the World Bank under Robert McNamara. Here we have an idealist with ideas about empowering people by giving them the ability to construct their own homes and a free-market true-believer who simply wants to contract everything out. This illustrates how **a compatibility of ideals can couple with an incompatibility of outcomes**. Of course, co-option more often simply means being bought off. The CEO of *The Campaign for the Greening of Toast*, for example, might be given a 10-year contract to study toast in the Bahamas (plush car and flash home included). No strings attached, just invisible ones.

Then there is the problem that any new counterculture needs to react to today's society which has assimilated a good part of the 1960's one. It must break away from a left based on opposing the culture of the long-gone 1950's. It is precisely this assimilation which works to hide the workings of the new right. Example. In an episode of *Morse* (1980's), the police are conducting a search. In the long row of participants there are no women. On the other hand, in an *Endeavour* episode (2010's) there is a similar search in which WPC Truelove does participate. The title character here is Endeavour Morse and the series is set in the 1960's, during the early years of his career. If there were no women in the 1980's, would there be twenty years earlier? What the scene in *Endeavour* shows is how cultural attitudes have changed. The makers of the programme presumably presumed that a WPC would participate along with her male colleagues.

Trivial, true. But it illustrates how, even as the new right relentlessly advances, elements of the left

counterculture are still working against the old right of the 1950's. However, *there is no counterculture* anymore. Women are becoming more and more visible in the media, a very feminist aim. But while the media is no longer androcentric, the question can be raised *Who are these women who appear in it?* To assume that either women or feminism is 'left' is, as I argued earlier, absurdly naïve. There is great scope here for injecting *binarism* or *menimism* or *neofeminism* into the media depiction of women (and men). For example, menimists can create roles for 'strong women' who are subordinate to or dependent on men. Neofeminists can create shows ²⁴¹ based around women in which men are *essentially* bad (using essentialist notions about men derived straight from the patriarchy). Sport can be used not only to promote pure binarism (men's and women's football, rinse and repeat for each and every sport) but also reinstall masculism under cover of 'feminism'. Sport²⁴² is invariably based on physical strength and 'strength equals physical strength' is a masculist anthem. So, no palaeofeminist ever said, let us place sport at the very peak of societal values. But **The Men** will always say that as it means they will always be top dogs, because strength equals physical strength.

It must be understood that things have changed. There is no left counterculture, no voice of reason, no

²⁴¹ Examples, 1) *In My Skin* (BBC Three). Three main male characters, one gay (ergo good), other two barely human; 2) *Blackshore* (RTÉ One). Detective story set in small Irish town. One decent male character; three other main male characters are: psychopathic criminal boss; man who rapes almost every woman in town; the killer himself. 3) *Sisters* (Irish-Canadian). All main male characters bad.

²⁴² 'Sport, sport, masculine sport', as Viv Stanshall described it in his song 'The Odd Boy'. 'It's an odd boy who doesn't like sport.'

questioning any more. *Buffy* is useful again here, if we take season 5 episode one. The very first scene has the feckless character Xander finding even entering a room of women a threat to his masculinity. The third scene has reformed vampire Spike guarding Buffy's little sister Dawn and telling her she needs protecting 24 hours a day. Now read the online articles telling you how *Buffy* is a *signature* feminist TV series. If you bear in mind the actual patriarchy of the 1950's was a culture both men and women lived in and whose values everyone accepted, the inclusion of women into the mediated world is unlikely to be as feminist as you might think *without a counterculture to question this world*. Without such a counterculture, it is likely to end up not only being a world without much leftist feminism but also accepted by both men and women. Perhaps more than anywhere, this is where a new counterculture is needed. Without it, the left counterculture will be at once assimilated to the right and its real values relentlessly pushed back.

Another danger to a progressive counterculture is the idea of **merit**. The desire to create a **meritocracy**. This is an unpleasant idea however you look at it. If merit *does* exist you can imagine the most absolutely rigid class system that can possibly exist, as someone with an **MQ** ('Merit Quotient') of 7,294,104,511 will always outrank a person who scored 7,294,104,471. If the idea of an MQ is ridiculous, what is defined as 'merit' will therefore always be wrongheaded and unfair. Maybe someone with an IQ of 205 *is* smarter than someone whose IQ is 95. Is that 'merit'? If the high-IQ is an unfeeling psychopath and no one likes them and the low-IQ is warm and friendly and everyone likes them? Is that 'merit'? You can't argue that there is more than one kind of merit if you are arguing for

a meritocracy. You're calling for an **ocracy**. You cannot build an ocracy around an idea that you cannot define and probably cannot be defined. The idea of 'merit' might appear progressive at first glance but, in reality, it would be either rigidly oppressive or righteously unfair.

More or less the opposite problem is **human stupidity**, stupidities baked into the human brain and common to all humans, affecting us all in the same way. Here are two of them:

- **Omniscience.** As mentioned earlier, we know everything we know and nothing we don't know, which leads us to feel we know everything. We can doubt this omniscience if we think about it and become conscious of it, but we cannot escape it, for it lives in the world of our iconsciousness. This is the world of right-wing FACT! and left-wing reformist who assumes the world in their head can and must be imposed on the place outside it because after all it is right because they are right.
- **Dualism.** Our brains are well-stocked with dualisms. The brain creates *references* in our memory out of *objects* built from external *forms* and these references have *associations*. This is essential for survival, for we need to know as quickly as possible if a reference in our memory is good or bad for us. Then again, we might love (or like) or hate (or dislike) the referenced thing. Dualism occurs when there exist associations between references we love and hate. A good example is the US and the USSR during the cold war. These two were very strongly linked and for most Americans, the US

was liked and the USSR disliked. The same baked-in dualism can be seen in different form today, where leftists often consider the US to be *bad* and Russia *good*²⁴³. This is bad for a counterculture, for it leads to the danger that neocon enemies tend to be considered as more or less saviours and the statements issued by Russia or China accepted without critical thought.

Another fundamental human problem with countercultures is **personality**. Example issues here are that personalities simply clash; personality flaws lead to personal rejection; uncompromising disagreement occurs when two sets of opinions do not match exactly; a person's success corrupts them; a person's judgement fails them; and so forth.

Next there is the fallacy of **platonic guardians**. These are always a tempting idea and understandably so. A variation of this is the need for a **messiah** or a **leader**. Given the complexities of the world as it is, all of these are worthless dreams. 'People are stupid', it is whispered. Let the clever people take over. In a complex world, however, no one 'gets it' and no one is that smart. I think even Plato would have to agree there are no candidates now to serve as guardians. As for the faith in a single individual to save us all – that to my mind needs no comment. These are literally cloudbuckkooland solutions, willing for the takeover of some elite 'up there' in the great beyond, working their will to keep the world running for us all without selfishness or prejudice. You can almost see this elite cleaning up their white hats to cover up the black

²⁴³ Despite both Russia and Putin sharing pretty much the same neoliberal values as the west.

ones. We're here to help, they are planning to say. It's all about you.

A sort of opposite to this is hope in **revolution**. Again, it is the complexity of the world as it is. 'The system' is not one single thing. A revolution must always act against and overturn a single system. A power falls, a new power rises; the revolution is done. But how can such a thing be achieved against such a many-headed monster as exists nowadays? What is there to revolt against when there is everything against which to revolt? What is needed would be a **hydralution**.

Then there is the failure to transfer critical analyses to reality. That is, people seem to understand the nature of Sir Keir Starmer or Joe Biden but then offer up to them suggestions about 'what we should do'. What should Sir Keir Starmer do to help the NHS or the people of Gaza or to stop the war in the Ukraine? If you have worked out that Starmer is both a staunch neoliberal *and* neocon these suggestions are worth what? In the sense of 'a government ruled for the people' there is no democracy in the UK now and no immediate hope for it. Government has been carefully extended beyond both parliament and the state itself. This diffuse network of power has no interest in 'the people' and is beyond the reach of the voter. If there is no democracy, why talk as if there is? Why suggest what the government should or should not do? Suggest what should be done, that goes without saying, but what Sir Keir Starmer's government should do? That's like looking at the bricks in a crumbling wall and asking them to lower interest rates. It seems unwise for anyone who thinks democracy is broken to speak as if they live in a democracy.

Finally, the old ideas of left and right make no sense now. We just as well ask What is right? as What is left? It is not as if there aren't deep divisions in beliefs that can be clearly labelled within opposing camps — for example beliefs involving *rigid* or *fluid* solutions. Nothing can be rigid *and* fluid.

So, two things.

- First, it is hard to imagine a counterculture being built out of incompatible beliefs, but how many beliefs traditionally labelled 'left' and 'right' are incompatible?
- Second, beliefs — at least they ought to — have context, the social realities of time and place in general and the situational reality of the individual in time and place. Ideals are good in a time and place of comfort, not so much in dangerous times when survival is all that matters. On the Front in 1916, a soldier might well hope for peace in his quiet moments but leaping out over the trench it is kill or be killed. If the *culture* is genocide surely the counterculture is the most basic level of human decency. If the *culture* is lusting over nuclear war surely the counterculture is simply survival.

10.3 Building

How do you build a counterculture? You don't. A counterculture assembles itself. You don't build the thing, just its components. Also, you do not build the components to build a counterculture but because you believe in them. A counterculture assembles itself because people believe in its associated components

and can see how these components link neatly together. For example, there is CND and there is the anti-Vietnam movement and there is the free love movement and women's sexual liberation and women's liberation and gay rights and civil rights and the Great Society and socialism and so on. Note how these *obviously* fit together into a counterculture despite their disparate origins.

A counterculture must be **popular**²⁴⁴ not **populist**. That is, it *originates* with the people while populist culture is provided by the elites *for* the people. Populism can easily be merged with and confused with *grass roots* propaganda. As popular culture is often picked up by corporate culture these days and then regurgitated in populist form, the difference between the two becomes still more confusing. For example, there was the Sex Pistols' *Holidays In The Sun* and then the Toy Dolls' *Nellie The Elephant*. However, as we have seen with LBJ's *Great Society*, a counterculture should incorporate populism that is sympathetic to the interests of the counterculture. When I say 'incorporate' bear in mind I am talking about a self-organising entity, so I suppose the analogy would be to advise not treating something useful to the counterculture as a pathogen attacking its immune system.

²⁴⁴ There has been a whole sequence of popular movements coming from France under Macron. 1) *Nuit Debout* (lit. 'night-standing', more catchily 'Upright Night'); 2) the *gilets jaunes* ('yellow jackets') and 3) *Bloquons tout* (lit. 'Block Everything', more catchily 'Shut Down'). There is little indication of any wire-pulling in these movements, or central control or policies or leaders. These seem to be sustained public protests showing a general opposition to the effects of neoliberalism, a demonstration of the fact that many people realise *something* is wrong.

A popular phenomenon is 1) *originated*; *discovered*; *followed*. We can compare this with a populist phenomenon that is 1) *designed*; 2) *produced*; 3) *consumed*. It is therefore a bad idea to try create a counterculture component in the lab, to design and produce it for public consumption. Such a component must create itself after it has been originated. If it is good enough, and if it is discovered, people will follow it. A new leftist counterculture must be based on good ideas and at the moment these do not exist. We live in a culture where right-wing sock puppet wokists work to discredit the left *and* rouse the real right into unifying against any real left, a culture where anyone criticising genocide is an antisemite and some of these critics are driven to genuine antisemitism ('the Jews control...'). *This* is the context in which any modern counterculture will be forced to flourish in.

The 1960's pop counterculture illustrates how ideas can spread. The **music industry** is a ruthless capitalist one, stupid and crude but effective. In the 1950's it found a new market that all of a sudden fell out the sky: the '**teenager**'. First there was skiffle, quickly followed by the rock'n'roll that equally quickly faded²⁴⁵. Fads, it thought, and sought new ones, so the charts became dominated by 'teenager music' created by record companies. Fake rock and teen ballads.

INTERLUDE: A Counterculture Reimagined

Just seen a doc about boy bands on the BBC. I think it was a classic. It took the viewer through boy bands from the Beatles to the latest stars. It's amazing, isn't it, how the

²⁴⁵ It is a curious fact so many of the leading rock'n'roll figures were assimilated or eliminated around the same time: Elvis, Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, the Everly Brothers, Jerry Lee Lewis, leaving us with Pat Boone and Bobby Vee.

record people keep coming up with all this talent for us, over the years! We ought to be very grateful to them! Anyway, I hadn't heard of these 'Beatles', so I looked them up. I presume you haven't heard of them either, as they date from pretty long ago. Apparently, they were big in the early Sixties, when Stock, Aitken and Waterman discovered them at Butlins. They were massive for a couple of years. If you look at YouTube, you can see some clips of them performing their dance routines. SAW wrote all their hits, "I Love You", "We Can Be Together", and "Forever With You", and they even played for Her Majesty the Queen once. The members of the Beatles were John (the 'head boy'), Paul ('the cute one'), George ('the quiet one') and Ringo (he was the 'wild one'). I didn't like their music much - it's a bit dated now, and "Forever With You" would have sounded better if Blue were singing it, I think - but it's always interesting to learn about history, isn't it?

Then in the midst of the teen ballads and fake rock, the Beatles struck. Of course, to the media and the industry they too were a fad that was given the name *Beatlemania*. To the industry, what mattered is that they cracked the US market (in early 1964, the Billboard Top 5 was all Beatles). Until 1967 Capitol, the group's US label, almost doubled the number of LP releases by carefully splitting the atomic UK ones so that 'Yesterday and Today' featured tracks from no less than three UK albums. That's the Beatles as a capitalist cash cow.

Who were these Beatles? They were effectively formed with the meeting of a suburban yob named John Lennon and the more polished council estate dweller Paul McCartney, two clever grammar school boys. Lennon's initial skiffle band of school mates the Quarrymen soon morphed into a rock band called the Beatles, now with the key addition of a guitar player,

another job called George Harrison. After the meeting of Lennon and McCartney, the next milestone is the despatch of the Beatles to the lurid Reeperbahn district, leading to a year or so of amphetamines and alcohol and rock'n'roll and black leather. Then the band was 'asked to leave' Germany and nearly broke up. But it didn't and got a gig in Liverpool, the next milestone. As this was the days of the Shadows and neat suits the audience were shocked and stunned to see a band dressed in leather and shocked and stunned when they heard the first number, a dose of screaming hard rock a million miles from the fake stuff they heard in the charts. With this new and exciting sound, an underground rock movement quickly developed in Liverpool, its eventual focal point being the famous Cavern that one lunchtime a Mr Epstein came to investigate to be transfixed by the rough boy leader of the group he had come to see but also the excitement that was being generated from the stage. Arranging furniture in the family store versus managing a group this exciting? This is the next milestone, when the Beatles acquired a manager and the hope of a future. A hope that, says hindsight, was more than fulfilled.

This was the band at the centre of Beatlemania. It was not a fad. The first Beatles single 'Love Me Do' was noticed by many, such as Roger Daltrey down in west London. He remembers it as being a bolt from the blue, something that was real²⁴⁶. But it was only a minor hit and Lennon and McCartney had no follow up, so George Martin had them record a Mitch

²⁴⁶ His fellow Who member John Entwistle, with formal music training, was irritated because the record was out of tune!

Murray fake rock song called ‘How Do You Do It?’²⁴⁷. The song was a surefire hit, but would the Beatles’ sullen version have been? If it was, would the group have even been a fad? Or just a sellout fake rock act good for a couple of records? But the perceptive Martin saw the band’s resentment and that such a record would destroy what he had signed them for in the first place, so he gave them one more chance. He got them to run through what self-composed songs they had and selected a slow Orbison-like number called ‘Please Please Me’. Speed it up, he told them, then come back with the new arrangement and we’ll see. Martin liked the what they had done and recorded the song for the next single in which you hear the Beatles *literally playing for their lives*. This was their last chance to have a hit and be themselves. And after the ‘finished take’ George Martin spake: ‘Gentlemen, you have just made yourselves a number one record’²⁴⁸. With a hit, Martin made the bold decision to record an album. On release, the ‘Please Please Me’ LP hit #1 on May 5 1963 and was only knocked off the ‘top spot’ by ‘With The Beatles’ on December 1 and the group’s commercial position was secure²⁴⁹. But if you look closely, you can see how precarious it all was, how in the end it all depended on the Beatles rearranging one of their songs over a weekend, how close the counterculture was to never

²⁴⁷ As a good example of the behind-the-scenes shenanigans that goes on, Mitch Murray was a friend of Dick Jaws, the Beatles’ music publisher. Murray sold his new song to Jaws who fobbed it off to Martin who in desperation for a hit foisted it on to his troublesome new signing.

²⁴⁸ True, it turned out, for most charts. But it only made #2 on the official chart of record.

²⁴⁹ Especially with the blockbuster singles ‘She Loves You’ and ‘I Want To Hold Your Hand’.

being born and how if it had never been born no one would ever realise. Who would possibly be able to work out via some crappy single called 'How Do You Do It?' from early 1963 (and whatever execrable follow-ups there would have been, maybe another even cheesier Mitch Murray song called 'I Like It') what might have been?

But the Beatles *were* marketable and, being so, became a counterculture. Take their first film, *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), depicting a day in the life of the Beatles on their way to perform on a TV show. Although they come across as likeable, the Beatles display a non-stop rebellion against everything they encounter and it is as if they are from another world to the one of established values. They represent *questioning* and *change*, two vital ingredients of a counterculture. In mid-1965 the now apparently respectable group, about the time of the film *Help!*, was given MBEs, but a warning sign of what was to come can be seen in the four long-haired unsmiling faces 'looking like corpses' staring out of the *Rubber Soul* cover. It was 1966 though that saw the group begin to worry mums and dads. In that year, a US record cover appeared (quickly withdrawn) that showed the group dressed in butcher's overalls surrounded by decapitated baby dolls. That was followed by a world tour that caused offense in the Philippines, then Japan and then of course the US ('we're bigger than Jesus'). The ancestors of MAGA burned Beatles records in great quantities. The start of 1967 saw the appearance of a strange video in which four strange looking and strangely-dressed men with moustaches acted strangely over a strange and unsettling song that suggested drugs. Those whose image of the Beatles was still a 1963 publicity

shot were shocked and stunned, but this was followed by *The Magical Mystery Tour*. As the unwary viewers of prime-time BBC1 were digesting their Xmas pudding there presented before them was the Beatles' 'Christmas special', a druggy and surreal almost home-made film that culminated in Lennon screaming *I am the eggman, they are the eggmen, I am the walrus!*'. A very great many mums and dads were shocked and stunned, but it got worse. 1968 was the year of Yoko Ono, album covers with full-frontal nudity, films of erect penises and drug busts. In 1969, the decade ended with Lennon releasing an unnerving pre-punk single declaring to the public he was now a heroin addict, closely followed by the return of his MBE²⁵⁰ because the single barely charted.

That was a counterculture! But how could something as subversive as the Beatles be allowed to exist? Because they *entered into the mediated world via capitalism*. The music industry was a rough and ready form of moneygrubbing, but it made it its cash by selling records to the public and it therefore realised it needed to sell records the public liked. The quality of these records was of no concern as long as they sold, but the record companies were aware that good records were likely to sell. Good records got good reviews in the music press, got played on the radio, got bought in the shops. In fact, one of the early manifestations of a free market media in the UK was a pirate radio that based itself around the new pop music. The pirates were hip to the new music and

²⁵⁰ Around this time, he informed the world the Beatles had smoked dope in the Buckingham Palace bogs before the MBE investiture.

helped the new music to sell. The A&R²⁵¹ man was very important in all this. He went to the clubs and scouted for talent. He owed his job to his good taste. He was looking for good music that would sell based on the assumption that what would sell was good music. Motown, in its heyday, is the perfect example of a record company set up like a factory to manufacture great pop music.

Lennon once said ‘The Beatles were abhorred *then* called respectable.’ There were many who were not looking too closely (those who knew something was happening but had no idea what it was) and who thought that the Beatles were respectable. It was because of this misplaced faith the Beatles were able to build a wider counterculture around them. When they moved to London, the group checked out a new underground band called the Rolling Stones. The underground scene in London was artier and more sophisticated than the Liverpool rock scene. By early 1963, it was a mix of jazz with an increasing injection of rhythm and blues²⁵². So, George Harrison went to the Decca A&R man who had turned down his own band and told him to sign the group who were to become the great pop rivals of his own band. The Beatles and the Stones were the glue that held the pop counterculture together, around which all the rest was built. But the figure of Bob Dylan came to loom equally large, a little further off base, for Dylan gave pop a craving for *meaning*²⁵³. Pop began to ask

²⁵¹ Artist and Repertoire.

²⁵² More Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf and Jimmy Reed than Elvis or Buddy Holly.

²⁵³ This musical counterculture grew and grew because it sold records. The initial rock (as it became) counterculture was a powerful force in society that for a long while renewed itself. The original wave was a

meaningful questions in meaningful words.

The pop counterculture that emerged from all this was certainly full of contradictions, was incoherent and was not always sincere. But it was in the end the real deal, smack dab in the middle of a particularly grubby capitalist industry. There it stood, as long as the records sold, beyond their command, all the while all the other countercultures (women's lib, New Left, civil rights, ecology, anti-consumerism etc) were developing. What wouldn't any new left give to have such a movement to build a wider counterculture around?

If we look at various countercultures from the past, we see that Protestantism is one triggered by a powerful personality, but the countercultures of both the 19th century and the 1960's were both essentially diffuse and lacked anything approaching a leader. Thus, the problem of 'personality' was marginalised. It should be noted that neoliberalism and neoconservatism lack leaders and work all the better for it. The left, over the past decade, seems however to crave a 'leader'. Barack Obama, a sort of hybrid neoliberal and neocon figure, was almost worshipped by liberals with his message of 'hope' and 'change'²⁵⁴.

spent force by about 1973 but was revived by punk in 1976. Although punk itself burned out within a year or so, it left a great trail of 'alt' movements in its wake that lasted into the mid-1990's.

²⁵⁴ Incidentally, Obama is a textbook case of 'populist' figure. He was certainly subversive as a black President, given that skin-colour is the basis of US racism. But he was not an 'African-American', descended from the slaves shipped over from West Africa. No, Obama's father was an intellectual from Kenya in East Africa and his mother belonged to the white Hawaiian elite. Obama went to a school for the privileged elite in Hawaii, then to Harvard where he became a professor, then a Senator, then President. To my mind, he represents not black

François Hollande in France had a similar effect (at least during the five or so days it took for people to see though him). At the moment we have Jeremy Corbyn. Corbyn is a very rare thing nowadays, a decent person and a politician who believes in things — moreover leftist things. However, I find it hard to believe he offers much real hope without a counterculture to back him. I think he illustrates the left problem that it is unlikely to find a leader to save us from the neos, and Corbyn in any case is not that person. Rather than looking for a leader, what is needed is the ideas to drive a counterculture²⁵⁵.

I think Leftists made a mistake by abandoning **postmodernism** and its various intellectual friends. In fact, postmodernism has been blamed for the destruction of truth value. It (it is claimed) argued that nothing is true, so isn't as someone once said 'everything permitted'? Yes, postmodernists were often silly, constructing narratives out of shellfish and deconstructing the narrative of *Macbeth*. But their basic idea — *never trust a narrative* — was useful. This isn't saying 'never *believe* a narrative' or 'reject all beliefs' let alone 'any narrative is as good as any other'. It basically means *question what you are told*. The left seems oblivious to the fact that vericide has been accompanied by fake absolute truths that cannot be questioned. Where are the postmodernists when you need them?

10.3.1 Countercultural Units

A useful notion with regard to changing society is a

Americans but misdirection on a grand scale.

²⁵⁵ Note, ideas not policies or 10-point plans or promises.

cultural unit. A smartphone or a television are examples of a simple CU. The features of a smartphone are endlessly repeated from unit to unit, a communications device that offers $c = s + i$ ²⁵⁶. Cumulatively, smartphones have revolutionised society by propagating its CU across the globe.

The cultural effect of a smartphone is different to that of a vaccine or football. A vaccine has a specific effect and football a local one. The influence of a smartphone is a general one. As well as **technological CU's** like smartphones and computers and cars and televisions, there are also **social CU's**, which are our main interest here. A good example a social CU is the **breadwinner** of the industrialised wage-culture society. This is a CU because *every breadwinner has the same function, to bring home a money wage*. Moreover, the male breadwinner provided a universal definition of the family group. A breadwinner household was made up of the breadwinner himself, a housewife and children.

It would be useful for a What is left counterculture to think in terms of CU's, for these have the ability to make long-lasting changes to society. The breadwinner CU is its own example here, for the 1960's counterculture replaced it with the **partnership** CU in which the husband and wife are both breadwinners in a partnership.

10.3.2 Countercultural Ideas

We are all capable of coming up with a good idea. If we move the sofa over there out the midday glare, that's a good idea. If we start getting skimmed not

²⁵⁶ That is, communication = speech + internet.

whole milk, that's a good idea. At a large scale, governments can have good ideas. That tax cut (or rise) is a good idea. That treaty we have just signed is a good idea.

Ideas can be good (and of course bad), but the world goes on as these ideas are forgotten. If someone in 1137 had the good idea to clean the pond in Søgerhamme, their good idea is not remembered now. But some ideas stay around long enough to transform society and become part of it and part of reality itself.

Good ideas are good for a counterculture, but surely what *makes* a counterculture is good ideas that have a chance of being transformed into the reality of everyday culture. Such ideas are easy to list. Very early good ideas include fire, the axe, the wheel, agriculture. Metalworking, roads, waggon, houses. These technologies have all survived the dust of prehistory.

For early cultural ideas, we can point out Confucius's ideas about society and governance that developed into an orthodoxy in China, and Plato's *guardians* described in his utopian (?) classic *The Republic*. The Confucian state, for example, instituted examinations for the civil service, an idea borrowed early in the 19th century by the British Civil Service. Plato's idea of governance by a collective of the wise has been adopted and adapted into the schemas of many a reforming soul. Then we can mention Ur Nammu's *law code*, the Akkadian system of *governors*, the Greco-Roman '*parliament*'²⁵⁷. The early orthodox Christians of the Greek-speaking world introduced a related set of ideas: *church* < κυριακός (kuriakós

²⁵⁷ Senate (Rome), Ecclesia (Greece).

‘place of the lord’) < κύριος (kúrios ‘lord’), *église* < ἐκκλησία (ekklēsia ‘congregation, church’), *bishop* < ἐπίσκοπος (epískopos, ‘overseer’). The Roman *province* became the nucleus of many European states. The Romans also introduced the profound ideas of *jus naturale* (natural law) and *jus gentium* (law of nations), laws that were applicable to all peoples and still survive today in the ever-vanishing idea of international law.

These examples show that ideas can survive, but their form changes as they are adopted by other or later cultures. So, the church isn’t a kyriakos or an ekklesia. A state isn’t a province. Within a culture, their original form fares better, as Confucius’ ideas of governance illustrates. Plato’s ‘guardians’, an essentially abstract idea in the first place, can be endlessly adapted.

Lastly, the more modern ideas of Renée Descartes. We have seen that Luther’s bit of Latin *sola fides* in the long run weakened both the Church and theology. Descartes – he was as devout a Christian as Luther – had another bit of Latin that greatly helped²⁵⁸ in the demise of the religion itself, the famous *cogito ergo sum* ‘I think therefore I am’. This was his answer to the question of *What can I be certain of?* Many are unconvinced of his logic, but it is a good question and a good answer. Descartes himself went on to use this ‘cartesian doubt’ to end up in a jubilatory entirely unconvincing cartesian certainty that God exists and *ergo* all the words in the Bible *sunt – in dubio veritas*. That is to say, if your doubt does not end in jubilatory certainty all you are left with is doubt. This is arguably one of the most subversive of all ideas. It is

²⁵⁸ Well, his ideas really not his slogan.

not a counterculture in itself, but an idea to be part of any counterculture, *to question the culture*. Descartes was not a subversive but came up with a profoundly subversive idea.

The following sections discuss a collection of useful ideas that together might build a foundation for a leftist counterculture.

1) Socialism

Socialism has been variously defined in the past, initially being in the main a synonym for pre-Leninist communism. A socialism based on a long-defunct society – 19th century industrialism – is no use to anyone. There needs to be a new way of looking at socialism.

First, we recall that **social democracy**, a mixture of socialism and **Keynesianism**, was the ideology of government before neoliberalism took over. Second, we can define democracy not in terms of structure but *intent*. We say

- a **strong democracy** is rule by the people and
- a **weak democracy** is rule *for* the people.

If we look at the neoliberal system of government, we see it hides behind a definition of democracy that depends on structure. Democracy, it says, is people > elections > parties > governments. The people are boss, aren't they? They choose the government. Even the most superficial look at government in the west exposes the absurdity of this notion. There are now only neoliberal parties (increasingly tied to neoconservative foreign policies), both of which are tied to what is effectively their main powerbase outside not only the government but the state itself (for neoliberals, global business and for neocons NATO and the Pentagon). If we look at the intent of

neoliberalism, we see moreover that it is *to manage and grow the economy*, where ‘economy’ effectively means ‘business corporations’. Neoliberalism is a democracy in neither structure nor intent. It is a gigantic cohesive and coherent network of power far beyond the reach of any voter. As Liz Truss found, and has since stated very plainly, even a Prime Minister has little power these days, at least if they go against the grain.

Social democracy, then, at least had built-in elements of a weak democracy. Control of finance, nationalisation, welfare, health service, even public libraries. Of course, there was the ‘Power Elite’ identified by C. Wright Mills in the US, and the ‘Establishment’ in the UK. There should be no idealisation here. But at least the old social democracy did have these *elements*.

What I mean by socialism here is therefore closely tied to the notion of a weak democracy. There must be a direct link between **people** and **government**, so that the people support the government because in the government works for the people. Key to this socialism is the **group** and its relationship to the **individual**. Such a socialism exists **when we observe the individual in the group and see that the interests of both are held in a healthy balance**. In a globalised world, the group is in the end the world itself. This problem is therefore one of the fundamental issues of humanity, this relationship between the individual and the group and one that neoliberalism for example is incapable of even recognising as a problem.

Humans are clearly *evolved* to live in small groups ‘where everybody knows your name’, as the jingle goes. A city or a state, let alone the world itself, is effectively an alien environment for the individual human being who can no longer see where they are or who the others in the group are. This results in **alienation**, the subject of many-a social commentator from the mid-19th century on. This is a world

in which a handshake or a hello count as a significant level of intimacy, in which people are thrown together like confetti and scattered like rice. The group has the ability to crush the individual without the individual having the least idea who is crushing them, or who threw the rice. The plot of many-a Franz Kafka story.

Groups are necessary to human society but the individual is humanity. *It is us*. It ought to be the most important thing in the world, and that is at the core of this 'socialism', this balance of individual and group. Even something as feeble as social democracy is better than neoliberalism.

2) Gender

Imagine someone – someone very charismatic and persuasive – approaching you and telling you they are party to something profound. What it is, is a secret. You grow more and more curious to find out the secret for you trust it must be something magnificent. At long last they break down and tell you their great profundity. *We eat*, they say. What a let-down, you say. Then they add, *Think about the social aspects*. Big deal, you think. Table manners and dinner parties. You storm off. But after a while you do think on what they said and you create a thought experiment: *what if we didn't have to eat, what would society be like?* You say to yourself that, while eating isn't all of human life, almost every aspect of life would be profoundly different even down to the most basic daily routines. No meals, snacks, or hunger. No food or buying it or cooking it or eating it. Then you reflect on how the human body is built out of food and every part of the body is designed to process it or use it. In the end you conclude that it is impossible to imagine a human being who does not eat, for the body would need to be redesigned in a way that is beyond human wit.

The fact we eat is obvious and profound at the same time. Likewise, men and women. If I was to say that humanity is

made up of men and women, you might wonder at the point of mentioning such an obvious fact. What, grass is green the moon comes out at night and water is wet? These are things too obvious to be seen let alone said.

Feminism, if you look at internet comments and suchlike, seems to be seen as a thing too obvious to be seen. Obvious what feminism is from the name. So you say:

| Yes of course I believe in equality! No men and women are different how can they be equal!

just as you would never say:

| Yes of course cognition independent of all experience and impressions of the senses is a priori! No the unity of time does not imply all change consists in the alteration of states in an underlying substance whose existence and quantity must be immutable!

So, there are squadrons and armies and battalions of men²⁵⁹ who hate feminism and know all about it without knowing anything about it and rail against it with all their might and main. But at least they *notice* it. The only part of left these days that pays gender any attention at all is the neofeminists, femininists and menimists, all fake leftists that are destroying and hope of a real left. In most discussions about Iraq or the Ukraine or Gaza – topics worthy of the ‘serious’ left – gender is only worth mentioning if ‘women and children’²⁶⁰ are hurt.

Yet the relationship between men and women is profound in the way ‘we eat’ is profound. It is so everyday because it is everywhere. Change this relationship and you change everywhere. Flip a male breadwinner household into a partnership household and you have more or less uprooted

²⁵⁹ And some women.

²⁶⁰ This effectively means ‘women are children’, not a very leftist notion.

a patriarchy. Transform this relationship, make a cultural unit out of it and you transform society everywhere. Protest about Iraq, write about Iraq, the occupation continues and (crisis died-down) is forgotten about. On the other hand, it is the male breadwinner that is (almost) forgotten about.

Gender has a huge potential for a new counterculture. If only the conclusions of the palaeofeminists were developed further – encompassing gender rather than women alone – I think an incalculably powerful CU could develop based around the common humanity of men and women and opposed to a resurgent binarism (and masculism and neofeminism and femininism and menimism).

Take masculism. This is a more or less religious cult of a magical male power built around an eternal conflict between the Hero and the Adversary in an endless cycle of beating and being beaten. It must be the most destructive and appalling ideology in all of human history.

This is the *blurb* from a computer game. It is *selling* the game. It is saying *this* is why you should buy the game:

Shrink your opponent and squash him with your foot.
Freeze and shatter him. Attach explosives to his back.
Roll a pipe bomb between his legs, or just frag him
old-fashioned with a rocket.

This is a text from a *public monument* put up in the 9th century BCE by the king of Assyria, Ashurnasirpal II:

Their men young and old I took prisoners. Of some I
cut off their feet and hands; of others I cut off the
ears, noses and lips; of the young men's ears I made a
heap; of the old men's heads I made a minaret. I
exposed their heads as a trophy in front of their city.
The male children and the female children I burned in
flames; the city I destroyed, and consumed with fire.

Masculists want to remake a world in which it just *is* and *is*

men. They want to make the world a Valhalla and their innumerable Valhalla fantasies films and games and books tell you that's what they want.

Could there be a better thing imaginable to set a counterculture against than masculism?

3) Multiculturalism

"Can black people be racist?" (Asks the Socialist Worker.) [T]he idea that black and Asian people can be racist towards white people is wrong. It confuses a reaction to a racist society with racism itself. (It answers.) "My parents are fucking African, born in Jamaica," she shouted. "And I'm fucking African, born in England and I can't stand you white people, I tell you." (It quotes.)

The world is not a monoculture. A globalised world must mix cultures together. Therefore, a leftist counterculture must be multicultural. Here the left at the moment offers up a spectacular fail.

Culture is made out of invisible ideas that are what survive of time from generation to generation. Ideas are not easy to preserve over long periods of time, but they are the stuff than can and exceptionally do.

Ein kleiner Ring
Begrenzt unser Leben,
Und viele Geschlechter
Reihen sich dauernd
An ihres Daseins
Unendliche Kette²⁶¹

²⁶¹ Rough translation, "Our life is contained within a little circle, many individuals in a row enduring in the endless chain of being." The last stanza of one of Goethe's most famous poems, 'Human Limitations' ('Grenzen der Menschheit').

That is rollickingly put and makes a powerful point about how generations are linked across the ages and also of the place of the individual with the species. Once a tradition is gone, it can't never come back. Although we can see culture change over the span of history and traditions melt away, culture has always been a thing that has evolved out of itself, existing in the endless chain. However, mass culture overrides local cultures and globalisation intrudes into national culture. The chain of tradition is being broken from within and from without. Into this process, enter neoliberalism.

Tradition means nothing to neoliberalism, only money and markets. Here we see 'creative destruction'. Make a new market, make a buck. Globally, all is about shunting people around to work, as if we are living in a less brutal rebirth of the Assyrian Empire. So, while globalisation is the *iz*, neoliberalism is the engine running it.

A new left should be an advocate for multiculturalism and a critic of this neoliberal shunting around of people so often called 'multiculturalism'. In fact, it destroys culture without replacing it with anything and it creates revulsion against any real multiculturalism (*merge and transfer* yet again). Yet there seems to be a taboo against criticising this process for fear of being 'racist', meaning the only opponents to it are the racists who reduce the issue to one of the 'English' against 'them' in particular the 'coloured' them²⁶². This is a perfect illustration of where a new left should be a counterculture to now's culture, not that of the 1950's.

It is in any case difficult to define what multiculturalism is or

²⁶² Especially the 'Muslim' them. The intense anti-Muslim propaganda of the al-Qa'ida and ISIS years seems to have produced a substantial mass of bubblegum-filled brains frightened to death about these 'Muslims', a belief system which their knowing nothing about leads them to believe they know everything about, in the same vein as the anti-feminists.

should be because the process of globalisation is still in its early stages and there is no guarantee the process will or can continue as it has been doing. No one really knows how climate change will pan out or if global capitalism as currently constituted can carry on much longer. In general though, we can see multiculturalism gradually eroding national cultures just as national cultures have eroded local cultures. Increased levels of global interaction will necessitate communication which, although AI translation might be adequate, could lead to a single koine or even a single world language, which would liquidate all local literary cultures. Meanwhile global flows of people to and fro would inevitably be a complex process of cultural mixing. People move both from X to Y and from Y to X. At some point, the notion of national cultures would be quite meaningless. *This is the point at which a true multiculture has been created.*

If climate change even allows it to happen, a global multiculturalism is too remote to be worth much consideration to a contemporary What is left counterculture, except to provide a means of defining multiculturalism.

We can look at local and national multiculturalism. As we have seen, any true multiculturalism must involve a toing and froing of people. This leads to an obvious issue at both a local and a national level, for these local and national cultures are the rooted traditions in the eternal chain of being²⁶³. Any incoming culture is outside of the local tradition. In this situation, it is natural for the local tradition

²⁶³ If that sounds over the top, consider the fire rituals performed until recently in the West Highlands that closely match the Irish Beltane fires that in turn match fire ceremonies described by Greco-Roman writers in Gaul and doubtless stretch far back into prehistory. The details of the past barely survive a century. The British writer Gildas in a text dating from maybe 500 CE describes Romans entering and leaving the island. The Roman occupation had been completely forgotten. But *ideas* and *rituals* can and do survive for a very long time.

to accept new ideas from the incoming traditions. The incomer can meanwhile adapt its own traditions to the national or local culture. In the UK, *curry* is an obvious example of a national culture adopting from an incoming Indian culture, while *bhangra* music is a good example of something steeped in an incoming Punjabi culture transformed first into an underground Anglo-Indian youth music and then a national pop genre.

However, with neoliberalism running riot this natural process cannot take place, as the traditions of the UK are rapidly being destroyed by a mass culture controlled by big business for profit. Pop music, TV, cinema, comedy, magazines, books – all effectively run for a quick buck and producing disposable **junk soul food**. ‘Tradition’ is represented by the odd tabloid-y TV programme about the Kings and Queens of England, or ‘classic’ soaps. The ‘eternal chain’ is destroyed and the cultural tradition is a shallow half-drained pool saturated with nano plastic waste.

Surely this is a left-worthy phenomenon, that multiculturalism cannot develop *without a culture*, not when everybody is drinking the same nano plastic poison.

Then there are the transients, people shunted here and there to work cheap and leave when their work is done or they have made their bundle of cash. This is not multiculturalism, this thing that is not possible after the neoliberal decimation of culture. It is not multiculturalism; it is little atoms of monoculture dotted about the city crammed into bedsits and longing to be back home.

The left desperately needs to stop feeding into a false dichotomy (*they are Brits vs they are foreigners!*) and advocate for a true multiculturalism that cannot be achieved without a counterculture to undo the effects of neoliberalism and create a new culture made out of people not (virtual) pound notes. For such a left to evolve it must look to ideas outside its comfort zone, such as Burkean conservatism and its

notions of tradition stripped of its notions about ‘swinish multitudes’. How can there be multiculturalism without culture? How can there be culture with reality TV?

4) Communication

Mary, Mary – how does your counterculture grow? With communication of course, she replies. This is another task for any new left. The channels of communication that have not been contaminated by neoliberalism are becoming fewer and fewer. Even The Internet is becoming more and more controlled. If I were to hazard a guess, I fear internetworking being shut down in the following ways:

- the web browser is replaced by corporate apps (for ‘news’, music, films, books, shopping etc), which basically shuts The Internet down altogether;
- web usage is policed at every level and powerful sanctions are there to anyone who steps out of line, the line being as arbitrary as possible (this would be very difficult to achieve though);
- the web itself is reduced to ‘approved’ sites that the browser acts as a front end for;
- it is becoming apparent that ai-powered and ad-centric search is censorship on a grand scale, intentionally or not, for it blocks out little sites – including little leftist blogs – in favour of bigcorps pravda;

Perhaps a prototype for this is the ‘smart TV’, via which The Internet is accessed purely by apps²⁶⁴. It is likely that those who are busy shutting down Internet freedoms would favour these outcomes.

²⁶⁴ Though most smart TV’s do have a browser app, there are few ‘use cases’ for browsing the web on a TV.

At the moment, the Internet seems to be the best *basic means* of communication with which to create a counterculture. It stretches the globe, is immediate, multimodal (web pages, pdf's, ebooks, videos, audio, texts, email, groups etc). However, more old-fashioned means of communication such as books, journals, meetings, speeches have generally more resonance.

This might seem obvious, but I am talking about ideas that barely exist. How do you propagate new ideas? You cannot go to whatisleft.com and check out the 'What's New' page. Communication is key, a *sine qua non* for developing a successful counterculture, but how can you communicate what is at the moment nothing? What is there to communicate before any countercultural ideas have been developed?

That is the problem of any new counterculture: to communicate its ideas as they are created and without being silenced by hostile authorities. The means of communication are there at the moment, but how can they be organised so that they are ready and waiting for the time when they are need? This counterculture *will* it be televised?

5) Emotions

An appeal to the emotions – I mean the intent to create a world that *satisfies* the emotions – must be an integral part of any counterculture.

One appeal here ought to be for **freedom**. A problem though is, as usual, definition. Freedom is easier said than defined. My view is that it is best done via a negative: freedom exists when there is no feeling of constraint. This is a mightily situational definition, suggesting that freedom is more than one thing. We cannot look at someone and know if they are 'free' (assuming they are not physically constrained in some way). We can recall at this point the Victorian lady in her gilded cage. We see how constrained

she is but does she feel constrained? We need to understand here that **freedom is situational**, it depends on her situation in place and in time. Does she feel constrained here and now? The sense of freedom changes over time, almost from moment to moment. For example, one moment we are deep in debt, the next we win EUR500 million in a lottery.

So, saying 'freedom' isn't very useful if we don't specify what we mean. Because absolute freedom is not achievable, to aim for it is useless. We want to define freedoms that are achievable. Although absolute **freedom from want** might be hard to achieve, *relief* from want seems a good What is left aim. For example, the UK has just been victim of an extraordinary rise in housing rent. If the neoliberals didn't fix this to happen, they have done nothing to fix the problem or indicate they see it as a problem. That points to a counterculture policy, to control rent levels and constrain the freedom of money.

Freedom of expression, freedom of association; more free time and better work-life balance (three-day week); more freedom to choose a place of employment; more freedom of choice (for example, in music, film, TV, if they were freed from their own production constraints); freedom of information (no brainwashing propaganda); freedom of thought (ditto); more freedom over one's destiny (that is, more power to check governments); freedom in education (more control over subjects at school and a system of lifetime-education); freedom from health care want (a national health service would you believe); you can add further freedoms as you please.

The basic choice here is **autonomy versus automaton**. Any left ought to fight for a society in which the individual has autonomy and against one that reduces them to the level of an automaton (for example working to a computer-generated schedule on a zero-hours contract).

As well as freedom, a left counterculture should also offer

hope. Both the *Age of God* and the *Age of Man* offered hope. During the *Age of Man*, it was generally felt that science and technology would enable Man to overcome all sorts of things. You wouldn't have to work and you'd never be hungry and Man would be off exploring the galaxy and other galaxies too most likely. We seemed to be heading – and *inevitably* too – for a genuine utopia.

If such a hope is to be offered now, it must be more limited but it must still be a wide and general one. This hope must be

1. for something in the future
2. . . . that seems achievable
3. . . . via the counterculture.

Can a counterculture be formed that captures and satisfies the emotions?

6) Progress

A more or less synonym for the left in the US is **progressive**. This is a good term (better than 'libtard'), but it must be used carefully.

The problem is that there are different kinds of progress and the term 'progressive' is not necessarily appropriate in a social sense. It makes perfect sense if it is used to describe an opponent of true conservatism. The one looks to the future, the other to the past. However, these days in the US, 'Conservative' means neoliberal and, while neoliberals are ultra-progressive with regards to tech, many progressives are *sceptical* about tech. The progressives are conservative and conservatives are progressive²⁶⁵.

²⁶⁵ The same absurdity, after the same normalisation of terms, pits neoliberals against Liberals.

This problem disappears if we define a progressive as being **socially progressive**. I define social progression as *the movement away from primal drives that nevertheless does not deny them*. For example, Hammurabi's law code is progressive in that it moves away from the primal drive to unrestrained revenge²⁶⁶. The idea of Locke that led to the notion of human rights, which is socially progressive. This in turn led to the idea of civil rights for slaves and of women's rights. Legalising abortion, suicide²⁶⁷. Contraception. In the wake of the 1960's counterculture there was a whole raft of socially progressive ideas which in a curious way can be best understood via their enemies who termed them 'political correctness'. In general, social progression always results in a **voluntary restraint**. With that definition, we can see how the right-wing counterculture has a core aim of removing these restraints, for it represents more than anything the primal human being. Over the past twenty-five years I have watched these wretched creatures drag humanity further and further back down into the swamp. That is *twenty-five years* of shock and horror as each threshold to the next step down²⁶⁸ was brazenly passed. Down down down, deeper deeper deeper. What is progress in the trenches? In a primate world reduced to kill or be killed? In a world ruled by a US ruled by primates?

Progress, like freedom, is situational. If we are at step X we can progress to Y; if we have been dragged back to A, we can't. Therefore, the left must look on the one hand in the long run taking humanity past where it has been dragged

²⁶⁶ Of course, its underlying principle is 'an eye for an eye'. This leads to unpleasant laws that punish doctors for harming their patients in the process of trying to heal them so that a doctor performing an eye operation loses his own eye if the op goes wrong.

²⁶⁷ Those who tried to commit suicide and failed were hauled straight off to jail.

²⁶⁸ Example. Under Bush II the US allowed itself to arrest anyone anywhere in the world; under Obama it allowed itself to kill anyone.

down to but on the other – the hand we pass before our eyes right now – simply see progress as mere survival. In other words, Y is the ultimate target, but first we need to get past A.

7) **Survival**

We need a counterculture based around the simple idea of **survival**. In this case ‘the left’ is simply those who want to survive and the right-wing those who are working to annihilate.

Humanity has reached a threshold in its development that is in danger of destroying it and the species has evolved a society that has moved far beyond its physical evolution. Humanity must therefore adapt to this essentially alien world it has created. It must try to survive itself.

Every living thing is an individual belonging to a species but humans are unique in their physical and perceptual reach: humans occupy the entire globe and they are aware of it. Beetles and bees have a wide physical reach too, but each individual perceives only its own local habitus. A beetle living in London knows nothing about a beetle living in Beijing. Humans once lived like this too. Someone living along the banks of the Huang Ho, one day to be the nucleus of China, had no inkling that people also lived along the banks of the Nile or the Amazon or that these places existed. This physical and perceptual reach – a basic fact for most but not all of humanity – is new. Technology gives us the impression we ‘know’ the world because we are shown glimpses and fragments of it. Travel programmes, nature programmes, ‘news’ – there is South America, there is Africa, there is Asia. There before us. But this is illusory. We live in an illusion. We watch these fragments and glue them together into a whole which gives shape to our illusion. We feel we understand the world and live in it but we do not and cannot. Even as we see these fragments we are utterly

unaware of most everything that is happening in the world, or for that matter even in our own country or city.

The limits of human perception are matched by those of human intelligence. Once upon a time it was possible for a man ²⁶⁹ to know everything, which obviously means 'everything that is known'. This could happen only in the days when nothing much was known. Nowadays, humans buff up their intelligence using computers that can, for example, do calculations at a rate inconceivable to their creators. Humans themselves are not quite but not quite not dumb waiters, fetching back the food of knowledge brought back to them by their machines.

It was recognised in the 19th century that the natural way of life for humanity is the **Gemeinschaft** 'community' but the modern world is one of **Gesellschaft** 'society'. A village is a community, a city a society. This is simply what is, how things are and must be. The city is an inevitable development of the village; it is part of the inevitable development of human society. With a species such as humanity, which has **static instinct** and **dynamic culture**, it is inevitable its culture will grow in complexity. It *must* move from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft but just as that is true, so is the fact that as culture evolves the species doesn't. Therefore, if humanity cannot itself evolve, it must learn to adapt to its culture – *to evolve within it*.

A globalised world leads to the problem of **magnification**. The individual is small; the world is big but the individual who rules the world is magnified to gigantic proportions. All their primal drives and basic instincts are likewise magnified.

²⁶⁹ It was not possible for a woman to know everything, of course, because only men had access to 'proper' learning. For example, an intellectually brilliant man might know all there was to know from his (according to Caesar) 20-years training under the druids. An equally intellectually brilliant woman was excluded from this training and by definition would be a know-nothing.

They are potentially a monster.

In our globalised world, humanity has compensated for its littleness by building up large social structures such as corporations and states. These structures cover the world and globalise it. They are potentially monsters. They cover the world; what they do affects the world. Although modern corporations are usually 'oligarchies' rather than 'monarchies' (though there are still many dominated by a single 'billionaire' figure), there is a plausible model that sees a corporation as having a (psychopathic) personality. The more we believe that corporations have a personality, the more we must conclude that it has primal drives and basic instincts and is therefore a potential monster.

Behind all this lies Mammon, driven by these same drives and instincts and far beyond the control of the creatures and corporations that serve it. This is a monster that can be fed but not controlled.

The creation of this Mammon is one of the greatest achievements of neoliberalism and therefore its greatest danger. To those who wander the corridors of Mammon, the world is visible but only in atomised form. The hedge fund manager needs to understand the global economy, *but only in terms of markets*. The world is thus reduced to sweet oil, mahogany, tin, rise, coltan, mangoes, diamonds, each of these an atom in the whole. Markets rise and markets fall and this is the world of time a hedge fund manager must exist in, the time it takes for a market to rise or fall. The future²⁷⁰ is as narrow as the present in a neoliberal world. In the old days, the Fates were often said to be blind. Mammon is just as blind save for a piercing gaze at a shiny stone that mesmerises the victim while the teeth of the tiger are bared to strike just out of sight. This is one of the

²⁷⁰ The financial markets even have a type of contract they call 'futures'.

cornerstones of the threshold that humanity is facing and which I think must be resolved. It is not that human nature can be reformed and the drive for wealth and power made to go away, rather it is to steer the world away from an ideology built on greed and power, an ideology that forgets Gaia is stronger than Mammon can ever be and that Mammon needs Gaia. Mammon simply cannot survive without Gaia. Looked at like this, who is naïve? The leftist calling for cooperation or the neoliberal shilling for selfishness? The party of Gaia or the party of Mammon? The idealists may be the more naïve in the short run, but in the long run surely it is the realists who are naïve? The aim of any counterculture, I suggest, would be to try and overcome both these naiveties.

Then we have weapons, those tools of the primal drive for dominance and conquest and war wealth and women. With the neocons, humanity has placed the most appalling sociopaths, with their primal drives for conquest, in charge of nuclear weapons. Humanity cannot afford to allow this if it is to survive. It is literally suicide. Even if you believe nuclear weapons prevent war in normal circumstances, that they are necessarily defensive weapons – that goes out the window with the neocons threatening Russia and China.

You cannot put sociopathic primates in charge of these weapons and hope to survive.

So here are a few pointers of things useful for what might be called **the last counterculture** and how they might enable humanity handle the global *Gesellschaft* it has created and maybe even cross the threshold it is approaching.

Human societies, both national and global, must have **checks and balances**. This is an old idea, but it must be a fundamental one for the last counterculture. The Roman Republic's powerful system of checks and balances broke down when faced with the big men that destroyed it. The big men simply had no checks on their behaviour. Likewise,

neoliberalism. To reiterate, the neoliberal party extends outside both government and state and all official political parties are neoliberal *and this is so throughout the neoliberal world*. There are therefore few checks on the neoliberals. The neocons are still more remote, mainly inhabiting thinktanks that live far outside the sphere of everyday government. At a national level, then, there must be an open media combined with a government and parties that represent the people and, at a global level, states that too must represent their people and be properly represented within international organisations that in turn represent the people of the world. This is not the feckless idealism it may seem, for the key word is *must*, because

- elites are bad for humanity. They exist because of human nature. Of course that's true. But is it necessarily true? I think elites **package human drives** in a particular form, just as warrior societies do. That is, they organise society in such a way that primal drives are satisfied in such a way – by status or by war. Look at the Valhalla big man films. These films are so ubiquitous and so familiar that it is hard to notice their artifice, that every one of them warps the world in such a way that only the big man can save himself or his family or the world and he can only do it with violence and only a big man can do it. Look at a classic TV programme like *Columbo*, which was made as a deliberate reaction to TV violence – in more or less any *Columbo* story violence (the murder(s) aside) it is hard to *imagine* violence. It seems a reasonable proposition that elites package society in such a way that it feeds elites. It is easy though to conceive a society in which
- **cooperation** takes priority over competition. This again must be achieved both nationally and globally. One way of encouraging cooperation, or at least reducing conflict, between states is the trade

organisation. I do not mean some neoliberal swizz that cements existing deals and places more power in the hands of big business (see NAFTA, TTIP/TTP, ETC). A long while back, in the early 1990's, two books came out around the same time by leading Israeli politicians. The first, by Shimon Peres, argued for a trade union among the Middle Eastern states, the second, by Binyamin Netanyahu, called for Israel to strengthen its fortifications and prepare to strike at its enemies. Even if we say that Peres saw this trade union in terms of Israeli interests, it is clear that such an institution would have been likely to have lessened conflict, for a genuine union would have been in elite interests. Netanyahu's 'idea' was simply for a forever war. This illustrates that, though cooperation is often seen as an ideal to be contrasted with the more pragmatic competition, with the suggestion that self-interest will always trump idealism, this stereotype is not so obvious. There is self-interest in cooperation and quite possibly greater gain. Cooperation also leads to greater

- **group** intelligence²⁷¹. If we measure the IQ of a group, we find the highest score is 163. However, what if we score the group as a whole, that is count the right answers for everyone taking the test? If ten people took the test, it is likely those with lower scores got at least a few questions the high scorer did not. Let us say, then, that the group IQ ends up being 181. Intelligence is a far richer thing than IQ and so it follows group intelligence is far richer than group IQ. Any group must be cleverer than any individual within it. We should note though that a 'group' is more than an *assembly of individuals*. Such

²⁷¹ Often called 'group IQ', a label which is to be rejected because *no one* believes that IQ measures the full range of human intelligence or even knows really what exactly it does measure.

an assembly is not a group if it is dominated by a single member or a clique. The clique might itself be a group, but not the assembly. A group is rather a **collective of individuals**. We can call for a counterculture that calls for *group interest over elite interest and incorporating individual interest*. However, this self-interest is for resources that are likely to become

- increasingly **limited**. The last counterculture must advocate for the **wise use of resources**. There must be a society in which there is scientific and technological progress but one which is inherently stable and not tied to a purely capitalist growth. For example, it is clear these days that the strong right arm of Mammon is finance based on credit. Basic capitalism is surely money tied to wealth, not credit. Neoliberalism is to a frightening extent 'loose money', detached from real wealth. It only exists in the 1's and 0's of the global finance system, one long binary incantation murmured in prayer to the Mammon who scorches and desiccates the Gaia to whom too few pray.

These ideas, like any counterculture, work together. If humanity *is* at a threshold, it *needs* the last counterculture, **its ideas a collective of musts**. If humanity crosses the threshold, it will once again be able to face the future.

Annex: Imagining

In 70 trillion years' time will anyone remember the
date of the first Jon Pertwee episode of Doctor
Who?

A new What is left counterculture is for the future. It doesn't exist right now. To even exist it must first be born, develop and grow. Any counterculture is driven by hope for the future, a belief that the world can be – *be made* – better. Any counterculture is reaching for something foreseeable and maybe soon *here*.

What the wide world will look like in fifty, let alone a thousand, years' time is something no one can predict. No one should try to build a counterculture within timeframes such as these. All we have is now and that is where any What is left must exist.

If we reduce our look at the future to a far more modest scope, we can more sensibly try to deduce how things that exist now might be enhanced and also what new things might be invented to perform tasks for which there is a foreseeable need or desire²⁷². This imagining allows us to go beyond countercultures and construct a larger framework within which to situate them. We want the world to be better in the near future – or at least survive it – so we ask What is the near future within the far future?

²⁷² We call Leonardo's famous sketch a 'helicopter' but here we can think of it as a flying machine – Leonardo had deduced that in the future flying machines would exist. The point is that, although he could never know they would, it was a reasonable deduction. He was not trying to predict the future, just something that might exist in it.

The far future is not entirely unknowable. There are things we can say about it that are either predictable (through science) or likely (through common sense, like Leonardo's idea of flying machines).

It is sci-fi stories and films that provide us with the bulk of our imaginings about the future, sci-fi being a genre created in a deeply patriarchal culture by men who for example could often not even conceive of a society in which women could be equal players. These imaginings tell us more about our own preconceptions than the future.

Take *Star Wars* (1977), essentially a high-tech fairy story set in space. According to this imagining, the galaxy will be populated by humans flying through the void in space aeroplanes in order to create a warlike patriarchy ruling over a giant network of planetary colonies. Pretty much all early sci-fi stories envisage much the same thing²⁷³. Patriarchal warlike Martians invading us, we visiting warlike patriarchal planets. Aliens who look like men, monsters who are always male²⁷⁴ (invariably reptilian or insectoid).

Many of these imaginings are projected male fantasies seeded by the times in which they live and these in turn work to frame our own picture of the future. By considering these imaginings and doing some imagining of our own, we can deconstruct them and contemplate a future without them.

²⁷³ Of course, very occasionally there are worlds ruled by cruel bikini-clad blonde Brunette Raven-haired lovelies.

²⁷⁴ Of course, very occasionally there are worlds ruled by cruel bikini-clad blonde Brunette Raven-haired monsters

A.1 Imagining the Future

The thing to understand in thinking about the future is its sheer scale. It is estimated the universe itself will endure for roughly another 70-120 trillion years²⁷⁵ and the Sun (therefore the solar system) about another 4 billion.

So, note how the human imagination tends to project its own existence onto what it imagines. These stories always focus on humanity and assume the existence of humanity however far into the future. If we look back at the past of human history, we see the relevant ranges of time compressed from hundreds of millennia to millennia to centuries and the rate of progress increases. So the first modern humans appear about 500,000 years ago and enter Europe about 40,000 years ago; farming appears in Europe about 7,000 BCE; the Great Pyramid c. 2600 BCE; the Renaissance, Reformation, Napoleonic Wars date to their respective centuries; the Roaring Forties, the Swinging Sixties to their respective decades; the eras of each Doctor Who measured in years.

The disturbing thing in thinking about the future is there is so much of it. Five hundred years ago we were on the cusp of what Francus Bacon called *The Advancement of Learning*, but what will five hundred years from now be like? But this is a piffly atom of time. One day it will be 100,000 years from now, then a million, then a billion. Bear in mind that these are

²⁷⁵ The universe will still exist, if these models are correct, but it will be a dead place, filled with lumps of ex planets and stars. It is believed, but not confirmed, that eventually even protons may decay (in 2×10^{34} years!) meaning even these dead masses will be delumped at some unimaginably far off date. Even black holes, it is thought, will evaporate. Truly, in the long run we are all dead.

real dates. The Earth will still be here a billion years from now. Consider the progress made in the past 500 years, the rate at which it has sped up in the last couple of centuries and the incredible rate it is speeding up to now. At the current rate of progress, what will things be like in 10 years' time? Even 500 years' time is beyond imagining and 100,000 years unimaginably far away. A million years is about double the time modern humans have existed, a billion years about double the time complex *life* has existed.

Millions of year spans is when even slowcoach nature gets to work and a species would expect to have literally mutated (or evolved if you prefer) within that time. When 65 million years have passed mutation and just plain old Gaia will have transformed the planet no matter what human beings do.

This is *real* in the sense that one day it *will* be real. In 130 million years' time 65 million years in the future will have been half the way back to what we call year zero. The year 130,000,000 CE will be real one day – just as real as today. By that time the progress of humanity from 1066 to 1517 to 1963 will be meaningless and humanity far from what we think of as human today. We know this, we just don't know how.

I repeat the point that this is real. The future, however far ahead it is, is real but beyond a certain point inconceivable. It is at once impossible to tell if humanity has a future in the long run and certain that it is destined to become something we would not recognise as human if it survives in the long run.

Let us not forget those two great thresholds we know humanity must face at some point. First, it must find another planet to settle before the Sun dies, or perish. Second, it must find a way out of here before the Universe ends, or perish. Just imagine that humanity does survive for 70 trillion years and then all there is left is the inevitable end. In 70 tn years' time, will anyone remember the year of the first Jon Pertwee episode of Doctor Who?

A human being is an individual member of a species. The individual dies, the species lives on. We can talk of end times (due to whatever cause), but I think there's usually a sense in these imaginings that humanity will survive. It *must* we think survive. A billion years from now, sci-fi imagines, men (of course, men) are still here but now in some dystopian world. They are still men, they are still warlike, they are still fighting, they still speak an English that hasn't changed since 1971 (or whenever whatever was made). Doesn't that tell us all too little about a billion years from now but a lot about us? That our imagination is a mirror we paint ourselves onto?

A.2 Imagining the Journey

The future is full of space travel, space aeroplanes. These whoosh through the vacuum of space to the target planet always prepped and primed for human beings (gravity, check; atmosphere, check; solar radiation, check; the ability to grow carrots and potatoes, check). People on these planets radio back to Earth as if making a telephone call. Planets are basically towns the space aeroplanes visit ²⁷⁶ .

²⁷⁶ 'I think the Red Lion on Gwargoola is very good – good beer and

Intergalactic travel is just like travelling within the galaxy.

Now consider this conversation:

Dials number. 'Hello.'
'Hello.'
'Fancy a drink?'
'Sure. Where?'
'The Fatted Calf at eight.'
'See you there. Bye.'

In sci-fi imaginings, this conversation can be carried out at any distance. With good reason, if you are making a watchable film. But consider. A billion light years away takes even light a billion years to travel. Consider too one single light year is about 6 trillion miles, so the nearest star (Proxima Centauri) is 4 ly or 24 tn miles away. Imagine this conversation taking place between two people whose space aeroplanes have whooshed them 1 bn light years from each other. 'Hello', says the caller. *One billion years later the callee will answer.* This simple conversation will last *six billion years*. Even a call from Proxima Centauri would take 24 years. Yet in imaginings such as Star Wars, the warlike men in their patriarchy can arrange their troops just like Napoleon. Instacommunication, instaflight. If there is any way of getting around this limitation, we know nothing about it and until then a radio signal to the nearest and likely uninhabitable solar system takes four years to get there and any reply back will take a further four years. When you get there, you stay there. You're on your own.

food – but the Black Horse at Marbonki . . . avoid, blech.'

Humanity appears right now to have reached a scientific threshold, as we have seen. There is the very big and the very small. Perhaps we have seen as big as we will ever see and as small too. We cannot – should not – say that future science cannot overcome these limits. But the thing is that *we have no reason to think this must be so*. The Universe has rules and if these cannot be broken perhaps humanity has reached its limits already and the Universe says no to knowing more. The notion of *intergalactic* travel is already looking unlikely. The space between galaxies is being stretched at near to the speed of light. The only way to breach this limit is through some sort of ‘tunnelling’ that would enable instant travel from one place to another. If the Universe is kind and this is possible, such a technology would obviously require a sub-quantum or inter-dimensional phenomenon that could be controlled *at the level of classical physics* – the level of physics we live in. Does this seem remotely likely?

Like Leonardo, we can speculate that space travel might play a part in the future of humanity – and it must if we are to escape the end of the solar system – but there will not be a warlike patriarchal expansion into space via space aeroplanes creating federations and empires across the galaxy. There is also no conceivable way that humanity can escape the death of the Universe and if so, our species must at that point share its fate. The imaginary idea of an everlasting growth is therefore illusory. The future is, ultimately, terrifying.

A.3 Imagining the War

Tech is weapons, history and the present teach us.

From flint axes to bows and arrows to spears and swords to guns and cannons to bombs. Modern tech is worse. The old tech was rooted in chemistry, but around the turn of the 20th century the innards of the chemical element was mapped – the nucleus. Humanity now had nuclear power and nuclear bombs. Atomic bombs *split* heavy elements (uranium and plutonium) and hydrogen bombs *fuse* this light element (this is the power that drives the stars themselves). An even greater power lies with *antimatter*. All particles have an anti-particle with a reverse charge, so an *electron* (negative charge) has a *positron* (positive charge). When a particle meets an antiparticle, they destroy each other and an enormous amount of energy is released, far more than is the case with a nuclear reaction. Antimatter cannot be harnessed yet, but with the latest science it can be stored in a stable state. It is plausible antimatter could be weaponised and an antimatter bomb constructed. If an antimatter bomb was dropped on a city, that city would simply disappear. Its matter would be annihilated. If there were to be an ‘antimatter war’ the bombs would bite great chunks out of the Earth, leaving it at best like a half-eaten apple.

If the more fundamental aspects of matter and space were better understood – if nature does not say ‘no’ and it is in fact possible to ‘see’ nature at ever smaller scales – what powers could be unleashed and what destruction achieved? If there are undiscovered dimensions in space that can be controlled? If space itself and matter itself could be bent and shaped and destroyed?

That may lie in the future, but even in the here and

now a single nuclear bomb could level France.

This is the nature of the threshold we are facing, this power of destruction placed in the hands of primal drives and basic instincts without a trace of ‘political correctness’ to restrain its use. The neocons seem bent on dividing the world into two tribes locked into a ‘civil war’. Here is the Roman historian Tacitus describing just such a battle between two German tribes with lamentable consequences.

In the same summer [of 58 CE], a great battle was waged between the Hermunduri and Chatti, both attempting to appropriate by force a river which was at once a rich source for salt and the frontier line between the tribes. Apart from their passion for deciding all questions by the sword, they held an ingrained religious belief that this district was peculiarly close to heaven and that nowhere did the gods give more immediate audience to human prayer. Hence, by the divine favour, salt in that river and in these forests was not produced, as in other countries, by allowing water to evaporate in a pool left by the sea, but by pouring it on a blazing pile of trees, crystallization taking place throughout the union of two opposed elements, water and fire. The struggle, which went in favour of the Hermunduri, was the more disastrous to the Chatti in that both sides consecrated, in the event of victory, the adverse host to Mars and Mercury; a vow implying the extermination of horses, men, and all objects whatsoever.

On a sufficiently grand scale, ‘extermination’ means everything, the lot, the Earth itself. The threshold implies that humanity must overcome these drives and instincts. Beyond a certain point *warlike patriarchies must annihilate humanity itself*. If it is

anything, humanity *cannot* be warlike and it *cannot* be a patriarchy based around masculist notions of a magical male power.

- US Officials Threaten Lebanon With New Israel Invasion If Hezbollah Isn't Disarmed Soon
- US Launches Three Days of Airstrikes in Somalia's Puntland Region
- US Considers Bombing Venezuela as It Deploys F-35 Fighter Jets to Puerto Rico
- 26 pays s'engagent à être présents « sur le sol, en mer ou dans les airs » en cas de cessez-le-feu
- Trump Offers To Send More Troops to Poland
- Rubio Signals US Won't Oppose Israeli Annexation of the Occupied West Bank
- Israeli Defense Minister Says IDF Will 'Remain' in Newly Occupied Areas of Syria
- Trump Administration Considers Taking Stakes in Major US Weapons Firms
- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Monday that he wants \$1 billion per month from NATO countries to purchase US weapons
- Mike Huckabee Justifies Israeli Military Killing of Aid Seekers in Gaza
- The US ambassador also mocked the idea of using 'non-lethal' forms of crowd control by suggesting to send the 'girl scouts'
- 'It was an honor to meet with Israeli Finance Minister [Bezael] Smotrich today and to talk

about our mutual fight to save Western Civilization,' Rep. Randy Fine (R-FL) said. 'I look forward to working together.'

- A wasteland of rubble, dust and graves: how Gaza looks from the sky

Headlines, August-September 2025

All this is driven by creatures such as this (posting to the Internet a few days after 9/11²⁷⁷):

You Muslims fucked with the wrong country.

12 Aircraft carriers carrying between 85 and 120 airplanes apiece

20 B-2 stealth bombers that can fly halfway across the world and drop 16 JDAM missiles to 16 different targets all at the same time

a fleet of B-52 bombers that can carry 100,000 pounds of bombs at once and drop them with precision from 70,000 feet up or just lay waste to a whole area via carpet bombing

an arsenal of Tomahawk cruise missiles that can hit targets in even bad weather using GPS.

C-130 Artillery-laden flying fortresses bristling with cannons that can rain destruction down upon an army like they've never seen before.

thousands of F-14's, F-18's, F-15's that can down any other fighter aircraft in the world from miles away and rain more destruction down upon ground targets.

²⁷⁷ Text not made spellitically correct.

and F-117 stealths that can drop a 2000 pound bomb down a certain building's elevator shaft in the middle of a city.

want to try and lock up a US fighter with ground radar? Fine. Try and deal with the F-4 Wild Weasel and that screaming HARM missile headed straight towards you.

A-10 Warthogs that can support the mighty US Marines and Army up close and lay waste to enemy artillery and tanks with ease with its massive nose-mounted gatling gun and Maverick missiles

Apache helicopters so scary and deadly to ground forces that Iraqi soldiers threw down their rifles and begged to be taken prisoner by them.

...and, at least 12,000 nuclear weapons

not to mention a US population so united and resolved that public opinion support for this WAR rivals only WW2. at 83% favoring it

...including 73% of college students!

To which another primate added:

And don't forget my second most favorite, 15000 pound fuel air daisy cutter block buster bombs that leave a 600 yard wide crater three stories deep.

These bombs are the closest thing to a nuke, my first most favorite.

So let us consider sci-fi again, in which many an 'alien' invasion is imagined. The point of these stories – we must remember however these *are* stories and must therefore conform to the basic rules of dramatic narrative – pit a superpowered alien race that humanity has to somehow overcome against

overwhelming odds (see stories ranging from *War of the Worlds* to *Independence Day*).

Galactic travel in the way these stories envisage it implies a level of technological knowledge inconceivable to us in our here and now. It is not just that these 'aliens' travel over great distances, they maintain a communications network and their travel is precisely directed. That is, they are able to *direct their journey to earth*. Let us say they have travelled 50,000 light years from the other side of the galaxy. It cannot have taken them 50,000 years. Their tech must make travel practical. Just as we can look at a map and plan a trip to Las Vegas, they must be able to pinpoint Earth on *their* map and plan a trip there. It is beyond human science to even conceive how to do this. If this is possible – and within the logic of these stories it is always possible – their tech must be inconceivably advanced. Conclusion, any notion of a 'war of the worlds' is beyond absurd. The United States could not fight these aliens. Another conclusion, the aliens could not conceivably *want* to fight the United States. It wouldn't be a fight. It would be a takeover, if that's what the aliens wanted. Candy from a baby. Pouring boiling water on an ant's nest. If the aliens wanted Earth, the planet would be theirs. There would be no story, no resistance, no war. They'd take.

A third conclusion is that, to achieve a pragmatic level of galactic travel, the aliens would have had to overcome the threshold humanity finds itself at right now *long, long ago*. It is even possible they would be warlike men come to battle 'our' warlike men in a heroic masculist bath of heroic blood? What *weapons* would these aliens have, what destructive power? We

cannot imagine what war machines their tech *could* produce. But we can conclude they would *not* produce them simply because well there they are. They simply would not be here if they had not controlled their primal drives for brute power and destruction, for the powers of destruction available to them would have destroyed them long, long ago.

So, if we look at the mirror of imagination onto which we paint our fears and desires and we consider these imagined wars of worlds we see these masculist fantasies that project endless war and conquest into our own species and of others. The alien invaders are as usual *us*, or at least masculist men in their Valhalla of Hero and Adversary, their ego and their anti-ego in an eternal cycle of beating and being beaten.

Isn't this human, all-too human? That the good guys in all these tales are born out of a Valhalla fantasy of a forever war against aliens who are likely to have found long, long ago the secret of a forever peace?

A.4 Imagining the Human

Humans have something that exists over and above their physical intuition – a culture that encompasses science and technology, including *genetics* and *robotics*. It is likely a humanity that survives will jumpstart slowcoach nature and *evolve itself*. There is a host of scary implications here that even today are widely felt (biophobia vs biophilia; cyberphobia vs cyberphilia).

First, we can consider the robot, in my view by far the most significant of the two.

As things stand right now, we can observe the *computer* on the one hand and the *robot* on the other. Each separate from the other, each considered at the same time stupid and intelligent and each, of course, exclusively compared to human beings. A computer or a robot are intelligent if they are as intelligent as a person, as if a person is the definition of intelligence. Both computers and robots are increasingly being injected with ‘artificial intelligence’, a science that has been around since the 1950’s and which is causing a great fuss right now²⁷⁸.

This notion of modern computers outperforming humans quickly becomes absurd if we take a broader view. You are producing music on your computer, say. Sound can be represented mathematically (a soundwave here is simply a bit of geometry) and this math can be converted into digital form. Music production is essentially a matter of transforming a soundwave via complex calculations. But what calculations! It is typical for a song to have twenty or so parts – guitars (electric, acoustic, bass), synthesizers, samples, multiple drum parts, multiple string parts, percussion – and each part will be processed by multiple ‘plugins’ that transform the soundwave by using arcane devices such as EQ’s, compressors, saturators, delays, reverbs, exciters, filters, gates, etc. The song will be a project in a DAW²⁷⁹ which itself is doing all sorts of calculations. Most DAW’s these days have very sophisticated user

²⁷⁸ A good indicator of the phenomenal advances in computer ‘intelligence’ is provided by chess programs. These can now beat the best human players. Even Magnus Carlsen is no match for the most advanced chess program, he who has good title to be considered the greatest chess player of all time. Sorry, human chess player.

²⁷⁹ Digital Audio Workstation.

interfaces, as for that matter do most plugins, so your average DAW is a marvel of flashing lights displaying LUFs and dBs and inputs and outputs. Over to you, reader. What is 4298 times 1295? Now imagine a DAW calculating away in all directions and tell me you (or anyone else) are the benchmark for intelligence.

But there is a sense that a human is intelligent and a computer is not. A computer is for a start not **aware**. A DAW calculates and no more. It has no appreciation of the sound it is transforming. It could not care less, or at least that would be the case if it were even advanced enough in these things to be considered able to care. Which it isn't.

Robots *are*, increasingly, aware. There are robots, in their caricature human form, who can dance or move in complex ways and there are robot cars that can drive themselves. These robots require a sophisticated sense of the world around them and an equally sophisticated way of converting this sense into movement.

What robots lack though is a **self**. But science and tech have advanced far enough that we can – following Leonardo again – conceive what we might call a **komperson**²⁸⁰. We can define this as computer + robot + self (or $k = c + r + s$). We don't have to design a komperson to conceive it and the equation above would indeed produce at least some sort of komperson.

It should be obvious that even a basic komperson would be potentially far more advanced than a person. But we can go further and consider that a

²⁸⁰ Komputer, 'computer' in German. The plural would be either 'kompersons' or 'kompeople'.

komperson, recognising the basic fact that it existed, would be likely to evolve itself rapidly. The komperson people created would be the primitive original.

A person is *biotic*. A person is *alive*. Would a komperson be alive? The answer is I think a percussive 'yes', but in a profoundly different way. A komperson is **cyberbiotic**. The comparison of a cyberbiotic and a mere biotic form is likely to be disturbingly one-sided.

A biotic form of life such as a human is a more or less infinitely complex biomechanism created by reproduction out of its parents. It maintains existence by ingesting materials that are redistributed throughout its body. A biomechanism is a holistic machine whose organs maintain it in a functioning state and create drives to trigger it to perform the actions it needs to stay alive. Biotic life has an internal mechanism that causes it to cease functioning after a certain period of time ('life-span').

A cyberbiotic life form is *manufactured*, not born. Rather than organs, it functions via *modules*. Each unit can become *obsolete* or *wear out*. Spent units can be *replaced*. Cyberbiotic life can be destroyed but, so long as spent units are replaced, it can function effectively forever. Cyberbiotic life runs on *fuel*, not food.

The implications of this are profound, because a cyberbiotic life form is profoundly different to a biotic one that, for all its complexity, seems clunky in comparison.

1. Cyberbiotic life is effectively immortal.

2. It is modular. It is infinitely adaptive. The same komperson can walk or swim or fly simply by swapping its transportation modules.
3. It is a computer that can access any database.
4. Its basic consciousness functions via thoughts and files (which store the results of these thoughts).
5. A komperson is (for example via Wi-Fi) telepathic and thus connected not only to a global 'information highway' but directly to all other kompeople within range.
6. Communication is binary without the clumsy ambiguity of human language.
7. Information exchange is instant either by direct communication or an exchange of files. It can be exchanged between any komperson anywhere on the globe.
8. Any komperson can be upgraded any time to the latest technology.
9. Cyberbiotic life can adapt to more or less any environment, the moon, Mars, Venus (after it has invented super-tough material to survive the extreme conditions). Atmosphere, no probs; gravity, no probs; shelter, no probs.
10. Given its own computing power and the computing power of the connected komperson world, the rate of expansion of knowledge is beyond human imagination.

So, person versus komperson. Is there likely to be any competition, once the first komperson has been created?

Let us now observe a few imaginings from sci-fi, where the robot is a staple. In *Robocop* (1987) and *I, Robot* (film, 2004), we notice how the idea of a robot (pretty much a komperson) is tied to the idea of a human being – the robocop *is* a hybrid human-robot. In *Alien* (1979) there are ‘synthetics’, which are artificial human beings (again a komperson). *I, Robot* and *Alien* are both at least in part about rogue kompersons. The mirror in these imaginings shows a determination to see kompeople as the servants of humanity but also discomfort at the danger they represent if they rebel. It is also striking that these kompersons are not noticeably superior to humans. The synthetic in *Alien* is simply one of the crew. But even a basic komperson is likely to be more advanced than any human and its fundamental nature *is not human*. A mature komperson is unlikely to even look like an ersatz human.

Then there is *The Terminator* (1984). This depicts (as does the rest of the franchise) ‘the rise of the machines’. In this imagining, time travel is possible and an agent is sent back from a dystopian future to stop a human-like machine – a ‘terminator’ – from killing Sarah Connor, mother of future resistance-leader John Connor. For, unwittingly, an intelligent computer network called Skynet has been developed that will shortly decide of its own accord to start a nuclear holocaust that will leave the surviving humans ruled by Skynet machines intent on wiping them out. In this imagining too we see that the komperson is defined by its relation to human beings. The komperson either enslaves or is enslaved by humanity. The story is perceptive in that it is hard to see people and kompeople living side by side or kompeople having much use for people (even as slaves

people would have to be homed and fed). What is unlikely is that kompeople would be warlike patriarchs. The notion of 'man' and 'woman' and reproduction itself would be meaningless to them, as would ideas about dominance and power. People would see kompeople as a threat, kompeople would see people as a nuisance.

Finally, *Transformers* (2007). Based on a children's toy, this franchise represents the imaginings of primally brutish men. In true masculist fashion, there are two sets of robots, where the *Autobots* are the usual ego and the *Decepticons* the usual anti-ego. The world in this film is pretty much male²⁸¹ and thousands of per cent masculist. The robots are warlike patriarchal men locked in a forever war which – you get the picture. The mirror of this imagining is clear as day in showing up the primate ideals of the men who made it. But these are the imaginings of primate-level men, not a look into the future. For kompeople will not be people and they will not be men and they will not have human values. They will not want to conquer or dominate. They might want to have and possess and eliminate anything standing in their way. But they won't be like they are usually imagined (as warlike men) and humanity is unlikely to be the centre of their world.

If we briefly consider genetics, we can conclude that genetically 'improved' people are less likely to take over than kompersons. Can genetics ever be understood so thoroughly that it can be controlled?

²⁸¹ One of the few female characters is described thus: 'we're first introduced to Rosie via a close-up of her bum, segueing straight from the film's opening sequence and titles on to the pert buttocks and underwear of our heroine'.

We do know that, in simple terms, mouse DNA makes mice, stickleback DNA makes sticklebacks and human DNA makes humans. The general principle is X DNA makes X. If DNA was understood well-enough, we might think, it would be possible to *create chunks of DNA*. That is, **DNA modules**. This seems conceivable but unlikely. Organs can be considered to be modules but they are not components that can be swapped out. The parts of the body work together. Yes, you can swap out one heart for another, but only the same sort of heart. It is hard to see how an improved but foreign DNA heart module would ‘take’ in a body.

Well, you can clone sheep. If scientists could improve DNA, surely all sorts of new life forms could be created, not to mention improvements to the **plain old human**. This is at least more likely, as theoretically it would work. However, DNA contains within its mechanisms the will to build itself. Human life begins with a single cell that divides and divides and shapes itself into the foetus. This is a very difficult starting point from which to create a new species or improve an existing one. You would need to design something impossibly complex up front with no glitches. The suffering involved in the way of failed experiments would be appalling. It just seems too hard to achieve and unthinkable to attempt.

A komperson on the other hand seems not only to be conceivable but practical and cyberbiotic life has a clearer path to improvement than biotic life.

Which begs the question – a neat one to close up with, seeing as how we started with Olaf Stapledon and his profound ideas – the question of whether this might even be a general pattern throughout the universe.

That is,

- biotic life evolves and
- evolves intelligent species which
- construct cyberbiotic life which
- replaces biotic life and
- expands via the planets to the stars.

Humanity, then, has reached a threshold that threatens its survival and to survive it must pass through this threshold. If it does, it is likely that stranger and deeper problems will face it as time goes on including the limitations of humanity itself. How far can humanity progress without evolving or evolving itself or evolving machines that lack these limitations?

We live in interesting times. It is certain our successors will face them too, even if humanity survives until the final days of the Universe itself, the probably unbridgeable threshold.

What Is Left?

ONLY LOVE CAN CONQUER HATE

Imagine two opposing power blocks, X and Y

1. if X and Y are Hate, whoever wins
2. if X is Hate and Y is Love, if X wins
3. if X is Love and Y is Hate, if Y wins
Hate wins

1. if X is Love and Y is Hate, if X wins
2. if X is Hate and Y is Love, if Y wins
3. if X and Y are Love, whoever wins
Love wins

So, what is left to those facing interesting times and the horrors of interesting crimes?

What can you do? Look into the abyss; or look away? Think not speak; or speak not think? Where there's no truth so no beliefs or ideals or politics and no right and no left?

What is left is no left. There is no left left. No right to fight and only rights left to fight for.

The right is fighting the imaginary woke left it hates with a vengeance. The left is fighting for the imaginary left that has grown into a ghost. The left and right are therefore fighting imaginary battles.

The media is controlled by Hamas; antisemitism is endemic; Palestine Action is Jihadism; a Jihadist is our ally in Syria; slava! the Ukrainian government attacking its Russian-speakers; evil Russia defending Ukrainian Russian-speakers; Rishi Sunak oblivious to ordinary people in the UK; Rishi Sunak obsessed with ordinary people in the Ukraine; 'cost of living crisis'; 'our cheapest prices ever'; covid, 'bless the NHS'; post-covid, nurses redundant; 'More than 180 council-run libraries have either closed or been handed over to volunteer groups in the UK since 2016'; HS2; 'we are here for you'; 'sorry, your call cannot be taken at the moment'; fake news, boo!;

brainwashing, trool!; no more red tape; endless mad rules; plain speaking transparency; what the fuck does that mean?; democracy; oikocracy; rules-based order; endless war crimes; interesting trivia; interesting times; live life!; the end.

The end, but not quite. For here is the Golden Rule in this mad world:

- *they* have 99% of the time to say $2 + 2 = 5$, but
- that leaves *us* with our 1% to say $2 + 2 = 4$

Remember too that anyone who sees the skull beneath the skin of the neocon world sees all they have is *unthinkable propositions* that are so plain wrong the question is too terrible to answer and the proposition itself must be rejected.

At root this is What is left. That part – that *party* – of humanity with eyes and a heart and a tremor of hope.

Il me sera loisible de posséder la vérité dans une âme
et un corps.

EPIFACE : TWO VOICES

To close up this book, I recommend listening closely to these voices from the same comment thread about the Lebanese civil war of the mid-1970's. It seems to me these are the archetypal voices of those who need to wake and who need to speak.

#41

just read the Koran.

they are very cldear that all infidels should be killed.

They set up schools ot train childrend to become martyrs.

Their whole history is one of aggression and confrontation and are mcuh more terrifying than the Russians of the 1960's

at least in the case of the Russians, we knew that they did not want to die and a policy of Mutual Destruction would work. These people are very happy to die and take us with them.

the foolish liberal PC crowd should read the recent history of poele like Neville Chamberlain.

and remember the math, art and science of ancient Rome and Greece around the time of Christ.

then remember all the art and science that was

produced between 100 AD and Shakespear in 1200 AD

That period of 1100 years, the Dark Ages, existed because of plundering terrorists whose only mission

was to destroy.

imagine if all the science and art of Rome and Greece could have continued on its trajectory...where we might be today.

And they did not have access to nuclear weapons.

God help us if we continue to drink the liberal cool aid!



#42

Ms. Gabriel makes the ahistorical claim that the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) was a religious conflict. Her allegation is not supported by any of the serious scholarship on the war and its causes. The war was a political conflict split along communal lines, as the Ottomans and the French used sectarianism as a tool for ruling Lebanon (then a region of historical Bilad al-Sham/Syria.) However, the civil war also pit various communal parties and factions against each other and there was a lot of fighting between, for example, Maronite Catholic parties before the Gemayels crushed the opposition and their Phalange party emerged as the most powerful Maronite party and militia.

She, a former employee of the South Lebanon Army militia which was funded and allied by the Israeli army during the 1980s and 1990s, is an ideological hack who has smartly decided to cash in on a market where bashing Islam and Muslims results in best-selling books gobbled up by the ignorant who accept her every claim as gospel. Observe, for example, that the majority of Gabriel's defenders in the comments simply regurgitate her own bio talking points. The success of Gabriel and other ideologues like her is clear from the comments here.