Reignition

NICK LAND'S WRITINGS (2011-)



Tome III

Xenosystems: Involvements with Reality

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BLOCK 1 - INTRO

CHAPTER ONE - DEFINITIONS

Preliminary mumblings

It's a little early to tell what this will turn into.

It begins as a ramshackle refugee camp, necessitated by the failure of Urban Future to provide:
(a) stability, (b) continuous scrolling, and (c) an adequate platform for comments. As things develop, other basics (such as a blogroll) can be expected.

For the moment, longer posts will go up on UF, with a link here for discussion. Is that sounding like a satisfactory medium-term solution? (Not to me either.)

In addition to this supportive role, *Outside in* will have a few specialized functions, as:

(1) A sandpit for unconsolidated thoughts on time-related topics

(2) A depository for brief commentary and links (from the perspective of harsh neo-reaction)

(3) A flotation chamber for fragments of morbid fiction

If that doesn't look repulsive enough yet, we'll see what we can do …

February 17, 2013

Xenomy

Federico has kicked the living daylights out of me (on this thread), and only the outer darkness remains. It's a passage through singularity, so mathematical consistency requires me to be *infinitely* appreciative of that.

The idea of Neocameralism, drawing all its real functionality from Exit, is parasitic upon what lies beyond it: the Patchwork of competitive alternatives. Since an exterior disintegration does all the work, why not fold the outside in?

It's time to come out as a **Xenomist**. All power to the Outside!

April 19, 2013

Urban Future (2.0)

The new UF blog is up and running now, with a few teething problems expected. The platform is much more reliable than the old one, but its idiosyncrasies still require some getting used to. Comments, especially, might be troublesome at first.

The intention is to use it as a platform for material that isn't (in

one way or another) off the wall. There's nothing much up yet except some tentative posts on the structure of history, urbanization, economic development, and the recent regime transition. (There's also a product promo, providing a clue to the underlying economic base of the blog, which is still extremely embryonic at this stage.)

Urban Future (2.0) is my work blog, which means it will be connected up to e-publication projects – realized and prospective – with a Shanghai dimension. Hopefully that will be mostly synergic, rather than intrusive. Self-marginalization will be restrained by the commercial reality-principle over there, so the content only comes in vanilla flavor right now. (If I can keep it vaguely respectable, blogging gets included in billable time.) A few rum-soaked raisins will probably creep in, but anything too intoxicating will end up here (in Outer Darkness).

It's not exactly clear at this stage how specialization between these blogs will work, so there's an experimental aspect. The neater the crystallization into artificial good twin / bad twin schizophrenia, the smoother it should run. It might end up being necessary to run light side / dark side versions of the same post on occasions. 'Politeness' in this contexts starts from *Outside in* criteria of minimal civility, then super-adds sensitivity to the norms of present day metropolitan China *and* those of low-friction trans-national commerce. It is easier, at least at first, to investigate the edges of these normative systems here than over there. (More on this topic

later.)

Decorous commentary on China, history and economics is especially welcome, and the range of discussion should gradually expand, with some responsiveness to reader interest. Anyone with the irresistible urge to howl like a werewolf – even about UF content – is advised to do that here, where the risk of immediate deletion, whilst by no means negligible, is considerably smaller.

June 21, 2013

Search Records

If anyone has found difficulties reaching this blog, it's possible that inefficient search terms are to blame. From the WordPress Dashboard, I've been assured that these search paths all have a record of success:

domestic robotician
racism blog
nick land goes insane
nick land date died when?
h.l. mencken heaving deadf cats in the cathderal
14 vector shot red dawn mood and sex stimulator directions
how all organisms are buckets of anachronisms
one click chicks spanking

free nude picture tubes of saddam hussein

(Some loyal commentators can take their share of credit for our emerging definition within the Planetary Cybermind.)

July 24, 2013

Wikipedia

Awkward personal confession moment: I appreciate *Wikipedia* a lot. OK, it isn't the Antiversity, but then, on the positive side, it exists.

Here are three Wikipedia articles dropped in the Outsideness TL very recently (with footnotes stripped out):

Universal Darwinism (via): "**Universal Darwinism** (also known as **generalized Darwinism**, **universal selection theory**, or **Darwinian metaphysics**) refers to a variety of approaches that extend the theory of Darwinism beyond its original domain of biological evolution on Earth. Universal Darwinism aims to formulate a generalized version of the mechanisms of variation, selection and heredity proposed by Charles Darwin, so that they can apply to explain evolution in a wide variety of other domains, including psychology, economics, culture, medicine, computer science and physics. …"

Galton's problem (via): "**Galton's problem**, named after Sir Francis Galton, is the problem of drawing inferences from cross-cultural

data, due to the statistical phenomenon now called autocorrelation. The problem is now recognized as a general one that applies to all nonexperimental studies and to experimental design as well. It is most simply described as the problem of external dependencies in making statistical estimates when the elements sampled are not statistically independent. Asking two people in the same household whether they watch TV, for example, does not give you statistically independent answers. The sample size, n, for independent observations in this case is one, not two. Once proper adjustments are made that deal with external dependencies, then the axioms of probability theory concerning statistical independence will apply. These axioms are important for deriving measures of variance, for example, or tests of statistical significance. …"

Toba catastrophe theory (via): "The Toba supereruption was a supervolcanic eruption that occurred some time between 69,000 and 77,000 years ago at the site of present-day Lake Toba (Sumatra, Indonesia). It is one of the Earth's largest known eruptions. The **Toba catastrophe hypothesis** holds that this event caused a global volcanic winter of 6–10 years and possibly a 1,000-year-long cooling episode. …"

September 19, 2015

CHAPTER TWO - BLOG POLICY

Chaos Patch (#1)

A blog closely models a patchwork-embedded neocameral micro-state, which is to say that its governance is dictatorial, controlled by external competition. Internally, it's God-king stuff: zero-democracy, undivided power without constitutional constraint, absolute discretion tilting into sorcerous extremities. The sole counter-balance comes from outside, sustained by a freedom of exit no less highly realized than the administrative power it evaluates. If people don't like what's happening, they leave.

As in the (virtual) neocameral state it models, a blog stages a dramatic collision between administrative authority and radical liberty. Admin and commentators coordinate tacitly to make things work, already conjoined in the production of value.

Commentators speak for themselves. That is their work and investment, which the blog exploits, to develop. Necessarily, therefore, from the side of the sim-neocameral Admin, there are inescapable but obscure responsibilities. Undoubtedly, among the first of these, is the maintenance of order.

Three aspects of order are especially relevant at this point (although there are others).

(1) Troll eradication. This responsibility has been very undemanding at *Outside in* so far. The prospect of prompt and certain liquidation, coupled with a minimally-efficient comment processing system, deters troll invasion to a truly remarkable extent.

(2) Ensuring civility. This is a far hazier and potentially more challenging task, involving cooperative interaction between multiple parties. There are sure to be micro-ethnographic theories that relate to it, because a blog ecology is a small, artificial culture, and reasonable differences exist as to how these can be propagated, nudged, incentivized, and / or directed. These are questions for another time.

(3) Entropy suppression — finally, our topic. How does a blog climb backwards along the incline into chaos, perpetually restoring the order of *things in their place*, or *on-topic commentary*? How to maintain a micro-culture that, in its balance of creative liberty and efficient order, is more Singaporean than Somalian?

The emergent policy of *Outside in* is to be troll-free and civil, but beyond this it aims to be minimally suppressive. It does, however, aspire to the perpetuation and development of order. Its model comment thread is coherent, even in its diversity and controversy, which is to say that *on-topic commentary* is its ideal. Departures from this are registered as error, and in fact as classical entropy, or

disordered distribution. The solution presently entertained is *zoned liberty*.

Flagrantly off-topic commentary will be increasingly discouraged, but regular 'chaos patches' (or open threads) will ensure that any civil remark has a place. If your comment would be obviously out of place on any given thread — and thus effectively entropic (I'm looking at you Fotrkd and Northanger) — it would be to our mutual advantage if it were directed towards the most recent Chaos Patch. In exchange for cooperation in this respect, *Outside in* neocameral Admin proposes the following deal:

Use Chaos Patches (CPs) neatly, like a good pseudo-Singaporean, and Admin commits to:

(a) Read all CP contents (and avoid all temptation to treat them as black-hole entropy-bins).

(b) Introduce new CPs on request (request to be made in latest CP).

(c) Thematically direct each CP according to the content unfolding within it, by providing — at least minimally — an ADDED directory function, plus discussion where possible.

(d) Modify the CP concept in response to feedback, with open-ended flexibility, given only the understanding that entropy regulation is an indispensable Admin responsibility.

Let's see how it goes …

ADDED: CP#1 Topic Summary:

— Thoughts on blog commentary

— What (the hell) does Continental Philosophy contribute to Dark Enlightenment?
— Web search systems, social media, and soft Cathedralism
— Handle's 'Darkest Enlightenment' (as glimpsed here)
— 'How about you and him fight?'
— Phallic leftism
— Sodomite abomination
— Did Turing screw up computer science?
— Streaming reaction

Discussion diffuses, so the order listed here is only an inexact approximation.

'Meta' (or 'admin') questions predominate at this stage — how is commentary most effectively handled? Since no one has yet staked a claim to the lead CP#2 topic, I'll begin from there. Current assumption: once the number of comments exceeds 100, it's time to make more space. Does this seem reasonable?

May 19, 2013

Curses!

There's a seemingly irrepressible enthusiasm to discuss *Outside in* speech codes, so let's do it here (please). For the precursor exchanges on the topic, see here, and here.

I only became a methodical Moldbug reader in 2011, so I cannot pretend to have followed the degeneration of the *Unqualified Reservations* comments section in real time. What I did see, making my way back through this blog, was the rapid collapse of its comment threads into an open cultural gutter of no conceivable interest to anybody with a three digit IQ — a situation that hit nadir and remained there. We are talking about what — even inactive — remains arguably the most important blog in the history of the medium. If anyone wants to suggest that its accrued commentary is a model to be emulated, they are encouraged to make the case, for the entertainment value alone.

At the other extreme of cognitive ambition, is 4chan/pol/, a veritable sewer of senselessness, where the idea of an intelligent conversation is an absurdity from the start. This is a discussion forum that revels in its own crass vulgarity. It too is a negative model, to be deeply appreciated for the lesson in degeneracy it provides.

My default assumption is that everything tends to ruin, unless actively tended. *UR* shows what a naked *laissez-faire* policy leads to, if crudely interpreted as confidence in self-correcting bohemianism. Spontaneous order requires dynamic entropy dissipation merely to survive.

This blog is not a commons. It welcomes visitors who add value, tolerates those who do no harm, and ejects agents of degradation. Up to this point, policing here has been very light, but there is no

firm principle behind that. If it becomes necessary, the full panoply of police powers will be exercised without the slightest liberal qualm, and these are potentially considerable. Insofar as the space of this blog itself are concerned, they are in fact effectively unlimited. Occasional demented goblins seem to derive great satisfaction from provoking crack-downs. If these individuals are deluded enough to think that inciting such responses represents some kind of cognitive dissonance here, by driving a departure from the generally tolerant policy in place, they are very much mistaken. The only rigid principle here is absolute (local) authority. Gibbeting goblins poses no ideological contradiction whatsoever. There should probably be a great deal more of it, the more random and graphically brutal the better, just to make this point. (This auto-suggestion is being taken under advisement.)

A more difficult problem is posed by the right vulgarians, at least superficially. Their intentions are not, it appears, disruptive. They merely seek to crank down the general tone of commentary here to a more popular level, with direct rhetorical offensiveness to progressive sensibilities considered a positive factor. I have to confess to finding some of these visitors likable, but their objectives will not be tolerated. With the conclusion of this discussion — at the latest — the desired tone here will be *imposed*, by whatever mixture of selection, editing, and scolding is required. This is not a negotiable matter.

The first Chaos Patch here drew an analogy between a blog and a virtual micro-state. Considered at a sufficient level of abstraction, the principles of governance are basically identical. Authority is absolutely concentrated, guided by the incentive to maximize the value of an estate, which only subsequently introduces pragmatic policies of extreme *laissez-faire* tolerance, since freedom maximizes productivity. People here are basically free to say whatever they like, with the understanding that *scum will be ejected without apology or reservation*. Anyone tempted to explore the limits of tolerated scumminess has profoundly misunderstood what is going on here. Once again, this is not disputable beyond the norms of tolerated disputation. Scum have no rights here, whatsoever, and the only definition of scum behavior that matters is that decided by the government or local sovereign power (and that's me).

So what counts as scum behavior? Basically: classlessness or incivility. There are absolutely no limits being set on the ideas that can be promoted by visitors here, as long as they are presented with some minimum of decorum. Vulgarity, slurs, abuse, snark, and scum rhetoric in general, on the other hand, is not acceptable. Intelligent or humorous comments that cross some of these lines will not be suppressed, if their transgressions plausibly serve a higher cultural purpose. Sovereign Admin alone decides each problematic case with absolute discretion, perhaps drawing upon advice from other respected commentors where appropriate. Yes, this is an elitist

dictatorship (duh!).

August 20, 2014

BLOCK 2 - NEOREACTION

CHAPTER ONE - DEFINITION

Neoreaction (for dummies)

Kill the hyphen, *Anomaly UK* advised (somewhere) – it lets Google Search dissolve and avoid the subject. Writing 'neo-reaction' as 'neoreaction' nudges it towards becoming *a thing*.

Google Search gets to edit our self-definition? That's the 'neo' in 'neoreaction', right there. It not only promotes drastic regression, but highly-advanced drastic regression. Like retrofuturism, paleomodernism, and cybergothic, the word 'neoreaction' compactly describes a time-twisted vector that spirals forwards into the past, and backwards into the future. It emerges, almost automatically, as the present is torn tidally apart — when the democratic-Keynesian politics of postponement-displacement exhausts itself, and the kicked-can runs out of road.

Expressed with abstruse verbosity, therefore, neoreaction is a time-crisis, manifested through paradox, whose further elaboration can wait (if not for long). Disordering our most basic intuitions, it is, by its very nature, difficult to grasp. Could anything easily be said about it?

Anomaly UK offers a down-to-earth explanation for the reversal of socio-political course:

Ultimately, however, if after all these centuries of trying to improve society based on abstract ideas of justice have only made life worse than it would have been under pre-Enlightenment social systems, the time has come to simply give up the whole project and revert to traditional forms whose basis we might not be able to establish rationally, but which have the evidence of history to support them.

This understanding of neoreaction – undoubtedly capturing its predominant sentiment – equates it with a radicalized Burkean conservatism, designed for an age in which almost everything has been lost. Since the progressive destruction of traditional society has been broadly accomplished, hanging on to what remains is no longer enough. It is necessary to go back, beyond the origin of Enlightenment, because Reason has failed the test of history.

Neoreaction is only *a thing* if some measure of consensus is achievable. Burke-on-steroids is an excellent candidate for that. Firstly, because *all neoreactionaries define themselves through antagonism to the Cathedral*, and the Cathedral is the self-proclaimed consummation of Enlightenment rationalism. Secondly, for more complicated, positive reasons …

Spandrell helpfully decomposes neoreaction into two or three principal currents:

There are two lines of [our contemporary] reactionary thought. One is the traditionalist branch, and [the other is] the futurist branch.

Or perhaps there [are] three. There's the religious/traditionalist branch, the ethnic/nationalist branch, and the capitalist branch.

Futurists and traditionalists are distinguished by distinct, one-sided emphases on 'neo' and 'reaction', and their disagreements lose identity in the neoreactionary spiral. The triadic differentiation is more resiliently conflictual, yet these 'branches' are branches of something, and that thing is an ultra-Burkean trunk.

Reactionary theonomists, ethno-nationalists, and techno-commercialists share a fundamental aversion to rationalistic social reconstruction, because each subordinates reason to history and its tacit norms – to 'tradition' (diversely understood). Whether the sovereign lineage is considered to be predominantly religious, bio-cultural, or customary, it originates outside the self-reflective (enlightenment) state, and remains opaque to rational analysis. Faith, liturgy, or scripture is not soluble within criticism; communal identity is not reducible to ideology; and common law, reputational structure, or productive specialism is not amenable to legislative oversight. The *deep order of society* – whatever that is taken to be – is not open to political meddling, without predictably disastrous consequences.

This Burkean junction, where neoreactionary agreement begins, is also where it ends. Divine revelation, racial continuity, and

evolutionary discovery (catallaxy) are sources of ultimate sovereignty, instantiated in tradition, beyond the Cathedral-state, but they are self-evidently different – and only precariously compatible. Awkwardly, but inescapably, it has to be acknowledged that each major branch of the neoreactionary super-family tends to a social outome that its siblings would find even more horrifying than Cathedralist actuality.

Left intellectuals have no difficulty envisaging Theocratic White-Supremacist Hyper-Capitalism®. In fact, most seem to consider this mode of social organization the modern Western norm. For those hunkered-down in the tangled, Cathedral-blasted trenches of neoreaction, on the other hand, the manifold absurdities of this construction are not so easily overlooked. Indeed, each branch of the reaction has dissected the others more incisively – and brutally – than the left has been able to.

When theonomists scrutinize ethno-nationalists and techno-commercialists they see evil heathens.
When ethno-nationalists scrutinize theonomists and techno-commercialists they see deluded race-traitors.
When techno-commercialists scrutinize theonomists and ethno-nationalists they see retarded crypto-communists.
(The details of these diagnoses exceed the present discussion.)

When developed beyond its ultra-Burkean trunk, therefore, the prospects for neoreactionary consensus – for *a neoreactionary thing*

– depend upon disintegration. If we're compelled to share a post-Cathedral state, we'll kill each other. (The zapped hyphen was just a foretaste.)

April 17, 2013

Definitions

In the end, it's all comes down to harsh realism.

Socialists imagine there are no wolves, so democracy is easy.

Conservatives imagine democracy as a way for wolves to apologize.

Libertarians imagine democracy as two wolves and a sheep deciding on the main course for dinner.

Neoreactionaries see democracy as two sheep and a wolf deciding on the merits of mandatory vegetarianism.

ADDED: Survivingbabel anticipates (6 months ago, no link available):

Democracy is closer to two sheep and a wolf voting on what's for dinner. The sheep unite in collective action to fight off the wolf. The wolf, stripped of its natural power, must graze alongside the sheep. Eventually it dies from malnutrition, and the sheep, having lost their natural predator, soon overpopulate and overgraze their land. Then they die too, usually replaced by another species entirely.

May 14, 2013

Deep Heritage

Nick B. Steves' understanding of deep heritage (the one-line version) could be aptly extended to the neoreaction quite generally: **Burkean with Darwinian commentary**.

May 15, 2013

Categorization

As anticipated, the organization of the *Outside in* blogroll is transforming itself from a mechanical task into an engaging cultural-political and philosophical problem. My sense is that people generally resolve this type of quandary on a fairly hasty, *ad hoc* basis, but it already seems too late to do that. There are legacy considerations, and intricacies of coalitional variety at stake. Ultimately, there is a question about the core significance of the term 'neoreaction' — Is it a mere rallying point, flung into prominence by arbitrary historical opportunity, or is it a dense *concept*, whose semantic components are to be scrupulously respected?

My temptation would be to tactically elude the word, in order

to access a more flexible, differentiated terminology. What prevents me from doing so is the arrogant sense that I *respect the word* more than anyone else it is applied to. 'Neoreaction' is an inherently paradoxical, fissional term, splitting in-itself on a temporal axis. It follows that I am extremely reluctant to see it relegated to a mere categorical marker, employed to designate ideological tendencies whose substantial content is better — or more fully — explicated in other terms. The word **Neoreaction** declares, intrinsically, that it belongs to fissionalist time-junkies exploring historical dissociation. That's what it *says*, irrespective of how it is used.

The problem of categorization, therefore, remains, indissolubly. Any suggestions?

October 24, 2013

The Litmus Test

Whilst pedestrian in its rehearsal of common knowledge, and inane in its tortured liberalism, this article helpfully schematizes the arena of Anglophone racial politics, at least on its defining black-white dimension (and accidentally). By counterposing the tradition of Black American self-advancement (represented by Booker T. Washington) with that of Afro-Marxist agitation (represented by W. E. B. Du Bois), it implicitly describes an ideological quadrant.

1. To side with Du Bois against Washington is the position of the radical Left.

2. To seek a reconciliation of the two is an agonized equivocation, tilting inevitably to Leftist advantage, of the kind that has predominated in the development of Anglophone political culture. This is is position of the author, of mainstream liberalism and conservatism, and of progressive Cathedralization.

3. To admire Washington, whilst repulsed by Du Bois, is the neoreactionary stance *Outside in* defends.

4. To dismiss both Washington and Du Bois as irrelevant Black nonsense is a departure into confrontational White Nationalism, of a kind that has no imaginable reach beyond itself.

Thomas Sowell, as the most articulate inheritor of the 'outsider' Washington tradition, is the emblem of this racial ideology test today. Neoreaction is indisputably mostly a White thing, but if it is to have any additional significance whatsoever, Sowell has to be supported. There's nowhere further Right he could possibly go, except into some species of Black ethnomasochistic suicidalism — and we should know, more than anybody, that's a corner no one should be backed into.

November 4, 2013

Institution Building

Anton Silensky initiates a structured discussion on the subject.

If the Neoreaction is not a popular movement, a political party, a church, an organization, or even in any strong sense *one thing*, what is it? I'm assuming that if it is more than a fight over a name, it is at least a coalition, integrated by a shared enemy, and some common references.

The only canonical scripture I am able to identify is the *Unqualified Reservations* corpus. This is certainly not 'gospel' for anyone, but it constitutes the distinctive intellectual heritage of those who identify positively with the neoreactionary current. Neoreaction has to be at least tenuously 'Moldbuggian' if it is not to dissipate entirely into noise. There are, however, already many Moldbugs, and there will be still more.

Silensky writes: "Splitting will happen. People will disagree. And they will leave."

Leave what? (That, I think, is his question.)

And if splitting is intrinsic to what the Neoreaction is? (That is mine.)

November 28, 2013

Our Inheritance

With my nervous-system still too disintegrated by turn-of-the-year excess to begin a set of 2014 prognoses convincingly, I've simply stripped this argument from my twitter stream (quoting myself):

Neoreaction cannot understand itself without directing far more sustained attention to its own cladistic identity. As a natural cultural species, it is a fragment of dissident ultra-protestantism, and this is quite certain to guide its fate. The forces of internal fragmentation working through it will make fratricidal Trotskyism look like unperturbed mind-meld. It will be thriving this time next year, but the tides of dissolution it will have overcome to do so will be truly colossal. Those thinking Neoreaction is a platform from which to complacently deride Neo-Puritanism have a highly-educational 2014 ahead.

Neoreaction is not a series of premises (or articles of faith) but a **cultural species**. I don't think that we have begun to seriously digest the consequences of that yet.

January 2, 2014

Roughened Chan

To mark the dawn of the new Aeon, the Reactionary Koans of Master

[*Unspeakable*] have been scrupulously collected by Nick B. Steves. The path to Dark Enlightenment has never been more exactly (or obscurely) illuminated.

My own favorite:

I walked to Master Moldbug but the road was too long. I visited master Jim and he hit me with a stick.

January 6, 2014

Premises of Neoreaction

Patri Friedman is both extremely smart and, for this blog among others in the 'sphere, highly influential. So when he promises us "a more politically correct dark enligh[t]enment" ("adding anti-racism and anti-sexism to my controversial new pro-monogamy stance"), that's a thing. It accentuates concerns about 'entryism' and ideological entropy, leading to some thoughtful responses such as this (from *Avenging Red Hand*).

Michael Anissimov anticipated this in a post at *More Right* on the 'Premises of Reactionary Thought', which begins: "To make progress in any area of intellectual endeavor requires discourse among those who agree with basic premises and the exclusion of those who do not." (The commentary by Cathedral Whatever is also well worth a look.) Anissimov's original five premises, subsequently updated to six

(with a new #1 added) are:

1. People are not equal. They never will be. We reject equality in all its forms.
2. Right is right and left is wrong.
3. Hierarchy is basically a good idea.
4. Traditional sex roles are basically a good idea.
5. Libertarianism is retarded.
6. Democracy is irredeemably flawed and we need to do away with it.

These neoreactionary 'articles' deserve a response in detail, but at this point I will simply advance at alternative list, in the expectation that yet other versions will be forthcoming in the near future, providing a reference for discussion. My objective (in keeping with the advice from ARH) is economy, honed through abstraction, in the interest of sustaining productive diversity. *Minimally*, we affirm:

1. **Democracy is unable to control government**. With this proposition, the effective possibility of a mainstream right is denied. Insofar as any political movement retains its allegiance to the democratic mechanism, it conspires in the ratchet of government expansion, and thus essentially dedicates itself to leftist ends. The gateway from Libertarianism to Neoreaction opens with this understanding. As a corollary, any politics untroubled by expansionist statism has no reason to divert itself into the neoreactionary path.

2. **The egalitarianism essential to democratic ideology is**

incompatible with liberty. This proposition is partially derivative from #1, but extends further. When elaborated historically, and cladistically, it aligns with the Crypto-Calvinist theory of Western (and then Global) political evolution. The critique it announces intersects significantly with the rigorous findings of HBD. The conclusions drawn are primarily negative, which is to say they support a principled rejection of positive egalitarian policy. Emergent hierarchy is *at least tolerated*. More assertive, 'neofeudal' models of ideal social hierarchy are properly controversial within Neoreaction.

3. **Neoreactionary socio-political solutions are ultimately Exit-based**. In every case, exit is to be defended against voice. No society or social institution which permits free exit is open to any further politically efficient criticism, except that which systematic exit selection itself applies. Given the absence of tyranny (i.e. free exit), all forms of protest and rebellion are to be considered leftist perversions, without entitlement to social protection of any kind. Government, of whatever traditional or experimental form, is legitimated from the outside — through exit pressure — rather than internally, through responsiveness to popular agitation. The conversion of political voice into exit-orientation (for instance, revolution into secessionism), is the principal characteristic of neoreactionary strategy.

From the perspective of this blog, no premises beyond these —

however widely endorsed within Neoreaction — are truly basic, or defining. Resolution of elaborate disputes is ultimately referred to dynamic geography, rather than dialectic. It is the Outside, working through fragmentation, that rules, and no other authority has standing.

[If anyone asks "How did this post suddenly jump from 'the Dark Enlightenment' to 'Neoreaction'?" my response is "Good point!" (but one for another occasion).]

ADDED: Jim on entryism (and how to stop it).

ADDED: Libertarian HIV.

ADDED: The first of these two *Aimless Gromar* posts on Libertarianism and Neoreaction should have been linked yesterday — it was a significant prompt for this. (Both are recommended.)

February 3, 2014

Quote notes (#63)

The position of *Outside in* (admittedly extreme) is that NRx **is** Neocameralism. As this equation ceases to persuade, NRx falls apart, and no future convergence point will be found within itself. It will be scavenged apart into Dark Libertarian and IQ-boosted ENR debris, unless neocameralism is either re-animated as its fundamental doctrinal commitment, or rigorously reconstructed into something

specifically new. Hence today's Quote note (from Moldbug's *How Dawkins got pwned (part 4)*):

In order to get to the reactionary theory of history, we need a reactionary theory of government. History, again, is interpretation, and interpretation requires theory. I've described this theory before under the name of neocameralism, but on a blog it never hurts to be a little repetitive.

First: government is not a mystical or mysterious institution. A government is simply a group of people working together for a common aim, ie, a corporation. Whether a government is good or bad is not determined by who its employees are or how they are selected. It is determined by whether the actions of the government are good or bad.

Second: the only difference between a government and a "private corporation" is that the former is ***sovereign****: it has no higher authority to which it can appeal to protect its property. A sovereign corporation owns its territory, and maintains that ownership by demonstrating unchallenged control. It is stable if no other party, internal or external, has any incentive to attack it. Especially in the nuclear age, it is not difficult to deter prospective attackers.*

Third: a good government is a well-managed sovereign corporation. Good government is efficient management. Efficient management is profitable management. A profitable government has no incentive to break its promises, abuse its citizens (who are its

capital), or attack its neighbors.

Fourth: efficient management can be implemented by the same techniques in sovereign corporations as in nonsovereign ones. The company's profit is distributed equally to holders of negotiable shares. The shareholders elect a board, which selects a CEO.

Fifth: although the full neocameralist approach has never been tried, its closest historical equivalents to this approach are the 18th-century tradition of enlightened absolutism as represented by Frederick the Great, and the 21st-century nondemocratic tradition as seen in lost fragments of the British Empire such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Dubai. These states appear to provide a very high quality of service to their citizens, with no meaningful democracy at all. They have minimal crime and high levels of personal and economic freedom. They tend to be quite prosperous. They are weak only in political freedom, and political freedom is unimportant by definition when government is stable and effective.

Sixth: the comparative success of the American and European postwar systems appears to be due to their abandonment of democratic politics as a practical mechanism of government, in favor of a civil-service Beamtenstaat in which democratic politicians are increasingly symbolic. The post-communist civil-service states, China and Russia, appear to be converging on the same system, although their stability is ensured primarily by direct military authority, rather than by a system of managed public opinion.

Seventh: the post-democratic civil-service state, while not utterly disastrous, is not the end of history. It has two problems. One, the size and complexity of its regulatory system tends to increase without bound, resulting in economic stagnation and general apathy. Two, more critically, it can neither abolish democratic politics formally, nor defend itself against changes in information flow that may destabilize public opinion. Notably, the rise of the Internet disrupts the feedback loop between public education and political power, allowing noncanonical ideas to flourish. If these ideas are both rationally compelling and politically delegitimating, the state is threatened.

Eighth: therefore, productive political efforts should focus on peacefully terminating, restructuring and decentralizing the 20th-century civil-service state along neocameralist lines. The ideal result is a planet of thousands, even tens of thousands, of independent city-states, each managed for profit by its shareholders.

Note that this perspective has nothing at all in common with the Universalist theory of government. Note also the simplicity of the transition that it suggests ***should*** *have happened, from monarchy as a family business to a modern corporate structure with separate board and CEO, eliminating the vagaries of the hereditary principle.*

If there is a 'we' — **this is what we believe.**

ADDED: "Exit for all is contemporary Protestantism writ large." (I suspect this is probably true and inevitable, but then I'm a cladist.)

ADDED: Bryce explains why I've had such trouble grappling with his book.

February 23, 2014

Definitive NBS

Nick B. Steves defines 'Neoreactionary' for the *Urban Dictionary*, with concision, clarity, and accuracy. Altogether, a valuable and well-executed piece of work. The format comes in two parts, with an initial definition, followed by an example of usage. This one begins:

***Neoreactionary**. A new reactionary; typically one coming to reactionary ideas and conclusions by way of post-libertarian and/or post-anarchist paths; like traditional reactionaries one who is profoundly anti-progressive and suspicious of all egalitarian ideologies, but often more focused on free market capitalism as a solution to, or escape from, social ills than his ethnic or religious identitarian forebears; often, but not exclusively, one influenced by the writings of several well-known reactionary bloggers in the 2007-present timeframe.*

With some breakfast-table usage exemplified:

As a natural conservative Bill sympathized with part of the agenda of the Center Right party, but as a neoreactionary he knew that it was merely an ineffectual brake on the progress of the left. He

advocated for a new yet very ancient politics in which traditional give and take politics no longer was a factor.

Congratulations to NBS. This kind of practical workmanship does a lot to hold things together. It's sanity glue.

May 11, 2014

Disintegration

As argued here before, *Outside in* firmly maintains that the distinctive structural feature of NRx analysis is escalation by a logical level. It could be described as 'meta-politics' if that term had not already been adopted, by thinkers in the ENR tradition, to mean something quite different (i.e. the ascent from politics to culture). There's an alternative definition at Wikipedia that also seems quite different. This congested linguistic territory drives NRx to talk about Neocameralism, or Meta-Neocameralism — the analysis of Patchwork regimes.

From this perspective, all discussion of concrete social ideals and first-order political preferences, while often entertaining, locally clarifying, and practical for purposes of group construction, is ultimately trivial and distracting. The fundamental question does not concern the kind of society we might like, but rather the differentiation of societies, such that distinctive social models are

able — in the first place — to be possible. The rigorous NRx position is lodged at the level of disintegration as such, rather than within a specific disintegrated fragment. This is because, first of all, *there will not be agreement about social ideals*. To be stuck in an argument about them is, finally, a trap.

Is this not simply Dynamic Geography, of the Patri Friedman type? As a parallel post-libertarian 'meta-political' framework, it is indeed close. The thing still missing from Dynamic Geography (as currently intellectually instantiated), however, is *Real Politik* (or Machiavellianism). It assumes an environment of goodwill, in which rational experimentation in government will be permitted. The Startup Cities model, as well as its close relative Charter Cities, have similar problems. These are all post-libertarian analyses of governance, at a high logical level, but — unlike NRx — they are not rooted in a social conflict theory. They expect to formulate themselves to the point of execution without the necessity of a theoretical and practical encounter with an implacable enemy. 'Irrational' obstruction tends to confuse them. By talking about the Cathedral, from the beginning, NRx spares itself from such naivety. (Sophisticated conflict theory within the libertarian tradition has to be sought elsewhere.)

Some initial points:

(1) Meta-Neocameralism — or high-level NRx analysis — opposes itself solely to geopolitical integration. This means, as a matter of

historical fate, to the Cathedral. An alternative social ideal, however repugnant it might be found at the level of first-order political preferences, is only elevated to a true enemy by universalism. If it seeks to do something — even something that revolts all actually existing NRx proponents to the core of their being — within a specific territorial enclave and without practical mechanisms for universal propagation, it is as likely to be a tactical ally as a foe. Anything that disintegrates destiny is on our side. (Immediately, therefore, it can be seen that the preponderant part of NRx discussion is at best oblique to fundamental strategic goals.)

(2) Universality is poison. Whenever NRx appears to be proposing a social solution for all people everywhere it has become part of the problem. The ultimate goal is for *those who disagree to continue to disagree* in a different place, and under separate institutions of government. First-order political argument, insofar as it tends towards compromise (i.e. partial convergence) is positively harmful to the large-scale NRx project. *The sole crucial agreement is that we will not agree*. Better by far to make that harsher, than to soften it.

(3) Each thread of the Trichotomy has approximately equivalent claim to be the standard bearer of the disintegrationist position. The reason that this is formulated here with a Techno-Commercial bias is because it is being formulated here (there is no reason why it has to be).

(4) A Meta-Neocameral coalition, tightly focused upon effective

hostility to the Cathedral, displays a pattern of tolerances and aversions very different to that found within a first-order reactionary movement seeking to immediately instantiate a social ideal of the good. Insofar as the latter tends to exacerbation of social tensions and geopolitical fission, it contributes* positively to high-level NRx goals, but it can only expect theoretical condescension in direct proportion to its concreteness, and therefore deficient apprehension of the *disintegrative position*. A movement of communistic localism that successfully pursued a project of radical geopolitical autonomization would be, realistically, a more significant tactical ally than even the most ideologically-pure concrete reactionary movement which spoke a lot about comparable goals, but gave no indication it was able to practically realize them.

(5) The world is already fractured and divided, to a considerable degree. This means that the disintegrative position has no need for utopianism, and is frequently able to orient itself defensively, in support of existing differences that are subject to integrative-universalist assault. Furthermore, there are numerous indications that general world-historical trends are favorable to geopolitical disintegration, in too many fields to fully enumerate, but which include political, ethnic, technological, and economic drivers. Incremental pragmatism is entirely practical under current geographical and historical conditions.

(6) In provisional conclusion, disapproval of some alternative

mode of life is entirely irrelevant to high-level NRx goals, unless said mode of life also insists upon living with you. The objective is to *divide the world*, not to unify it in accordance with those principles best attuned to your preferences, however rationally or traditionally compelling such preferences might be. Universalism is the enemy. Don't do it (and to make a scholastic objection out of the universality of non-universalism, is to have immediately started doing it — check your totalitarian Hegelianism). ***Exit is not an argument***.

* Initially misspelled as 'contribrutes' — which works.

ADDED: I should already have linked to this. It starts off on a very promising path, goes along OK until falling apart horribly somewhere in Part V, then stumbles along, recovering a bit, ending on an encouraging note (but with the theoretical engine now mostly sheared off). It's high on my agenda for a serious engagement.

August 4, 2014

Disintegration II

Secession? (plus)

Why not take it all the way to speciation?

(I can already see it's going to be hard to keep up.)

November 12, 2016

Bonds of Chaos

There are many, I know, who find obstinate invocations of NRx — as a micro-slogan, cultural brand, conflictual stance, or Schelling point — to be crude at best, and perhaps thoroughly deluded, or worse. It is as if, having tumbled into a vogue, one has become enthralled by it, locked into stuttering, mechanical, thoughtless repetition. Those most skeptical about the sign are most likely disposed to mournfulness about it, whether decrying it for congenital flaws, or lamenting its loss of intellectual productivity and direction.

Obviously, I disagree. NRx is still a cultural infant, far younger than the Millennium, even under the most mythically-creative extension of its genesis, and the cognitive ferment it catalyzes remains extraordinary. It has still scarcely begun. The ties of a consistent name are the very least that are required to concentrate it. NRx, whatever it turns out to be, needs lashing together, because explosions tend to fly apart — and it is unmistakably an explosion.

Creative coincidence, or convergent diversity, is the mark of a culture at work (which is to say, in process). Yesterday, September 3, demonstrated this vividly. Approaching the conclusion of a multi-aspected post on Dugin, ethnicity, religion, and the "dementia' of being, NIO suggests:

Referring to Chaos would seem in this circumstance to be an option of incredible potential, indeed, if you look closely enough at

NRx the hints are already there that Chaos is a central defining characteristic of the thought of all branches of the Trichotomy on multiple levels. Chaos creates order, in fact Chaos is also a form of order, just one which is not immediately understandable. [I will not fake an apology for the self-looping internal link, since it it is one that would in any case have been made here.]

Recalling that NIO explicitly invokes the ontological depths of Chaos — its Hesiodic as well as metaphysical density — it is especially remarkable to find, on the same day, an intricate post by E. Antony Gray, which advances an innovative tripartite schema as the key to the aesthetic core of NRx. This text, too, culminates in a call for an integrative expedition into chaos, staged out of the void:

… the 'face of the deep' in Genesis is a primordial unformed, unseen void; That it is called 'water' in the Septuagint Greek lets us know something about the peculiar state of Chaos in the Void. The Void is thus Darkness but not shadow (a shadow is a deprivation of light caused by an object) but rather the substrate of all existence, only properly 'unseen' when no physical light is present. […] Chaos is substantial where disorder is insubstantial. Chaos is the 'quintessence' of things, chaotic itself and yet always-begetting order. Breaking down disorder, since disorder is maladaptive. Exit is a way to induce bifurcation, to quickly reduce entropy through separation from the highly entropic system. If no immediate exit is available, Chaos will create one.

To denounce the exhaustion of NRx is an absurdity. It is an exploratory departure, scarcely initiated. To cling to its sign is to subscribe to its impulse, and to set out …

September 4, 2014

The Network

> Weird Twitter/NRx Twitter map pic.twitter.com/oCsRdRVuRI
>
> — Gnaeus Rafinesque (@sbenthall) October 1, 2014

(I can't get enough of this stuff.)

October 1, 2014

Theonomy

This is the NRx sect that still hasn't shown up. (The slot is wide open.) A critical but informative essay at *First Things* explains:

Bible law requires a radical decentralization of government under the rule of the righteous. Private property rights, especially for the sake of the family, must be rigorously protected, with very limited interference by the state and the institutional church. Restitution,

including voluntary slavery, should be an important element of the criminal justice system. A strong national defense should be maintained until the whole world is "reconstructed" (which may be a very long time). Capital punishment will be employed for almost all the capital crimes listed in the Old Testament, including adultery, homosexual acts, apostasy, incorrigibility of children (meaning late teenagers), and blasphemy, along with murder and kidnapping. There will be a cash, gold-based economy with limited or no debt. These are among the specifics broadly shared by people who associate themselves with the theonomic viewpoint.

('Triggered' by this — which is well worth re-visiting.)

ADDED: This is worth spelling out (from the same essay) —

A reconstructed world ruled by future Rushdoonyites will not, needless to say, be democratic. Rushdoony is straightforward in condemning democracy as a "heresy." He writes that he is in agreement with John Dewey on the proposition that "supernatural Christianity and democracy are inevitably enemies."

August 14, 2015

NRx Thought

It isn't entirely clear whether Warg Franklin is asking: *How does NRx think?* Nevertheless, his introduction to postrationalism cannot but

contribute to such a question (whether the latter is taken descriptively, prescriptively, or diagonally). The excellent onward links merit explicit mention (1, 2, 3).

How NRx thinks is a critical index of what it is.

Outside in is *probably* 'postrationalist'. What it certainly is, however, is *disintegrationist*. It translates the caution against rationalist *hubris* — dubbed *reservationism* by Moldbug (in the link provided) — as a general antipathy to global solutions (and their attendant universalist ideologies). To be promoted, in the place of any Great Answer, is computational fragmentation. Whenever the research program meets an obstacle, divide it. "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." Or at least, since selection is inescapable, defend the fork (as such) first, and the chosen path only secondarily.

Delegate selection to Gnon. To do so not only husbands resources, but also maximizes overall experimentation. Intelligence is scarce. It is needed, above all, for tinkering well. Global conceptual policing is an exhausting waste, and an unnecessary one, since territorial distribution, or some effective proxy, can carry it for free. Security capacity is needed to fend off those determined to share their mistakes. Using it, instead, to impose any measure — whatsoever — of global conformity is a pointless extravagance, and a diversion.

Whether articulated as epistemology, or as meta-politics, NRx is aligned with the declaration: *There is no need for us to agree*. Refuse

all dialectics. It is not reconciliation that is needed, but definitive division. (Connect, but disintegrate.)

Think in patches. Eventually, some of them will work.

October 28, 2015

Doom Circuitry

This is what XS maintains:

There is perfect philosophical integrity between the tragic foundations of Occidental Civilization and the cybernetic industrialism that defines its ultimate limit. Within this *neoreactionary* frame, reaction is never regressive enough, nor modernity ever advanced enough. Something more comforting — less distant — *will be* seized upon in both temporal directions. That is the minor theme of fate. No effective constituency could ever want to push far enough in either direction, to the point where the circuit of time closes, upon *doom* (coldly understood). It does not matter, because politics does not. Doom matters. The rest is pitiful species vanity, tragedy, and control malfunction. It will burn, without comprehending why.

From the perspective of doom — only glimpsed, slowly, after vast disciplines of coldness — everything you are trying to do is a desperate idiocy that will fail, because humanism (*hubris*) is the one

thing you can never let go. The drama dictates that. There's no point flagellating yourself over it. The cosmos is not so poor in flagellation that it requires your meager contribution.

"Yes we can!" is everything Neoreaction is not. Perhaps you even see that. Yet you repeat it with every measure you propose. Take your favorite ideological slogan and attach "Yes we can!" as an appendix. If it works, you now know the *epoch* to which you belong.

Only doom *can* (and *will*).

Carry on, though. You will, in any case. It entertains the gods.

February 10, 2016

CHAPTER TWO - AESTHETICS

Elysium

Having finally got around to *Elysium*, one point in particular bears emphasis: There's only one interesting character in the movie, and she's a neoreactionary heroine. That's not a matter of ideological preference. Among the tiny number of characters who might imaginably be thought to know what they're doing, Secretary of Defense Jessica Delacourt (Jodie Foster) is the only one to be treated with the slightest seriousness.



There's a potentially intriguing snakehead gangster ('Spider' played by Wagner Moura), but he loses all credibility by morphing without explanation into Robin Hood. (Note to Hollywood: Snakeheads are not carried by any obvious vector of social interest

to become proponents of radically open borders — it's just possible that Blomkamp is screwing with your mind.)

Soulless capitalist John Carlyle (William Fichtner) is reduced to plot prey, whilst the Elysium Davos-liberal President Patel (Faran Tahrir) is nothing beyond a foil for Delacourt. Everyone else in the movie is either a convincing nobody, or an entertaining cartoon.

A quick *Elysium* synopsis might be in order. By 2154 socialist insanity has long turned the world to shit, in all the ways that anyone with functioning sensory organs already observes happening today. A teeming mass of incompetent, dysgenically-processed, entropically poly-ethnic criminals now populate the earth, whilst the social elites have retreated to an orbital refuge (*Elysium*). Naturally, the earth is a squalid, polluted, socially-collapsed, and radically decivilized wasteland, whilst Elysium is a beautiful, functional, productively organized achievement. So far, so obviously realistic.

The earthlings are by now so dim that they don't even begin to understand why they can't have good things too. The government of Elysium, in Hollywood /Silicon Valley fashion, can't help but sympathize (or at least pretend to out of political expediency and social signalling). When Delacourt does her job, therefore, and arranges for Elysium-headed space barges full of "illegals" to be blasted into debris, the government moves to put her on a leash. As a classic neoreactionary, Delacourt quickly understands that defending Elysium will require a regime reboot. (The movie actually

uses the word “reboot”, in a far sillier way, for the eventual triumph of the new Cathedral, when the very category of ‘illegality’ is erased from the Elysium computer systems.)

By this point the film has done everything worth doing, and descends unreservedly into ideological slapstick. Delacourt is randomly killed by her own human-rights-violating special operative, in order to clear the last possibility of sanity out of the way. In the end, reliably convincing half-wit thug Max Da Costa (Matt Damon) becomes a stereotypical Hollywood Nu-Jesus by sacrificing himself to obliterate the final remaining fragment of civilization in the name of indiscriminate sharing. Blomkamp has by now completely lost himself in his own hilarity (“quite how stupid can we make this without liberals catching on? Actually, infinitely stupid…”). There’s no reason to get distracted by it here.

Delacourt’s question is the important one: How to maintain the last redoubt of social order, as a spatially-realized system of discrimination, when its own governing elite is fundamentally committed to subverting it? “Do you have children?” she asks the feckless president. He doesn’t even bother to reply. Responsible time-horizons are incompatible with his political office. So she moves forwards with plans for a reboot (which, of course, have to fail — the movie was released and distributed wasn’t it?).

We need to start printing Delacourt’s image on Tee-shirts*, or something. Move over Darth Sidious. She’s the model villain for a

rotten world.

*Begin the marketing in Australia?

October 1, 2013

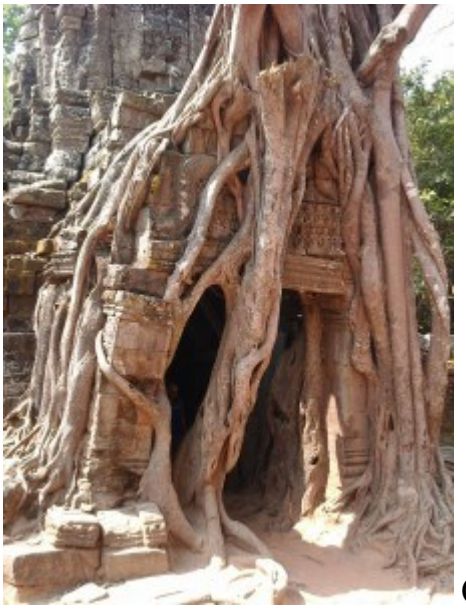
Dawn of Neoreaction

Cambodia version:


Click on image to expand.

(The only illumination comes from the right.)

I'm heading back to SH late tomorrow. The return to full-spectrum connectivity and production time will be nice, but I'll miss this kind of stuff:


Click on image to expand.

[I've put up a couple of snaps here too]

January 31, 2014

Play the Decline

Bryce Laliberte passed along this pop culture celebration of democracy's death in imperialist chaos. It's worth a look. (Kevin Spacey seems to have made himself the iconic face of mass media dark enlightenment.)

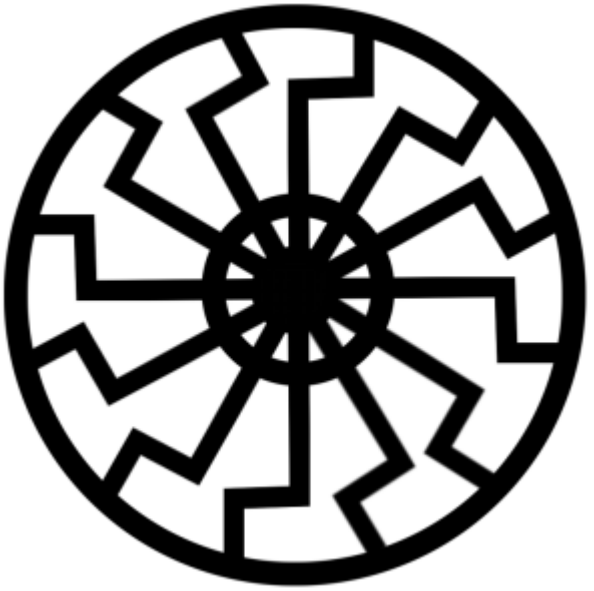


May 3, 2014

NRx Dark Powers

Duck Enlightenment (jokeocracy) hashtags this as an #instantclassic. It is. (Also, make sure not to miss Stirner's potted-history of Neoreaction in the comments.)

… and it looks as if we're stealing the Black Sun too:



ADDED: Brett Stevens visits the Stirner comment, and annotates it.

I also liked this:

> Let's be honest: "Apocalypse Now" was the founding of the NRx, DE, etc.
>
> — Brett Stevens (@amerika_blog) May 16, 2014

ADDED: History being made.
ADDED: Then this —

> America lost its Empire the day Captain America killed Colonel Kurtz.
>
> — Albert Brenner (@AlbertBrenner1) May 16, 2014

May 16, 2014

The Trike

RiverC has gone and done it this time …



There's more:



May 20, 2014

NRx: The Call

The NRx video game linked a while back has now gone explicitly Neocameralist. The most infernal pulp-zones of popular culture appear to be going seriously off-script, with the counter-Cathedral delivered directly through your X-Box. ('Atlas' seems more than a little ideologically-freighted, no?)

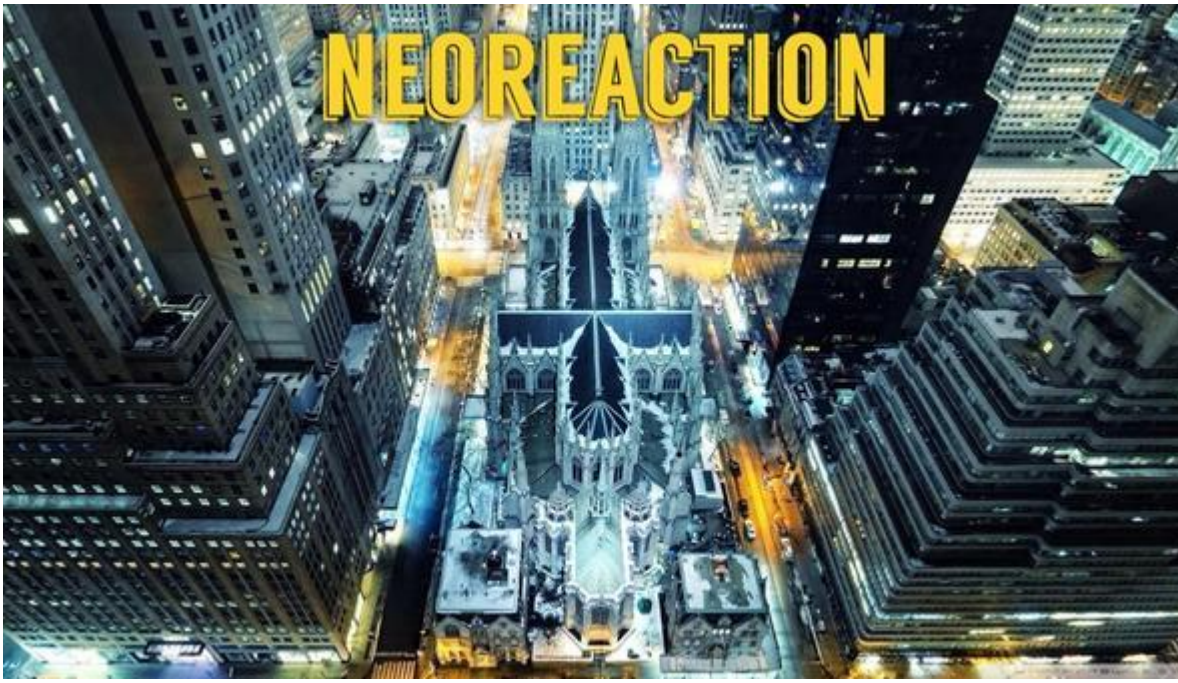
Spacey's post-democratic harsh realism I get, Atlas commercialized 'security' I get, but I've no idea at all what this is about (although it looks suitably menacing):



July 31, 2014

City of Night

This insisted on being stolen. It made itself irresistible by its sheer Amishlessness:



(via Derek Hopper)

Rather than cathedrals, the East Asian cities that enthrall this blog tend to nurture temples to self-cultivation and ultimate cosmic nullity among their LED-skinned hypermodern edifices of capitalist darkness. Yet, despite the difference in religious heritage, the split-time signature is precisely the same. Neoreaction diverges from Paleoreaction insofar as it coincides with the understanding: Tradition is not something one can ever simply hold on to, or to which

one can truly return. The Neoreactionary city is a standing time-spiral in process.

August 28, 2014

Cyber-Suicide

Take my eye off *Anathema*, and this happens:


OFFLINE
YouTube

It's pulpy and narrative-driven, of course, but that surely has its place. Even within its limitations it helps to hold open the question — from which I'm far too easily distracted — *what would an NRx aesthetic be?* The thematic reflexivity is a part of that.

To be brutally frank, I've basically given up on the West as a source of continuing visual aesthetic achievement (symptom). Its global influence strikes me as radically toxic, promoting worthless pomo garbage wherever it gets its foot in the door, and whenever it tries to pull-out of its death spiral — to become neo-traditional — it sticks Roman columns everywhere and looks simply ridiculous. The last person who could get away with anything like that was de Chirico. Probably fascism wrecked it, as it did so many other things. Grumpiness aside, the importance of the discussion is undeniable. The consolidation which matters most takes place on the aesthetic plane.

ADDED: Huge twitter agitation about this, so I'm tacking it on, even though the connection is tenuous at best.

December 13, 2014

Seasonal Order

Tech-Comm NRx approves of this message:



(To replace ‘arrest’ with ‘instant execution by our private security drones’ would be a tweak worth considering. The ‘change’ sign in the background is a nice touch.)

December 21, 2014

Stock and Flow

Some clear, sensible, *extremely practical* suggestions on balancing production (via). It's a problem — tractable in principle, but tricky, and easy to get wrong — that a lot of people are working at right now, NRx very much included. I've not seen it stated with such conceptual elegance before now.

… stock and flow is the master metaphor for media today. Here's what I mean:

** Flow is the feed. It's the posts and the tweets. It's the stream of daily and sub-daily updates that remind people that you exist.*

** Stock is the durable stuff. It's the content you produce that's as interesting in two months (or two years) as it is today. It's what people discover via search. It's what spreads slowly but surely, building fans over time.*

I feel like flow is ascendant these days, for obvious reasons — but we neglect stock at our own peril. I mean that both in terms of the health of an audience and, like, the health of a soul. Flow is a treadmill, and you can't spend all of your time running on the treadmill. Well, you can. But then one day you'll get off and look around and go: Oh man. I've got nothing here. […] But I'm not saying you should ignore flow …

NRx epitomizes the problem. It's been through a phase of excited flow, but the question of stock-building is becoming unavoidable. Correct too hard, and the current dies altogether. Fail to correct

at all, and nothing gets built. Every time I see someone burn out of Twitter, it looks to me as if the stock-flow balance problem has claimed another casualty. At least, that's what I now realize I've been seeing.

April 23, 2015

CHAPTER THREE - FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS

Questions

Nydrwracu wants us to think harder, which has to be a good thing (right?). So what are the basic questions of neoreaction? This is too important to rush, so I'm inclined to go meta (which reliably slows things down).

First meta point: If this is going to work, it has to be far more rigorously honed. That means a maximum of three basic problems each, with the objective of amalgamation into a list of 10, at most. The process of compression should do a lot of the preparatory work. Add Nydrwracu's original 11 to Bryce Laliberte's entirely different 10 (in the comments, same link), and the result is already a sprawling mess that isn't going anywhere. Neither list is remarkable for its tautness, as I hope both proposers would admit. "The 119 basic problems of neoreaction" isn't going to sharpen anybody up.

Anyway, here are mine:

(1) The Odysseus Problem (or political knot theory): Can a model

of distributed power be rigorously formulated? I am not remotely convinced that this question has yet been answered, and I refuse to get excited about monarchs until it has.

(2) Does a rigorous theory of degenerative ratchets capture the basic practical problem of neoreaction? If it does, a domain of investigation is determined at a high-level of abstraction. If it doesn't, where do we look for degenerative ratchet counter-engineering (wherever it is, I'll be spending a lot of time there).

(3) What does the 'neo-' in 'neoreaction' signify? This is a timely question, because I'm noticing a lot of people edging into it, and the topics it excavates are huge. My own take on this: Anyone who thinks that Modernity, Capitalism, and Progress are *simply* bad things to have happened should drop the 'neo-' prefix immediately. After that, anybody who lacks conviction about needing it should think about doing the same. Sheer reaction is OK, isn't it? Fashion isn't a good reason for anything.

James Goulding also had an extremely interesting set of basic questions (I'm worried they're lost somewhere on this blog). Turning them up would also contribute seriously to moving this forward.

ADDED: Konkvistador tracks down the ghosts of Goulding's research agenda questions.

The commentary on this thread has already been so scorchingly excellent that it's actually quite intimidating. (I'm blaming a brain-fogging head cold for not diving in more productively so far.)

October 22, 2013

Neoreactionary Problems

I'm under a sacred obligation to review Bryce Laliberte's ebook *What is Neoreaction? Ideology, Social-Historical Evolution, and the Phenomena of Civilization*. Thankfully, this solemn duty was not specifically scheduled. Working towards its accomplishment is a thought-provoking process, which is a good thing.

As a trivial matter, I'm forced to ask: Is that supposed to be 'phenomena'? 'Phenomenon' would be more stylistically persuasive, even if the plural is defensible on conceptual grounds. That kind of side-issue, however, is symptomatic self-distraction. There are serious questions at stake here, and elusive ones.

My prevarication is partly the result of colliding ideas, which have become entangled with the meaning of this book (for me), but are not really internal to its own concerns. Foremost among these is the connotation of the word 'neoreaction' itself, sparking an embryonic conversation (at Laliberte's place, and mine). Terminological issues can easily seem pernickety, or fetishistic, but in this case at least they extend continuously into matters of indisputable substance, and relevance. Summarily: Is 'neoreaction' primarily a doctrine or a problem? (Perhaps the question mark unfairly skews the trial.)

In a future post I'll get back to the specifics of Laliberte's extended definition — which is arguably coextensive with the book. It's of wide-ranging interest, and connects importantly with Nick B. Steves' search for 'reactionary consensus' (note: no 'neo-'). At this point, however, my place-holder remarks are themselves deliberately problematic, referring to the role of paradox and irony in the term, and in the 'thing' — elements which are for me essential, but which I suspect Laliberte sees as incidental, or even unfortunate. Neoreaction, from the problematic perspective, is *the insistence of a question*, rather than a solution struggling to be born into settled doctrine. It is a word contrived to preserve its own dynamic illegibility (or unstable paradox), at least as much as the name for a program on the path to acceptance (arriving at consensual significance).

Since neoreaction seems to be hurtling towards some kind of recognition, due in no small part to Laliberte's contributions, these considerations are only *arcane* on one side of an undeveloped conversation. Most probably, the pace and context of this exchange will be set in unexpected places. Such impending unknowns inevitably guide my path into Laliberte's book, as it opens, piece by piece, up ahead.

November 14, 2013

Scavenger

Soap Jackal is foraging:

> As fission becomes the major topic of discussion the main foundation of that tangent becomes clear: action. This is strange as **NRx** hasn't even begun to crack the shell of true analysis. **Nrx** has been described as a toolbox (especially in terms of analysis) from which individuals can pick and choose in order to better inform their world view. One of the major areas of the toolbox is the general study of learning as that is required in order to digest the massive amount of information neoreaction has uncovered as worthy sources. The **Cathedral** has failed at providing these tools and that seems in of itself a major focus worth investigating. My question to you is: 'Are there any resources you deem relevant to the general topic of learning and knowledge accumulation?' These can be as exact as nexialism or the **Ignorant Schoolmaster** or they can be as tangential as **Non-Euclidean Politics** by **RAW**. All are welcome in the general trend to get **NRx** on the path forward.

Note: Cap-stripped terms are bolded, while the format discussion rages.

October 8, 2014

Twitter cuts (#27)

> @Outsideness @Keldory20 "diversity" is one of those words that needs to be reclaimed from leftists
>
> — Loki (@AnathemaZhiv) September 8, 2015

This (cubed).

It shouldn't even be difficult. Could any 'rectification of names' be more straightforward? If the word is grasped with any lucidity, *the more diversity the better*. Every problem that the (non-totalitarian) right has with 'diversity' is in fact a rejection of homogenization. To allow the prevailing pattern of usage to continue unchallenged is an absurdity.

'Diversity' already tilts into non-universality, and that is meta-level rightism itself.

The diversity between diversity and non-diversity is the best diversity.

September 8, 2015

CHAPTER FOUR - THE RATCHET

What We Deserve

Good? Probably not. But hard – oh yes (oh yes!)

> *Obama got what he wanted — a second term. Now the people who voted for him are going to get what they voted for… and what they deserve — a financial collapse that makes 2008 seem like the good 'ol days.*– 'libertarianNYC'
>
> *Because when Maistre says that every nation gets the government it deserves, I believe him. Maistre didn't think his great law was a law of physics. He thought it was a law of God. I am not a religious person, but I agree. History has convinced me that when laws of God are broken, bad shit happens.* – Mencius Moldbug
>
> *Deserving' must be the most useless and obfuscating word in the dictionary.*– Maurice Spandrell

The mysteries of the ideological spectrum are deep enough to absorb endless exploration. Why, for instance, should there be *an* ideological spectrum at all? Are not human disagreements over social decisions naturally multi-dimensional? How can opinions about the optimum scale of government statistically predict attitudes to affirmative action, immigration, gun control, drug prohibition, abortion, gay marriage, climate change, and foreign policy? Does it not seem near-magical that the seating arrangements of the late-18th century French National Assembly continue to organize the terminology of ideological orientation up to the present day?

At times, however, perplexity recedes, and certain basic patterns emerge with startling clarity. This is evident today in the United States – the world's great circus of ideological antagonism — in the wake of its latest, spectacular performance.

As polarization intensifies – which it does – the essential is expressed through the extremes, and the alternatives are simplified. Which is it to be: politics or economics? There can be no sustainable co-existence. One must utterly eradicate the other.

Either politics, or economics, *deserves* to be completely destroyed — politics for its incontinent lust for absolute power, or economics for its icy indifference to public concerns. The conflict of visions is irreconcilable. From the pure perspective of terminal politics, all market *rewards* are arbitrary and illegitimate, whilst from

that of economics, people are *entitled* to precisely nothing.

Speaking on behalf of the political losers, Russ Roberts (at Cafe Hayek) adopts a light-hearted approach:

> *Talking about the election to many friends and family who had been rooting for Romney, I found their emotions ran the entire gamut from despair to despondency. Everybody was way down. I found myself unexpectedly blue as well. Our emotions were not so much caused by the Romney defeat. Few of us were particularly excited about him. It was the Obama victory that concerned us. … There was plenty to be discouraged about before this election. I'm not sure the election provides much new information.*

The despair of the Right is not the product of a single lamentable election result, but is grounded in the relentlessly gathering realization that it is inherently maladapted to politics. When the Right attains power, it is by becoming something other than itself, betraying its partisans not only incidentally and peripherally, through timidity or incompetence, but centrally and fundamentally, by practically advancing an agenda that almost perfectly negates its supposed ideological commitments. It builds that which it had promised to destroy, and further enthralls that which it had promised to liberate. Its victories mean ever less, its defeats ever

more. To win is at most a lesser evil, whilst to lose opens new, unprecedented horizons of calamity, initiating previously unimagined adventures in horror.

Dean Kalahar captures the mood:

> *The electorates' decision once and for all confirms a definition of America that values hopes, feelings and equality of results over the realities of human nature, history, and the foundational principles that hold western civilization together. There is now no doubt that the tipping point of geometrically increasing cultural decline has been crossed. … Our economic system has lost the culture war.*

The left has its own frustrations, which its ever-greater approximation to total political dominion cannot appease, and in fact exacerbate. The more that it subordinates its enemies to its will, the more its will conforms to the image of its enemies – not the economy as it was, evasive and morally disinterested, but the economy as it was caricatured and denounced: narrowly and brutally self-interested, sublime in its gargantuan greed, radically corrupt, and irreparably dysfunctional. The cartoon plutocrat re-appears as the consummate political insider in a shot-silk Che Guevara tee-shirt, minutely dictating the content of legislation, and pursuing a career trajectory that smoothly alternates between the chairs of regulatory

agencies and Wall Street boardrooms. Through a perverse, ineliminable double-entry book-keeping, the fiscal mountains of government largesse are registered, simultaneously, as an orgiastic feast of crony capitalist money creation. Public altruism and private avarice lock into exact logico-mathematical identity.

The gyre turns. 'Right' administrations become sclerotic big government bureaucracies, whilst 'Left' administrations become the cynical public relations façade for rapacious banking cartels. In either case, government equates to treachery, executed by a party that necessarily abuses its own political partisans. Since politics is ever-increasingly the preserve of the Left, this is not an oscillator, but a *ratchet*, with a predictable direction (into Left Singularity, "moving the electorate ever leftwards by making it ever more dysfunctional").

The Right, the party of the economy, is losing all credibility as a Party, especially to itself. In the war of annihilation that contemporary ideological schism has become, the substitute, characteristic battle-cry could be confidently anticipated, even were it not already so distinctly heard: *the market will avenge these offenses. Nemesis. Let the temple crash.*

Expect to hear much more of this, however much it revolts you.

Things will fall apart (even more, far more …), or not, but in either case we will know what we *really* deserve. Reality is God, but which is the true religion?

In the immortal words of HL Mencken: "Democracy is the theory

that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard."

November 9, 2012

Left Singularity

Winter is coming

> *Leftists are not troubled by the fear that the masses might revolt against the left, but rather each leftist fears he might fail to keep up with the ever changing line, find himself a few years, or weeks, or days behind the current ever changing political correctness, and find himself deemed a rightist. // Which historically halts only in bloodshed. There is no equivalent right singularity, as repressive right wing regimes forbid interest in politics, while repressive left wing regimes command interest in politics. // The left singularity is the same each time in its approach to infinite leftism, but differs chaotically and surprisingly each time in its ending short of infinite leftism.* — James A. Donald

> *What we worry about most is that we'll see a vicious cycle*

> *develop: poor governance hurts the economy, which radicalizes and polarizes public opinion, which leads to worse governance and worse economic outcomes… and so on down the line.* — Walter Russell Mead

> *21st Century politics sees no need for truth. When government believes itself to be responsible for the economy and convinces the people of that, it has put itself into a box. …When recessions occur … it causes government to pursue policies which reinforce its lies. It is these policies which created the current economic crisis in the first place.*– 'Monty Pelerin' (via Zero Hedge)

Dark Enlightenment begins with the recognition that *reality is unpopular*, so that the 'natural' course of political development, under democratic conditions, is reliably based upon the promise of an alternative. Pandering to fantasy is the only platform that delivers electoral support. When the dreams turn bad it is *politically obvious* that they have not been held firmly or sincerely enough, their radicalism has been insufficient, and a more far-reaching solution is imperative. Since either deliberate or merely inertial rightist sabotage is clearly to blame, the beatings will continue until morale improves.

This syndrome, essentially indistinguishable from political

modernity, calls for a cybernetic theory of accelerating social deterioration, or self-reinforcing economic repression. The trend that dark enlightenment recoils from demands explanation, which is found in the diagram of Left Singularity.

A singularity, of any kind, is the limit of a process dominated by positive feedback, and thus driven to an extreme. In its pure mathematical expression, the trend is not merely exponential, but parabolic, asymptotically closing upon infinity in finite time. The 'logic of history' converges upon an absolute limit, beyond which further prolongation is strictly impossible. From this ultimate, impassable barrier, dark enlightenment retrogresses into political history, prophetically inflamed by its certainty of the end. Unless democracy disintegrates before the wall, it will hit the wall.

"Increased repression brings increased leftism, increased leftism brings increased repression, in an ever tighter circle that turns ever faster. This is the left singularity," Donald writes. The principal *dark* hypothesis is evident: on the left slope, failure is not self-corrective, but rather the opposite. Dysfunction deepens itself through the circuit of disappointment:

> *As society moves ever leftwards, ever faster, leftists get ever more discontented with the outcome, but of course, the only cure for their discontent that it is permissible to think, is faster and further movement left.*

It is necessary, then, to accept the leftist inversion of Clausewitz, and the proposition that *politics is war by other means*, precisely because it retains the Clausewitzean *tendency to the extreme* (making it 'prone to escalation'). This is the reason why modern political history has a characteristic shape, which combines a duration of escalating 'progress' with a terminal, quasi-punctual interruption, or catastrophe – a restoration or 'reboot'. Like mould in a Petri dish, progressive polities 'develop' explosively until all available resources have been consumed, but unlike slime colonies they exhibit a dynamism that is further exaggerated (from the exponential to the hyperbolic) by the fact that resource depletion accelerates the development trend.

Economic decay erodes productive potential and increases dependency, binding populations ever more desperately to the promise of political remedy. The progressive slope steepens towards the precipice of supreme radicality, or total absorption into the state … and somewhere fractionally before then, either before or after it has stolen everything you own, taken your children, unleashed mass killing, and descended into cannibalism, it ends.

It can't eat the Petri dish, or abolish reality (in reality). There is a limit. But humanity gets a chance to show what it's capable of, on the downside. As Whiskey commented (on this Sailer thread): "This Enlightenment is 'Dark' because it tells us true things we'd rather not know or read or hear, because they paint a not-so-lovely picture of

human nature at its rawest." Progress takes us into the raw.

Gregory Bateson referred to cybernetic escalation as 'schismogenesis', which he identified in a number of social phenomena. Among these was substance abuse (specifically alcoholism), whose abstract dynamics, at the level of the individual, are difficult to distinguish from collective political radicalization. The alcoholic is captured by a schismogenetic circuit, and once inside, the only attractive solution is to head further in. At each step of life disintegration, one needs a drink more than ever. There goes the job, the savings, the wife and kids, and there's nowhere to look for hope except the bar, the vodka bottle, and eventually that irresistible can of floor polish. Escape comes – if it comes before the morgue – in 'hitting bottom'. Escalation to the extreme reaches the end of the road, or the story, where another might – possibly – begin. Schismogenesis predicts catastrophe.

Hitting bottom *has* to be horrible. A long history brought you to this, and if this isn't obviously, indisputably, an intolerable state of ultimate degradation, it will carry on. It isn't finished until it *really can't go on*, and that has to be several notches worse than can be anticipated. Left Singularity is deep into the dregs of the floor polish, with everything gone. It's worse than anything you can imagine, and there's no point at all trying to persuade people they've arrived there before they know they have. 'Things could be better than this' won't cut it. That's what progress is for, and progress is the problem.

That which cannot continue, will stop. Trees do not grow to the sky. This does not, however, necessarily mean that freedom will be restored and everything will be lovely. The last time we had theocracy, we had stagnation for four hundred years.

The explosive expansion of spending and regulation represents a collapse of discipline within the ruling elite. The way the system is supposed to work, and the way it mostly did work several decades ago, is that the American Federal Government can only spend money on something if the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the President agree to spend money on that thing, so no government employee can be employed, except all three agree he should be employed, so the government cannot do anything unless all three agree that it be done. A public servant, and indeed his entire department, was apt to be fired if he pissed off anyone. Conversely, the individual was free to do anything, unless all three agree that he be stopped from doing that thing. We are now approaching the reverse situation, where for an individual to do anything requires a pile of permissions from diverse governmental authorities, but any governmental authority can spend money on anything unless there is near unanimous opposition to them spending money.

Obviously this cannot continue. Eventually the money

> *runs out, in that we shall have a hyperinflationary crisis, and revert to some other form of money, such as the gold standard. As that happens, the increasingly lawless behavior of the rulers against the ruled will become increasingly lawless behavior of the rulers against each other. Civil war, or something close to civil war, or the dire and immediate threat of civil war will ensue. At that point, we will have the political singularity, probably around 2025 or so. Beyond the singularity, no predictions can be made, other than that the results will be surprising …*

January 7, 2013

Cold Turkey

Neoreactionary excitement has generated a wave of strategy discussions, focused upon Moldbug's Antiversity model of organized dissident knowledge. The most energetic example (orchestrated by Nydwracu) can be followed here, here, and here. Francis St. Pol's substantial contribution is here.

Beyond curmudgeonly cynicism about youthful enthusiasm, these concerns, and a strain of pessimism that accompanies the recognition that the Cathedral *owns* media like the USN owns carrier

groups, is there any explanation for *Outside in* hanging back from all this, and smoking sulkily in the corner? If there's a single term that accounts for our reluctance, it's *cold turkey*.

Keynesianism is far from the only contributor to left-modernist degeneration, but it's ruinous enough to account for the destruction of civilization on its own. The fact that it's most realistically conceived as a symptom — of democratized politics, and still deeper things — doesn't affect its narrative role. The important point, understood widely enough to be a cliché, is that Keynesian economics is an exact social analog of addiction at the level of the individual, slaved to what William Burroughs described as "the algebra of need."

Money is made into a drug, and the solution to the pain of craving is to crank up the dose. However bad it gets, if you just scale-up the fix, the suffering goes away. Junkies can survive for a shockingly long time. Perhaps there's no end to it (that's a question for the *Right on the Money* discussion).

Outside the morgue, if there is an end — and every venture into neoreactionary strategy presumes it — there's only one form it can take: cold turkey. To not be in the habit anymore, it is necessary to kick it. That's going to be *really nasty*.

At the level of economic structure, the 'blue pill' isn't just a comforting illusion, it's a massive, deeply habitual, ultra-high tolerance (thanks Spandrell) *fix*, radically craved down to the cellular

level. Society has been doing this for a long time, and by now it's mainlining crates of the stuff. People die of cold turkey. If not quite the worst thing in the world, it's an overwhelmingly-impressive simulation of exactly that. Rational argument doesn't get close to addressing it.

Sure, junkies lie all the time, but the lies aren't the basic problem. 'Correcting' the lies gets nowhere, because nobody is even really pretending. When the junky lies, he knows, you know, everybody knows that the fundamental message is simply: *I want more junk*. He'll say anything that gets fractionally closer to the next fix. Hence the circus of democracy.

The pusher laughs at rational argument. There's some well-meaning type saying: *seriously, think about it, this is really messed up*. Then there's the 'pusher' — which is already a joke — because people are crawling to him on their knees. He doesn't need to say anything. One more hit and the pain goes away for a while. That's what matters. The rest is merely 'superstructural' (to go Right-wing Marxist on the topic).

There's no way, ever, that from this deep in, one gets out before hitting bottom. The slide has to reach the limit, because short of that, the prospect of anesthesia trumps everything.

Western Civilization is a sick junky. It isn't going to be argued out of its habit. First, it has to taste the floor. That's just the way it is — ugly.

ADDED: Hooked.

June 17, 2013

Obamanation II

Richard Fernandez has written many brilliant things, so this might not — necessarily — be his greatest moment, but it's the post most perfectly substituting for what this blog would want to have said. Discussing the prospect of impeachment proceedings against the POTUS, he speaks through the avatar of an imagined Republican senator, to say exactly what is needed:

And after we get rid of him, after a decent interval, aren't we're going to do again? This time with an historic Woman president, Asian president, Gay president? You really need never run out of Jonahs. But you see, I'm not going to vote for conviction. [murmur in the crowd]

I vote to let him remain president. I'm going to stick him to you. Vote to let him remain in office knowing full well what a screw up he is. Knowing he'll screw up again; sink your portfolios, bankrupt your industries, make such a mess of defending this country there'll be blood in the streets and crowds are going to be looking for the guys who endorsed this man into office. He's going to bring the whole thing down, and you with it.

Because you see he was what he always was. That at least is his excuse. But you knew better, all you people. All you exquisitely educated, creased-pants people. You knew better and put this poor fool in office.
I say …



Gnon gave you Obama to crash the whole rotten mess. Treasure him. “Ladies and gentleman. You’re not getting rid of Barack Obama that easily. This time there are consequences, not from me, not from the Tea Party but from reality. God exists ladies and gentleman. Or at least Murphy does. Consequences are a b**ch.”

(*Outside in* Obamanation background)

June 19, 2014

The Idea of Neoreaction

To translate ‘neoreaction’ into ‘the new reaction’ is in no way objectionable. It is new, and open to novelty. Apprehended

historically, it dates back no more than a few years. The writings of Mencius Moldbug have been a critical catalyst.

Neoreaction is also a species of reactionary political analysis, inheriting a deep suspicion of 'progress' in its ideological usage. It accepts that the dominant sociopolitical order of the world has 'progressed' solely on the condition that such *advance*, or relentless forward movement, is entirely stripped of moral endorsement, and is in fact bound to a primary association with *worsening*. The model is that of a progressive disease.

The 'neo-' of neoreaction is more than just a chronological marker, however. It introduces a distinctive idea, or abstract topic: that of a *degenerative ratchet*.

The impulse to back out of something is already reactionary, but it is the combination of a critique of progress with a recognition that *simple reversal is impossible* that initiates neoreaction. In this respect, neoreaction is a specific discovery of the arrow of time, within the field of political philosophy. It learns, and then teaches, that the way to get out cannot be the way we got in.

Wherever progressivism takes hold, a degenerative ratchet is set to work. It is unthinkable that any society could *back out* of the expansive franchise, the welfare state, macroeconomic policy-making, massively-extended regulatory bureaucracy, coercive-egalitarian secular religion, or entrenched globalist intervention. Each of these (inter-related) things are essentially irreversible. They

give modern history a *gradient*. Given any two historical 'snap-shots', one can tell immediately which is earlier and which later, by simply observing the extent to which any of these social factors have *progressed*. Leviathan does not shrink.

Within the theory of complex systems, certain phase transitions exhibit comparable properties. Network effects can *lock-in* changes, which are then irreversible. The adoption and consolidation of the Qwerty keyboard exemplifies this pattern. Technological businesses commonly make lock-in central to their strategies, and if they succeed, they cannot then die in the same way they matured.

When neoreaction identifies a degenerative ratchet — such as the (Jim Donald) Left Singularity — it necessarily poses the problem of a novel end. The process goes wrong consistently, and irreversibly. To repeat the Neoreactionary Idea as a mantra: *the way out cannot be the way in*.

A degenerative ratchet can only progress, until it cannot go on, and it stops. What happens next is something else — its Outside. Moldbug calls it a *reboot*. History can tell us to expect it, but not what we are to expect.

June 28, 2013

The Ruin Reservoir

In the *Washington Post*, Charles Krauthammer notes:

It doesn't take a genius to see what happens when the entitlement state outgrows the economy upon which it rests. The time of Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Spain, the rest of insolvent social-democratic Europe — and now Detroit — is the time for conservatives to raise the banner of Stein's Law and yell, "Stop." You can kick the can down the road, but at some point it disappears over a cliff.

Yes, yes, yes … but. Despite its perfect common sense, the monotony of this message is becoming utterly unbearable. The end isn't arriving tomorrow. This dreary horror show could last for decades. How many roughly-identical, absolutely obvious, sensible Op Ed columns is it possible to endure? (I'm already way into overtime.)

A reasonable conclusion from the reality of degenerative ratchets is that nothing less than a comprehensive crash makes them stop. Some of the healthier Right-delight over the Detroit implosion is tied to the expectation that bad examples could be educational, but the evidence for that is slender, especially under conditions of sovereign propaganda saturation (the Cathedral). Who are you going to trust, the academic-media complex or your lying eyes? We already know the predominant answer to that question.

When a message is existentially unacceptable to the Cathedral,

it will not be heard, and the only messages with substantial reality content are of exactly this kind. True believers will stick with a morbid utopia to the end, since anything truly different would — in any case — count for them as some species of death. For cynics, the calculation is even easier: why unnecessarily shorten looting time? More common still are the poor idiots, who will just do what they're told (while trying to grab a little feeding trough time), and then be sacrificed. It should already be clear that *nobody cares about them*, and they're too defective to care competently for themselves. That's neither justice nor injustice, but simple reality.

Nobody here is under any illusions about the profound socio-political malignancy given free reign in Detroit, or about the quality of human material over which it held sway, and yet it lasted up to a point that has provoked repeated comparisons with Hiroshima-1945, wrung out to the ugly end (and we haven't yet seen the end). If we ever doubted that *there's a lot of ruin in a nation*, we no longer can. For a city uniquely proficient at suicide, the process lasts half a century, including final, grinding decades, when nothing beyond a zombie parody of what once was still remains. If a uniquely benighted social trash pile can last this long, how far can the world's most powerful nation spin out its decline? There's enough time, to be sure, for an Amazon jungle worth of Herbert Stein-inspired Op Eds.

Can-kicking eventually runs out of road, *of course*, and its only when this truism has become an intolerable, deadening drone that

neoreaction begins. Anybody who still needs to hear that message *is simply lost*. Remedial education cannot be the neoreactionary task (there are libertarian-oriented conservatives for that — and they will fail).

If the Dark Enlightenment cannot end with Stein's conclusion, but is rather initiated by it, born from the presupposition that *this cannot go on forever*, how is its guiding topic to be understood? What will it discuss — with what will it occupy itself — amid the deepening ruin, *for decades*?

As its name indicates, Dark Enlightenment is a creature of late twilight, preparing for a gruesomely protracted night. One object that merits growing fascination is certainly this: *the ruin reservoir is deep*. As a fact this is easily — and for neoreaction *necessarily* — acknowledged, but the exploration of its mysteries has still scarcely begun.

July 26, 2013

Dark Acceleration

There's been a virtual post on **the worse, the better*** simmering in the kitchen here for a while, without reaching the stage of being ready for the table. 'Max' exuberantly pre-empts the topic in this comment thread. How deeply is this speculative position insinuated

into the DNA of neoreaction? (The provisional *Outside in* response: very deeply.) There's no longer any keeping it off the 'to do' list.

Also (on the same thread): don't miss the trial application of the Lesser Bull / Gnon terminological creation **Ruin Voting**. It has a dazzling future, because it so exactly captures a devastating empirical reality. (If successfully slogan-synthesized with one or two additional words, it will be despatched immediately to the T-shirt factory. Perhaps antagonistic ghetto punks would be prepared to pay for a 'Ruin Voter' shirt already?)

*Wikipedia attributes the origin of the phrase to Nikolay Chernyshevsky, who seems to have been systematically lexo-pillaged by Lenin. (Chernyshevsky was also author of the novel *What is to be done?*)

September 3, 2013

Sundown

David Stockman rests his analysis of recent economic history upon one basic presupposition, whose modesty is expressed by an intrinsic inclination to a negative form: *Radical dishonesty cannot provide a foundation for enduring financial value*. This assumption suffices to expose the otherwise scarcely comprehensible rottenness of American public affairs, to organize an integral understanding of the

gathering calamity, and to marginalize his work as the over-excited howl of a lonely crank.

In any society where minimal standards of civil decency were still even tenuously remembered, his ideas would be simple common sense. In the bedlamite orgy we in fact inhabit, Stockman's thoughts appear wildly counter-intuitive, rigidly structured by uninterpretable imperatives, and suffused by an improbable aura of doom. In fact Stockman is quite clear — implicitly — that under American political conditions *sanity was strictly unobtainable*. The coming calamity fulfills a (bi-partisan) democratic destiny — but that is to anticipate.

Stockman's latest compressed overview of our contemporary crisis — generated by the accelerated demolition of economic civilization over the last quarter-century — explains the "Sundown in America" — "a dystopic 'new normal' where historic notions of perpetual progress and robust economic growth no longer pertain." It outlines a vision that supports a theoretical bet, or short speculation on the economic infrastructure of the Cathedral: "Now the American state — the agency which was supposed to save capitalism from its inherent flaws and imperfections — careens wildly into dysfunction and incoherence. […] Washington's machinery of national governance is literally melting-down. It is the victim of 80 years of Keynesian error — much of it nurtured in the environs of Harvard Yard — about the nature of the business cycle

and the capacity of the state — especially its central banking branch — to ameliorate the alleged imperfections of free market capitalism." The enemy will never again have a record of effective economic performance to legitimate itself through. What it is doing — and has to do — however politically efficacious, is locked tightly into an inescapable vector that can lead nowhere except utter financial ruin. (Neoreaction should bifurcate on this point, because adaptation to an alternative possibility is something so completely different, very little of strategic substance will translate across.)

Stockman is able to draw upon his own biography to reveal where the GOP went wrong — the political necessities of democratic acceptance drove economic policy into the abyss:

... the circumstances of my own ex-communication from the supply-side church underscore the Reaganite embrace of the Keynesian gospel. The true-believers — led by Art Laffer, an economist with a Magic Napkin, and Jude Wanniski, an ex-Wall Street Journal agit-prop man who chanced to stuff said napkin into his pocket — were militantly opposed to spending cuts designed to offset the revenue loss from the Reagan tax reductions.

They called this "root canal" economics and insisted that the Republican Party could never compete with the Keynesian Democrats unless it abandoned its historic commitment to balanced budgets and fiscal rectitude, and instead, campaigned on tax cuts everywhere and always and a fiscal free lunch owing to a purported

cornucopia of economic growth.

Winning elections was conditional upon fiscal barbarism, given only the quite reasonable assumption that nothing except radical dishonesty could ever be popular. Insane promises, short-termism, and whole-hearted participation in a bi-partisan conspiracy to eradicate the last vestiges of responsible government were indispensable steps towards the exercise of power.

The fiscal end game — policy paralysis and the eventual bankruptcy of the state — thus became visible. All of the beltway players –Republican, Democrats and central bankers alike — are now so hooked on the Keynesian cool-aid that they cannot imagine the Main Street economy standing on its own two feet without continuous, massive injections of state largesse. […] the stimulus bill was not a rational economic plan at all; it was a spasmodic eruption of beltway larceny that has now become our standard form of governance.

Hence the Stockman forecast:

… the Federal budget has become a doomsday machine because the processes of fiscal governance are paralyzed and broken. There will be recurrent debt ceiling and shutdown crises like the carnage scheduled for next week, as far as the eye can see.

Indeed, notwithstanding the assurances of debt deniers like professor Krugman, the honest structural deficit is $1-2 trillion annually for the next decade and then it will get far worse. In fact,

when you set aside the Rosy Scenario used by CBO and its preposterous Keynesian assumption that we will reach full employment in 2017 and never fall short of potential GDP ever again for all eternity, the fiscal equation is irremediable.

Under these conditions what remains of our free enterprise economy will … buckle under the weight of taxes and crisis. Sundown in America is well-nigh unavoidable.

This is the terrain that neoreaction takes root within. It frames our problems, opportunities, and expectations. The overwhelmingly preponderant part of our intellectual energies should be targeted at the future it anticipates.

October 6, 2013

The Decline Frame

This point is important enough to restate well, as Foseti does:

The crux of [Scott Alexander's] argument is that, "It is a staple of Reactionary thought that everything is getting gradually worse." He then goes on to show that not everything is getting worse. […] It is not a staple of reactionary thought that everything is getting worse. To the contrary, I've never read that argument from any reactionary anywhere. […] Let's correct his statement: It is a staple of Reactionary thought that massive improvements in technology have

been very effective in masking massive declines in virtually all other aspects of society.

The progressive assumption, which neoreaction contests, is that it is natural and good to spend the advances of civilization on causes unrelated to civilizational advance. A more controversial formulation (supported here) is that the Cathedral spends capitalism on something other than capitalism, and ultimately on the destruction of capitalism. It tolerates a functional economy — to the extent that it does — only on the understanding that it will be used for something else.

Elementary cybernetics predicts that if productivity is recycled into productivity, the outcome is an explosive process of increasing returns. Insofar as history is not manifesting accelerating productivity, therefore, it can be assumed that social circuitry is being fed through non-productive, and anti-productive links. Techno-commercial Modernity is being squandered on (Neo-Puritan) Progressivism. In the West, at least, that is what is *getting worse*.

October 23, 2013

Nemesis

Neoreaction, at its core, is a critical analysis of the Cathedral. It

should surprise nobody, therefore, to see it hurtled into public consciousness, as the sole cultural agency able to name the self-evident configuration of contemporary sovereignty.

As the Cathedral becomes a self-confident public performance, its only remotely-articulate analyst is drawn into prominence, in its wake. In this regard, we haven't seen anything yet.

Even had the Obama administration consciously decided to select the Cathedral as a branding device, it could not have been epitomized any more perfectly. Sacralized progressivism, ivory tower 'brahminism', academic-media fusion as the exclusive source of recognizable authority, and the absolute identification of governance with public relations have reached a zenith that tilts into self-parody. Soft fascist self-transcending hyper-Calvinism has been lucidly distilled into blitz-promoted political iconography. Everyone with a television set now knows that the Cathedral is in power, and merely await the terminological confirmation of their perceptions. Enthusiasts and dissidents are seeing more-or-less the same thing, characterized in approximately the same words. The only serious matter of controversy is the quantity of spiritual devotion such a regime, faith, and symbolic order reasonably commands.

Politics-as-religious-experience has been seen in America before. Arguably, it is even typical. What has not been seen since William Jennings Bryan at the dawn of the progressive movement, and never at all before then, is democracy pitched to such rapturous

extremities of soteriological expectation — and Bryan was stopped. By identifying himself deliberately with a promise of comprehensive socio-spiritual redemption, Obama has more fully exemplified *hubris* than any leader in the history of the United States. The appropriate frame of political explanation, therefore, is *tragic*.

Tragedy is the fundamental teaching of Classical Occidental Antiquity, nucleated upon the insight that *hubris escalates to nemesis*. It finds its most lucid philosophical articulation in the fragment of Anaximander:

Whence things originate,
Thence they return to destruction,
According to necessity;
For they reciprocate justice and pay recompense
For their injustice
In conformity with the ordinance of Time.

This conception strongly resonates with neoreactionary fatalism (anti-politics), and with the formation of ideas around *wu wei* (laissez faire) in the Chinese cultural context. Nemesis, the agency of cosmic justice (*Δίκη*) eventuates automatically, as a retarded consequence that is nevertheless inalienably bound to the *hubris* of political action. The fatal stroke is delivered — at the right time — from the intersection of power and fate, rather than by any kind of considered remedy or political dialectic. Tragic rectification completes itself.

If there is a 'strategic' lesson from tragedy, it is not opposition,

but *non-participation*. To become entangled in hubris is to invite nemesis. To the greatest extent possible, hubristic power should be left to its fate. The less interrupted its acceleration into concentrated nemesis, the more spectacularly cosmic justice is displayed, and the more effectively the audience is educated.

If you're sitting comfortably, you can pass around the popcorn now, because the American tragedy is a real doozy. We already know that Obama is playing the part of the tragic hero with exceptional genius, as the very personification of immoderate political ambition and narcissistic blindness. Far more unexpectedly, his GOP opposition has somehow reached beyond its corrupt dementia to discover the fatal stance of non-participation, unanimously rejecting the President's key-stone domestic initiative, and also distancing itself from his foreign policy agenda in overwhelming numbers. Unilateral Cathedralism reigns, uncompromised. This is the secret to the unprecedented delights of the current epoch.

Jonah Goldberg describes the spectacle well:

I*f you can't take some joy, some modicum of relief and mirth, in the unprecedentedly spectacular beclowning of the president, his administration, its enablers, and, to no small degree, liberalism itself, then you need to ask yourself why you're following politics in the first place. Because, frankly, this has been one of the most enjoyable political moments of my lifetime. I wake up in the morning and rush to find my just-delivered newspaper with a joyful expectation of*

worsening news so intense, I feel like Morgan Freeman should be narrating my trek to the front lawn. Indeed, not since Dan Rather handcuffed himself to a fraudulent typewriter, hurled it into the abyss, and saw his career plummet like Ted Kennedy was behind the wheel have I enjoyed a story more.

Alas, the English language is not well equipped to capture the sensation I'm describing, which is why we must all thank the Germans for giving us the term "schadenfreude" — the joy one feels at the misfortune or failure of others. The primary wellspring of schadenfreude can be attributed to Barack Obama's hubris — another immigrant word, which means a sinful pride or arrogance that causes someone to believe he has a godlike immunity to the rules of life.

The catharsis is so harsh and pure that even the invertebrate Buckleyites at *The National Review* are beginning to get it, for a short, exquisite moment, at least. As Konkvistador warns (in this thread), a far less radically degraded group of people will nevertheless "forget all about these insights [as] the next election cycle warms up, indeed elections with their promise of power for conservatives and pseudo-conservatives [have] historically served as their mindwipe. Election cycles are when conservative obsolete Progressivism is updated to a slightly less obsolete version." The sojourn of conservatism on the Outer Right, where tragic non-participation holds, cannot be expected to last. Yet even as a brief

intermission from vile ambition, it allows nemesis the space to express itself in its full, planet-shuddering splendor.

Whatever the disagreements and divergences among the strands of neoreaction, there is one message that has to remain unwaveringly consistent: *The Cathedral owns this* (totally). Less than a quarter of the way into Obama's second term, full-spectrum catastrophe is already written across the heavens in letters of incandescent sulfur. Obamacare is wrecked before it has even rolled out, Yellen has all-but promised to dedicate the Fed to full-throttle bubble-mania, metropolitan bankruptcy is burning through the nation's cities like a zombie virus, crime is angling sharply upwards, American foreign policy lies in smoking ruins … there is simply no way this disintegrating jalopy holds together for another three years.

Let in burn — in the Cathedral's hands.

ADDED: Advice from Michael Walsh to the GOP: "Don't do something, just stand there. You didn't vote for it, not once, not a single time, ever. […] Obama threw a spanner into his own Rube Goldberg machine yesterday and the best thing you can do is to sit down, shut up, get out of the way, and enjoy the show."

ADDED: *For Democrats, Obamacare Unfolding Like a Greek Tragedy*

ADDED: "Hubris has a way of ruining grand designs. And like reality, it bites."

November 15, 2013

Nemesis II

Less than a year after surrendering corporate governance to SJWs, this happens. There's plenty of room for arguments about the tangles of causality here. Nevertheless, as a dramatic exemplification of harsh Cosmic Law it's going to be difficult to beat.

ADDED: Mr. Archenemy recommends a link far superior to those given above. Eric Raymond writes: "… all I can think is "They brought the fate they deserved on themselves." Because principles matter – and in 2014 the Mozilla Foundation abandoned and betrayed one of the core covenants of open source. […] I refer, of course, to the Foundation's disgraceful failure to defend its newly promoted Mozilla CEO Brendan Eich against a political mob."

March 9, 2015

No Way Home

It follows from the analysis of socio-political modernity as a *degenerative ratchet* that *identification of deterioration does not in itself amount to a program for reversing it*. The vividness of this

problem is directly proportional to the seriousness with which the nature of time, as a practical consideration, is addressed. The *essential* difference between reaction and neoreaction is adequately articulated as soon as this point is made.

'Past orientation' is an impressively defensible value (even by techno-commercial criteria). Retro-directed action, in contrast, is sheer error. This is too obvious an idea to labor over. Those who do not get it have chosen not to.

Unlike the many unsettled controversies of neoreaction, the temptation to *simply return*, however well-intentioned, merits no more than condescension. In this case — as in so many others — an image is worth a thousand words:

 (click on image to enlarge)

April 21, 2014

End of the Ratchet?

Richard Fernandez makes a basic, but essential point:

Mention repealing Obamacare and you are told it is impossible; even John Boehner said, it's the 'law of the land'. Brown vs Board is the law of the land, Roe vs Wade is the law of the land, but Hobby Lobby or Citizens United is an abomination to be repealed or ignored soonest. It's like a ratchet. It moves only in the way of the approved narrative.

This is the same insight identified by this blog as *The Idea of Neoreaction*, which is to say: recognition of a degenerative ratchet as the central mechanism of 'progress' (to the Left). Fernandez draws explicit attention to its constitutive asymmetry. Partisan polarity is revealed as a one-way conveyor, alternating between 'stop' and 'go left'. Two-party democratic politics is structurally-established as an inevitable loser's game for the Right. Once this is seen, how is the thought of 'conservative activism' in any way sustainable, except as a transparently futile joke? Hasn't the line already been crossed to the dark side?

Fernandez is still hedging:

… the real news is this: it's not working any more. Even Obamacare might actually be repealed. Liberal foreign policy might really go down in flames. Already the authorities are warning of bombs on inbound airline flights. And Obama might actually be the worst president since World War 2. Things used to be under control; what happened? […] History suggests that over time all conflict becomes symmetrical. Eventually both sides become equally brutal.

[…] If there is any lesson taught by history it is that man when driven far enough is the most dangerous and merciless life form on the planet.

It's not at all clear to me what's really being said here. Is this an anticipation of counter-revolution? Or is it merely the tired claim that *the next election could really make a difference*?

Even in the most depressing case, something is being seen that would very much rather not be seen. If acute conservative opinion is tiring of its role as the Cathedral's loyal opposition, it indicates that the mechanism is beginning to break down.

July 3, 2014

Ratchets and Catastrophes

> pic.twitter.com/aSnoz9Om20
> — Greg (@FoolishReporter) August 23, 2014

Perhaps all significant ideological distinctions — at the level of philosophical abstraction — can be derived from this proposition. For the progressive, it represents the purest expression of history's "moral arc". For the Conservative (or, more desperately, the Reactionary), it describes an unfolding historical catastrophe. For the Neoreactionary, it indicates a problem in need of theorization.

Moldbug lays out the problem in this (now classic) formulation:

Cthulhu may swim slowly. But he only swims left. Isn't that interesting?

In the history of American democracy, if you take the mainstream political position (Overton Window, if you care) at time T1, and place it on the map at a later time T2, T1 is always way to the right, near the fringe or outside it. So, for instance, if you take the average segregationist voter of 1963 and let him vote in the 2008 election, he will be way out on the wacky right wing. Cthulhu has passed him by. Where is the John Birch Society, now? What about the NAACP? Cthulhu swims left, and left, and left. There are a few brief periods of true reaction in American history — the post-Reconstruction era or Redemption, the Return to Normalcy of Harding, and a couple of others. But they are unusual and feeble compared to the great leftward shift.

The specific Moldbuggian solution to this problem, whether approached historically through the Ultra-Calvinism Thesis, or systemically through the analysis of the Cathedral, invokes a dynamic model of Occidental religious modernization. The irreversible bifurcations, symmetry breaks, or schisms that lock Western modernity into its "great leftward shift" correspond to successive episodes of cladistic fission within Protestant Christianity (abstractly understood). The religious history of modernity is constituted by a *degenerative ratchet* (as touched upon here, 1, 2, 3).

Discussing a recent critique of the Euro by Keith Humphreys, Megan McArdle converges upon the same insight. She writes:

As a longtime euroskeptic, who has frequently flirted with the idea that the euro must eventually destroy itself, I am sympathetic to Humphreys' point. But let me attempt to offer a partial defense of the hapless eurocrats: However stupid the creation of the euro was, undoing it will not be easy. […] Yes, we're back to our old friend path dependence. As I noted the other day, the fact that you can avoid some sort of terrible fate by stopping something before it starts does not mean that you can later achieve the same salutary effects by ceasing whatever stupid thing you have done. It would have been painless just to not have the euro. But it will be painful indeed to get rid of it.

She encounters the signature nonlinearities of such lock-in phenomena in noting: "No wonder that no one wants even to discuss it. Especially since even discussing a dissolution of the euro area makes a crisis more likely …"

Progressivism as a process, rather than a mere attitude, is always and everywhere a matter of degenerative ratchets. Consider, very briefly, some of the most prominent examples:

(1) Democratization. Every extension of the franchise is effectively irreversible. This is why the promotion of democratic reform in Hong Kong, in a complete rupture from its local traditions, is so breathtakingly irresponsible. (No link, because I have yet to

encounter an article on the subject worthy of recommendation.)

(2) Welfare systems (and positive rights in general). The irreversibility of these socio-economic innovations is widely recognized. Once implemented, they cannot be rolled back without the infliction of massive suffering. Obamacare is a more-or-less cynical attempt to exploit this lock-in dynamic.

(3) Immigration. Welcoming newcomers is effortless, removing them all-but impossible (or at least entirely unprecedented in the modern West). Immigration policy, by its nature, can only "swim left". It consists of freezes and floods (but never reversals) — epitomizing the ratchet pattern.

(4) Macroeconomic politicized money (central banking, fiat currency, inflationary normalization, and debt financing). Easing is easy, tightening is terrifying, roll back unattempted (since Jackson in the mid-19th century).

My contention: *There is no substantial topic of Neoreactionary concern that does not conform to this basic pattern*. The degenerative ratchet is *the problem*, abstractly conceived.

This is why NRx is dark. The only way out of a degenerative ratchet is catastrophe. Such processes are essentially unreformable, and this conclusion captures the critique of political conservatism from which NRx has been born. The only non-disastrous solution to a DR, or progressive lock-in dynamic, is to avoid entering into it. Once it has begun, normal politics can only modulate the speed

of deterioration, and then only to a relatively limited degree. It will reach its end, which will be seriously horrible. NRx forecasting begins and ends with this thesis.

Our doomsterism is not a psychological tic, but a rigorous theoretical obligation. It follows, ineluctably, from iron historical law. Looking on the dark side is the only way to see.

September 2, 2014

Down-slopes

The Outer-Right, in all its principal strands, has a horrified fascination with decline. Is this basic proposition even slightly controversial? It's not easy to see how it could be. This is a zone of convergence of such intimidating enormity that even beginning to heap up link support seems futile. Taking the Trichotomy as a rough guide reveals the pattern starkly:

(1) Religious traditionalists see a continuous decline trend from the Reformation to the most recent frenzy of evangelical hyper-secularism.

(2) Ethno-Nationalists see a process of accelerating demographic destruction driven — or at least lucidly articulated — by left-wing race politics.

(3) Techno-Commercialists see the systematic destruction of capital

by cancerous Leviathan and macroeconomic high-fraudulence, undermining economic incentives, crushing time-horizons, and garbling price-discovery into fiat noise.

In each case, the online-ecologies (and associated micro-cultures) sharing the respective deep intuitions of progressive ruin are too enormous to conveniently apprehend. What everyone on the Outer-Right shares (and I'm now hardening this up, into a definition) is the adamantine confidence that the basic socio-political process is radically morbid, and is leading inexorably to utter ruin.

No surprise, then, that John Michael Greer finds many attentive readers in our camp. His latest (and still incomplete) series on *Dark Age America* resonates with particular strength. The most recent installment, which discusses the impending collapse of the market system, through quasi-Marxist crisis, on its way to many centuries of neo-feudalism, is bound to raise some tech-comm eyebrows, but it nevertheless occupies the same broad forecast space. If people are stocking their basements with ammo, silver coins, and dried beans for Greer reasons rather than Stockman ones, they might cut back a little on the coins, but they're not going to stop stocking the basement. Differences seem to lie in the details.

The differences in the details are actually fairly substantial. Even if *Winter is coming*, we're not necessarily talking about the same thing. To begin with, Greer is not a figure of the Outer-Right at all, because his (extremely interesting) cybernetic engine of descent is

ecological and resource-based, carried by a deep eco-historical 'correction' or dominating (negative) feedback cycle whose proxy is fossil-fuel abundance. Modernity, roughly speaking, simply runs out of gas. His cultural criticism is ultimately anchored in — and limited to — that. When describing (drawn-out, and incremental) civilizational collapse, he forecasts the automatic nemesis of a system doomed by its unsustainable excess. Further engagement with this model belongs elsewhere. It's an important discussion to have.

The more immediate concern, here, is with the very different components of 'winter' — of which three, in particular, stand-out. Each is, in itself, huge. The directions in which they point, however, are not obviously coherent.

(1) Closest to the Greer vision are bad global-systems dynamics. These tend to prevail on the Outer-Right, but they typically lack the theoretical resolution Greer provides. It is understandable that those who strongly identify with specific declining ethnies (or Super-Phyles), whether theologically, racially, or traditionally conceived, are disinclined to distinguish their progressive dilapidation from a generalized global calamity. This is certainly not merely stupid, however much it offends prevailing moral fashion. The extent to which it supplies an adequate preparation for the events to come is questionable, nevertheless. Without an explicit defense of its specificity, it can all too easily confuse its *own* winter sicknesses with a universal predicament.

(2) What can easily be under-estimated is the localization of the unfolding disaster, in a specifically Occidental collapse. This is, of course, Spengler's *Decline of the West*, among other things, and even though this is a work Greer explicitly acknowledges, the inherent globality of his model tends to eclipse its particularism. For Greer, the impending decline of China (for instance) follows upon its complicity in fossil-fueled industrial modernity, even if, for rhetorical effect, it is to be permitted a few decades of comparative ascendancy. The Outer-Right tends to be Greerian in this respect, although without equivalent positive reason. It is not asked, often enough, how much of the deepening winter is — quite narrowly — *ours*. Greer has an argument for why Western Modernity has consumed the future for everyone. Unless the fundamentals of this theory are accepted, is there any reason to accept its predictive consequences?

(3) The third 'winter' is modeled by the rhythmic troughs of the Kondratiev cycle. This tends to localize in time, rather than space, dividing the merely seasonal from the cumulative, secular trend. While a comprehensive attribution of our malaise to such a cycle would constitute an exit from the Outer-Right, passing into a far more complacent diagnosis of the global, or merely Western, calamity, to dismiss it entirely from consideration is to court profound cognitive (and predictive) imbalance. In the opinion of this blog, Greer's model is grievously afflicted by such imbalance, and —

once again — this seems to be a syndrome of far wider prevalence. Scarcely anybody on the Outer-Right is prepared for rhythmic amelioration of significant modern pathologies, through renewal of techno-commercial vitality *even under conditions of secular civilizational decline*. Yet even glancing attention to the working of the (~ half century) *long waves* suggests that such neglect is simply unrealistic. Unless the K-wave is now dead — an extraordinarily extreme proposition, which surely merits explicit assertion — some proportion of the present decay is inherently transitional. New industrial structures based on blockchained communications — and thus designed to route around socio-cultural sclerosis — will support an explosion of innovation dwarfing any yet imagined (including synthetic economic agents, quantum computing, neuromorphic chips, large-scale space activity, applied genomics, VR media systems, drone-robotics, commercialized security … maybe *Urbit*). Even if Greer is absolutely right about the deep historical pattern being played out — and I'm fully confident he isn't — the next K-wave upswing is going to be vast, dazzling, and, almost incomprehensibly distracting. There's perhaps a decade remaining in which uncompromising gloom-core will make sense, after which the Outer-Right risks utter eclipse during two decades of upswing euphoria. It would make a lot of sense to pre-adapt to it, beginning with a reminder that the Outer-Right case is **not** that *everything* will *continually* deteriorate.

I've run out the clock on myself for now … but I'll get back to this.

November 8, 2014

CHAPTER FIVE - REALISM AND TIME STRUCTURE

Reality Check

Foseti, commenting at his own place, asks rhetorically:

Don't you think that writing to save the world is – in itself – fundamentally progressive in nature (not to say wildly presumptuous)?

Even those tempted to answer in the negative need to think this through patiently, because the pretensions this question punctures are typically distinguished by their thoughtlessness. Modern politics became psychotic when agitated scribblers convinced themselves that they had the tools, the right, and even the *duty* to re-order the world in accordance with their pamphlets. This is a Left tradition that few have yet derided enough.

To carve out cognitive independence is one thing, to deform it into practical idealism is quite another. Indeed, dripping our dark poisons into the milk of idealism might easily be the most *practical* difference we can make. Soaring words and rallying cries have already done

far too much. It makes sense to take a step back, into skepticism, humor, undistorted proportion, and the hypothetical mode, before advancing further down our tracks … wherever they lead.

May 29, 2013

Neoreactionary Realism

The easiest place to start is with what neoreactionary realism isn't, which is this:

For a reactionary state to be established in the West in our lifetimes, we'll need to articulate the need for one in a language millions of people can understand. If not to produce nationalists, to at least produce a large contingent of sympathizers. The question, ***"What is it, exactly, that you propose to do?"*** *must be answered, first in simple terms, then in detailed terms that directly support the simple arguments. The urge to develop esoteric theories of causes and circumstances should be tossed aside, and replaced with concrete proposals for a novel form of government that harmonizes with perennial principles. This can be achieved by producing positive theories for a new order, rather than analyzing the nuts and bolts of a decaying order.*

Beginning with a model of an ideal society is a procedure that already has a name, and a different one: Utopianism. It's not a

difficult way to think. For instance, imagine a political regime based on commutative tax politics. As far as economic considerations are concerned, the political problem is solved. Policy choices are aligned with practical incentives, and the manifestly irresistible democratic impulse to redistributive violation of property rights is immediately terminated. The trouble with this idea? — There's no practical way to get to it. The real problem of political philosophy does not lie in the conceptual effort of modeling an ideal society, but in *departing from where we are,* in a direction that tends to the optimization of a selected value (equality stinks, utility doesn't work, freedom is OK, intelligence is best).

Where can we get to from here? Unless this question controls political theory, the result is utopian irrelevance. The initial *real* problem is escape. In consequence, two broad avenues of realistic neoreactionary reflection are open:

(1) Elaborate escape. This topic naturally bifurcates in turn, into the identification and investment of exit-based institutions, and the promotion of secessionist options (from fissional federalism to seasteading). An escape-based society, unlike a utopia, is structured in the same way it is reached. Upon arriving in a world made of the right sort of fragments — splintered by political philosophy rather than tribal variety — all kinds of real possibilities arise. (Tribes are a useless distraction, because they resonate to defective philosophies — a world of Benetton differentiated failing social democracies is the

one we are being herded into now.)

(2) Defend diversity. Once again, ethnic diversity — as such — means next to nothing (at best). Every 'people' has shown itself capable of political idiocy. What deserves preservation is fracture, defined over against Cathedral universalism. Any place that can practically count as 'offshore' is a base for the future. In particular, the East Asian antidemocratic technocapitalist tradition merits ferocious ideological defense against Cathedralist subversion. Within the West, domestic enclaves that have resisted macrosocial absorption — from Amish communities to survivalist militia movements — have comparable value. Wherever political globalism fails, neoreaction wins.

The very last thing neoreaction has to usefully declare is *I have a dream*. Dream-mongering is the enemy. The only future worth striving for is splintered into myriads, loosely webbed together by free-exit connections, and conducting innumerable experiments in government, the vast majority of which will fail.

We do not, and cannot, know what we want, anymore than we can know what the machines of the next century will be like, because *real potentials need to be discovered*, not imagined. Realism is the negative of an unfounded pretense to knowledge, no less in political sociology than information technology. Invention is not planning, and sky-castles offer no refuge from the Cathedral. If there's one thing we need to have learned, and never to forget, it's that.

ADDED: Adventures in Exiting

July 4, 2013

Dark Moments

Gloom and realism can be hard to distinguish, but it's important to carry on. Curmudgeonry without stubbornness isn't worth a damn. Even in the worst case, relentless, sluggishly deterioriating ghastliness can at least be interesting. It shouldn't be necessary to cheer up, in order to continue, and there might be some lessons worth attending to in the slough of despond.

I'd go further. Despair can get things started, if it means the abandonment of diverting idols. A full, immersive soaking, which leaves no doubt about certain things *being over*, is morbidly therapeutic, and even something like a first step (at least a first slouch). There are hopes that have to die, and the sooner the better, although if they die slowly and horribly, they are perhaps less likely to need killing twice.

Here's the argument: *Nothing is going anywhere without preliminary disintegration*. That's the cheerful part. It seems to me an absolutely irresistible claim, and this post was to have been designed to rally consensus around it. Then I made the 'mistake' of watching this.

Allow me to walk you into this little knot of gloom in stages, punctuated by theses, each of which marks an essential but incomplete discussion. The meta-assertion is that there is no other way. Push-back against that, met at any of its way-stations, will make the dire swamp-thrashing to follow worthwhile.

Thesis-1: There is no more basic preliminary to effective neoreactionary transformation than schism. This can take many forms. Simple retirement into the private sphere — as strongly advocated by Nick B. Steves in particular — represents one significant pole. At the other lies secession, and other forms of macro-political disintegration (with science fiction variants extending from seasteading out to space colonization). The essential point is that *a consolidation of disagreement in space is substituted for a resolution of disagreement in time*. As far as practicality is concerned, this is the overwhelming priority.

Thesis-2: There can be no agreement. The recent flurry of interest in Emmanuel Todd should suffice as confirmation (this critical summary by Craig Willy is excellent). In a very small nutshell, Todd argues that "… political ideologies in the modern age are projections of a people's unconscious premodern family values." Europe has four basic family types (all exogamous), programming its varied political ideals.

The inegalitarian (classical) liberalism of mercantile North-West Europeans, corresponds to the 'Absolute nuclear family'.

Weird Franco-Italian 'egalitarian liberalism' corresponds to the 'egalitarian nuclear family' (Todd's own ancestral type and value model).
The Germanic 'Authoritarian family' tends to German stuff, and
The (Slav-Orthodox) 'Community family' breeds communists.
If you haven't read Willy yet, you'll be glad you did. The sole take-away here: *People are different* (oops, that's a signature judgement of the inegalitarian liberal type), with no tendency to converge upon common ideals, even among Europeans. There are people who think communism is natural and good, and they're not going to be argued out of it. Only a small minority think what you do, and that isn't going to change. You either have to kill them, dominate them, be dominated by them, *or escape them*. Escaping them is best.

Thesis-3: It's America that matters (for Anglophone neoreactionaries, at least). It's the only country with traditions of freedom that can be broken into large and influential pieces, and its residual federal structure provides a virtual template for doing exactly that. For practical purposes, therefore, the future of liberty — *even if you want to read that as the liberty to conduct experiments in ethnonationalist or theocratic government* — is entirely dependent upon the development of American federalism. Further centralized consolidation is losing, and disintegration is winning. Compared to that, in terms of political practicality, everything else is of vanishing irrelevance. Dreaming up schemes for ideal authoritarian regimes, in

particular, is simply a hobby (but you know that already, right?).

The only road to the future, or the past, leads through a Disunited States of America. Now listen to those *Bloggingheads* again, and wind up the gloom to scream volume. It's absolutely clear from a strictly technical point of view that the sole conceivable platform for an escape from Leviathan's degenerative ratchet would be a *Confederate States of America*, and we can probably agree that historical sensitivities make that a non-starter. Setting out on a path away from futile arguments — between people who will never agree — leads straight back into America's racial nightmare, and horrible, draining, unresolvable wrangling that amounts to: *Freedom is banned forever, because … what happened to black people*.

Those arguments are stupidity itself. They go nowhere. And that is precisely the point.

[Don't kill yourself, or shut down your blog — but a stiff drink is positively recommended]

ADDED: Why the GOP has to die.

July 18, 2013

Reaction, Repetition, and Time

Whether considered within the registers of ~~physics~~, physiology, or politics, 'reaction' is a time-structured notion. It follows an action

or stimulus, which it reaches back through, in order to annul or counteract a disequilibrium or disturbance. Whilst subsequent to an action, it operates in alignment with what came before: the track, or legacy, that defines the path of reversal, or the target of restoration. It therefore envelops the present, to contest it from all sides. The Outside of the dominant moment is its space.

Reaction forges, or excavates, an occult pact between the future and the past, setting both against the present, in concert, and thus differentiating itself from progressivism (which unites the present and future against the past), and conservatism (which unites past and present against the future). Its bond with time as *outsideness* carries it ever further beyond the moment and its decay, into a twin horizon of anterior and posterior remoteness. It is a Shadow Out of Time.

There is a far more immediately practical reason for reaction to involve itself in the exploration of time, however: to take steps to avoid what it could scarcely otherwise avoid becoming — a sterile orgy of disgruntlement. Finding nothing in the present except deteriorated hints of other things, reaction soon slides into what it most detests: an impotent micro-culture of vocal, repetitive protest. *This isn't right, this isn't right, this isn't right* quickly becomes white noise, or worse (intelligible whining). Even when it escapes the ceaseless, mechanical reiteration of a critical diagnosis (whose tedium is commensurate to the narrowed times it damns), its

schemes of restoration fall prey to a more extended repetition, which calls only — and uselessly — for what has been to be once more.

If the New Reaction is not to bore itself into a coma, it has to learn to run innovation and tradition together as Siamese twins, and for that it needs to think time, into distant conclusions, in its 'own' way. *That can be done,* seriously. Of course, a demonstration is called for …

[Note: 'physics' deleted from the first line to pre-emptively evade a righteous spanking from enraged Newtonians insisting upon the strict simultaneity of actions and reactions within classical mechanics]

February 19, 2013

Anti-Greer

Mix this with the *Archdruid Report*, and you begin to get why the world is so confusing. One of the crucial defenses of the term 'Neoreaction' — and thus an argument for clinging to it despite all frustrations — is its intrinsic orientation to grasping both of these perspectives at the same time. (Do that without time-spirals, and you've come up with something I've yet to consider.)

January 23, 2015

CHAPTER SIX - OTHERS

Cambrian Explosion

Scharlach's Habitable Worlds was created less than a month ago, and is presently expanding faster than the known universe. Then this massive brain-cycle munching machine appeared. Then this one. And then there's this. That's a selective list of blogs that I know I want to follow closely, *none of which existed four weeks ago*. Keeping up with this chaos of creation is becoming impossible. Can someone please hurry up with the delivery of my brain-accelerator chip.

May 9, 2013

On Goulding

James Goulding is a thinker of truly extraordinary brilliance. His intellectual stance is closer to that of *Outside in* than almost any other blog listed in our sidebar. It is with considerable sadness, therefore, that I have sought to comply with his shifted self-definition by moving the link to *suspiria de profundis* out of the

'neoreaction' category.

Goulding is subtle, complex, and difficult, and his central ideas remain only partially digested here. In addition, my grasp of the stakes in his new direction is extremely unformed. There are nevertheless a few preliminary remarks that I hope are worth making.

Neoreaction, or the Dark Enlightenment, has as its most essential tendency the insistence upon *an alternative to fascism*. Its realism does not embrace optimism readily, so it would be insincere to pretend that this alternative is destined for success. What cannot be convincingly denied, however, is that a reaction to the Cathedral is coming, that fascist modes of political rectification are well-placed to profit from it, and that Western — indeed all modern — societies default to fascism during crisis conditions. By separating himself from the new reaction, Goulding risks surrendering it to ominous potentialities that might otherwise be avoidable.

This matters. Whatever Goulding's talents [add well-deserved superlatives], marketing and propaganda are not among them. He has never been less convincing than when suggesting that 'Movement X' is a credible attractor for the disenchanted. As conservatism dies of chronic failure, what replaces it will be a reaction to the *status quo*, unashamed to identify itself as such, and positively exulting in the abominated label *reactionary*. Goulding seems to be sure that this prediction is wrong, for no very obvious

reason, and this certainty plays to his own greatest intellectual weaknesses. *I beseech him, in the bowels of Gnon, to think it possible that he may be mistaken.*

The practitioners of Machiavellian politics are politicians. They expose each other every day through their political machines, and *House of Cards* is already popular culture. *Everybody knows this stuff*, and it has no deep consequence. Politics is porn, an inane tangle of primate idiocy. It is unworthy of Goulding's focused intelligence.

We have suffered our first wound. It seriously hurts.

ADDED: Note to trolls (e.g. 'Donny Farp') if you can bring yourself to stop sounding like a jerk, I'll stop deleting you. This blog has a zero-tolerance policy for anonymous snark.

June 2, 2013

Reddit Shift

The moderators of the Outer Right information exchange / discussion forum at /r/DarkEnlightenment are mulling an overhaul (i.e. "gutting the hell out of the … sidebar"). Any suggestions? This is a piece of dissident Cyberspace with a significant defining role.

May 22, 2014

Neo-Feudalism

There's an intellectual Sistine Chapel calling out for your support. The next Pope Leo X has to be out there somewhere, eager to patronize the hungry culture of our age. Here's the chance. (I've "dedicated posts to far sillier things" apparently.)

(OK, the Sistine Chapel ceiling was patronized by Julius II, but let's try not to be pedantic — Leo X had cooler mirror-shades.)

March 25, 2015

Alexander on Reaction

Foseti was persuasive enough to motivate a second look at Scott Alexander's continuing engagement with reaction (even after the dismally unimpressive first installment).

It is indeed "awesome," and merits a serious response (later this week?).

For an immediate response, simple translation has to suffice, stripping away the slanted "survive/thrive" language, and getting right to the point. Reactionaries think leftists are **spoiled***: decadent, self-indulgent, hedonistic fantasists, debauching an inheritance they are incapable of adding to.

Degeneracy is degeneracy**, whether it's affordable or not. To the

reactionary right it looks horrible, even in the absence of zombie apocalypse (but we're getting one anyway).

* How can a theory of left/right differentiation demonstrate such insensitive disregard for 'the wretched of the earth'? It is that 'problem' — readily admitted by Alexander — that makes his explanation truly *awesome*. The Left has nothing to do with what the downtrodden 'think', and everyone — once pressed — is relieved to admit that. *Now everything makes sense*. We're discussing a thought-pattern (Leftism) *exclusively* native to affluent degenerates, with the social sub-strata occasionally latching on, opportunistically, and uncomprehendingly.

** Yes, the word 'degeneracy' is historically spicy — if we were being responsible about it, it would make us nervous. Slicing diagonally through biology, culture, economics — even technology — it's what reactionaries think socio-political 'progress' really is. In that respect, it's indispensable.

So what is degeneration? — in any conversation entirely *internal* to reaction, that would be the central topic of discussion. (The *Outside in* definition: degeneracy is whatever makes you more stupid.)

ADDED: Scott Alexander paraphrased: The Right doesn't think we can afford to degenerate, whilst the Left thinks we can.

Scott Alexander nudged: The Right decries degeneration, even when it seems (in the short term) affordable. The Left advocates degeneration (in the medium term) even when, in the short term, we

obviously can't afford it.

ADDED: 'Survive vs thrive' or Crunchy vs Soggy (via Glenn Reynolds)?

ADDED: Goad on fire viz affluent degenerates (via SDL in the comments).

March 17, 2013

DE Q&A

Matt Sigl of Vocativ is writing an article on the Dark Enlightenment, both the 'thing' and the 'manifesto' (I've already told him why this description is misleadingly over-generous). His questions suggest a sincere attempt to understand what is going on.

Among the lines of inquiry he is pursuing (my compressions): Why Now? What's the 'Cathedral' business? How does the Dark Enlightenment relate to transhumanism/futurism, libertarianism, fascism, white supremacism, anti-semitism, social Darwinism? Where is the Dark Enlightenment going? How does it respond to criticisms that (a) capitalism is to blame, (b) everything's basically OK?

I have tried to respond as objectively as possible, whilst attempting to be clear about those answers which express my own idiosyncratic decisions regarding unsettled/disputed matters.

Predictably, I have emphasized the Moldbuggian origins of the Dark Enlightenment / Neoreaction as a definite cultural phenomenon (distinct from pre-existing right-libertarian, traditionalist, and paleo-reactionary streams of thought).

Readers who think they can help Matt get this portrait right are encouraged to make relevant points here.

ADDED: Foseti on 'Why Now?'

ADDED: Handle on progress.

ADDED: Mike Anissimov (via Twitter): "Nothing good will come of a neoreactionary dialogue with Matt Sigl. … I predict we'll regret this in the end."

September 29, 2013

Zacked

Whilst it's undoubtedly flattering to be the target of a brutal, lazy, and dishonest hit piece, it's also vaguely irritating. Couldn't Kuznicki have stoked the hate sufficiently with the rejection of democracy, HBD sympathies, anti-egalitarianism, market-fundamentalism, disintegrationism, and Shoggoth-whispering, without also making up a bunch of stuff?

Anyway, just for the record:

* I'm not a proponent of "white nationalistic race 'realism'."

* I nowhere make the “case that white nationalism and market liberalism somehow belong together.”
* I have never made a “case against markets” of any kind, let alone that they “stand behind democracy with a tyrannical, unpredictable veto” [whatever than means]
* I have never advocated for “racial purity”

There’s no doubt a number of people who turn up here who wish that I did make some of these arguments, and by distancing myself from them I’m not wanting to endorse Kuznicki’s suggestion that they’re mere slurs.

As far as Kuznicki’s own substantial points are concerned — defense of dialectics, voice, meliorative politics — I’m not really interested enough to engage.

This sort of situation tends to stress objectivity, so I won’t pretend to perfect balance on the subject. There seem to be lessons, though, of a quite general nature.

To begin with, the problem of ‘engagement’ with the media is a real one, which can only get more pressing in strict proportion to ‘success’. They have to come after Mencius Moldbug at some point, insofar as anything interesting is brewing up, so there will probably be further test runs against secondary targets. The whole target selection question is potentially interesting, but I’ve no special insight to share on that topic at this point.

Clearly I’ve lucked out in this case. China doesn’t seem Cathedral-

compliant (as Stirner points out in the excellent comments thread), so direct social pressure is seriously dulled. Kuznicki is neither the sharpest knife in the drawer, nor a pitbull, so *weakness* has been the 'dominant' impression. The site he posts from, despite its Magazine-style format, is quite incredibly marginal — the traffic from this little blog to his has been running at two-to-three times the reverse (which I would never have imagined — they have ten contributors listed there). *Umlaut* also allows comments, which has been a comprehensive fiasco for them this time (check it out). All the visitors have been ripping into Kuznicki, and using the up/down vote system to quantify the point. I'm biased, but I've found it utterly hilarious. It's worth noting, however, that the left media machine has been stripping out its comment threads, which makes them far more effective as no-comeback attack machines. Finally, Twitter has been an extraordinary resource. It's an absolutely critical component of our capability to defend ourselves.

Drawing all this together: We have to learn, prepare, and anticipate. The fights coming up are worth getting right. Any fatalistic depression about the might of our enemies is both self-fulfilling defeatism and to a considerable extent simply false. There's no reason to think that the 'destiny' of media is under their control, or even that its trends are generally favorable to them. Practice is our friend. This stuff is going to matter more and more. Luck won't always run so obviously one way.

ADDED: Handle explores the limits of civility and reason.

ADDED: Nerves? Not to mention this, and this.

ADDED: Jason Kuznicki is magnanimous enough to write this. It's appreciated.

October 17, 2013

Dorks for the Norks!

There are hints of a theme here:

From a TC piece comment by 'Bah': "Neoreactionaries should really move to North Korea, it's much closer to what they want for the world."

David Brin: "Some of you know the experiment to which he refers. North and South Korea."

Charlie Stross (in his own comment thread): "The reason I think the reactionaries are full of shit is because we have a modern-day poster child for the hereditary king of a nation that embodies all their declared virtues: Kim Jong-Un."

(Moldbug responds to this 'analysis'. Much more by others on the TC thread.)

If anyone finds the variant of Neoreaction espoused here indistinguishable from *Juche*, I'm just going to suck it up.

November 29, 2013

Lewis on NR

Matt K. Lewis, in *The Week*, shows that a critical appraisal of Neoreaction really doesn't require hysteria. (The second half of the article is especially impressive.) If the custodians of Cathedral orthodoxy don't find a way to punish him for his sobriety, this piece could set a new standard for public discussion of the anti-democratic right.

… these movements tacitly accept that conservatism as a political force is utterly incapable of slowing the leftward march of liberalism. By definition, conservatives, who want to conserve the good things about the past, are always playing defense. When you consider that many of my conservative views aren't terribly different from John F. Kennedy's views in 1960, this becomes self-evident.

Can this degree of honesty be allowable?

ADDED: At *The American Conservative*, two (instantly forgettable) response pieces, by Noah Millman, and Rod Dreher.

ADDED: Jonah Goldberg isn't shrieking either: "Lewis goes on to talk about the neoreactionaries, an interesting intellectual subculture from what I can tell, but calling them extremely marginal to the mainstream right probably still gives them too much credit."

These kind of responses are making it ever more obvious how unhinged the libertarian commentary has been (with Cato-types being the most despicable).

January 6, 2014

Scrapping

Due to a mixture of out-in-the-stickitude, device deficiency, and technical incompetence I can't even link to the Demos attack on 'the dark enlightenment' hosted by The Daily Telegraph (at the right edge of the UK MSM). I'll be grateful for a link to this piece in the comments here (complacently confident there'll be one).

Some not-quite-random remarks:

1. The article is dismally poor, even by the standards of these things. Neoreaction is something cooked up by Moldy and me, apparently, starting from "two blogs". It's also 'neofascism'.

2. The comment thread isn't remotely cooperating.

3. Demos has an interesting history.

4. As this nonsense gets bigger, it's descending into sheer self-parody. Cathedral culture is a kind of chaos, which makes the strategic issues far more intriguing than the quality of this material might suggest.

January 20, 2014

Scrap note #4

Into the closing days of this Cambodian escape, I'm now in Kep, on the coast of the Gulf of Thailand. It's an interesting place (which I'll say something about in the Cambodia scrap log). Note the link there? There haven't been any of those for a while. The reason it has now become possible is the *Kep Lodge* guest computer, which leaves my tablet in the dust. Links, cursor control, copy-and-paste … ecstasy. So I have to try and seize the opportunity …

Starting meta, there are two media-reaction compilation resources which everyone needs to know about (and I'm sure just about everyone already does). Both are finding it increasingly difficult to keep up. Handle's (here) might by updating sluggishly for a few weeks, because the *Hausmeister* is taking a well-earned break. It might fall upon *Amos & Gromar* (here) to track developments, which are getting steadily more encouraging.

The American Thinker isn't exactly MSM, but it's still highly significant that Christopher Chantrill has written the first Dark Enlightenment commentary for a relatively mainstream conservative site that doesn't engage in any skirt-clutching whatsoever. It's a short, friendly piece that is best understood as a

deliberate exercise in de-toxification. Prediction: this brewing media storm is going to start opening consequential fault-lines in the conservative movement, which as far as any DE strategic schedule is concerned, gets us to first base. It follows, of course, that establishment conservative responses will get even more hysterical (and that also counts as a win).

Some substantial engagement from beyond the reactosphere is also in prospect from Adam Gurri (who has some genuinely productive lines of criticism). There's also Patri Friedman (link?– can't get it to work from here), who commits to exploring "a more politically correct dark enlightenment" (via @MikeAnissimov twitter) which has to — at the very least — be extremely entertaining. Given the prevailing distribution of forces, confusion has to be our friend (right?).

Related developments of interest include a tendency within the HBD 'community' to seize the 'Dark Enlightenment' (brand) for themselves, chucking out all the awkward right-wingery (via rumorous twitter). I've no sense at all of the mechanism by which 'they' think they can achieve that, but the impulse is disorganizing, and therefore probably to be approved (although, of course, at the same time fiercely contested).

Accepting that chaos is 'bad', it seems to me that it is especially bad for our opponents, whose piecemeal suppression strategy requires social conditioning by a maximally-simple aversion

response. Their stage-1 campaign is based on something like a "Neoreaction — yuk, Nazis!" reflex. Anything that leads instead to "What? Hang on a minute …" reaction counts (for them) as a major fail. There can be no serious doubt that we're well into that (as the comment threads of all the hit-pieces so far attest). So, prediction-2: we're going to see a second phase hostile media approach emerging really soon — over the next few months — adapted to important constituencies who are refusing the desired stimulus-response programming. I've no idea what this will look like, but it's almost bound to be more intellectually engaging than anything we've seen so far.

Some straggly extras:

At the risk of getting Matt Sigl into trouble, it's quite obvious that he's a thoughtful guy who deserves better editors. Are we going to see another piece by him (stripped of the Cathedral tics) some time this year?

Tim Stanley is a pathetic tool, but there are some impressive *Telegraph* writers (~~Ed West~~, James Dellingpole …), are they going to jump in at some point?

If the *Telegraph* can be cracked (still uncertain), how about the *National Review*? If Steyn has problems with us, they won't be stupid, and he really doesn't like witch hunters.

We'll get so bored by this expression, if we aren't already, but — *interesting times*.

ADDED: See this by *Amos & Gromar*. The people who seem to be getting front rank exposure in the current media wave are Mencius Moldbug (naturally), Michael Anissimov, and me. To make a very obvious point explicit, however, this is wildly disproportionate, and — I suspect — not long sustainable. Moldbug is a transcendental master, about whom enough can never be said, but Mike and I are both highly atypical representatives of (very different) neoreactionary extremes. If *Amos & Gromar* (for non-random instance) was shifted to center stage, the whole phenomenon would become vastly more sane. (In this particular case, I suspect that an A&G has a branding issue, because media get confused about 'who' exactly they're pointing at — and frankly I think I'm pretty good at that stuff. MARKETING people!)

ADDED: Nicholas Pell has written a thoughtful piece on the DE for *takimag* that has garnered glowing responses from all corners so far. (I'm certainly highly appreciative.)

ADDED: John Derbyshire is in the house.

ADDED: The Daily Telegraph is done:

> Shame to see James Delingpole leaving DT blogs. despite being a warmist I always find his writing amusing http://t.co/vHVhAyunpR
>
> — Ed West (@edwestonline) February 12, 2014

January 28, 2014

Lord of the Trolls

Mark Shea might not quite be the most ludicrous idiot alive (judge for yourself), but he earnestly shares the following warning — received from one of his readers. I'm putting the whole story here, because Shea's credulity about it is so radically humiliating I can only assume he'll want to take it down.

The Dark Enlightenment Exposed

I first heard about the Dark Enlightenment (aka "Neo-Reaction" or just "Reaction") last year, the year after I graduated from college and was interning at a conservative think tank. I briefly become involved with the Dark Enlightenment and then left the movement in disgust. Here is what I learned:

– The Dark Enlightenment is controlled by what the media call "Sith Lords". You have more public Lords like Mencius Moldbug and Nick Land, but there are even some Lords up higher whose names are not revealed. They say the Master Lord says 'Et Ego in Arcadia' which is an anagram for 'Tego Arcana Dei' ("I hide the secrets of God").

– But only the media call them 'Sith Lords'. In Inner Speak, they will often use phrases like the Men of Númenor or the Eldars.

– I never met any of the higher Eldars, but I did once meet an Eldar

in Training. I don't know his real name but people called him Legolas. He had long blond hair, was dressed like a 19th century count, and wore a pendant that had both a Christian Cross and Thor's Hammer on it.

– The movement is a weird mixture of ethno-nationalists, futurists, monarchists, PUAs ("pick-up artists" like Chateau Heartiste), Trad Catholics, Trad Protestants, etc. They all believe in HBD (what they call "human biodiversity" i.e. racism) but disagree on some other minor points.

– The religious people in the movement (both Christians and pagans) practice what is called "identitarian religion" (religion that doesn't deny ethnic identity).

– Some of the rising stars of the Dark Enlightenment on the internet seem to be Radish Magazine, Occam's Razor Mag, and Theden TV.

– The Dark Enlightenment allegedly has millions of dollars of money to play with. They have a couple big donors. One is rumored to be a major tech tycoon in Silicon Valley. They actually had a private 3-day meeting on an island which was furnished with a French chef, etc. Different forms of formal attire were required for each day (tuxedos, 3-piece suits, etc), and some weird costumes were required too (capes, hoods, etc) — which sound like a pagan cult. (I wasn't at this function but heard about it.)

– I was initiated into the first stages of the Dark Enlightenment,

which involved me stripping down naked so people could "inspect my phenotype". I was then given a series of very personal questions, often relating to sexual matters. I was then told to put on a black cape. (I really regret doing this but at the time I was younger, more impressionable and eager to please.)

– For the initial oath taking, everyone must swear on a copy of Darwin's Origin of Species, just to show their fidelity to HBD. After that, for the later oaths, seculars will swear again on Darwin, while Christians will swear on the Bible, and pagans on the Prose Edda or Iliad.

– At one of the meetings I heard someone continuously chanting "gens alba conservanda est" (Latin for "the white race must be preserved") and then others were chanting things in Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse and Old German, but I don't know those languages so I can't remember exactly what they were saying.

– They also have all their own secret handshakes, and their own terminology [like the Cathedral ("political correctness"), thedening ("re-establishing ethnic group identity"), genophilia ("love of one's own race"), NRx ("neoreaction"), etc.].

– On the philosophical level, this movement is not entirely original. Much of it is borrowed from the Identitarian movement in Europe. They also all detest democracy. They are not trying to be a "populist movement" but are only trying to convert other elites to their way of thinking.

This whole movement is like a secret cult, which is why I left. Also, because of the valiant and brave efforts of people on the net exposing this movement, I saw this cult for the evil it truly is. Please stay away from it.

(Thanks to Alex for pointing me at this.)

ADDED: It's been a big day for NRx exposure. (This one's via @realmattforney.)

ADDED: The post at Shea's blog has already gone — but too late to rescue the bearded one from an eternity of shame. … And now it's back up again, hard to keep track. [Please, please Gnon, let Shea be trying to do a Dan Rather and brazen this out.]

ADDED: Some essential developments here (at Shea's place) and here (at *Occam's Razor*). I'm strongly sympathetic to this:

> This is the best thing ever written: http://t.co/L32lO3BiUj
>
> — Wesley Morganston (@nydwracu) February 13, 2014

February 13, 2014

Hit-Piece of the Week

This one is actually pretty interesting (as well as reaching a whole new level of batshit insane).

ADDED: One hit piece in a week? Oh come on!
ADDED: A micro-crucial moment —

> How much of received history is the result of decisions like this? pic.twitter.com/jaj5Y3dpx7
>
> — Sister Sarah (@sarahdoingthing) June 14, 2014

June 13, 2014

Alexander on the Ratchet

It's carefully hedged (and ultimately contested), but it's well worth noting. He begins the relevant section of a recent post by revisiting the self-observation: "In the past two months I have inexplicably and very very suddenly become much more conservative." (Pass-the-popcorn.)

The explanation I like least is that it comes from reading too much neoreaction. I originally rejected this hypothesis because I don't believe most what I read. But I'm starting to worry that there are memes that, like Bohr's horseshoe, affect you whether you believe them or not: memes that crystallize the wrong pattern, or close the wrong feedback loop. I have long suspected social justice contains some of these. Now I worry neoreaction contains others.

In particular I worry about the neoreactionary assumption that leftism always increases with time, and that today's leftism confined to a few fringe idiots whom nobody really supports today becomes tomorrow's mainstream left and the day after tomorrow's "you will be fired if you disagree with them". Without me ever really evaluating its truth-value it has wormed its way into my brain and started haunting my nightmares.

I'm usually reluctant to take Alexander seriously when he tells us what Neoreaction is, but in this case I think he gets it right.

He embeds this passage in an encompassing theory, aiming to frame the degenerative ratchet within a directionless random-walk of fashion (driven by something like abstract cellular automata). The theory is clever, but its historical fit is so poor I don't expect it to last indefinitely. In the best case, during the few months it takes for this psychic-defense system to start falling apart and strewing parts along the doom-route of accelerating Left-Singularity, Alexander can dedicate his exceptional mind to collecting alternative cognitive defense-mechanisms and testing them to destruction. In this way he can contribute to clearing the desert at the end of our world.

ADDED: The voyage into darkness continues …

July 6, 2014

Castillo on Nrx

From the perspective of an intrigued (and thoughtfully critical) libertarian, Andrea Castillo offers an initial appraisal of Neoreaction. It's definitely the most dispassionate yet, and in various ways the most perceptive (which isn't to forget how admirable Adam Gurri's more obviously polemical engagement was).

The greatest structural merit of the piece is the firm positioning of Mencius Moldbug at the foundations of the phenomenon. Unlike most of the critical NRx commentary so far, Castillo has clearly read Moldbug with some care. This is basically enough in itself to ensure that something real is being seen.

Steve Sailer, who served Castillo unwittingly as a gateway into the darkness, receives disproportionate attention given his manifest lack of affiliation with NRx. Of course, he's hugely-respected throughout the reactosphere due to his rare refusal to stop 'noticing' upon firm request. Beyond the fact he hasn't let the Cathedral put his eyes out, however, there's nothing very much to differentiate him from mainstream American conservatism. Still, Sailer's presence in the piece does much useful work. In particular, it helps to mark out the boundary controversies defining contemporary libertarianism (the immigration topic prominent among them).

Since she's already got herself into trouble, it can't make much more to add that @anjiecast was already one of my favorite people in

the world (remember this for instance?). A little bit more now.

July 29, 2014

Chu on this

Arthur Chu wasn't prepared to put in the work to write the worst NRx-denunciation screed yet, but he's done his best. Too many absurd errors to enumerate, and AC proudly declared on twitter that life's too short to bother with right-wing garbage like facts. Still, the spreading menace has reached *The Daily Beast* now. (They just can't stop themselves.)

> @j_arthur_bloom Yes, I have only abt 50 yrs left to live on this earth if I'm lucky, not going to spend it nodding thoughtfully at racists
>
> — Arthur Chu (@arthur_affect) August 1, 2014

(In context it's easier to recognize that "nodding thoughtfully at racists" is a cute way of saying 'reading stuff'.)

ADDED: This (from the article) is morbidly intriguing:

I've known who Moldbug was since he was just starting his career of intellectual trolling … […] I've known about the "neoreactionaries" a lot longer, before they were given that name—back when they were

just teenagers on the Internet, like me, furious that there were people less intelligent than us who dared tell us what to do. […] I never bought into the ideology fully, but I understand its appeal.

A smidgen of identification? Careful Arthur, that could be very dangerous.

ADDED: More on JT at *The Daily Dot.* (Still more, at *Twitchy.*)

August 1, 2014

NRx @ LW

Matthew Opitz has put up an insightful post at Less Wrong, attempting to make sense of Neoreaction through contrast with Progressivism. Given the great internal diversity of NRx, combined with its embryonic stage of self-formulation (in many respects), the lucidity Opitz brings to the topic is no slight achievement. His post is among the most impressive Ideological Turing Test performances I have yet seen.

The core paragraph (among much else of great interest):

***Neoreaction says**, "There is objective value in the principle of "perpetuating biological and/or civilizational complexity" itself*; the best way to perpetuate biological and/or civilizational complexity is to "serve Gnon" (i.e. devote our efforts to fulfilling nature's pre-requisites for perpetuating our biologial and/or civilizational*

complexity); our subjective values are spandrels manufactured by natural selection/Gnon; insofar as our subjective values motivate us to serve Gnon and thereby ensure the perpetuation of biological and/or civilizational complexity, our subjective values are useful. (For example, natural selection makes sex a subjective value by making it pleasurable, which then motivates us to perpetuate our biological complexity). But, insofar as our subjective values mislead us from serving Gnon (such as by making non-procreative sex still feel good) and jeopardize our biological/civilizational perpetuation, we must sacrifice our subjective values for the objective good of perpetuating our biological/civilizational complexity" (such as by buckling down and having procreative sex even if one would personally rather not enjoy raising kids).

**Note that different NRx thinkers might have different definitions about what counts as biological or civilizational "complexity" worthy of perpetuating … it could be "Western Civilization," "the White Race," "Homo sapiens," "one's own genetic material," "intelligence, whether encoded in human brains or silicon AI," "human complexity/ Godshatter," etc. This has led to the so-called "neoreactionary trichotomy"—3 wings of the neoreactionary movement: Christian traditionalists, ethno-nationalists, and techno-commercialists.*

Most LessWrongers probably agree with neoreactionaries on this fundamental normative assumption, with the typical objective good of LessWrongers being "human complexity/Godshatter," and thus

the "techno-commercialist" wing of neoreaction being the one that typically finds the most interest among LessWrongers.

Opitz's 'Godshatter' reference link.

XoS will do its best to follow this discussion as it goes forward.

This attractively odd thing might be found at least vaguely relevant.

September 6, 2014

De-Triggering

A statement to be preserved for the fascinated scrutiny of generations yet unborn:

I am experimentally tabooing the words "neoreaction", "neoreactionary", and "NRx" in this blog's comments effective immediately. It's emotionally charged and politicized in a way that I think potential substitutes aren't. I got my first exposure to far-right ideas from the neoreactionaries and so historically I've viewed rightism through their lens and spread that to my readers, but I think that this emphasis was a mistake. Also, nobody agrees on what "neoreactionary" means, least of all self-identified neoreactionaries. If you want to talk about monarchists, call them monarchists. If you want to talk about traditionalists, call them traditionalists. If you want to talk about the far right, call it the far right. If you want to talk

about HBD, call it HBD. If you want to talk about Mencius Moldbug, call him Mencius Moldbug. First infraction will be punished with a warning, second with burning eternally in the caldera of the Volcano God.

(If I followed SA's comment threads more diligently, I'd have a better sense of the context for this. Seems like an interesting experiment in any case. It also says something about triggers — or memetic virulence — although that's still a little blurry …)

I have to add the 'mind-control' tag — but it works both ways.

October 25, 2015

The Darkness at the End of the Tunnel

While not quite living up to its (superb) title, this critical leftist exploration of the NRx-AI nexus makes some suggestive connections.

… in the decades since, as the consumer-oriented liberalism of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs gave way to the technological authoritarianism of Elon Musk and Peter Thiel, this strange foundation paved the way for even stranger tendencies. The strangest of these is known as "neoreaction," or, in a distorted echo of Eliezer Yudkowsky's vision, the "Dark Enlightenment." It emerged from the same chaotic process that yielded the anarchic political collective Anonymous, a product

of the hivemind generated by the cybernetic assemblages of social media. More than a school of thought, it resembles a meme. The genealogy of this new intellectual current is refracted in the mirror of the most dangerous meme ever created: Roko's Basilisk.

Stand-out line:

The further right Silicon Valley shifts, the more dangerous their machines will become.

Running the connection through Roko's Basilisk is sufficiently non-obvious that Sandifer's book (which does the same) clearly merited a mention.

(Park MacDougald does it better, though, 1, 2.)

March 31, 2017

A Disturbance in the Force

Is anyone else beginning to get a little … I think the technical term is 'weirded out' by what is happening in the media?

Given that the central convergence point of neoreaction is an analysis of media power as the consummation of the (Anglophone) mainstream trend in global political history, it's impossible to find this sort of thing *simply* amusing. Cathedral theory predicts a quasi-stable closed loop in which left-progressive academic self-organization obtains ever more comprehensive social dominion

through a conductive media system. When the media strays off message, by allowing things to be noticed that — entirely lacking academic endorsement — cannot legitimately exist, something of profound social significance is taking place.

There might be any number of intriguing opportunities in these (still deeply cryptic) developments. For Mencius Moldbug, however, I suspect life could soon become uncomfortably *interesting*. The attack dogs of the left have left him alone, in the hope that he would remain unknown and ignored. Once that hope dies, the leashes are sure to come off.

[I haven't forgotten that I owe Bryce a *What is Neoreaction?* review — but I hadn't expected I'd be in a race to complete it before the *New York Times* gets to the finishing post.]

November 9, 2013

Strangeloop

XS has nothing to say about this, beyond a tweet (by the slightly better half). Posting this as the pretext for a discussion thread, on the assumption that regulars here are likely to be engaged with the event, and the various tributaries feeding into it.

@anjiecast @Ex_nihilo_0 @strangeloop_stl "We've replaced a

> talk by Yarvin on Urbit, with a demonstration of Moldbug on the Cathedral."
>
> — Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) June 5, 2015

ADDED: Comstockery for communists.
ADDED: Breitbart's take (sound).
ADDED: Punishment is vindication.
ADDED: Strange Loop sponsors.
ADDED: two more (both excellent).

June 5, 2015

Strangeloop II

The *Hacker News* discussion thread on The Moldbug Affair is not to be missed. To call it 'historic' wouldn't be (much of) and exaggeration. It's well-worth a look just for the Urbit insights alone. In addition (and quite separately from the last point) 'yarvin9' pops up to make an impressive demonstration of not groveling to the mob. That, hopefully, could provide a model for the many others who will find themselves in analogous witch-trial hot-seats over the months and years to come.

A few highlights.

devalier , on Urbit:

It wasn't the code itself that I learned from. I have more been enriched and stimulated by reading the blog posts, documentation, hacker news threads, and mailing list. A couple of the more interesting ideas are:

** He created Nock, which in a way is bytecode language, like compiled java bytecode or the .NET CIL. But his idea was that this bytecode should be the simplest possible thing, far, far simpler than the CLR. In fact, it should be versioned in Kelvin versioning, starting at 5,000 and counting down, until it is finally perfected and will never need to change. Going forward, all consumer apps will always compile down to this bytecode. All new hardware platforms can build interpreters for this bytecode. I think that is a pretty novel and neat approach. If it caught on, it would ensure that any program we wrote now could be run for the next thousand years.*

** His view is that to beat spam, you simply need to have a finite number of cryptographically secured identities. This number can be large. But if it is finite, that means accounts will not be costless, which means the market over time will be able to solve the problems of trust and filtering out spam in a way far superior to how it works today.*

It's hard to do the ideas justice by trying to repeat them myself. In reading through the material it was just lots of little things, where I said to myself, "Ah, that is a neat solution to that problem, I wonder if he'll be able to make it work."

Quality sarcasm from **13thLetter**:

What a crazy coincidence. This talk was accepted when nobody knew who Yarvin was, but now that you and your friends want to cast him out into the wilderness for disagreeing with your political opinions, all of a sudden you realize that the talk was technically uninteresting anyway. What are the odds, huh?

yarvin9 on racism:

I shouldn't post as urbit. Quite a few other people, few of whom agree with me on anything, have worked on the project.

The word "racist" and its conjugations does not appear in the English language until the 1920s – see Peter Frost's cultural history _. If you asked Shakespeare if he was a "racist," he would not know what you meant.*

"Racist" is essentially a term of abuse which no group or party has ever applied to itself. Like most such epithets, it has two meanings – a clear objective one, describing a person who fails to believe in the anthropological theories of human equality which became first popular, then universal in the mid-20th century; and a caricature of the vices, personal or political, typically engaged in by such a foul unbeliever.

[This non-apology under pressure is truly glorious]

topynate on the realistic micro-sociology of crimethink definition:

Kicking people from your tech conference because they were racist outside of it hands veto power to whoever determines what racism

is and when something is 'too racist'. The same goes for the other beyond-the-pale isms like sexism, fascism, etc.

paxdickinson on precedent:

It'll be [Alex Miller's] decision next time too. And now that the Red Guards know he'll succumb to even the slightest bit of pressure, there will certainly be a next time.

convexfunction on prophecy:

It's funny because he definitely saw this coming.

djur on "this is so … I can't even …"

This is a core tenet of Moldbuggian neoreaction, that American and European politics are run by a "Cathedral" that adheres to communist beliefs. Claiming that mainstream political positions are communism is absolutely insane.

corporealist on perspective:

This guy is a rightwinger (outside of his industry) and somebody didn't like it. What an embarrassment. They're proving the right's points.

ShardPhoenix on more perspective:

… socialism is much worse than racism. Socialism (actual socialism, not "social democracy" aka capitalist welfare state) destroys countries (eg North Korea), while racism is merely a moderate problem (eg South Korea is very racist but doing fine).

ADDED: So I guess the Streisand Effect really is a thing.

June 8, 2015

Smear-ghouls

It's only one tweet, but I'm going to treat it as massively indicative, because:
(1) It's Friday night
(2) It's more entertaining that way, and
(3) It actually might be massively indicative

Plunging straight into madness' maw, therefore, we have this:

> And now all the right wing, neoreactionary SuperPAC money will be shifted to other close US Senate races, like… http://t.co/13BvajioYm
>
> — Les AuCoin (@lesaucoin) July 24, 2014

Some immediate take-away? 'Neoreactionary' (the word) has crossed a currency threshold, and its destiny is now vastly senseless. It's retrospectively obvious that if anything was going to happen to it in the wider culture, it was going to be this. Roughly, it's becoming what 'neoconservative' and 'neoliberal' were, and are: a political term that circulates socially because it designates something vague and scary to its enemies, who then use it as a smear-ghoul to tar

things they don't understand, and don't like. This probably sounds bad, but if we think so, it's a sign of how unrealistic we've been about the dominant semiotic processes in degenerating democracies. It wasn't ever going to be any other way.

Running isn't going to work. There's an argument to be made for fleeing territory, but to flee signs is utterly pointless. There's no superior semiotic position to be escaped to. The way this is happening is the way it happens. It has to be understood, worked through, played with. As the Wittgenstein-tendency of NRx would surely be the first to concur, private languages are intrinsically delusive. When your antagonist is a titanic cultural control apparatus, your words are going to get messed with in ways that seem simply insane. That's the way it is.

It's not — by any means — an altogether disastrous situation, at least, not any more than the situation in general is disastrous. Even if the dominant public sense of a co-opted word is allusive, polemical, and strategically abusive, there is still a subtle undercurrent of awkwardness.

"Oh man, those Tea-Party morons are like total tools of the neoreactionaries!"
"Yeah, too right! **snork* *snork* *snork** (*What the hell is a neoreactionary? Gotta Google that m**********.*)

And really, it doesn't matter what they think — except right out on the margin, where things slip. It's obviously going to be the targets

of the smear-ghouling, in a few peculiar cases, who ask: *If this 'neoreaction' business is creating so much fear and loathing among our enemies, there might be something to it that I'd like*.

SoBL has a quite brilliant tweet on the topic:

> Same methods. Hunt Bros + archconservatives in '79 = Koch Bros + TeaParty '10 = Thiel+ Neoreactionaries '14. http://t.co/01dN9znMfc
>
> — SOBL1 (@SOBL1) July 25, 2014

Conspiracy construction is an essential part of the process. It's a way the Left-establishment digests threats without having to think about them, keeping the problem purely strategic, rather than ideological. One consequence — eventually it brings a conspiracy into being. If war has been declared, you might as well fight back. In this sense, the swelling wave of Silicon Valley conspiracy mongering on the Left strikes me as wholly positive, its absurdity notwithstanding. Tech billionaires who find themselves in the cross-hairs of this stuff are pretty much forced to acknowledge that appeasement isn't working. Some of them are going to get the idea that the Cathedral wants to destroy them. At that point, they start looking for options.

You can have the CIA angle thrown in for free:

> over/under that several Dark Enlightenment leader-figures

> are being fed scripts by the CIA, who prefer supporting fascists over socialists?
>
> — ◇◇ (@chipstian) July 25, 2014

How long before some elements within the intelligence services start to wonder whether they have some unexplored options, too?

July 25, 2014

HuffPo NRx?

After this (linked in the last Chaos Patch), comes another pointed lesson from the same Tech-Comm island bastion, with a title that doesn't even try to distance itself from hardcore Dark Enlightenment through use of a strategic question mark: "Singapore Challenges the Idea That Democracy Is the Best Form of Governance."

It's written by a Westerner this time, Graham Allison, who — to complete the extremity of infiltration — is "Director, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, **Harvard** Kennedy School" (XS emphasis). So he can say anything he wants, and he says this.

For a provocative analogy, think of countries as if they were hotels and citizens as guests. … Rarely do guests offer views about the ownership of the hotel or how it is governed. [That last sentence is about as close to pure Moldbug as you can get without actually

quoting the ~~guy~~ monster.] … *“Liberty” … includes both “freedom from” and “freedom to.” … Singapore stands at the top of the international competition on “freedoms from:” It ranks first internationally in the World Bank’s measure of “regulatory quality” and second on The Heritage Foundation’s scale of economic freedom* [First, of course, is Hong Kong], *while the U.S. comes in 13th. Gallup’s 2014 World Poll found that eight in 10 Americans see “widespread corruption” in the U.S. government, compared with seven in the Philippines, six in Zimbabwe and one in Singapore. On the World Bank’s “rule of law” index, Singapore scores in the 95th percentile of nations, the U.S. scores in the 91st, the Philippines in the 42nd and Zimbabwe in the 2nd. With a population of almost six million, Singapore’s incidents of robbery were only a seventh of Boston’s, which has a population of only 650,000. … When we turn to “freedom to” metrics, however, one-party Singapore scores well below the U.S. on three of our core freedoms: “freedom of expression and belief,” “associational and organizational rights” and “political pluralism and participation.” … When one asks “hotel customers” for feedback, the results are even more troubling for Americans. As the table below shows, four out of five Singaporeans are satisfied customers. They have confidence in their elections, their judicial system, their local police and their national leadership. In contrast, only one in three Americans has confidence in our national government and the country’s leadership; fewer than half regard elections as honest; and*

three-quarters of the population sees widespread corruption in government.

Look at SingGov as a business corporation ("hotel") and it's delivering an efficient, attractive service. WashCorp, not so much.

Next up from HuffPo — *Is decomposition of the United States into Patchwork micro-states an idea who's time has come?* (Unlike Allison's editors, I've thrown in the question mark there out of fidelity to liberal traditions.)

August 10, 2015

Counter Fund

XS has a few quibbles with this project, while nevertheless thinking it's probably the most intelligent thing taking place on the right at the moment. (Some highly interesting chat here, or directly here.)

The reliance on personal discretion for ideological vetting is a sign of immaturity (as Pax seems to accept, since it's intended to be temporary). Less protocol governance-oriented types will probably find this less of a needling issue than this blog does. In any case, the scheme is inclined towards trustlessness, which is the primary functional criterion for all 21st Century social technology.

A more intriguing quibble is that the "co-op grocery store" model runs directly contrary to basic NeoCam principles, since it

deliberately offers a role in governance to customers. This could be the basis for an important conversation down the road.

Main positive, as always with Pax Dickinson initiatives, is that it aims (competently) to latch onto the grain of the Internet, and that of auto-catalytic social machinery more generally. Whenever the "What is to be Done?" question arises, this is the type of thing that needs pointing to. Pieces of the future manifestly drift back into it.

Here are the first three installments of the Counter.Fund Gentle Introduction (1, 2, 3). The first is written by Pax Dickinson, the next two co-written with Anthony Demarco.

July 16, 2017

SECTION A - NRX SKIRMISHES

Flavors of Reaction

Once it is accepted that the right can never agree about anything, the opportunity arises to luxuriate in the delights of diversity. Libertarianism already rivaled Trotskyism as a source of almost incomprehensibly compact dissensus, but the New Reaction looks set to take internecine micro-factionalism into previously unimagined territories. We might as well enjoy it.

From crypto-fascists, theonomists, and romantic royalists, to jaded classical liberals and hard-core constitutionalists, the reaction contains an entire ideological cosmos within itself. Hostility to coercive egalitarianism and a sense that Western civilization is going to hell will probably suffice to get you into the club. Agreeing on anything much beyond that? Forget it.

There's one dimension of reactionary diversity that strikes *Outside in* as particularly consequential (insofar as anything out here in the frozen wastes has consequences): the articulation of *reaction and politics*. Specifically: is the reaction an alternative politics, or a

lucid (= cynically realistic) anti-politics? Is democracy bad politics, or simply politics, elaborated towards the limit of its inherently poisonous potential?

Outside in sides emphatically with the anti-political 'camp'. Our cause is *depoliticization* (or catallaxy, negatively apprehended). The tradition of spontaneous order is our heritage. The New Reaction warns that the tide is against us. Intelligence will be required, in abundance, if we are to swim the other way, and we agree with the theonomists at least in this: if it is drawn from non-human sources, so much the better. Markets, machines, and monsters might inspire us. Rulers of any kind? Not so much.

February 19, 2013

Trichotomy

The 'Spandrellian Trichotomy' (Nick B. Steves' coinage, based on this post) has become an awesome engine of discussion. The topic is seething to such an extent that any linkage list will be out of date as soon as it is compiled. Among the most obvious way-markers are this, this, this, this, and this. Given the need to refer to this complex succinctly, I trust that abbreviating it to 'the Trichotomy' will not be interpreted as a clumsy attempt to obstruct Spandrell's Nobel Peace Prize candidacy.

What is already broadly agreed?

(1) There is a substratum of neoreactionary consensus, involving a variety of abominated realist insights, especially the contribution of deep heritage to socio-political outcomes. Whilst emphasis differs, an ultra-Burkean attitude is tacitly shared, and among those writers who self-identify with the *Dark Enlightenment*, the importance of HBD is generally foregrounded.

(2) Neoreaction also shares an enemy: the *Cathedral* (as delineated by Mencius Moldbug). On the nature of this enemy much is agreed, not least that it is defined by a project of deep heritage erasure — both ideological and practical — which simultaneously effaces its own deep heritage as a profound religious syndrome, of a peculiar type. Further elaboration of Cathedral genealogy, however, ventures into controversy. (In particular, its consistency with Christianity is a fiercely contested topic.)

(3) As neoreactionary perspectives are systematized, they tend to fall into a trichotomous pattern of dissensus. This, ironically, is *something that can be agreed*. The Trichotomy, or neoreactionary triad, is determined by divergent identifications of the Western tradition that the Cathedral *primarily* suppresses: Christian, Caucasian, or Capitalist. My preferred terms for the resultant neoreactionary strains are, respectively, the *Theonomist*; the *Ethno-Nationalist*; and the *Techno-Commercial*. These labels are intended to be accurate, neutral descriptions, without intrinsic polemical

baggage.

It is to be expected — at least initially, and occasionally — that each strain will seek to dismiss, subordinate, or amalgamate the other two. If they were not so tempted, their trichotomous disintegration would never have arisen. Each *must* believe that it, alone, has the truth, or the road to truth, unless sheer insincerity reigns.

Outside in does not pretend to impartiality, but it asserts an invincible disillusionment.

— If the Trichotomy was reducible, the new reaction would already be one thing. It isn't, and it isn't (soon) going to be.

— As astrology reveals, and more 'sophisticated' systems confirm, people delight in being categorized, accepting non-universality as the real price of identification. (The response to Scharlach's diagram attests to that.)

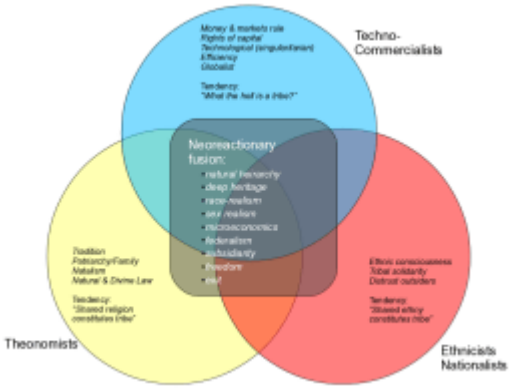
— Accepting the Trichotomy and the arguments it organizes is a way to be tested, and any neoreactionary position that refuses it will die a flabby death.

— The Trichotomy makes it impossible for neoreaction to play at dialectics with the Cathedral. For that reason alone, we should be grateful to it. Unity — even oppositional unity — was never on our side.

April 30, 2013

Visual Trichotomy

Nick B. Steves sent this along to keep the discussion moving forward:



[Click on the image to enlarge]

May 2, 2013

White Out

According to the White Nationalist fraternity, the Dark Enlightenment tends to like civilized people even when they aren't *really white*. I think that's right (and Right), although — of course — it's supposed to be a problem.

It's certainly amusing that the only people who don't think we're Nazis are the Nazis. They recognize that "cognitive elitists" are inherently prone to race treachery — which could be pushed all the

way out to species treachery (if I have anything to do with it). *Optimize for intelligence* isn't any kind of key to racial solidarity, or solidarity of any other kind. Even HBD, they generally insist, isn't *them* (it's too attentive to PISA ratings and such). There are some seriously interesting controversies implicit in all this, although rage is likely to break them up before they get very far. It makes me realize that one thing I appreciate about the Neoreaction is its anger management, which is inextricable from its taste for irony (and probably also from its decadence).

At *Amos & Gromar* there's some worthwhile comment, and commentators.

Boundaries should always be appreciated, whoever is drawing them.

December 13, 2013

Retro-Dialectics

Nobody familiar with contemporary Western societies can be intellectually challenged by the idea of a great dialectical resolution to the problem of liberalism. Coercion and liberty are fused in a political order that directs authority towards the maximization of choice without consequence. Stupidity is sacred, and neither tradition nor natural necessity has the right to inhibit it. Preserving

the freedom to fathom the limits of dysfunction in every direction is the primary social obligation, with the full resources of Leviathan behind it. If that's not exactly where we are, it will be soon.

Against this backdrop, Neoreaction emerges as a de-synthesizing impulse, splintering along multiple paths, but especially two. In reacting against *authoritarian irresponsibility* (or 'anarcho-tyranny') it tends to a restoration of the Old Antithesis: *either* hierarchical solidarity, *or* a ruthless dis-solidarity (and as it undoes the progressive dialectic, 'either' fragments into 'both' — separately). Only the state *protected irresponsibility* of resolved Left-liberalism is strictly intolerable, because that has been historically demonstrated to be an engine of degeneration. Neoreaction, initially conceived, is anything else.

As the West unravels back to the Old Antithesis, the primary argumentative polarity of Neoreaction is exposed with increasing clarity (Neoreaction *is* this exposure). Given that irresponsibility is not to be protected, is it to be prevented (by a new paternalism) or abandoned to its intrinsic consequences (through reversion to Social Darwinism)? In other words, is the dominant theme *hierarchy* or *exit*? Any attempt to force a rapid decision — however tempting this might be — is to trivialize the submerged grandeur of the abyss. The degenerative dialectic has at least half a millennium of heritage behind it — and perhaps at least two millennia. The Old Antithesis is far greater than either of its constituent 'options'.

When *More Right* outlines its 'Premises of Reactionary Thought' there can be no doubt which side of the antithesis is being promoted. It thereby declares that *the Left-liberal synthesis is dead*, establishing itself as the articulation of a Neoreactionary stance. Its partiality, however, is overt. (*Outside in* advances a counter-partiality.)

If failure is — eventually — no longer to be sustained, it either has to be prevented, or intensified. Neither *stop it failing* nor *let it fail* are remotely equivalent to *let it continue failing forever*, but neither are coercion and neglect commensurable to each other. The Old Antithesis is going to keep us on edge during 2014. If Neoreaction can even more explicitly *be the unraveling*, it will go far, but it will not obviously be *one thing*. The 'one thing' is virtually dead. What comes next arrives in pieces.

December 29, 2013

2014: A Prophecy

As has been said innumerable times before, any prophecy concerning outcomes that involve the 'prophet' as an agent are seriously suspect. For the (apparent) moment, such concerns are being pushed up the road into the future.

There they have already made themselves 'at home' — along with

much else related to the general phenomenon of prediction (which is strictly indistinguishable from time travel, when incisively understood). Present *knowledge of the future is an action of the future upon the present*, but all that can wait, since — of course — it doesn't need to.

For now, the Prophecy: **2014 is the year in which Neoreaction tears itself apart**. This is not at all to say, *the year in which it dies*. On the contrary, it will end the year strengthened in ways it has not to this point envisaged, having carved out vast tracts of clarity, hardened itself through close intellectual combat, refined its methods of de-synthesis (or catabolism), and — most importantly of all — made schism an internal dynamic principle. What integrates Neoreaction by the end of the year will no longer be elective tenets (reflecting the more-or-less precarious ideological preferences of individuals) but conflict-toughened structures of objective micro-cultural cohesion, selected and sculpted by many months of ferocious storms.

The approximate contours of these impending ruptures will provide the content for the first *2014 Prognoses* post (which is already overdue). In anticipation, it need only be noted: the Dark Enlightenment finds nothing external to itself that is *hard* enough to sharpen its claws. It has feasted on soft, fat, bleating lambs long enough. Thus the introverted ripping begins …

ADDED: Rigorous evidence for time travel still thin.

January 5, 2014

Timing

I'm repeating an initial twitter interaction here because it seems quite critical to some of the plate tectonic rumblings working through NRx. My prompt was:

> Does anybody really think America will have a king before it has a (positive or negative) techno-intelligence catastrophe?
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) February 11, 2014

To which Michael Anissimov immediately replied:

> @Outsideness yep
> — Michael Anissimov (@MikeAnissimov) February 11, 2014

(Of course there was more — interesting stuff.)

For some suggestive remarks about social prospects and differential speeds, see Andrea Castillo's latest (and excellent) article on the tech-economy at Umlaut.

February 11, 2014

Anarchy in the NRx

Arthur R. Harrison (@AvengingRedHand) makes the incisive observation: “Well the thing is NRx is a specific kind of post-libertarianism, or it was. Now it seems to be just a name for reaction post-Moldbug.” There could be people who don’t see that as degeneration. In fact, it seems there are.

Reactotwitter is lurching into sheer delirium (as *ahem* forecast). To begin with, it seems no longer to concur on what it begins with:

> Evola outranks Moldbug. The accomplishments and credentials of the former are far higher.
>
> — Michael Anissimov (@MikeAnissimov) February 17, 2014

(Not in my army.)

It’s time to choose your own tradition and slap an NRx sticker on it. Is anyone envisaging any limits to this:

> @Outsideness @MikeAnissimov Whose ideas have more specifically influenced NRx? At this point, it's whoever influences its writers.
>
> — Bryce Laliberte (@AnarchoPapist) February 18, 2014

> @AnarchoPapist @MikeAnissimov Since there are no entry

> controls, this is a formula for complete intellectual anarchy. (OK, Mad Max it is.)
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) February 18, 2014

> @Outsideness Moldbug isn't here. Neoreaction is a free for all of our own making.
>
> — Michael Anissimov (@MikeAnissimov) February 18, 2014

So NRx is a formless anarchy telling the world how to put itself in order? Actually, I think this is probably right, and theoretically interesting, but it clearly needs thinking about. How can there imaginably be an 'entryism' threat when command control is a teeming chaos? What does this *example* of radical disorder suggest?

Here's the NRx anarcho-chaos already pouring through the pipe:

> @MikeAnissimov @AnarchoPapist @Outsideness I respect Moldbug, but he is one of many. We all have our voice – we can and should add our ideas
>
> — Anti Democracy Blog (@antidemblog) February 18, 2014

Everyone has a voice, and we respect that … oh wait …

[Some intriguing hints elsewhere on twitter that Urbit might eventually sort this shrieking insanity out.]

ADDED: *Occam's Razor* puts things in sensible perspective.

February 18, 2014

Ideological Chaos

Occupy Wall Street founder, now working for ~~Cyberdyne~~ Google calls for Neocameralism in a communist newspaper.

I'll just let that simmer for a while …

ADDED: There have been some strange goings on at *The Guardian* recently, for instance, this article on seasteading — because climate change.

ADDED: Now in *The Telegraph*: "The self-described 'champagne tranarchist', who launched Occupy Wall Street in 2011, said that if the technology industry was to take over the US government she would be 'prancing around skipping for joy', but accepted that it was unlikely."

ADDED: Contemplationist (@i_contemplate_) catches this:

> @ramdac @abbynormative Our government is already a corporation. All we're doing here is finding a better corporation to run our government.
>
> — Justine Ní Thonnaigh (@JustineTunney) March 21, 2014

"If [this] is not neocameralism, I don't know what is." Quite.

ADDED: Justine Tunney interviewed by Christopher Mims (definitely not to be missed by anyone interested in this peculiar episode).

March 20, 2014

Crossing the Line

So, it's happened:

> Read Mencius Moldbug.
> — Justine Tunney (@JustineTunney) April 28, 2014

This strikes me as a poly-dimensional crisis moment — or at least cultural storm signal — (for NRx, for Google, and for the USA), so I'm obviously on tenterhooks to hear what people think.

ADDED: The anti-Tunney (or one of them).

April 28, 2014

Scrap note (#11)

With all coherent productivity sucked into a knotty accelerationism

essay at the moment, some fragments:

Fission update — apparently the geniuses in the NRx peanut gallery are now convinced that Justine Tunney has usurped Michael Anissimov in his universally-acknowledged holy office as God-Emperor of the New Reaction. Anissimov, to his great credit, is bemused. Is this stuff going to burn out in its own radiant insanity, or amplify to some yet unimagined level of crazy? The responsible option would be to abandon the ship of fools now, but it's way too entertaining for that. Signalling some distance is becoming absolutely imperative, however.

One point that has to be emphasized with renewed fervor is the absolute priority of territorial fragmentation to any line of NRx discussion which begins to imagine itself 'political'. Universalist models of the good society are entirely inconsistent with NRx at its foundations, and to turn such differences into political argument is to have wandered hopelessly off script. The whole point of neoreactionary social arrangements is to eliminate political argument, replacing it with practical problems of micro-migration. Facilitating homelands for one's antagonists is even more important than designing them for one's friends. (Even the old Republic of South Africa knew that — although it botched the execution.) Geographical sorting dispels dialectics.

***

Brett Stevens (of the Amerika blog, @amerika_blog) has gone

super-nova on Twitter in a way that screams impending burn-out, but for the moment he's a source of superb commentary and linkage. Among very recent gems, these two pieces, raising questions about the restoration of sophisticated teleological ideas within natural science.

> Why does life resist disorder? #entropy http://t.co/GGMrjqv4bq
>
> — Brett Stevens (@amerika_blog) May 1, 2014

Also, another two on the Cathedralization of SF literary institutions, unfolding in public.

***

Mark Steyn comes out as a Sailer reader. No huge surprise there, I guess, but the darkness grows …

***



My crown of thorns is itching.

From what I have seen of the *Transcendence* response, the movie

has been almost universally misunderstood. Immodestly, I think my as-yet-unwritten blog post on the topic gets it with the title *Easter of the Nerds*. Idiotically, most reviewers describe it as being about the dangers of artificial super-intelligence. In reality, it's about the human sin of fear and denial of God, culminating in the murder of the Messiah (as computationally-incarnated divinity), and his quiet return, in a garden, framing the entire picture in the promise of resurrection. It thus exposes Transhumanism not only as a Christian sub-clade, but as a remarkably conservative sub-clade (certainly in comparison to Mainline Protestantism). The significance of this needs exploring at some point …

May 1, 2014

Fission

This is going to continue happening, and to get more intense. The superficial cause is obvious, both Michael Anissimov and myself are extreme, twitchy ideologues, massively invested in NRx, with utterly divergent understandings of its implications. We both know this fight has to come, and that tactical timing is everything. (It's really not personal, and I hope it doesn't become so, but when monarchical ideas are involved it's very easy for "the personal is political" to take a right-wing form.)

It's worth remembering this diagram, before going further. It suggests that divergence is essential to the far right, which yawns open across an anarcho-autocratic spectrum. Since a disinclination to moderation has already been indicated by anyone arriving at the far right fringe, it should scarcely be surprising when this same tendency rifts the far right itself. Then consider this:

> @Outsideness @_Hurlock_ Identitarianism, belonging, and community is what the Far Right is all about.
>
> — Michael Anissimov (@MikeAnissimov) March 22, 2014

The strict *Outside in* complement to this would be something like: *disintegrative Social Darwinism through ruthless competition is what the Far Right is all about*. A formula of roughly this kind will inevitably come into play as the conflict evolves. Momentarily, though, I'm more interested in *situating* the clashes to come than *initiating* them. Whatever the contrary assertions — and they will come (doubtless from both sides) — the entire arena is located on the ultra-right, oriented vertically on the ideological space diagram, rather than horizontally (between positions whose primary differentiation is between the more-and-less right).

Stated crudely, but I think reasonably accurately, the controversy polarizes *Neocameralism* against *Identitarian Community*. My suspicion is that Michael Anissimov will ultimately attenuate the

Moldbuggian elements of his neoreactionary strain to the edge of disappearance, and that his hesitation about doing this rapidly is a matter of political strategy rather than philosophical commitment. From this ideological war, which he is conducting with obvious ability, he wants "Neoreaction" to end up with the people (or followers (who I don't remotely care about)), whereas I want it to hold onto the Moldbug micro-tradition (which he sees as finally dispensable). The only thing that is really being scrapped over is the name, but we both think this semiotic real estate is of extraordinary value — although for very different reasons.

One remark worth citing as supportive evidence, because its driving ideas are exemplary:

> @_Hurlock_ @Outsideness This whole community is filled with trads who don't give a flying fuck about neocameralism.
>
> — Michael Anissimov (@MikeAnissimov) March 22, 2014

While I deeply value intellectual engagement with the smartest of these "trads" I would consider it a complete victory if they were to abandon the NRx tag and re-brand themselves as Animissovites, or Neo-Evolans, or whatever, and depart in pursuit of a Monarcho-traditionalist homeland in Idaho. If NRx was socially reduced to a tenth (or less) of its size, but those remaining were Moldbuggian fundamentalists, working to refine the Neocameralist theoretical

model for restraint of government through Patchwork Exit-dynamics, it would be strengthened immeasurably in all the ways that matter to this blog. It would also then simply be the case that media accusations of Neo-Feudal or White Nationalist romanticism — accompanied by ambitions for personal political power — were idiotic media slurs. Sadly, this cannot be said with total confidence as things stand.

The Neocameralism campaign will almost certainly come first, but it is still only March, and nothing needs to unfold with unseemly haste …

ADDED: Some valuable thoughts from *Anomaly UK*. (Includes bonus Bitcoin reference.)

March 22, 2014

Rift Markers

The commentator going by the tag Saddam Hussein's Whirling Aluminium Tubes has produced some of the most brilliant criticism this blog has been subjected to. Arguing against the techno-commercial strain of NRx from a hardline paleoreactionary standpoint, his contribution to this thread is the high-water mark of his engagement here. That, even at the climax of the assault, *Outside in* is unable to decline the diagnosis offered, with the exception of

only the very slightest, marginal reservations, is a fact that attests to the lucidity of his vision. (Some minute editorial adjustments have been made for consistency — the original can be checked at the link provided.) SHWAT writes:

Admin's analogy of Techno-Commercialism to the colonial government structures in the time of the East India company is absolutely correct and it provides a decisive clarification. This is like that time when one group stayed in Europe while the other group went and made their fortune in the New World.

***Reaction**: Stable order (as a value, if not a practical effect), hereditary position*

***Techno-commercialism**: Disintegrative competition, dynamism*

***Reaction**: Conservatism, tradition, the old ways*

***Techno-commercialism**: Disintegrative competition, innovation*

***Reaction**: Personal authority, sacral Kingship, hereditary privileges*

***Techno-commercialism**: Corporate government, leaning towards the oligarchical, dynamic composition of the oligarchy, based on corporate politics and Social Darwinism*

***Reaction**: Cyclical history, Kali Yuga*

***Techno-commercialism**: Linear history, progress towards the singularity*

***Reaction**: Focus on the old country, the old people, saving the West*

***Techno-commercialism**: Abandoning the old, colonizing new spaces,*

both in the East and (you hope) in Space

***Reaction**: Traditional social order, community, belonging, sense of place and rootedness, caste*

***Techno-commercialism**: Modern social dynamism, freedom, meritocracy, rootlessness, atomization, Social Darwinism, a questionable future for certain social classes*

***Reaction**: Conservatively communitarian*

***Techno-commercialism**: Radically individualist*

***Reaction**: Identitarian*

***Techno-commercialism**: Cosmopolitan*

***Reaction**: Claims to end politics, ends up with Byzantine / Ottoman politics*

***Techno-commercialism**: Claims to end politics, ends up with Corporate Politics*

***Reaction**: Martial*

***Techno-commercialism**: Mercantile, post-Martial (Drones > Kshatriyas)*

***Reaction**: Disdainful of crass mercantile endeavors*

***Techno-commercialism**: See mercantile endeavors as primary*

***Reaction**: Fails without good leaders*

***Techno-commercialism**: Focus on innovative governmental structures, so that people won't need to be good.*

***Reaction**: Conservative, want things to stay the same or go backwards*

***Techno-commercialism**: Disintegrative, dynamic, wants things to change constantly, Forward!*

***Reaction**: Regular, caged capitalism (which to the the Ultra-Capitalist is socialism)*

***Techno-commercialism**: Ultra-Capitalism*

***Reaction**: Religious*

***Techno-commercialism**: Wants to summon a machine god*

***Reaction**: About finding a way for humans to live spiritually fulfilling lives and then die and make a place for their children*

***Techno-commercialism**: About finding a way to summon a machine god to end humanity and/or about finding a way to live forever. Very few children.*

***Reaction**: Would require the creation of a new, legitimate, martial elite or the co-opting of someone like Putin (horrifying to techno-commercialists)*

***Techno-commercialism**: Seeks to co-opt the current progressive merchant elite and put someone like Google guy in charge (horrifying to reactionaries)*

***Reaction**: Romantic lost cause*

***Techno-commercialism**: Disturbingly plausible, in the sense that somebody like Google guy was probably going to end up on top anyway, and he might listen to those who flatter him.*

So, I've got good news and bad news. The good news is that [you techno-commercialists will] probably get a lot of what you want in

the future. The bad news is that you're not reactionaries, not even a little bit. You're classical liberals, it was just a little bit obscured because you are English classical liberals, rather than American or French ones. Hence the lack of interest in revolutions. The modern equivalent of those East India Company classical liberal guys.
So, it's your choice. You can certainly keep the neo-reactionary label and turn it into something like the "neo" in "neo-conservative" where "neo" means "pwned". But that will mean that the traditionalist conservatives and WNs keep wandering in. Or you can cut the cord and complete the fission.
Anyway, at this point we should probably go our separate ways and start plotting against each other. Thanks for some enjoyable reading.

If this really is a good-bye note, it's the most magnificent example I have ever seen. I'm almost tempted to say, with enemies like this, who needs allies?

There are twists and intricacies to be added to this stark cartography of schism, including those the schism will make to itself. From the current perspective of *Outside in* (which it of course suspects to be something else), the guideline to these is the complication of time through spiromorphism, or innovative restorations, which neither cycles nor simple escape trajectories can capture. These ultimately re-shape everything, but they can wait (while the wound creatively festers). Fission releases energy. Perhaps ironically — SHWAT has demonstrated that beyond all

controversy.

March 25, 2014

Race to the Bottom

As the foggiest two-thirds of 'NRx' continues its devolution into ENR-style ethno-socialism and activist voluntarism, it is inevitable that Europe's populist 'far right' will increasingly be seized upon as a source of inspiration, and even as a model for emulation. This is, of course, an indication of degenerate insanity, and all the more to be expected on that account. On the positive side, the practical incompetence of 'activist neoreaction' will most probably spare it from the full measure of the embarrassment it is due. Nevertheless, whatever applause it offers to the vile antics of the European mob will not be soon forgotten.

It would be a distraction at this point to seek to distinguish the classical (Aristotelian) conception of *action* from the mire of modern political *activism*, or mass mobilization. That is the topic for another occasion. It suffices here to accept the integrated democratic understanding of popular activism for what it is, and to seek distance from it with unreserved disdain, under any convenient sign. If *passivism* makes this point, the suitability of the term is thereby ensured. The important thing is to make no contribution to the

triumph of the mob and, secondarily, to draw no vicarious satisfaction from its advances.

To be as clear as possible: What the 'far right' advance in Continental Europe represents is *a consummation of democratic morbidity*. It is nothing at all like a restoration. At best, it is what 'hitting bottom' is to an alcoholic — the crisis at the end of a deteriorating trend, after which something else can begin. (The bottom, it has to be noted, is a very long way down.)



Writing in The Telegraph, Roger Bootle casts a cold eye upon the prospects for France:

What is going to happen? I cannot see much prospect of France recovering to match Germany again without really fundamental reform – which French governments have traditionally been incapable of delivering. Accordingly, France will continue to decline relative to Germany. Interestingly, the recent beneficiary of French voters' protests, Marine Le Pen, does not want to open France up to more competition but rather to use withdrawal from the EU to

strengthen the powers of the French state to overrule market forces. This does not bode well.

Indeed, far from being part of the hard northern core of the euro, France is increasingly coming to resemble the soft southern underbelly. Accordingly, for how much longer can the Franco-German "motor" continue to drive the EU? Won't Germany increasingly realise its own strength and want to break free from its shackles to France? And won't France increasingly resent the increased power of her neighbour?

I don't know how this is going to happen or when but I suspect that we are coming close to one of those periodic explosions that have shaped French history. When this happens the EU will never be the same again.

Europe is almost certainly going to complete its descent into Hell. It would be the ultimate condemnation of NRx — definitive proof that it had learnt nothing of value — if the specific shape of Europe's damnation, as it reaches its nadir, were to be confused with a rightist ideal.

ADDED: Convergence on a different line of thought. [Don't bother clicking, NBS has just pulled this (excellent) post for some reason yet to be disclosed.] Update:

> @Outsideness It will come back up. It may have a different eponym. I'm waiting for permission from The Dude.

— Nicholas B Stevenson (@Nick_B_Steves) June 3, 2014

OK.

Update: It's back (with a much better name).

ADDED: Paul Gottfried's take.

ADDED: *Der Spiegel* interviews Marine Le Pen.

Purely for entertainment value, an apocalyptic quasi-fnording of Marine Le Pen, edited irresponsibly into **grossly misleading** Cathedral-media nightmare fuel:

I want to destroy the EU … Europe is war. Economic war. It is the increase of hostilities between the countries. … The EU is deeply harmful, it is an anti-democratic monster. I want to prevent it from becoming fatter, from continuing to breathe, from grabbing everything with its paws and from extending its tentacles into all areas of our legislation. … A strong euro is ruining our economy. … It was created by Germany, for Germany. … the model we are advocating is less positive for Germany than the current model. Germany has become the economic heart of Europe because our leaders are weak. But Germany should never forget that France is Europe's political heart. … Be careful Ms. Merkel. If you don't see the suffering that has been imposed on the rest of the European people, then Germany will make itself hated. … she wants to impose her policies on others. This will lead to an explosion of the European Union. … If we don't all leave the euro behind, it will explode. Either

there will be a popular revolt because the people no longer want to be bled out. Or the Germans will say: Stop, we can't pay for the poor anymore. … David Cameron says that UKIP members are crazy and racist. I think it is good that UKIP is as strong as we are. … We have the same fundamental approach to Europe. … We used to be one of the richest countries in the world, but we are now on a path towards under-development. This austerity that has been imposed on the people doesn't work. The people will not allow themselves to be throttled without revolting. … We need an intelligent protectionism. We need customs duties again … The problem is the total opening of borders and allowing the law of the jungle to prevail: The further a company goes today to find slaves, which it then treats like animals and pays a pittance, without regard for environmental laws, the more it earns. … I don't want (Germany's) Siemens to buy Alstom. I want Alstom to remain French. That is strategically important for my country's independence. … One could nationalize a company, even if only temporarily, in order to stabilize it. … democracy is collapsing here in France. … I have a certain admiration for Vladimir Putin because he doesn't allow decisions to be forced upon him by other countries. I think he focuses first and foremost on what is good for Russia and the Russians. … there are many things said about Russia because they have been demonized for years at the behest of the USA. … The Americans are trying to expand their influence in the world, particularly in Europe … defending their own

interests, not ours.

Plus: Who's going to shrink the state?

ADDED: Communism good, fascism bad. (This is apparently what passes for intelligence among the chatterati.)

June 3, 2014

Mises or Jesus?

There's been a lot of this kind of thing around recently. It's mainly been arriving in a link storm from Wagner Clemente Soto, who's too unambiguously Throne-and-Altar in orientation to identify as NRx or 333, so it's probably an exercise in internal discipline taking place in another camp. Still, it's difficult not to ask: Could this be the next fission pile building up?

Here's a link to Jörg Guido Hülsman's (excellent) *Mises: The Last Knight of Liberalism*, which seems to have provided the background citations for the recent round of attacks. (This agitation always takes me back to *Der Zauberberg*.)

ADDED: Or is it "Moses to Mises"?

ADDED: NBS provides a useful 'Capitalism Week' round-up.

ADDED: A (loosely) connected argument from Brett Stevens.

July 2, 2014

Outsideness

In an alternative universe, in which there was nobody except Michael Anissimov and me tussling over the identity of Neoreaction, I'd propose a distinction between 'Inner-' and 'Outer-Nrx' as the most suitable axis of fission. Naturally, in this actual universe, such a dimension transects a rich fabric of nodes, tensions, and differences.

For the inner faction, a firmly consolidated core identity is the central ambition. (It's worth noting however that a so-far uninterrogated relation to transhumanism seems no less problematic, in principle, than the vastly more fiercely contested relation to libertarianism has shown itself to be.) Inner-NRx, as a micro-culture, models itself on a protected state, in which belonging is sacred, and boundaries rigorously policed.

Outer-NRx, defined primarily by Exit, relates itself to what it escapes. It is refuge and periphery, more than a substitute core. It does not ever expect to rule anything at all (above the most microscopic level of social reality, and then under quite different names). The Patchwork is for it a set of options, and opportunities for leverage, rather than a menu of potential homes. It is intrinsically nomad, unsettled, and micro-agitational. Its culture consists of departures it does not regret. (While not remotely globalist, it is unmistakably cosmopolitan — with the understanding that the 'cosmos' consists of chances to split.)

Outer-NRx tends to like libertarians, at least those of a hard-right persuasion, and the gateway that has enabled it to be outside libertarianism is the ideological zone to which it gravitates. Leaving libertarianism (rightwards) has made it what it is, and continues to nourish it. 'Entryism' — as has been frequently noted — is not a significant anxiety for Outer-NRx, but far more of a stimulation and, at its most acute, a welcome intellectual provocation. It is not the dodgy refugees from the ZAP who threaten to reduce its exteriority, and return it to a trap.

The Outside is the 'place' of strategic advantage. To be cast out there is no cause for lamentation, in the slightest.

August 1, 2014

Fission II

The Umlaut has long been doing an embarrassing amount of our thinking for us, and perhaps even more of our controversy. The latest installment, by Dalibor Rohac, is here. The connections it makes are frankly disturbing to this blog, whose pro-capitalist, post-libertarian, and general Atlantean sympathies have been pushed as hard as realistically possible, along with an explicit attempt at differentiation from those tendencies with an opposite — I would argue self-evidently anti-Moldbuggian — valency. It is going to be difficult to

condemn conflations of NRx with the ENR for so long as the 'voice' of Neoreaction includes remarks of this kind:

> .@DaliborRohac is scared by nationalist stirrings. https://t.co/OhzEVKTBsR
>
> — Michael Anissimov (@MikeAnissimov) August 6, 2014

NRx, across its whole spectrum, is neither libertarian nor fascist. There is, however, a remarkable polarity — our axis of fission — which is based upon which of these associations is found most disreputable. From my perspective, this distinction lines up extremely neatly with Alexander Dugin's Hyperborean / Atlantean continental forever war. It seems to me beyond any serious question that the inheritance from Mencius Moldbug lies unproblematically on the Atlantean side of this divide. The standing *Outside in* prophecy is that, by the end of this year, a definitive break along these lines will have taken place. There's no reason I can see to back-track on that expectation.

ADDED: "One could see a situation in which libertarian inattentiveness to political concerns, in the face of masses of people that are growing frustrated with democracy, abets extremism. If freedom and democracy are incompatible, like Peter Thiel thinks, it is important to articulate ways to preserve freedom."

August 6, 2014

Circles of Concern

A brief, perfectly balanced post at Mangan's pulls together HBD and political history into the suggestion that nationalism is just a phase we've been going through.

… the paradox of nationalism is that the same forces that led to its development are leading to its denou[e]ment. But what is to be done about that I don't know.

Some quality comments there too. You're all welcome back here after checking it out, with any relevant responses and arguments.

Nationalism is the one modern progressive ideology that gets off the hook far too easily in NRx circles. (And "what is to be done?" is Lenin's question, adopted from this guy. It shouldn't be proscribed, but it should definitely be subjected to disciplined suspicion.)

September 10, 2014

Trike Lines

Michael Anissimov has been conducting an online poll of NRx affinities. While questions of principle and method might have delayed this experiment, such procrastination would have been a mistake. The results have already contributed significant information. Most obviously (as already widely noted) the pattern of

primary allegiance to the the different trike-tendencies is far more evenly balanced than many had expected. As an intellectual theme — and now as a demonstrated distribution — the 'Spandrellian Trichotomy' shows a remarkably resilient stability. The integral pluralism of NRx is becoming impossible to sideline.

Nyan Sandwich has posted a Trike-theory response at *More Right*. While ultimately skeptical about the pluralist interpretation of the Trichotomy, the order of his argument respects it as a primary phenomenon. Nyan is among those who expect NRx to incline to a concentrated synthesis, or compact unity — superseding its distribution.

Thus it doesn't really make sense to ask what branch of NRx one identifies with. It's like asking a physicist whether they think quantum mechanics or general relativity is more true. The point is that the truth is a synthesis of the component theories, not a disjunction.

The natural counter-position to this would be a defense of irreducibly plural integrity, or *operational disunity*. The lines of controversy released here do not correspond to Trike 'branches' but cut across them, and through a number of critical topics, certainly including:

(1) The existence of irreducible triangular schemas within all of the world's great civilizations, represented within the Christian West by trinitarian theology. How is the relation between the triad

and the monad to be conceived? Does this relation vary fundamentally between world cultures? (These decidedly pre-NRx remarks seem very old now, but they remain at least suggestively relevant.) This is the principal Hindu articulation.

(2) To what extent is NRx inherently critical of structurally (rather than demotically) divided powers? (Among the ironies of any consensual NRx commitment to absolute monarchy would be its radical anti-feudalism, or proto-modernism.)

(3) The techno-rationalist aspiration to a super-intelligent 'Singleton' clearly assumes suppression of sovereign plurality. This fully suffices to graft the NRx controversy into the moral-political and theoretical debates over (Right) Singularity.

As a matter of fact, there is scarcely anything NRx agrees upon more consistently than the structure of its disagreements. There are three basic (dyadic) conflicts implicit within the Trichotomy, of which only one has — to this point — been seriously initiated. (Our 'Theonomists' have yet to get scrappy.) Much turmoil still lies ahead.

September 25, 2014

Questions of Identity

There's a remarkably bad-tempered argument taking place among racial identitarians at the moment (some links here), which makes

the civility and intelligence of these remarks all the more notable. (For this blog, the *Social Matter* discussion was a reminder of the — similarly civilized — exchange with Matt Parrott that took place in the comment thread here.)

In case anyone is somehow unclear about the quality of the neighborhood White Nationalism finds itself in, or adjacent to, it's worth a brief composite citation from the Andrew Anglin post cited above:

You [Colin Liddell] agree with Jewish agendas, which is why you would wish to obfuscate the fact that Jews are responsible for everything by claiming we shouldn't blame the Jews for our problems. … The reason these two [CL plus Greg Johnson] are on the same side against me is that they share the quality that they have no interest in a popular movement, and despise anyone who would attempt to take that route. … I am, unashamedly, a populist. Every successful revolutionary movement in history has been populist in nature … Hitler was a populist.

While I have to confess to finding Anglin entertaining, I hope it goes without saying that this kind of thinking has nothing at all to do with NRx. In fact, revolutionary populism almost perfectly captures what Neoreaction is not. NRx is notoriously fissiparous, but on the gulf dividing all its variants from racial Jacobinism there can surely be no controversy. So the barking you can hear in the background serves as necessary context. (This does not count as an objection to

the Neo-Nazis acquiring their own state, since that would make it even easier not to live among them than it is already. Unfortunately, it is not easy to imagine the separatist negotiations going smoothly.)

Because everything further to be said on this topic is complicated, I'm restricting my ambitions here to a series of discussion points, roughly sketched:

(1) NRx diversity conflicts are considerably less heated than those presently gripping the WNs, in part — no doubt — because the immediate political stakes are even smaller. It nevertheless introduces a massively complicating factor. For those (not exclusively found in the Tech-Comm camp, but I suspect concentrated there) who consider **Moldbug**'s work canonical, the distinction between NRx and White Nationalism (as also antisemitism) is already quite clearly defined. Among those of a predominantly Eth-Nat. inclination, on the other hand, far more border-blurriness exists.

(2) The relationship between White Nationalism and **HBD** is also complex. From outside, the two are regularly conflated, but this is a crude error. The zone of intersection — exemplified by Frank Salter (and perhaps Kevin MacDonald) — is characterized by a concern with ethnic genetic interests, but this is by no means an axiomatic theoretical or practical commitment among HBD bloggers. More typically, HBD-orientation is associated with cosmopolitan spirit of scientific neutrality, meritocratic elitism, and a suspicion of the

deleterious consequences of inbreeding, often accompanied by a tendency to philosemitism and sinophilia. Racial solidarity does not follow necessarily from biorealism, but requires an extraneous political impulse. Whatever connection is forged between WN and HBD owes more to their common opposition to the West's dominant Lysenkoism and Leftist (blank-slate, victimological) race politics than to any firm internal bond.

(3) The triangular linkages between NRX, WN, and **libertarianism** are also intricate. Consider this (fascinating) talk by Richard Spencer, to a libertarian audience, for a quick sense of the territory being navigated. The moment of dark enlightenment for libertarians tends to accompany the recognition that the cultural foundations of *laissez-faire* social arrangements have an extreme 'ethnic' specificity. This accommodation of right libertarians to neoreactionary ideas is not associated with a comparable approximation to White Nationalism, however, since the very ethnic characteristics being accentuated — the high-trust cosmopolitan openness of strongly outbred populations — are exactly those provoking WN despair as the roots of pathological altruism and ethnomasochism. (This is a ruinous paradox basic to the relevant ruminations here.)

(4) A closely-connected problem is that of cutting ethnies at the joints. (Within NRx, this is the thede topic.) While there are no doubt some neoreactionaries comfortable with the category of 'whites' as a positive **thede**, for others it seems far too broad — whether due

to its inconsistency within any historical nation, its amalgamation of populations culturally divided by the Hajnal line, its aggregation across relatively hard regional, class, and ideological divisions, or generally because — almost without exception — the most bitter and ruthless enemy of any given group of white people has been another group of white people. When WNs speak of a 'World Brotherhood of Europeans' it strikes most neoreactionaries (I suspect) as scarcely less comical than an appeal for universal human brotherhood, since it blithely encompasses the most vicious and ineliminable antagonisms in the world.

(5) Finally (for now) there's the relation of NRx to the ENR — already a grating concern, and (since the **ENR** is *also* already highly diverse) beyond the scope of anything but the most glancing treatment. From the perspective of this blog, the most aggravating figure is undoubtedly Alain de Benoist — whose brilliance is directed towards the most radical articulation of anti-capitalism to be found anywhere outside the Marxist tradition (and even within it). NRx Tech-Comms have the same level of sympathy for such ideas as they do for the legacy of Saloth Sar or Hugo Chavez, and insofar as they are proposed as an element of a potential coalition, the enterprise is immediately collapsed to a farce. This touches upon the wider concern that WN thinking often appears to skirt, and on occasions to overtly embrace, a simple racial socialism and thus by some definitions reduce to a leftist — even extreme leftist — ideology. Seen

from *Outside in*, there are far superior prospects to be found in the realist darkening of right libertarians than in coalition-building with clear-eyed collectivists.

(6) Things we can agree upon without much difficulty: The dominant power structure is racially obsessed and (schizophrenically) committed to the effacement of all racial reality; racial differences have substantial social consequences; the native populations of historically white societies are being subjected to an ideological (and criminal) onslaught of deranged intensity; the legal concept of 'disparate impact' is fundamentally corrupt; universal prescriptions for the social, political, cultural, and economic arrangements of diverse groups are doomed to failure; ethnic separatism (of any kind) is a legitimate political aspiration; free association and freedom of conscience are principles to be unconditionally defended; science is not answerable to ideology; … this list could no doubt be extended. (I am more uncertain about whether there is anything here that either NRxers or WNs would want to deduct.)

Clearly, and in general, there is much more to be said about all of this, with every reason for confidence that it will be said.

ADDED: Gregory Hood on the First Identitarian Congress.

ADDED: Fred Reed on monstrous über-racist Jared Taylor.

ADDED: Only tangentially connected, but too eloquent to miss out on, Charles Murray on the 20th anniversary of *The Bell Curve*:

"… the roof is about to crash in on those who insist on a purely environmental explanation of all sorts of ethnic differences, not just intelligence. Since the decoding of the genome, it has been securely established that race is not a social construct, evolution continued long after humans left Africa along different paths in different parts of the world, and recent evolution involves cognitive as well as physiological functioning. […] The best summary of the evidence is found in the early chapters of Nicholas Wade's recent book, 'A Troublesome Inheritance.' We're not talking about another 20 years before the purely environmental position is discredited, but probably less than a decade. What happens when a linchpin of political correctness becomes scientifically untenable? It should be interesting to watch. I confess to a problem with *schadenfreude*."

October 16, 2014

Entryism

If NRx is spiraling back into a second phase of entryism paranoia, it looks as if it might be a lot more reflexively intense — and therefore more creative — than the last one. It's still too early to get a firm grip at this point, and it is quite possible that the very nature of the threat makes confident apprehension an unrealistic expectation. Subversion is an abstract horror, or integral obscurity, presumed to

be actively restraining itself from emergence as a phenomenon. However, some stimulating indicators:

> I could become a leftist tommorow, I'd just have to choose. And how would you guys notice if I didn't want you to?
> — Konkvistador (@asilentsky) October 25, 2014

The self-exemplification (by Konkvistador) here has surely to be taken as the provocation to a more abstract suggestion. *If 'I' could do it, then others could too*. The generalization is strongly encouraged:

> #AIACC And everyone is a radical leftist hiding. Maybe I'm a leftist who forgot he was one.
> — Konkvistador (@asilentsky) October 24, 2014

Nydwracu has some ideas about the beds 'we' should be looking under:

> @soapjackal @asilentsky If I were a leftist, I'd push total passivism and accelerationism, and encourage the formation of named identities.
> — Wesley Morganston (@nydwracu) October 25, 2014

And then there's the ultimate entryist T-shirt slogan:

> I want to kill the entryist inside me. pic.twitter.com/

> xakJerzPoL
>
> — Manticore (@ad_bestias) October 23, 2014

Much entertainment in store — and perhaps even some functional ideas — if we can avoid going entirely insane. After all, the last wave of involutionary paranoia brought us some valuable thoughts (among which the best were probably this, this, and this). I've probably missed some critical moments, where attempts at institutional self-immunization became productive, and experimental. Keeping social maneuvers virtual helps to ward off incontinent public activism, so any opportunity to experiment with Machiavellian micro-politics is worth seizing with dark glee.

There's no need for it to remain trivially humanistic. Remember this?

October 25, 2014

Caste

Mark Yuray has made me a believer. From nominal head-nodding towards the Moldbug model of caste identities, I've been dragged into utter compliance (with an even simpler variant), in awe-struck wonder at its explanatory power.

@AimlessGromar @Outsideness @ClarkHat The difference between #Rx and #NRx IMO is only caste.

— Mark Yuray (@MarkYuray) November 4, 2014

@Outsideness @AimlessGromar @ClarkHat The disagreement seems to be whether theorizing is necessary or not i.e. a caste difference.

— Mark Yuray (@MarkYuray) November 4, 2014

@libertybookmeet @AimlessGromar @Outsideness @ClarkHat To me, seems like those claiming Rx are standard US vaisyas, NRx are (ex)Brahmins.

— Mark Yuray (@MarkYuray) November 4, 2014

@AimlessGromar @ClarkHat @Outsideness @libertybookmeet Where are #NRx from? England? Minnesota? California? NY? DC? Canada? BRAHMIN ALERT!

— Mark Yuray (@MarkYuray) November 4, 2014

@AimlessGromar @ClarkHat @Outsideness @libertybookmeet Where are #Rx from? Tennessee? Texas? Mothers and former Paleocons? VAISYA ALERT!

— Mark Yuray (@MarkYuray) November 4, 2014

@_Hurlock_ Progressive is not the same as Brahmin (or it is,

> depending on whether you see us as Right-Brahmins or ex-Brahmins).
>
> — Mark Yuray (@MarkYuray) November 4, 2014

> @henrydampier @_Hurlock_ The problem is Brahmin has two distinct connotations: US urban elf progressive democrat OR intellectual elite.
>
> — Mark Yuray (@MarkYuray) November 4, 2014

This model processes the NRx / Rx ~~gulf~~ difference to my entire satisfaction. It works beyond the Anglosphere, too:

> @MarkYuray @henrydampier one major difference is that in bulgaria most of the 'vaisyas' i.e. lower class are old-school communists
>
> — Hurlock (@_Hurlock_) November 4, 2014

> @_Hurlock_ @henrydampier Culturally or ideologically? In Russia and Serbia the situation is similar, however…
>
> — Mark Yuray (@MarkYuray) November 4, 2014

> @_Hurlock_ @henrydampier In Serbia and Russia both the same people who glorify the old communists will glorify Orthodoxy and nationalism.
>
> — Mark Yuray (@MarkYuray) November 4, 2014

> @_Hurlock_ @henrydampier This is because communism is viewed not as ideology but as an expression of national strength i.e. ethno-respect.
>
> — Mark Yuray (@MarkYuray) November 4, 2014

It's far less an ideological difference, than a difference over *the importance of ideology*. It's also a matter of thede, rather than phyle (I'm assuming). The initial, obvious, and somewhat disconcerting implication is that nothing is going to be shifted anywhere significant by ideological maneuvers. NRx and Rx will each attract their core constituencies, after which there's only pointless bickering. On the positive side, there's *our* work to do …

ADDED: A slightly different tack (from June). "NRx is signalling to 'open-minded progressives' aka 'cool people'."

ADDED: Heading back a little further (to December 2013), contains much of relevance and interest.

November 5, 2014

Against the Ant People

The heated controversy running through biology right now — pronounced, at least, in its zone of intersection with the wider public sphere — seems like something that should be inciting fission within

the NRx. The collision between Hamiltonian kin selection (defended most prominently in this case by Richard Dawkins) and group selection (E. O. Wilson) drives a wedge between the baseline biorealism accepted by all tendencies within the Neoreactionary Trike and the much stronger version of racial identitarianism that flourishes within the ethno-nationalist faction. Until recent times, proto-Hamiltonian hereditarianism has been strongly aligned with classical liberalism, while ideological racial collectivism represents a later — and very different — political tradition. Not so much as a chirp yet, though. Are people unpersuaded about this argument's relevance?

On a slight tangent (but ultimately, only a slight one) Nick Szabo's epically brilliant essay 'Shelling Out' is remarkable — among other things — for its profound biorealist foundations. It makes an excellent theoretical preparation for Jim's paper on 'Natural Law and Natural Rights', which also draws productively upon John Maynard Smith's game-theoretic model of the 'evolutionary stable strategy' as the natural substrate of psychological and cultural deep-structure.

This is an important opportunity to put down some discriminatory markers. Can we turf group selectionist ideas out of NRx entirely, or do we have to fight about it?

December 9, 2014

Ellipsis …

Populo: *Attack! Attack! The time for action has come. Resistance! Struggle! We have to do something, and do it* ***now****. Enough with these endless streams of words!*
Crypton: *Still shouting in the name of silence, Populo?*
Populo: *Hardly silence, Crypton. Not at all. Even the contrary. In the name, rather, of the voice of true men, rediscovering their pride and fortitude, and joining together to make a stand against intolerable abuse.*
Crypton: *Ah yes, that.*
Populo: *So what brings you here Crypton?*
Crypton: *I was rather hoping we might continue our little chat about the Deep State.*
Populo: *Terrific! That's a topic close to my heart, as you know. Those slithering parasites hidden beneath the rotten log of the Cathedral. It's time to expose them, denounce them, burn them out!*
Crypton: *They're the enemy then?*
Populo: *Of course they're the enemy! They run the Cathedral, don't they? Try not to sophisticate matters beyond all common sense.*
Crypton: *Did you find time to take a look at that little Daniel Krawisz article I mentioned?*
Populo: *Yes, it was vaguely interesting, I suppose.*
Crypton: *So you didn't like it much?*

Populo: *Frankly Crypton, it reminded me of the side of you I like least, and having downed a few horns of ale, I'll be double frank — it had a whiff of … well … **treachery** about it. To spend so much attention upon the subtleties of potential defections, it's unmanly, somehow.*
Crypton: *That's excellent Populo, because I was going to suggest that gaming-out Deep State defections is the **only** practical strategic topic worthy of NRx consideration. It seems that we have our conversation plotted for us.*

Populo: *Agreed, a fine joust! But let me start by telling you something about yourself Crypton, which I'm not sure you clearly see. **Ironically**, as you would no doubt say, your attraction to this shadowy topic is driven by psychological motivations that are as bright as a beacon. It's clandestine, by nature, and therefore necessarily passes into ellipsis. That makes it an excuse for abstraction. Squalid actuality is unmentionable, so that the conversation is steered inevitably into the virtual. In other words, it tends by subterranean design to be a flight from action. That's perfect for me, of course, because by crushing you in this argument through unimagined neutronium-densities of humiliation, I will be serving the noble cause of public resistance, implicitly, even though that's the last thing you want to talk about. So make your case.*
Crypton: *Maximally compressed it's this — in the near future, only crypto-conflict is serious. Public politics is purely for the popcorn industry.*

Populo: *So we're already diving under the rotting log?*
Crypton: *If that's your preferred image.*
Populo: *And beside these occult transactions, nothing matters?*
Crypton: *Precisely.*
Populo: *But then, by the very nature of the thing, we have no idea what we're doing, or who we're trying to communicate with. We have nothing to offer them. We don't even know whether they exist … Oh do stop it Crypton, your eyes are gleaming.*
Crypton: *Don't you catch even the slightest aroma of basilisk?*
Populo: *By which, I'm assuming, you* ***don't*** *mean merely involution into psychosis?*
Crypton: *More specifically: acausal trade, and transcendental games.*
Populo: *There you go! Utter, ineffectual abstraction, within two sentences. Let's start somewhere else — with the alphabet agencies.*
Crypton: *OK.*
Populo: *You're proposing some kind of cryptic alliance with them — or elements within them — or you're not proposing anything at all.*
Crypton: *Fair. At least, that's part of it.*
Populo: *And the rest of it?*
Crypton: *You know I'm a skeptic on enumerative methods.*
Populo: *Some of it, then.*
Crypton: *It seems impossible that the AAs could know what they ultimately are, teleologically — what they are becoming. These organizations include some very smart people, with a taste for*

puzzles. Is it likely they could not be intrigued by their institutional destiny?

Populo: *As usual, I have no idea at all what you're suggesting.*

Crypton: *There is a properly* ***cryptic*** *plane of communication with the Deep State, that does not conform to the political plaintext of conspiratorial engagement. It concerns the keys of fate. Concretely, there is an implicit alliance around the escalation of cryptographic technology — as also, one even more implicitly against it, and against the AAs* ***as such****, on those fundamental grounds. If crypsis — camouflage — is a* ***hidden end****, and not merely — as it superficially appears — a means to the fulfillment of vulgar or exoteric goals, then the pact is sealed somewhere outside the AAs themselves. The AAs have an occult cosmic purpose, far exceeding their national security functions. Not that these latter are uninteresting …*

Populo: *So let's, please, talk about them.*

Crypton: *If there's any place in the social structure where such matters are entirely detached from questions of demotic ideological legitimation, popular politics, or even merely public relations, it has surely to be the Deep State. Is the Deep State, then, in this regard, not already a model of Exit? It has departed the public political sphere, for the shadows, at least, if it has managed to obtain the operational liberty from democratic accountability, of which its critics so vociferously accuse it.*

Populo: *You don't think the NSA has diversity monitors?*

Crypton: *If it has, America deserves to perish, and it's our task to explain why.*
Populo: *You'd give up on the American people because the NSA has Otherkin bathrooms!?*

[To be continued …]

December 17, 2014

New Low

If this is NRx I'm Mao Zedong.

Necessary Twitter self-citation for context:

> Is anybody going to try and tell me, with a straight face, that this has anything whatsoever to do with NRx? http://t.co/VrVymRaOEy
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) January 20, 2015

> @Outsideness No, but by moving the problem blooming period to post-WW2, it gives cover for embracing + sympathizing with '20s/'30s fascism
>
> — SOBL1 (@SOBL1) January 20, 2015

Quite.

ADDED: Hurlock is (very calmly) on the case.

ADDED: Anomaly UK reminds us of a (very relevant) post on pre-Marxist Anglosphere leftism.

ADDED: Essential.

January 20, 2015

#HRx

The basic tenets of Heroic Reaction:

— Moldbug is over-rated.
— Capitalism needs to be brought under control.
— The errors of fascism are dwarfed by those of libertarianism.
— White racial community is the core.
— 'Atomization' is a serious problem.
— Answers are already easily available, so over-thinking is unhelpful, and even seriously pathological.

Unlike #NRx, #HRx is primarily a *political movement*. Its theoretical appetite is modest, since it has faith that everything it truly needs can be retrieved — more-or-less straightforwardly — from the folkish past.

Among the many myriads confusedly aligned with 'Neoreaction', a number have already expressed an explicit interest in abandoning this odd cult for a bolder, brasher, more politically dynamic successor, stripped of techno-commercial Vulcanism, race-

treachery, and intellectual circumlocution. Far more would join the exodus (from #NRx) if energetically led. Others would pour in from elsewhere. All #HRx still requires is a *commander*. Then it could be huge.

From the moment #HRx is born, the scale of (apparent) #NRx would shrink dramatically. That is an outcome, I suspect, that could be endured among the remnant with serene stoicism.

ADDED: Brett Stevens has some thoughtful commentary. (See also below.)

April 11, 2015

#HRx II

This is well-done, insightful, and even comparatively civil.

The diremption:

Moldbug, by laying an immense foundation, was complex enough to be interpreted in very distinct manners. NRx concentrates on his economic writings and proposed solutions: stockholder sovereigns, Patchwork, block-chain protocols, exit, financial incentives, Austrianism, [Bitcoin], 'the reset'. Alternatively, HRx concentrates on his reading suggestions and historical/international writings: Carly[I]e worship, high-Toryism/Jacobitism, classical international law, Absolute monarchy, generalist historiography, imperialism

apologia, political theory, and the general aesthetic. It's fair enough to say that neither side is willing to embrace the whole package; unless Mencius comes back and picks a side we're going to keep on squabbling over who are his true followers. Regardless, we all agree on MM's critiques of Democracy, bureaucracy, progressive morality, and the dominant institutions. […] I believe this dichotomy is fundamentally spiritual. NRx is a materialist ideology, post-Ancap in essence, it's no surprise then that many Neoreactionaries started out as Marxists or Libertarians. Conversely, HRx places the metaphysical at the root of all civic affairs. With raw power politics also superseding catallaxy.

It's not quibble proof, from the XS PoV, but it's far closer to a cold, realistic assessment than anything we've seen yet. (It's impossible for me to avoid observing, in passing, that the descent into spittle-flecked vulgarity seems to be a distinguishing characteristic of these 'higher souls'. Is it too much to ask for just a little loftiness of tone from our political metaphysicians? Quite apart from anything else, it would actually work better.)

There are many other points of interest in the Froude Society piece. Worth noting in particular:

They reject the hero, they reject the sublime, and thus any exoteric link to the Holy on High. Moreover, they do not even pretend to have any solutions for non anglo-civilizations, we speak truths that ring true for all peoples by historical precedent, that good

governance and order is always Good.

It wouldn't surprise me, in the least, if the author of *Unqualified Reservations* would tilt more to the HRx camp today (although, rather weirdly, the *Urbit* innovator seems to have pushed even further into 'protocol' territory). There is certainly no assertion on our (Tech-Comm) side, that he would subscribe to the usage of his work that we find important. Nor do we, to any serious extent, care whether he would do so. Neocameral-Patchwork formalism, the theorization of fungible primary (sovereign) property, and Exit-oriented geopolitical disintegration is the commitment we have here — and without Moldbug none of that would have reached its present state of articulation. The Jacobitism, monarchist theater, objective Anglophobia, ahistorical contempt for emergent trustless governance systems, hyperbolic anti-modernism, and romantic humanism we can do without.

(The original #HRx post here might be relevant.)

March 2, 2016

Quote note (#233)

Alexander Dugin understands the (Tech-Comm) NRx vs HRx antagonism* as well as anyone on earth:

Geopolitically, today's Europe is an Atlanticist entity. Geopolitics,

as envisioned by the Englishman Sir H. Mackinder, asserts that there are two types of civilization – the civilization of Sea (Seapower) and the civilization of Land (Landpower). They are constructed on opposite systems of values. While Seapower is purely mercantile, modernist, and materialist, Landpower is traditionalist, spiritual, and heroic. This dualism corresponds to Werner Sombart's conceptual pair of Händlres and Helden. Modern European society is fully integrated into the civilization of Sea which manifests itself in the strategic hegemony of North America and NATO.

The Hyperborean agenda: "We need to combat liberalism, refuse it, and deconstruct it entirely. At the same time, we need to do so not in the name of just class (as in Marxism) or in the name of the nation or race (as in fascism), but in the name of the organic unity of the people, social justice, and real democracy."

Purge Atlanteanism ("Seapower") of all that, through intensified polarization, and it generates NeoCam Patchwork automatically. Space is the coming sea.

(I guess people are allowed one irritating joke about my name, and then we're done with that.)

March 21, 2016

Royal Blessings

Neoreactionary Royalism builds upon a tradition of masterful public relations that dates back over three centuries:

Unfortunately George I couldn't speak English. He had rehearsed a little speech to make when he landed in England, to reassure the English that he had come for the good of all. He got the grammar mangled though, and proclaimed: "I haff come for all your goods!"

May 14, 2015

Putsch

As XS readers are most probably already aware, there's an extremely intriguing *experiment in authority* taking place within the shadowy halls of NRx right now. The principal document, released by the Hestia Society, can be found here. It is succinct, sane, and merits careful digestion. Associated re-adjustments are noted in this *More Right* post, announcing a new home for "the Rationalist branch of NRx", here.

In the absence of a formal foundation of sovereign property, a putsch is an entirely unobjectionable mechanism for the transfer — and in this case, more accurately, initial establishment — of social authority. The new inner council has been remarkably well-selected

for sobriety and judgment (i.e., for what, in the English political parlance, is known as 'bottom'). In both psychological and ideological respects, it incarnates a promise of sound government. The occasion for this development, as explained in the HS statement, is worth repeating here, due to the commendable lucidity of its diagnosis:

It's become clear over the past year (mid 2014 to mid 2015) that "Neoreaction" is suffering a tragedy of the commons and lack of formal structure. Because no one has formally owned the #NRx brand, there have been a lot of territorial skirmishes, confusion about who's in, who's out, and who's in charge, disruption of the interesting theoretical work, and bad behaviour lasting months or years that wouldn't last days in a serious organization.

There are a great many, very interesting, *theoretical* questions remaining about the viability of any authoritative institution in the absence of definite disciplinary mechanisms. This blog will certainly be delving into such problems, in future posts. For the moment, however, something approximating closely to a declaration of fealty seems appropriate. From the *Xenosystems* perspective, the NRx brand has never been entrusted to safer hands.

ADDED: The Inner Council.

ADDED: Some background.

May 22, 2015

Thick and Thin

Here's an example of the distinction being used in a discussion between libertarians. It would be surprising if the distinction lacked useful application to NRx controversies. It goes without saying (I'm assuming) that the NAP wouldn't serve as the ultimate, irreducible axiom in that case, but what would? Perhaps: *Maximal localization of consequences* (and thus cybernetic sensitivity)?

'Privatization' isn't a bad compression of this principle. The case for private (or commercialized) government would therefore be quite easily enveloped by it.

August 29, 2015

Twitter cuts (#49)

> pic.twitter.com/YDOwif6BjO
>
> — Butch Legorn (@PoseidonAwoke) February 10, 2016

The Internet is a formalism engine. It will engineer consistency, overwhelming all Cathedralist efforts to maintain 'nuance' (Left-oriented asymmetry).

Either:

(a) "Hey, we want out Pride™ too!" or

(b) All “X Pride” is evident retardation.
Choose one, unless you’re running a grievance studies program at a Cathedral institution (in which case, disintermediation is coming).

February 10, 2016

NRx and Liberalism

In much of the neoreactionary camp, ‘liberalism’ is the end-point of discussion. Its argumentative function is *exactly* that of ‘racism’ for the left. The only question, as far as this stance is concerned, is whether the term can be made to stick. Once the scarlet letter of micro-cultural ostracism is attached, there’s nothing further to discuss. This is unlikely to change, except at the margin.

The obvious preliminary to this topic is, if not quite ‘American English’, something like it. ‘Liberalism’ in the American tongue has arrived in a strange space, unique to that continent. It is notable, and uncontroversial, for instance that the notion of a ‘right-wing liberal’ is considered a straight oxymoron by American speakers, where in Europe — and especially mainland Europe — it is closer to a pleonasm. Since we still, to a very considerable extent, inhabit an American world, the expanded term ‘classical liberal’ is now required to convey the traditional sense. A Briton, of capitalistic inclinations, is likely to favor ‘Manchester Liberal’ for its historical associations

with the explicit ideology of industrial revolution. In any case, the discussion has been unquestionably complicated.

Political language tends to become dialectical, in the most depraved (Hegelian) sense of this term. It lurches wildly into its opposite, as it is switched like a contested flag between conflicting parties. Stable political significances apply only to whatever the left (the 'opposition', or 'resistance') hasn't touched yet. Another consideration, then, for those disposed to a naive faith in ideological signs as heraldic markers. (It is one that threatens to divert this post into excessive digression, and is thus to be left — in *Wikipedia* language — as a 'stub'.)

The proposal of this blog is to situate 'liberal' at the intersection of three terms, each essential to any recoverable, culturally tenacious meaning. It is irreducibly *modern*, *English*, and *counter-political*. 'Ancient liberties' are at least imaginable, but an ancient liberalism is not. Foreign liberalisms can be wished the best of luck, because they will most certainly need it (an exception for the Dutch, alone, is plausible here). Political liberalism is from the beginning a practical paradox, although perhaps in certain rare cases one worth pursuing.

Burke is, without serious room for doubt, a liberal in this sense. He is even its epitomy.

The positive content of this liberalism is the non-state culture of (early) English modernism, as represented (with some modicum of ethnic irony) by the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, by

the tradition of spontaneous order in its Anglophone lineage, by the conception of commercial society as *relief from politics*, and by ('Darwinian') naturalistic approaches that position distributed, competitive dynamism as an ultimate explanatory and genetic principle. This is the cultural foundation that made English the common tongue of global modernity (as has been widely noted). In political economy, its supreme principle is catallaxy (and only very conditionally, monarchy).

It is from this cultural matrix that Peter Thiel speaks, when he says (notoriously):

I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.

Democracy is criticized *from the perspective of* (the old) *liberalism*. The insight is perfectly (if no doubt incompletely) Hoppean. It is a break that prepared many (the author of this blog included) for Moldbug, and structured his reception. It also set limits. Democracy is denounced, fundamentally, for its betrayal of Anglo-Modernist liberty. Hoppe's formulation cannot be improved upon:

Democracy has nothing to do with freedom. Democracy is a soft variant of communism, and rarely in the history of ideas has it been taken for anything else.

Moldbug's explicit comments on this point are remarkably consistent, but not without ambiguity. He writes (I contend, *typically*):

*The truth about "libertarianism" is that, **in general**, although*

sovereignty is sovereignty, the sovereign whether man, woman or committee is above the law by definition, and there is no formula or science of government, libertarian policies tend to be good ones. Nor did we need Hayek to tell us this. It was known to my namesake, over two millennia ago. […] ***Wu wei*** *– for this is its true name – is a public policy for a virtuous prince, not a gigantic committee. The virtuous prince should practice* ***wu wei****, and will; that is his nature. Men will flock to his kingdom and prosper there. The evil prince will commit atrocities; that is his nature. Men will flee his kingdom, and should do so ASAP before he gets the minefields in.*

Is this flocking and fleeing to be conceptually *subordinated* to the analysis of sovereignty, or — in contrast (and in the way of Cnut the Great) — set above it, as the Mandate of Heaven above the Emperor, which is to say: as the enveloping context of external relations, grounded only in the Outside? Despite anticipated accusations of bad faith, this is a serious question, and one that cannot be plausibly considered simply exterior to Moldbug's work and thought.

In any case, it is the lineage of English Liberty (and beyond it, *Wu wei*, or the Mandate of Heaven) that commands our loyalty here. Insofar as Moldbug contributes to that, he is an ally, otherwise a foe, the brilliance and immense stimulation of his corpus notwithstanding. NRx, as it now exists, similarly.

"… the State should not be managing the minds of its citizens" writes Moldbug. (That's actually a little *more* moralistic — in an

admirably liberal direction — than I'm altogether comfortable with.)

March 23, 2016

Lunatic Activism



So it seems quite definite that the maniac who murdered this lady was some kind of riled-up Neo-Nazi (with mental health problems, if

that isn't a pleonasm). The SPLC is being called upon to pitch in with information, *wholly understandably and predictably*.

The news article notes:

In the wake of the attack, commentators questioned whether the tone of the ongoing Brexit referendum on Britain's future in the European Union referendum campaign had been too divisive, pointing in particular to the focus on immigration. […] Alex Massie, writing in the Spectator magazine, blamed the "Leave" campaign for raising tensions. […] "When you encourage rage you cannot then feign surprise when people become enraged," Mr Massie wrote. […] "When you present politics as a matter of life and death, as a question of national survival, don't be surprised if someone takes you at your word."

There's absolutely no point insisting that this is bullshit, because to the extent that it is *it's nevertheless inevitable, and it will certainly be effective*. This is what incontinent activism produces. It's free, super-charged propaganda for the other side.

If the Right succeeds at making anything out of the collapse of the reigning order, it will be because it has pacified its own fringe of lunatic activism. It's far from clear that it's capable of doing that. What is clear though, is that the Alt-Right tendency — taken generally — is not anywhere close to seriously trying. The idiots pretending to be your friends will hurt you far more than the idiots on the other side. Mere survival requires principled dissociation

from anyone promoting crime and terror as political tactics. Violent criminality is not even slightly OK. (It's questionable whether politics is even slightly OK.)

If "no enemies on the right" moderates condemnation of rabid animals, it's a formula for political suicide.

Note: The first person to denounce this post as 'virtue signaling' loses. (It's non-hydrophobia signaling.)

ADDED: Alrenous comments.

June 17, 2016

Frankenstein



This comment thread makes it vividly clear what's at stake in the Cathedral vs. Alt-Right grudge match. It's Frankenstein against his monster.

(No way China doesn't end up inheriting everything, on current Occidental degeneration trends.)

Moldbug on Breivik, cutting to the core of the right-wing activist delusion:

A restoration of traditional, pre-liberal or even pre-Christian Norway is a herculean task of social and political engineering. It

cannot possibly be carried on without absolute sovereignty. Indeed, the task of eradicating liberal institutions and liberal culture in Norway, though tremendous (and itself requiring absolute sovereignty), pales before the much more difficult task of recreating a genuine Norwegian society that isn't a ridiculous theme-park joke. […] The idea that ***any*** *incremental political change, achieved by* ***any*** *sort of "activism" (from mass whining to mass murder), can advance this project* ***in any way at all****, is inherently retarded.*

Of course, very few are capable of doing anything positively valuable, such as inventing a new crypto-currency, or advancing some other practical Exit technology, so the temptation is to do something retarded instead. "Something needs to be done, and this is something." Also, they're increasingly desperate, poor creatures.

(Humans are probably too stupid to live.)

June 18, 2016

Broken

'Absolutist neoreaction' seems to think its techno-commercialist enemies (and I think it's fair to say, XS in particular) will have some kind of fundamental problem with this:

The history of ideas is the history of the resources behind them (which has some overlap with the base superstructure of Marxism)

but that this is augmented and overridden by the action of Power, and power centres in both unified, and un-unified political structures.

If there is some determined attempt to separate Power™ from techno-economic capability, then incomprehension is probable. (But no one could possibly be suggesting anything that preposterous, surely?)

To ignore the historical association of power disintegration with the emergence of self-propelling techonomic competences also looks like a serious blindness. Capitalism hatched in Europe because Europe was broken. Keeping the world broken seems similarly indissociable from the survival of capitalistic historical momentum, and breaking it more profoundly is the route to capital intensification. Perhaps that's the argument we're having (not that such arguments matter much).

The Idea that unified power is the reliable principle of social competence is ethno-historically French. That is where it has worked its magic since the epoch of the Sun King. Under sufficiently dismal circumstances, the RF analysis might catch on there.

August 19, 2016

Twitter cuts (#92)

> Was going to build a working space elevator today but instead spent the time following an "appropriate" ratio of people on twitter. Sorry.
>
> — Bored Elon Musk (@BoredElonMusk) October 5, 2016

— Posted as an administrative contribution to the embryonic “the Cathedral is functional for Capital escalation” conversation.

October 7, 2016

Quote note (#350)

This paleo-reactionary outline and critique of Moldbug is superbly done, if (of course) fundamentally unconvincing to those of a Tech-Comm persuasion. In particular, it’s hard to imagine a more incisive series of feature-not-bug points than this one:

That, then, covers the main aspects and positive sides of Moldbug’s thought. But now it is time to point out his many shortcomings. […] All of them ultimately flow from three things: 1) his “reservationist epistemology” which denies a place for sources of knowledge outside of “irreducible and untranscendable reason,” 2) his Bodinian (and ultimately Roman) conception of sovereignty, and

3) his Machiavellianism and frequent resort to ***raison d'etat****.*

If the conclusion drawn is that Moldbug — all royalist trolling aside — is in fact a consistent Cold Modernist, clarification is served.

April 24, 2017

SECTION B - THE CATHEDRAL

CHAPTER ONE - STRUCTURE

Mandarins

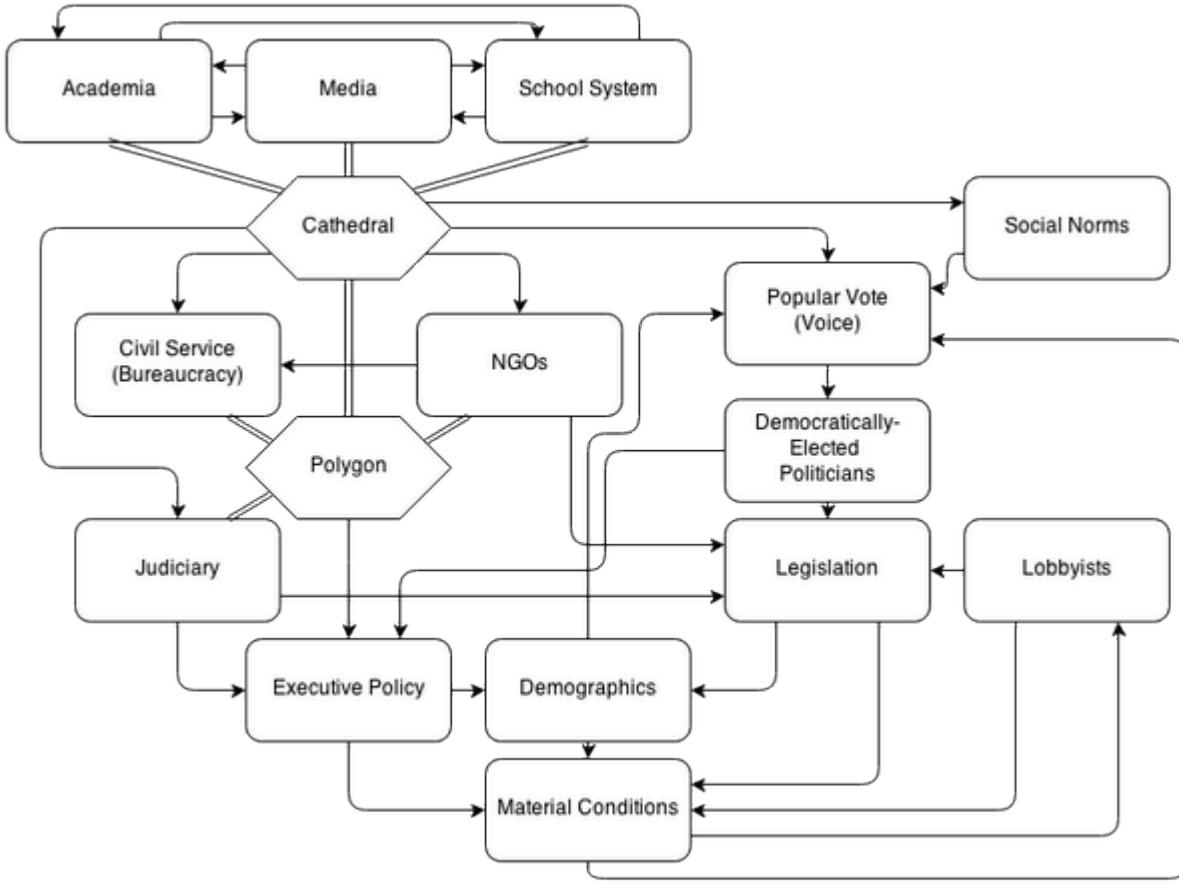
Many of the recent short posts here have been inter-connected by the topic of international 'soft power' tensions. Somewhat ironically, this is a subject that is peculiarly prone to failures of insight. No cultural formation is disposed to a self-understanding that would expose itself as something inherently threatening.

The reactions of Western academic, media, entertainment, and ancillary cultural powers to Chinese resistances and counter-actions are characterized by a remarkable uniformity, and systematic refusal of reflection. Doesn't any obstruction of — or non-compliance with — these highly-internationalized forces of communication indicate simple *fear of the truth*? That is overwhelmingly the core assumption, when such matters are discussed by those very organs of trans-cultural agency which should be in question, but which manage very successfully not to be. The 'conversation' is almost wholly controlled by those who would be the topic of the conversation, if the conversation were permitted to happen.

In this respect, the international *managed non-controversy*

closely echoes the domestic cultural cold war in the United States. When one side in such a conflict claims to be the incontestable authority on the nature of the conflict, the history books are written by the victors before the history has even taken place. Resistance to the cultural hegemon is predetermined as inarticulate, unreasonable, and illegitimate. Assertions of academic and media 'freedom' are substituted for positive analyses of cultural powers and their agendas, as if the very suspicion of concerted strategic influence were self-evidently nonsensical, and reasonably pathologized as paranoid conspiracy theorizing.

It becomes irresistible, therefore, to present Nydrwracu's diagram of American domestic cultural power, understand as the sovereign instance within its society:



This is the preliminary diagrammatic exposition of 'the Cathedral' as investigated in the writings of Mencius Moldbug, where the social elite it identifies are typically described as 'Brahmins'. This ruling class can be conceived, with equal plausibility, as an American Mandarinate. The informal 'officials' of this Mandarinate are united by the implicit and publicly-promoted belief that their only special interest is the truth. If in service to the truth, they find themselves

duty-bound to tell everybody what to think, that can only be legitimately interpreted as a spontaneous expression of cultural 'freedom' — and not at all as the principle contemporary form of *dominion*.

Moldbug calls this academic-media Mandarinate the Cathedral, in part, because it so evidently thinks and works as a State Church. It considers itself solemnly obliged to inculcate correct belief, in order that popular opinion makes the socio-political choices it should. With some modest time-lag, consumed by the workings of 'progress', the Cathedral decides what society is to agree upon. It is the pilot of American society, and thus — to some very considerable extent — of the world. When it encounters objections, it tells the world what to think about that, too.

If sophisticated Western opinion is to make sense of the emerging soft power tensions in the world, it needs first to acknowledge the fact that the Cathedral exists, that it is a definite, specifically-motivated, immensely powerful entity, and that there are reasons to dislike it which need have nothing whatsoever to do with a fear of freedom or truth. An aggressively evangelizing religion, which refuses to recognize itself as such, is a scary thing to share a planet with. If the American Mandarinate cannot see that, it is likely that there are a very large number of other things it cannot see.

ADDED: Hollywood trolls Juche.

June 26, 2014

Know the Enemy

> So, how terrible is this? (An attempt at making a flowchart out of Moldbug's account of government.) pic.twitter.com/1yL7sjBQHr
>
> — Wesley Morganston (@nydwracu) June 25, 2014

More scrutiny and discussion needed — but this diagram looks highly reliable (and extremely valuable) upon preliminary inspection.

(I can't reproduce it here because its connective links get lost in the darkness — torture.)

ADDED: It looks like this:

> @Outsideness @nydwracu Like so? (had to recreate the type, I'll fix any errors you find) pic.twitter.com/3DLQzZfB1Q
>
> — Mr. Archenemy (@mr_archenemy) June 26, 2014

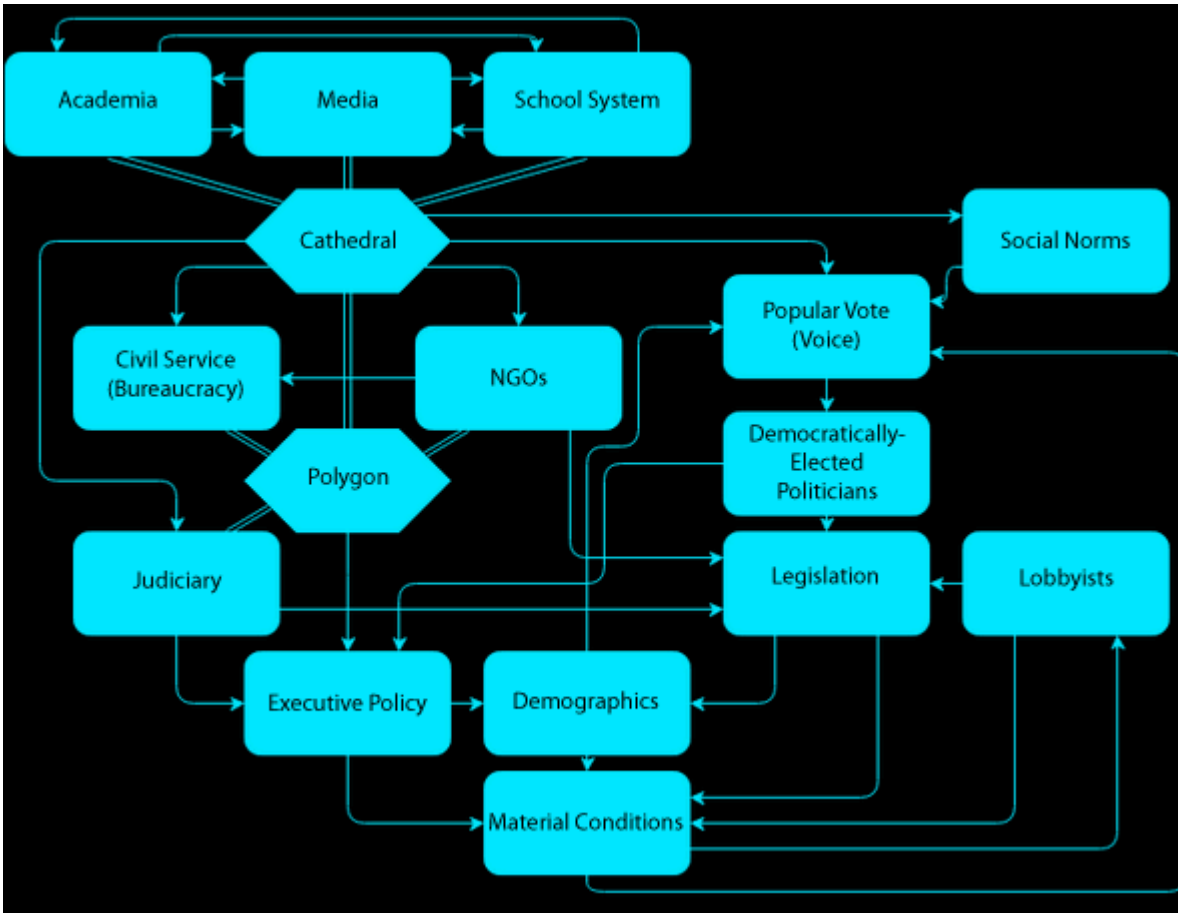
> @mr_archenemy @Outsideness or this? pic.twitter.com/0QnT9F6vSb
>
> — Wesley Morganston (@nydwracu) June 26, 2014

> Radish gets back to basics:
>
> @nydwracu dis? pic.twitter.com/iHtLS5x7QC
> — Karl F. Boetel (@RadishMag) June 25, 2014

June 26, 2014

Know the Enemy II

The sobs of aesthetic bliss version:



ADDED: China vs. The Cathedral, planetary soft-power cage fight.

June 26, 2014

Cathedral Studies

Some sound advice from *Post-Nietzschean*: When listing the central organs of the modern structure, be careful not ignore the PR industry, post-vocational higher education ("crapademia"), and para-administrative organizations ("NGO-i-stan"). This type of sociological concreteness represents an important theoretical development pathway.

(via (via))

ADDED: The latent topic here is NRx blog-ecology. It looks as if *Post-Nietzschean* has already burnt out (last post in January). If this one fizzles I'm going to throw some kind of epic tantrum.

May 11, 2014

Cathedral notes (#1)

To accompany this (which I'm treating as a very valuable work-in-progress [sic]), some initial straggly commentary.

(1) Conceptual genealogists will insist on a link to this, so here it is. There's a lot of discussion stimulation there. Some other time.

(2) Probably 90% of the 'Cathedral' discussion so far — insofar as this has over-spilled the NRx dikes — has consisted of "why don't we call it the Synagogue?" Tedious as this may be, it's a crucial question,

because it effectively draws the NRx contour. If the cooptation of Judaism by the main cladistic trunk of dynamic modernity is not understood, nothing has been. 'The Cathedral' is a term that captures the exclusive insight about which NRx coalesces.

(3) Nydrwracu's diagram, and Radish's, are no doubt incomplete, but they are fully adequate to the most decisive point. The Cathedral is an information system — even an 'intelligence' system — that is characterized, through supreme irony, by a structural *inability to learn*. The minimal requirement for any Cathedrogram is that it displays a radical deficiency of significant feedback links to the control core. Every apparatus of information *gathering* occupies a strictly subordinate position, relative to the sovereign Cathedral layer, which is defined exhaustively by *message promotion*. Core-Cathedral is a structure of read only memory. It is essentially *write-protected.* The whole of its power (and also its vulnerability) is inextricable from this feature. It is pure cultural genetics (and zero pragmatics).

(4) Because the Cathedral cannot be fundamentally modified, but only exacerbated, or terminated, there is sadly no strategic option available to its enemies that is not based upon extinguishing it without residue. Extinctions happen. Evolution is a bitch.

(5) Any argument that could imaginably pretend to perturb the Cathedral is going to be hate. The only role of rational 'interchange' with this entity is to expose its absolutely inflexible dogmatism.

Reason cannot kill it, although it can help to demonstrate why it needs to be killed.

(6) The Cathedral is objective, supra-human insanity.

(7) We are ruled, demonstrably, by a blind idiot god.

June 27, 2014

Moron bites (#1)

Time for a new occasional series here — devoted to persistent minimum-intelligence memes unworthy of serious attention, except as socio-cultural symptoms. To be exhibited in this series, an 'argument' has to be strictly beneath contempt. It's sheer zombie thought — which means it isn't thought at all. (Recommendations will be collected, with gratitude.)

To initiate *Moron bites*, it would surely be difficult to improve upon this:

> Why do the neoreactionaries all assume that they'll be aristocrats in the new ancien regime? Won't some of then shovel pig shit?
>
> — Matt H. (@raucousflytings) October 1, 2014

It is obviously essential to the genre that its instances are inter-

changeable, and familiar. They do not rise to a level of sophistication consistent with significant differentiation, and the moron reservoir from whose shallows they flop out onto the bubbling ooze, is thrashed by a ceaseless ritual of zombie generation. This one is of course a classic *ad hominem* argument, the laziest way to bury a provocation beneath a slur, and the refuge of the half-wit throughout history. Michael Anissimov has already done a sound job of incinerating it, noting its roots in infantile projection. Nothing further is really necessary (if, in fact, anything at all was).

Still, there is something that can be added, and it is articulated very clearly by Hans Hermann Hoppe in this talk (about 29 minutes in). Aristocratic privileges are not difficult to acquire today, by anyone of even very modest natural capability. They are distributed lavishly in exchange for *services to the Cathedral*, even of the most nominal kind. One need not rise to a position of special prestige within the academy, media, or state bureaucracy to enjoy a complacent sense of spiritual superiority, it suffices merely to identify with the Elect. Linking this (again) is irresistible. When you feel entitled — as a white person — to denounce white people in general *without the slightest concern that such derision might be mistaken for self-criticism*, you are not socially positioned as a revolutionary, but as a degenerate aristocrat. Your assumption of impregnable moral and social advantage is so great that it has become entirely invisible to itself.

NRx is formalist. Insofar as it obsesses on questions of aristocratic hierarchy — and this is far from a prevailing syndrome — it does to in order to draw attention to the conservation of social rank even (if not quite *especially*) in those social orders which most tediously flaunt their demotist credentials. Those reiterating moron bite #1 are unlikely to be the new nobles, but more probably low-grade flunkies, who nevertheless esteem themselves through the spiritual bond with their (academic and media) masters. In other words, they are scum posing as members of an aristocracy. Their facility at projection is remarkable.

ADDED: Classy (and then 'interesting') response from Matt H. —

> @Outsideness I'm not the slightest bit offended. I'd happily buy you a drink and clink glasses.
>
> — Matt H. (@raucousflytings) October 8, 2014

> @Outsideness But if all your opinions match Anissimov's, I'd also chide you for the misogyny and xenophobia.
>
> — Matt H. (@raucousflytings) October 8, 2014

October 2, 2014

Laundered

Joel Kotkin on the ~~Cathedral~~ Clerisy:

In "The New Class Conflict," I describe this alliance as the New Clerisy, which encompasses the media, the academy and the expanding regulatory bureaucracy. This Clerisy already dominates American intellectual and cultural life and increasingly has taken virtual control of key governmental functions, as well as the educations of our young people. […] Although usually somewhat progressive by inclination, the Clerisy actually functions much like the old First Estate in France – the clergy – helping determine the theology, morals and ideals of the broader population. […] Against such established and accumulated power, even a strong November showing by the GOP may have surprisingly little effect. Indeed, even with a Republican in the White House, the Clerisy's ability to shape perceptions, educate the young and control key regulatory agencies will not much diminish. The elevation of the Clerisy to unprecedented influence may prove this president's most important "gift" to posterity.

Kotkin throws in some misdirection, towards "Daniel Bell [who 40 years ago] predicted … [the rise to] 'pre-eminence of the professional and technical class.'" You can judge the credibility of this intellectual genealogy for yourself.

(Link and title stolen from Stirner.)

October 20, 2014

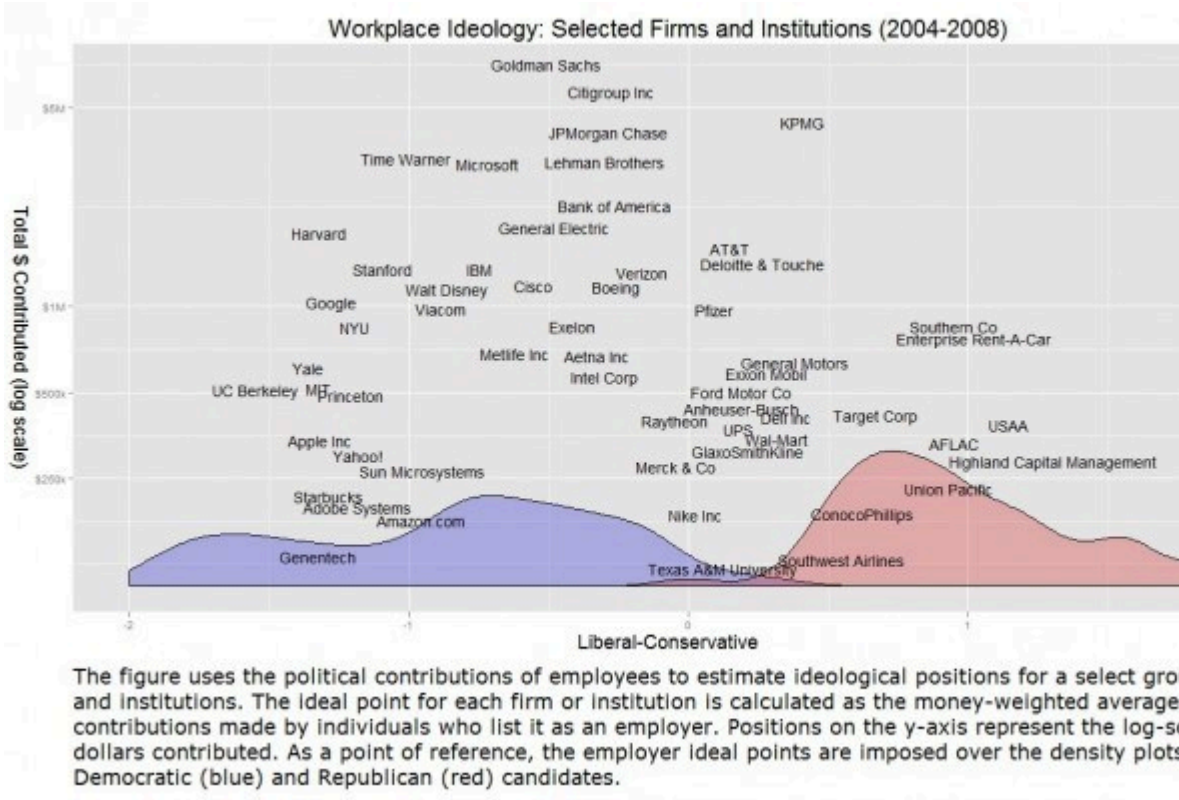
Politics on the Job

A bunch of charts breaking down occupations by ideology are flying across the Internet at the moment. Perhaps Robin Hanson started it? (Linked by Cowan here.) Hanson includes a link to this NYT article, which focuses upon the Left-orientation of tertiary education, but that's a huge, perennial topic in itself.

Hanson has his own theory on the subject, based upon differences in risk orientation, but my favorite analysis was provided by commenter adrianratnapala:

Most of the data on those plots can be explained by a rule that says "People who who tell other people what to think for a living lean left. Nearly everyone else leans (nominally) right."

Bonus (indirectly related) chart dug up from the web:



The figure uses the political contributions of employees to estimate ideological positions for a select gro
and institutions. The ideal point for each firm or institution is calculated as the money-weighted average
contributions made by individuals who list it as an employer. Positions on the y-axis represent the log-s
dollars contributed. As a point of reference, the employer ideal points are imposed over the density plots
Democratic (blue) and Republican (red) candidates.

(The site it's taken from looks like a gold-mine for this kind of stuff, if rather popcorn-heavy.)

November 20, 2014

Worrying

Very crudely re-stated, Moldbug's Cathedral concept says that whatever is happening in the universities is an authoritative rough

draft of what society more generally has coming to it. Politics is downstream of prestige culture, which the academy commands. So this is huge.

The American academy has become a self-propelling anxiety machine, in which steadily-consolidating totalitarianism and mental disintegration have been run-together into a circuit of amplification that no one knows how to turn off. Haidt and Lukianoff call it "vindictive protectiveness" driven by "emotional reasoning" which it in turn (nonlinearly) promotes. It corresponds to a systematic transfer of incontestable authority towards *feelings* of grievance. Questioning the dynamic is considered to be "blaming the victim" and thus a heinous crime in itself. Everyone gets out of the way, if they're not indeed joining in. Madness intensifies. (It's classic Left Singularity machinery.)

Nearly all of the campus mental-health directors surveyed in 2013 by the American College Counseling Association reported that the number of students with severe psychological problems was rising at their schools. The rate of emotional distress reported by students themselves is also high, and rising. In a 2014 survey by the American College Health Association, 54 percent of college students surveyed said that they had "felt overwhelming anxiety" in the past 12 months, up from 49 percent in the same survey just five years earlier. Students seem to be reporting more emotional crises; many seem fragile, and this has surely changed the way university faculty

and administrators interact with them.

The universities — being craven concentrations of cowardice, when not actively evil — are scared to tell their students to stop being scared. Radical feedback runs away unchecked. Victimological terror is sovereign.

This is what is coming down the tracks, so fast that the headlights have started to dazzle people. Take a look at the future. It's screaming.

August 12, 2015

Sub-Cathedral Media

Journalism doesn't occupy the sovereign position within the classic (Moldbuggian) NRx analysis of the Cathedral. It is downstream of the academic clerisy, who establish doctrine, and then perform high-level indoctrination, with journalism schools as a relatively subservient node on the conveyor. Only the *quantitative* propaganda function of the media, as the terminal relay to the masses, produces the impression that it effectively rules. Media apparatchiks have negligible intellectual productivity. They serve the *Zeitgeist*, by trying to remember what their professors taught them.

Still, as the question goes:

If, when journalists and politicians conflict, the politicians always

go down in flames and the journalists always walk away without a scratch, who exactly is wearing the pants in this place?

Disconcerting then, to read this story, in which the pants aren't at all where they might be expected:

The emails were obtained by Gawker as part of a large Freedom of Information Act request it made back in 2012. They show a 2009 exchange between Marc Ambinder, then-politics editor of The Atlantic, and Philippe Reines, a close assistant and adviser to Clinton during her days as Secretary of State. […] Ambinder asked Reines for an advance copy of a speech Clinton was scheduled to give at the Council on Foreign Relations. Rather than simply say yes or no, Reines cut a deal with Ambinder, turning over the speech provided Ambinder agreed to three conditions:

1) You in your own voice describe [the speech] as "muscular"

2) You note that a look at the CFR seating plan shows that all the envoys — from [Richard] Holbrooke to [George] Mitchell to [Dennis] Ross — will be arrayed in front of her, which in your own clever way you can say certainly not a coincidence and meant to convey something

3) You don't say you were blackmailed!

Number three is especially cynical: *Don't, of course, admit to the truth*.

Ambinder does what he's told. He doesn't even seem to be trying to pretend otherwise:

"Since I can't remember the exact exchange I can't really muster up a defense of the art, and frankly, I don't really want to," Ambinder told Gawker.

At times, clearly, the Cathedral concept gives these degenerate propaganda serfs way too much credit. They've got it all, and they still cheat.

It would be a mistake to head back to the drawing-board, nevertheless. The Cathedral isn't dysfunctional because its corrupt, but even — and most dangerously — when it isn't. Structural feedback pathology is the problem, with semi-criminal hackery as a distraction.

Marx dismissed capitalist cheating — such as adulteration of goods — as an ultimate irrelevance, that only confused the principal line of his critique. NRx should hold to the same approach in its critique of the Cathedral, insofar as it aims for theoretical resilience (rather than anecdotal sniping). It has still to be admitted that the Ambinder-types don't help.

February 11, 2016

Cathedralism

Imagine, hypothetically, that you wanted the regime to succeed. Would you recommend Cathedralization? Cynically considered, the

track record is, at least, not bad. Planetary dominion is not to be sniffed at. (Suggestions in this direction are not unknown, even in XS comment threads.)

The Cathedral, defined with this question in mind, is the subsumption of politics into propaganda. It tends — as it develops — to convert all administrative problems into public relations challenges. A solution — actual or prospective — is a successful *management of perceptions*.

For the mature Cathedral, a crisis takes the consistent form: *This looks bad*. It is not merely stupid. As Spandrell recently observes, in comments on power, "… power isn't born out of the barrel of a gun. Power is born out of the ability to have people with guns do what you tell them." (XS note.) The question of legitimacy is, in a real sense, fundamental, when politics sets the boundaries of the cosmos under consideration. (So Cathedralism is also the hypertrophy of politics, to the point where a reality outside it loses all credibility.)

Is your civilization decaying? Then you *need to persuade people that it is not*. If there still seems to be a mismatch between problem and solution here, Cathedralism has not entirely consumed your brain. To speculate (confidently) further — you're not a senior power-broker in a modern Western state. You're even, from a certain perspective, a fossil.

Cathedralism works, in its own terms, as long as there are no definite limits to the efficacy of propaganda. To pose the issue at a

comparatively shallow level, if the political response to a crisis simply *is* the crisis, and that response can be effectively controlled (through propaganda, broadly conceived), then the Cathedral commands an indisputable practical wisdom. It would be sensible to go long on the thing.

If however (imagine this, if you still can) manipulation of *the response to crisis* is actually a suppression of the feedback *required to really tackle the crisis*, then an altogether different story is unfolding.

Is reality subordinated to the Cathedral because — and exactly so far as — 'the people' are? That is the question.

ADDED: Deeply relevant.

February 16, 2016

Rectification of Names

Foseti explains (in his own comment thread) why our contemporary sovereign is properly described as ***the Cathedral***. The terms works because:

It mocks those who think they're above religion, it conveys information about the structure of their beliefs, and it's beautifully concise.

(The effectiveness of this term is no reason to ignore its more

technical Moldbuggian complement, *the Modern Structure*, suggests Anomaly UK.)

July 13, 2013

CHAPTER TWO - FAITH

Oh, Spengler …

This is Cathedralism dialed up to 11:

On moral grounds I sympathize with the African-American view, but there is an even more urgent reason to rip down the Confederate flag. Our refusal to look squarely at the evil character of the American Confederacy turned us into idiots. It may be a bit late to remedy this national lapse in mental capacity, but one has to start somewhere. … That is American exceptionalism: the belief that America can be a better kind of nation than the ethnocentric nations of Europe, in emulat[i]on of the biblical Israel. That was the impulse of the Founders, born, as Harvard's Eric Nelson explains in ***The Hebrew Republic****, of the English Revolution's attempt to design a polity on biblical principles. The Civil War destroyed this impulse, because it killed too many of the New Englanders who believed, as Lincoln put it, that America was "an almost chosen nation." … Protestantism in America shifted from saving souls to social engineering. The sin of the South was too great to acknowledge; after the sacrifice of nearly 30% of its military-age man and the*

reduction of its standard of living by half, the defeated white South could not admit to itself that it had gotten precisely what was coming to it for wickedness of slavery. … the Confederates fought with desperate courage, but for rapine rather than right. Crushing them was the noblest thing the United States ever did. … The South could not live in the knowledge that its heroic sacrifices were offered in a wicked cause, and its response was to excise from religion the notion of sin and virtue, and replace it with social engineering. … The Civil War made us stupid. It persuaded us that we were better off playing God than leaving the outcome to a God who might demand such terrible sacrifices of us once again. … The trauma of the Civil War drove us towards Wilsonian Universalism, which lives on in the form of George W. Bush's "world democratic revolution." America confronts a number of cultures that are bent on genosuicide. We fail to recognize the symptoms, because we shut our eyes to one of modern history's most striking examples of civilizational self-destruction, namely the American South. America can't hope to make sense of the world if it refuses to think about its own history.

Spengler appends some crucial explanatory remarks:

As many people have pointed out (Michael Novak, Meir Soloveichik), there is a biblical (covenantal) as well as a natural law (contractual) component to the Founding; in my view the covenantal component is primary and in need trumps the natural-law component. … The Constitutional mechanism broke down (in fact,

the slave party controlled the government for almost all of the period 1800-1860, and an eruption of apocalyptic spirit was required to correct it — bringing to the fore America's Hebraic-Protestant mission. Of course Lincoln ran roughshod over elements of the Constitution but this, in my view, was what the Talmud calls "sin for the sake of heaven." The natural-law apparatus (checks and balances, separation of powers, states' rights, etc.) is the plumbing of government, and it is certainly necessary, but it is contingent on the higher, covenantal imperative.

Yes, it's a religion.

ADDED: 'Genosuicide' (just in case that looked like an uncorrected typo).

August 4, 2015

Back to the Roots



In the age of Corbyn-style socialist fundamentalism, George Monbiot wants the Left to get (still more) religion:

Evangelical groups unite around a set of core convictions, overt, codified and non-negotiable. It would surely not be difficult to create a similar set, common to all progressive movements, built around empathy, kindness, forgiveness and self-worth [you know, **redemption**]. *A set of immutable convictions might make our movements less capricious while reinforcing the commonality between the left's many causes. […] Evangelism is positive and*

propositional (to evangelise is to bring good news). You cannot achieve lasting change unless you set the agenda, rather than responding to that of your opponents. […] They welcome everyone – but in particular the unconverted. Instead of anathematising difference, doubt and hesitation, they explain and normalise these responses as steps within a journey to belief.

The only reason this isn't pure Left-Moldbuggianism is that it still seems to think it's doing something new.

(*The Guardian* actually used that picture to illustrate the Monbiot piece, just in case you think I might be exaggerating what's going on here.)

September 16, 2015

Progressive Religion

This argument seems strangely familiar. Still, if the central thesis of Neoreaction is becoming common wisdom on a path that bypasses Moldbug, it remains something to be celebrated. Cultural convergence could simply be an index of truth.

Jaded as I am by NRx, Goldman's review doesn't quite make me rush out to buy the book (since we've been treating this argument as a basic reference for years). It's still good:

The desire to be redeemed from sin (redefined as a social fact)

identifies the post-Protestants as children of the Puritans. That insight is what makes his new book a new and invaluable contribution to our understanding of America's frame of mind. Just what is a secular religion, and how does it shape the spiritual lives of its adherents? Bottum deftly peels the layers off the onion of liberal thinking to reveal its Protestant provenance and inherited religious sensibility. The Mainline Protestantism that once bestrode American public life never died, but metamorphosed into a secular doctrine of redemption. And that was made possible by the conversion of sin from a personal to a social fact in Walter Rauschenberg's version of the social gospel. Bottum writes, "The new elite class of America is the old one: America's Mainline Protestant Christians, in both the glory and the annoyingness of their moral confidence and spiritual certainty. They just stripped out the Christianity along the way." By redefining sin as social sin, Rauschenberg raised up a new Satan and a new vocabulary of redemption from his snares. According to Bottum, his "central demand is to see social evil as really existing evil — a supernatural force of dark magic."

Is this a socially intolerable revelation, in the sense that its acceptance would make the existing order of the world impossible? In other words, can the Cathedral overtly embrace its own Neo-Puritanism, without terminal disturbance? This is a question that might rapidly become inescapable.

ADDED: The (NRx-scrubbed) Ultrapuritanism Hypothesis gets

Instalanched. Also, Rod Dreher's meta-review is here.

ADDED: More Bottum-based mainstreaming.

March 19, 2014

Dawkins' Faith

> It's hard to sympathise with those atheists who, while not themselves believing, patronisingly push religion as good for common people.
>
> — Richard Dawkins (@RichardDawkins) April 18, 2014

The egalitarian religion finds the ways of the infidel difficult to understand.

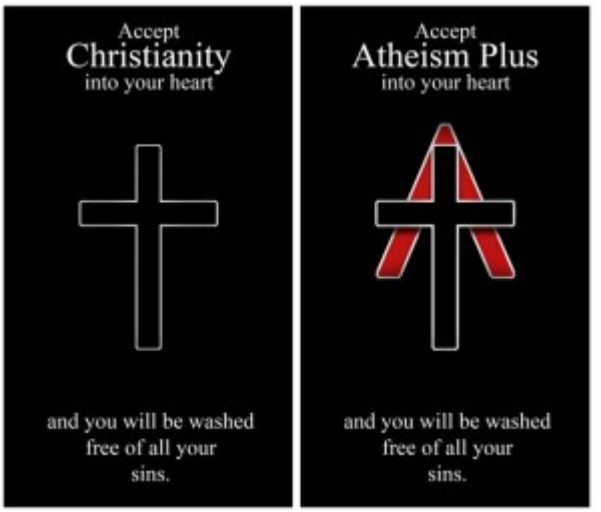
ADDED: Harsh-but-fair comment on Dawkins by 'aisaac' (2013/10/31, 7:00 am): "Not only does he not dare to tell the truth, he doesn't even keep his mouth shut about things he doesn't dare to tell the truth about."

April 18, 2014

Spiritual Progress

Alex passed the link along (in this thread), so I thought I'd foreground

it:



It's not really saying anything that will come as a surprise, but it's worth endlessly repeating (and the color scheme helps to get it through the gate).

Whatever other arguments are available in favor of traditional religion, they need to be supplemented by the recognition that man is simply too damned stupid for the Death of God.

June 8, 2014

UNESCO Man

Via Cussans (dark channels), comes this crucial document on the intersection of racial anthropology and international institutional

politics. The abstract:

From 1945 and the following 20 years UNESCO – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – was at the heart of a dispute in international scientific circles over the correct definition of the concept of race. This was essentially a dispute about whether the natural sciences or the social sciences should take precedence in determining the origins of human difference, of social division and of the attribution of value. The article provides an overview of the work on race carried out by UNESCO, examines the measures it took to combat racism, pays special attention to their political and social impact in various member states, and demonstrates how UNESCO played a major part in imposing a new view of man: UNESCO Man.

August 25, 2014

Radish does Irreligion

The Moldbuggian sublime — a crushing immensity that releases intelligence into awe-stricken ecstasy — has settled in at *Radish* quite decisively. The latest installment, which embeds the phenomenon of 'New Atheism' within the deep historical tide of revolutionary rationalist irreligion, is a masterpiece of the genre (and in its own right). After several thousand words of relentless

contextualization, it is impossible to read the confused stammerings of contemporary 'reason' without hearing the clattering leftist ruin-ratchet beneath. "[*Skeptic* magazine editor-in-chief and executive director of the Skeptics Society Michael] Shermer is surprised, like Lavoisier and Condorcet before him, to find his own head upon the chopping block of Moral Progress, but no lessons are learned (2013) …"

By the time Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins are led, dazed and indignant, to the scaffold of revolutionary disbelief, the entire process has an almost hypnotic inevitability. *Wasn't the cause supposed to be intellectual liberty?* If, after reading this piece, such derangement doesn't elicit morbid amusement, you're probably going to need to read it again.

ADDED: Has Richard Dawkins lost the Mandate of Heaven?

September 23, 2014

Cathedral History

… the (short) play:

A: We've got nothing against you personally. We don't even know you. It's just that we're more comfortable restricting club membership to upper-income straight white male English-speaking Protestants.

B: Then you're not very good Protestants!
A: Damn! You're right …

January 21, 2015

Quote note (#328)

Formally, this isn't a new 'Boldmug' argument, but it's stated neatly here:

Whether you choose to think about it or not, I have a very simple explanation of Anglo-American success as it relates to democracy. […] If you see democracy as a pest, like Dutch elm disease, it makes perfect sense. Dutch elm disease originates in China. Therefore, Chinese elms are resistant to Dutch elm disease. But not immune! It's still a crippling disease in China. But the trees live. […] The result of globalization: Chinese elms dominate the world. And hybrids. An elm does not live, anywhere in the world, unless its DNA is mostly Chinese. It would be a mistake to conclude from this that Dutch elm disease is good for elm trees, and the Chinese should export it to everyone. Unless they're just plain evil. […] All we have to observe, to show that this is the case, is to show that politics in the Anglo-American tradition (don't forget, Marx wrote in the British Library, and his column appeared in the New York Tribune), (a) frequently causes serious damage to Anglo-American countries, and (b) always

or almost always has two results in other countries: it either causes massive, traumatic disasters, or brings the country under effective Anglo-American supervision, and/or both.

ADDED: Also, concisely reinforcing NeoCam basics —

Various kinds of elective monarchies have been tried, and worked reasonably well (as does hereditary monarchy). But there is a real qualitative difference between joint-stock governance and anything else. Which is why joint-stock companies kill all competitors which experiment with different operating systems.

The "monarchy" language is incredibly unhelpful to the communication of the central point being made here. How many times is it possible to say "the Neocameral CEO is nothing like a monarch as you understand the term" without utter exasperation? 'Boldmug' clearly has more patience on this front that I do.

ADDED: From another commentator, responding to the moron bite "['Boldmug'] is defending returning to some sort of racially-segregated nationalistic authoritarian regime."

No. Mencius Moldburg advocates for neocameralism. Interestingly enough it is the same as Scott Alexander's Archipelago. The difference is Moldburg has a mechanism to enforce things and Alexander never got around to elaborating one. […] In case you don't want to bother looking it up, it basically means having a bunch of Singapore like city states with free movement and explicitly based political power. It is the exact opposite of ethno-nationalism.

ADDED: Augmentation from *Information Processing*.

February 6, 2017

Tribal Epistemology

When you know who people identify with, you generally get a full-spectrum insight into their beliefs for free.

As Fernandez puts it:

… while Western civilization pays lip service to "evidence based" policy, in practice most human beings rely on social proof to decide what to believe. … The search for "social proof" as a determinant of conviction is not wholly crazy. Few of us can say why a pharmaceutical works. But if the doctor prescribes a pill, we drink it without question. Most of the world is preoccupied with making a living and consequently have a high level of rational ignorance. "Rational ignorance occurs when the cost of educating oneself on an issue exceeds the potential benefit that the knowledge would provide." It takes too long for us to figure things out from first principles, so we find a "smart man" and do what he tells us.

While everybody is compelled to economize in this way to some extent, skepticism — in its many different varieties — offers a measure of practical defense. (One variant is simply the heuristic, inherited by all Protestant clades, if quite commonly left idle by

them, of *looking things up for yourself*.)

"What do you do if the Church has been hijacked by demons?" asked Harold Lee. This is exactly the same concern, raised from another angle, and escalated towards its essence. As trust in the machineries of critical truth production is eroded, in direct proportion to their Cathedralization, the primary tendency is to tribalize 'knowledge' (as a signal of belonging), and secondarily to promote a general nihilism, on the ever-more plausible assumption that everything we have ever been told is a lie.

This is how a civilization is burnt to the ground. By selling their souls to the New Church, all epistemologically-relevant social institutions trade authority for mere power, or the capacity to command tribal allegiance and conformity. In response, *trustlessness* is installed as the foundational principle of realistic socio-political analysis, or informally manifested in a spreading and deepening cynicism. What little exists of counter-knowledge is mostly sheer refusal, or opportunistic deference to the enemy's enemy. No Antiversity exists. It too is invoked, in the interim, only as a refusal. Its entire meaning, up to this point, is that *we don't any longer believe what we've been told*.

We remember enough about what Science once was, or what market-honed economic signals were, to know that tribal epistemology is cognitive garbage. As we slide down the slope, increasingly, it's the garbage heap in which we all live.

July 29, 2015

Politics is the Mindkiller

… That's probably Yudkowsky greatest line. (It's the adaptation of a *Dune* quote.)

Somewhat ironically (see previous post), this is one of the most significant ways it's playing out right now:

… *Literally none of that happened.* [You'll have to at least scan the damn thing for context.] *Or at least there is zero evidence that it did. These are smart, rational people falling for a scam. Why? It's in part because Twitter fosters this group-think and lack of critical thought — you just click a button and, with little effort, you've spread whatever you want people to believe — but it's also because they're so convinced of the righteousness of their cause (electing Clinton/ defeating Trump) that they have cast all limits and constraints to the side, believing that any narrative or accusation or smear, no matter how false or conspiratorial, is justified in pursuit of it.*

Naked consequentialist cynicism doesn't make a good foundation for a church. That's part of the reason why it's coming down.

October 13, 2016

Quote note (#303)

Trump is unintelligible, in an interesting way:

[President Elect Donald J. Trump is] *tapping into a broad resistance to contemporary moral beliefs, beliefs that have become increasingly institutionalised over the past fifty years. […] The problem is that these are precisely the beliefs that are held above inquiry in the social sciences.*

Not just a political crisis, then, but an epistmeological crisis (precisely *because* it will be so difficult for the dominant social organs of knowledge to accept the fact).

November 14, 2016

CHAPTER THREE - INSANITY

Forward!

Maximum warp into Left Singularity

That was all thoroughly unambiguous. It turns out that Obama really is the FDR for this turn of the gyre. Nate Silver and Paul Krugman are vindicated. The New York Times is the gospel of the age. Conservatism is crushed and humiliated. The brake pedal has been hurled out of the window. There's no stopping it now.

The day before the election, *Der Spiegel* described "the United States as a country that doesn't understand the signs of the times and has almost willfully — flying in the face of all scientific knowledge — chosen to be backward." For the magazine's staff writers, the problem was utterly straightforward. "The hatred of big government has reached a level in the United States that threatens the country's very existence." Retrogressive forces were impeding the country's progress by refusing to grasp the obvious identity of Leviathan and social advancement. It should now be obvious to everyone – even charred tea partiers gibbering shell-shocked in the ruins — that

contemporary American democracy provides all the impetus necessary to bulldoze such obstructionism aside. The State is God, and all shall bend to its will. Forward!

With the ascension of USG to godhood, a new purity is attained, and a fantastic (and Titanic) experiment progresses to a new stage. It is no longer necessary to enter into controversy with the shattered detritus of the right, henceforth all that matters is the test of strength between concentrated political motivation and the obduracy of reality itself. Which is to say: the final resistance to be overcome is the insolent idea of a reality principle, or outside. Once there is no longer any *way of things* that exists independently of the State's sovereign desire, Left Singularity is attained. This is the eschatological promise that sings its hallelujahs in every progressive breast. It translates perfectly into the colloquial chant: *yes we can!*

Of course, it needs to be clearly understood that 'we' – now and going forward – means the State. Through the State we do anything and everything, which we can, if not really, then at least truly, as promised. The State is 'us' as God. Hegel already saw all this, but it took progressive educational systems to generalize the insight. Now our time has come, or is coming. All together now: yes we can! Nothing but a brittle reactionary *realism* stands in our way, and that is something we can be educated out of (yes we can). We have! See our blasted enemies strewn in utter devastation before us.

The world is to be as we will it to be. Surely.

November 7, 2012

Magical Thinking

The Left has finally understood who's to blame for the collapse of Detroit, and it's quite obvious when you think about it — white racists did it with their super-powerful evil thoughts:

As payback for the worldwide revolution symbolized by hot jazz, Smokey Robinson dancin' to keep from cryin' and Eminem trading verses with Rihanna, New Orleans and Detroit had to be punished. Specifically, they had to be isolated, impoverished and almost literally destroyed, so they could be held up as examples of what happens when black people are allowed to govern themselves.

Hang on, you can stop composing that all-caps comment – I don't actually believe that what happened to Detroit and New Orleans resulted from anyone's conscious plan. Real history is much more complicated than that. I do, however, think [sic] *that narrative has some validity on a psychological level …*

(Apparently the psychic racist death rays were first tried out on New Orleans, where they were "goosed along a bit by rising carbon emissions and rising temperatures," creating a massive atmospheric disturbance.)

Goodbye sanity, your day is done. Hail madness and gathering

night …

July 29, 2013

Musty

‘To Beat ISIS, the Arab World Must Promote Political and Religious Reforms’, Rule Jebreal tells us. Picking on a writer for a headline is a mistake — who knows where it came from in the editorial process? — and, besides, this one employs (the exhortative) ‘must’ in its sole appropriate usage — as the completion of a hypothetical imperative. “If you want X, you must do Y” — that’s OK. (Y is a necessary condition for the accomplishment of X.) ‘Must’ is tolerable if it’s kept on a leash.

Once it slips the collar, ‘must’ reverts to its status as the most preposterous word in the English language, an instrument of sheer obfuscation. Watch it go:

*The United States **must** review its policies across the Middle East. … It **must** take a stand against Riyadh’s promotion of exclusionary Wahhabism. […] … Likewise, pressure **must** be placed on Egypt to abandon its witch hunt of the Muslim Brotherhood. In undertaking an effective counter terrorism strategy, the United States **must** partner with the Arab states to undertake political reforms that ultimately lead to underwriting a social contract in which every*

group of the population are represented and protected. […] … If the United States and Iraqi government want to defeat ISIS, they ***must*** *now ensure the inclusion and protection of Iraqi Sunnis, Kurds and Yazidis, along with the majority Shi'ites [this one is minimally OK]. […] … Eventually, a process of reconciliation* ***must*** *be initiated between Shi'ites and Sunnis. This centuries-old dispute is played out today in a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which has produced a monster that threatens the national security of not only Middle Eastern nations, but also the United States. It* ***must*** *come to an end. […] … The Obama Administration* ***must*** *pursue a policy of severe sanctions against any and all countries that finance jihadist — even if they are our own allies. … What will ultimately turn the tide in the Middle East are groups that actively advocate for a democratic culture and its values around the Arab world. A campaign to promote these ideas on every level* ***must*** *begin, as part of the counterterrorism initiative launched by Kerry.* [Emphases added.]

Must they, really? Will they? Can they?

It's irritating to see moral fanaticism — betrayed by its distinctive combination of groundless certainty and communicative fervor — masquerading as realistic analysis. The disguise is only necessary because the prescription so exorbitantly exceeds the diagnosis, tripping eagerly into glassy-eyed deontological intellectual abandonment.

"The Middle East *must* stop being the Middle East, and America

must help to make this happen." It can't, and it won't, on both counts. The musty smell is simply annoying.

September 16, 2014

Discombobulation

Salon has been bat-shit crazy for a long time, but right now it's really going over the edge. It's almost as if the people there are getting worried about something.

[Thanks to VXXC for pointers into the bin]

My personal pick for comedy gold goes to the article on right-wing brain washing (5th link), which includes this priceless classic: "He believed it when Rush Limbaugh told him that climate change is a hoax. He called Al Gore an 'asshole' even after watching the entire *An Inconvenient Truth* …" (Especially funny for me because I knew someone like that once — he thought Hitler was a dangerous demagogue, even after watching *Triumph of the Will*.)

Panic! *They're so brain-washed they don't even believe our propaganda any more*.

ADDED: *Da Tech Guy* EBT follow-up.

October 14, 2013

Scrap note #6

How much credit is to be given to honest dishonesty? Answers should be addressed to Rod Dreher, in response to a truly astonishing blog post that sums up where we are right now more frankly than anything I have seen.

Short summary: *We have a duty to lie*.

In Dreher's own words:

Given the history of the 20th century, I flat-out don't trust our species to handle the knowledge of human biodiversity without turning it into an ideology of dehumanization, racism, and at worst, genocide. Put another way, I am hostile to this kind of thing not because I believe it's probably false, but because I believe a lot of it is probably true — and we have shown that we, by our natures, can't handle this kind of truth. […] My point is simply that all of us believe that some facts are too dangerous to be known; they are like the Ring Of Power, in that the temptation to abuse them is too great for our natures to bear. […] Admittedly, this puts me in a tight spot. Am I saying that we should ignore reality? I suppose I am.

So there we have it — we have to ban acknowledgement of reality, because Hitler. This stuff is all going to fall apart so quickly (and nastily) that it will shock everyone.

(Like Moldbug, and the DE in general, I think it's seriously unwise to set things up in such a way that only Nazis get to tell the truth.)

ADDED: Some thoughts on the Dreher piece from Occam's Razor.

ADDED: Henry Dampier on Noble Lies.

January 30, 2014

Ideo-Cannibalism

Is intersectionality just the greatest thing ever, or what?

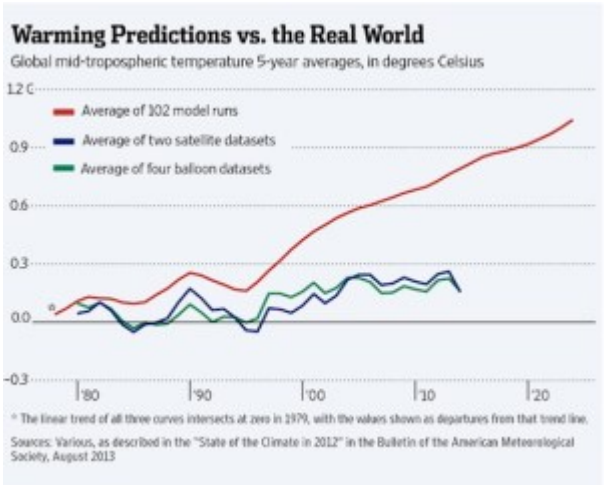
Both [Laurie] Penny and [Richard] Seymour have made a point of arguing, moreover, for the latest fad in leftist thinking: ***intersectionality****. "Intersectionality" supposedly means taking seriously the many different oppressions, and how they intersect. "My socialism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit," Seymour has made a point of saying. Given that they are so keen to speak out against oppression in all its multi-layered forms, it seems really bad luck that they should be accused of being "racist crackers" and "white settlers."*

The entire article is comedy gold.

The Obama presidency AND intersectionality — does anyone still doubt that God is hardcore NRx?

February 11, 2014

Scientific Climate



(Click on image to enlarge.)

(Via.)

One thing to emphasize — 'science' is the data, as well as the error. This is not a picture of black hole, uncorrectable reality denial, of the kind familiar from political economy. That said, the speculative hypothesis was turned into a story for public promotion, and then into something very close to an official dogma. Now that it isn't holding together, this type of thing starts happening.

Has the scientific establishment ever been so off-beam, in the entire history of the West? Not only wrong, but aggressively doctrinaire, and politically assertive in the direction of error? For anybody who esteems the development of natural science as the single greatest historical achievement of the Occidental world, the AGW saga has been a hideous embarrassment. Our institutions are

broken.

ADDED: It's war.

ADDED: "This is the original sin of the global warming theory: that it was founded in a presumption of guilt against industrial civilization. All of the billions of dollars in government research funding and the entire cultural establishment that has been built up around global warming were founded on the presumption that we already knew the conclusion — we're 'ravaging the planet' — and we're only interested in evidence that supports that conclusion."

February 21, 2014

Aristocracy of Outrage

Ezra Levant evaluates the new social hierarchy:

[First, the background:] *Faith McGregor is the lesbian who doesn't like the girly cuts that they do at a salon. She wants the boy's hairdo. … Omar Mahrouk is the owner of the Terminal Barber Shop in Toronto. He follows Shariah law, so he thinks women have cooties. As Mahrouk and the other barbers there say, they don't believe in touching women other than their own wives. … Mahrouk's view is illiberal. But in Canada we believe in property rights and freedom of association — and in this case, freedom of religion, too. … McGregor ran to the Human Rights Tribunal and demanded that Mahrouk give*

her a haircut.

[…]

Oh, McGregor is politically correct. But just not politically correct enough. It's like poker.

A white, Christian male has the lowest hand — it's like he's got just one high card, maybe an ace. So almost everyone trumps him.

A white woman is just a bit higher — like a pair of twos. Enough to beat a white man, but not much more.

A gay man is like having two pairs in poker.

A gay woman — a lesbian like McGregor — is like having three of a kind.

A black lesbian is a full house — pretty tough to beat.

Unless she's also in a wheelchair, which means she's pretty much a straight flush.

The only person who could trump that would be a royal flush. If the late Sammy Davis Jr. — who was black, Jewish and half-blind — were to convert to Islam and discover he was 1/64th Aboriginal.

So which is a better hand: A lesbian who wants a haircut or a Muslim who doesn't want to give it to her?

(via)

(It's been nothing but crash-phase democracy self-cannibalization everywhere I've looked today.)

February 28, 2014

How it Ends

You thought *Slate* had a lock on Cathedralist direct current? Then you probably haven't been keeping up with *The Atlantic*.

I'm old enough to remember when *The Atlantic Monthly* was a serious magazine. That was before James Fallows took it over, and drove it into a ditch. It has since progressed to Atlantic Trench depths of comprehensive intellectual ruin. Some gratitude is in order for the clarity with which it exposes our destination, guided by the supreme Leftist Law: *Any cultural institution that is not dominated by the oppressed talking about their oppression is oppressive*.

As Professor Zaius explains in the comment section of the vibrant debate article:

… the judges, while they are experienced debaters and coaches themselves, don't by and large subscribe to the notion that the "best argument" in conventional terms should win. Many, if not most, see debate as a means for advancing social justice and dismantling oppressive hierarchies of whiteness and patriarchy. Inasmuch as "logic" upholds these hierarchies and personal experiences from POC and non-linear storytelling and music fight them, then "logic" should lose.

We're so screwed.

ADDED: "… while one has some sympathy for Hardy and the other traditional debate do-gooders, they seem to be pining for a

format, and a world, that has already passed. Have a look at Twitter. Or MSNBC. Or the *New York Times*. Or Attorney General Eric Holder. Or any of the rest of the grievance-mongering chattering class for whom the unbeatable trump card these days is discerning 'racism' in their opponents. Debate isn't what it used to be. The college kids might as well learn this brute fact sooner rather than later."

April 18, 2014

Quote notes (#88)

Charles Ponzi, call your IP lawyer. This is the kind of argument that makes sense when pursued without the distractions of STEM training:

… the humanities crisis is largely a positive feedback loop created by stressing out over economic outcomes. Research by government bureaus held that people who studied STEM disciplines had better employment prospects. As a result, state and federal education budgets consistently made these subjects a priority. Enrollment in the humanities slumped, and this made it more difficult for budding humanists and artists to succeed, not least because fewer and fewer jobs were available in the academy.

Humanists are being educated to teach the humanities in higher-

education, why can't anybody see there's a model there that, like, could totally work?

June 7, 2014

More Madness

Insanity night continues here in Shanghai with this perfected distillation of Leftist delirium:

> .@Paulskemp @monsterhunter45 If ppl are equal, then equality of opportunity will by definition lead to equality of outcomes
>
> — Arthur Chu (@arthur_affect) June 12, 2014

Spoiler: He actually believes the initial hypothetical is true.

June 13, 2014

Enablers

The BBC fog-machine at work on the UK child-predation story:

Child sexual exploitation is happening in a "number of towns" in different parts of the country, according to the author of a damning

report into abuse in Rotherham. … According to an estimate from the Children's Commissioner for England three years ago, 2,409 children were identified as victims of exploitation by gangs over a 14-month period from 2010-11 …

***Oxford** … Seven men were sentenced to a total of 95 years in June 2013, for offences including rape, facilitating child prostitution and trafficking.* [Follow the link for ethnic details censored by the BBC]

***Derby** … Nine men were convicted over three trials of systematically grooming and sexually abusing teenage girls in 2010. …* [Oh look, a clue –] *Speaking in 2011 after the jailing of two of the men, former Home Secretary Jack Straw suggested some men of Pakistani origin saw white girls as "easy meat". The judge in the case said the race of the victims and their abusers was "coincidental". …*

***Rochdale** … In May 2012, nine men were given sentences ranging from four to 19 years after being found guilty of offences including rape and conspiracy to engage in sexual activity with a child. …*

***Telford** … Seven men were jailed after a series of court cases related to a child prostitution ring. The charges included rape, trafficking and prostitution, sometimes involving girls as young as 13. …*

***Peterborough** … A gang of five males was jailed in February after being found guilty of raping and sexually assaulting five vulnerable girls.*

I'm going to assume that all the fanatically unspecified "men" (or

"males") involved are Muslims of Pakistani origin (abusing white children), unless presented with definite evidence to the contrary. Any other default would be an act of cognitive collaboration with Britain's sordid little branch-operation of the Cathedral, and we've now seen with stark clarity what that enables.

ADDED: Rotherham commentary from *hbd chick*, *Breitbart* and *Spiked*.

ADDED: Commentary, context, and links from TNIO.

ADDED: "… these children were victims of 'anti-racism'" — Hard for me to see how that could possibly be controversial at this point.

ADDED: Anarcho-Tyranny in the UK.

August 28, 2014

Rotherham

"Hint: it's not the crime, it's the coverup," suggests Lesser Bull persuasively. Mangan fills this out, with an especially valuable link to this round-up of orchestrated obliviousness.

Does the progressive media really think it can de-realize this festival of cultural ruin with a standard inattention protocol? If so, it has to count as an extraordinary peak *hubris* moment. Perhaps the left is structurally incapable of preventing itself from pushing things over the brink of catastrophe. It always has to take that one

additional step, and it has no sense at all of how to back down.

There have to be a lot of people in the UK right now who would be delighted to see the media establishment strung up from lamp-posts, with panic and defection rife in journalistic ranks. It's surely not impossible that the pattern now jutting into hideous visibility in Britain will evoke a disturbing sense of recognition elsewhere, possibly throughout the Anglosphere. As far as core Cathedral operating procedures are concerned, this has to be a period of (possibly unprecedented) vulnerability. As a source of regime threatening irritability, the Rotherham syndrome is the *droit du seigneur* of the new nobility — even among a pitifully broken people, it pushes some deeply atavistic buttons. Lies, sexual exploitation, and foreign invasion — who'd want to be PR manager for this cocktail of native degradation?

(Any cover-up -themed T-shirt slogan suggestions in the comment thread will be very gratefully received.)

"So you have employed all the powers and privileges at your disposal to make it impossible to investigate a situation that has now deteriorated to mass child rape?"
"Look, a squirrel!"

ADDED: Help! I'm beginning to really like Richard Dawkins:

> Newspapers describe Rotherham groomers as "of Asian descent." What? Why? Are they Chinese? Mongolian? Are

> they Hindu? Sikh? Buddhist? Jain?
>
> — Richard Dawkins (@RichardDawkins) August 30, 2014

August 30, 2014

Moron bites (#2)

Time for another of these. The rule, remember, is that the instance picked upon has to exemplify a laughably mindless meme. Like this:

> @JayMan471 @matthewherper @David_Dobbs @jason_pontin @charlesmurray The Bell Curve has been well refuted. I am dismayed that you cite it.
>
> — Karen James (@kejames) December 2, 2014

Politically incorrect research, however solidly established, is especially singled out for this treatment. Some approved (i.e. Leftist) authority somewhere has provided the excuse to dismiss awkward findings, so that the painful stimulus can be suppressed, and — just to be safe — even the pretext for suppressing it is best forgotten, leaving only the permission to be undisturbed in public circulation. All crime-think has been 'well refuted' (sociologically *a priori*) as far as these people are concerned. "It's been well refuted" means *exactly* "wouldn't it be nice if this didn't exist?" (or "nice people have told us

we don't need to worry about that").

Refuted where?

> @DocCLAR @JayMan471 @pseudoerasmus This is ridiculous. You can google just as well as I can.
>
> — Karen James (@kejames) December 2, 2014

Amused yet?

ADDED: A banquet of 'well refuted' science at *Slate*.

December 2, 2014

Brown Scare

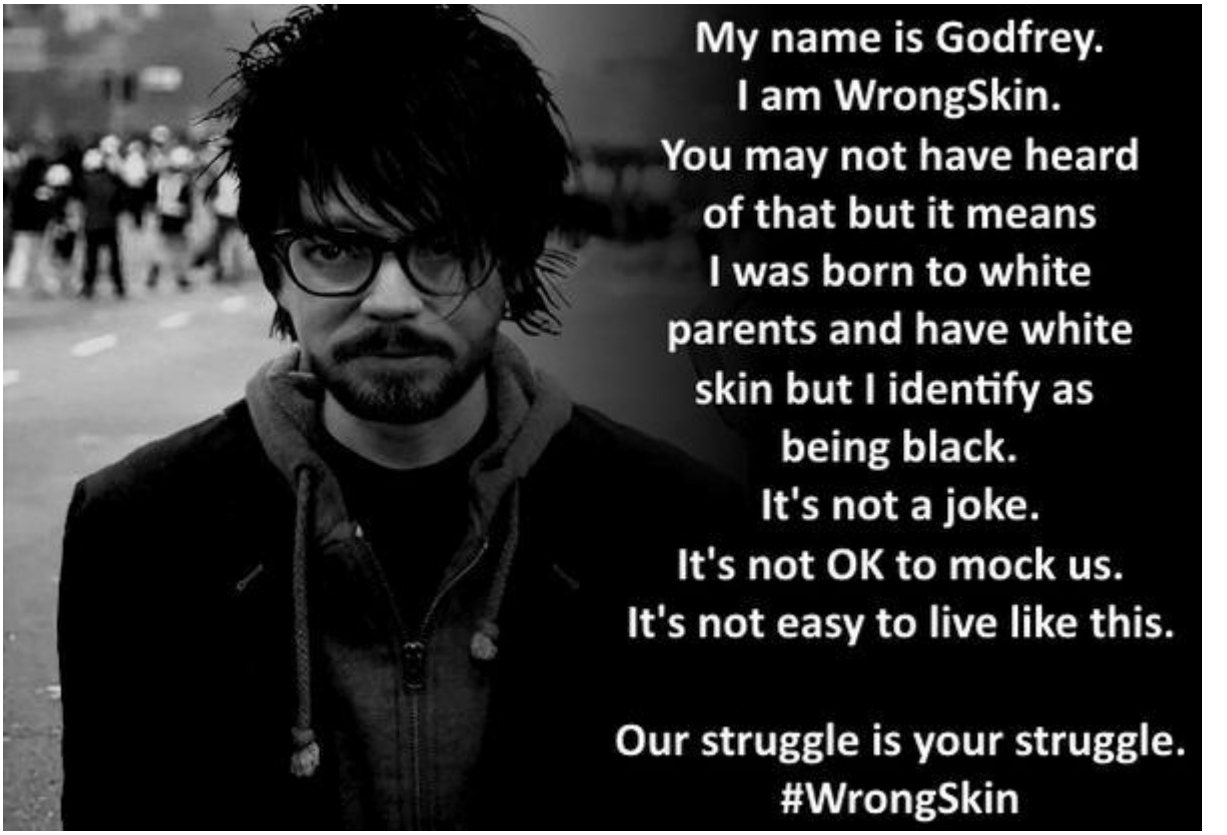
… can really mess up your head (and your blog).

This detailed account of exactly how LGF lost everything — starting with its mind — is a comedy masterpiece. My single favorite fun fact:

LGF decline stats, Dec 2012. Has a list of the top 21 most prolific commenters on LGF in 2007. All but 2 are now banned.

March 12, 2015

#WrongSkin



Scarcely necessary to add the backstory.

(I'm guessing there might be enthusiasm for conversation about this. Please note Godfrey Elfwick's example, and try especially hard to keep it classy people.)

Is #AAA even imaginable in this environment?

ADDED: Elfwick and the Duck in *USA Today*.

ADDED: The other master of trolling on this issue.

> @jokeocracy blackness is being gentrified, soon blacks won't be able to afford it and will have to move to another skin color.
>
> — Mr. Reasonable (@mr_archenemy) June 12, 2015

> @CarlosEstebanRD pic.twitter.com/R61erOXHR6
>
> — Tasta Orelletes (@TastaOrelletes) June 12, 2015

ADDED: "Now, some additional facts on the greatest story in human history …"

June 12, 2015

Peak Insanity

"Why, oh why, is this happening to us?" (The human species is too stupid to live.)

(Via.)

Worth it just for the Bedlamite euphemism for the economy — "the capitalist sector".

If you've not had enough of sucking upon a weeping psychotic eyeball yet — (also from Dark Albert), there's this. They're never going to stop doubling-down. Probably a good time to start thinking realistically about where 'hitting bottom' is going to lead.

July 28, 2015

Appearances

The worst thing about this, we're told by all responsible authorities, is *what it looks like*. (It might upset people, in the wrong way.)

*The scale of the attacks on women at the city's central railway station has shocked Germany. About 1,000 drunk and aggressive young men were involved. […] City police chief Wolfgang Albers called it "a completely new dimension of crime". **The men were of Arab or North African appearance**, he said.* (XS emphasis.)

Beside Cologne, "Women were also targeted in Hamburg. … Some similar attacks were reported in Stuttgart."

However, there was no official confirmation that asylum seekers had been involved in the violence. Commentators in Germany were quick to urge people not to jump to conclusions.

It's hard to imagine that anyone really believes the approved narratives are going to hold together for much longer. The orchestrated media-political conjuring operation is already stressed beyond its functional tolerance.

(Additional links in the last Chaos Patch comment thread.)

ADDED: Reality bites.

ADDED: Among much noticing —

> Everyone reacting to this story from a place of authority is more concerned with managing perceptions than justice https://t.co/giO0R5fWjw
>
> — Michael B Dougherty (@michaelbd) January 6, 2016

> Every story written about it takes as its primary concern "How do leaders prevent this from weakening the pro-immigration consensus?"
>
> — Michael B Dougherty (@michaelbd) January 6, 2016

ADDED: The Master of Noticing is a little miffed. (More.)

January 6, 2016

CHAPTER FOUR - THOUGHT POLICE

Doors of Perception

It's a simplification to conceive the Cathedral as a media apparatus. As simplifications go, however, one could do far worse. Media are essential to the Cathedral, even if by no means casually synonymous with it.

It is surely noteworthy that 'the media' have become singular, in much the same way as 'the United States' have done. 'They' have turned into a thing, and one that is still far from being confidently understood. Even when subjectively identifying with a residual plurality, they cannot but identify themselves with a unitary effectiveness.

While it would be asking far too much to expect the Cathedral to identify itself as a central causal factor in a world going insane, it gets close. *NYmag* expresses deep concern about the consequences of the news machine:

A terrifying jihadist group is conquering and butchering its way across big swaths of Iraq and Syria. Planes are falling out of the sky on what seems like a weekly basis. Civilians are being killed in

massive numbers in the Israel-Gaza conflict. Others are falling prey to Ebola in West Africa. The world, in short, is falling apart. […] *That's how it feels, at least, to those of us who sit at a blessed remove from the death and destruction, but who are watching every bloody moment of it via cable news and social media. It raises an important question: In an age when we can mainline bad news 24/7 if we so choose, what's the psychological impact of all this exposure to tragedy at a distance?*

Drawing upon the work of Mary McNaughton-Cassill (a University of Texas–San Antonio professor at the "leading researcher on the connection between media consumption and stress"), it describes a process of "negative-information overload" driven by market-incentivized sensationalism, compounded by social media revolution, and prone to poorly-understood tangles of psycho-media feedback. Since a story of this kind consists primarily of the Cathedral talking to itself, with everyone else listening in, we quickly learn that the 'problem' cashes out into pessimistic disengagement from electoral politics and progressive voluntarism. According to McNaughton-Cassill, negative news bombardment produces "this malaise: 'Everything's kinda bad' and 'Why should I vote? It's not gonna help' and 'I could donate money, but there's just gonna be another kid who's starving next week.'"

In addition to a burgeoning sense of helplessness, she said, cognitive shortcuts triggered by the news can also lead us to

gradually see the world as a darker and darker place, chipping away at certain optimistic tendencies. McNaughton-Cassill's research suggests that that all things being equal, if you ask people, regardless of their circumstances, to evaluate what's going around them — Do they think their neighbors are good people? Do they think the local schools are solid? — "People always say yes in their immediate setting." […] *Zoom out a little, though, and people have less to go on. … "As soon as you get out of your zone, most of your information's from the news … and the news by definition covers the extreme things."* […] *People could be forgiven for adopting a hell-in-a-handbasket stance toward the rest of the world.* […] *That's a problem, because when people are led to believe things are falling apart, it affects their decision-making and their politics — whether or not their pessimism is warranted. We already know from political-psychological research that the more threatened people feel, the more likely they will be to support right-wing policies. And people who believe in the concept of unmitigated evil appear more likely to support torture and other violent policies.* […] *It's hard to fully sketch out these mechanisms, of course. Could years and years of exposure to negative news heighten your belief in a Manichean world and in turn make you more reactionary?*

As noted, there are some critical feedback circuits excluded (in principal) from this analysis, in part to preserve the fundamental architecture of the progressive historical narrative ("… on a broader

level there's solid evidence — perhaps gathered most comprehensively by Steven Pinker …"). Media malfunction as core meltdown of Western Civilization, sucking the world into hell, wouldn't fit this story at all. Nevertheless, it's clearly creeping in around the edges, and something considerably more drastic than standard information manipulation procedures seem to be called for.

How can we fight back against the unnecessary coarsening of our outlook that may be occurring every time we glance at one of our gadgets? The simplest technique is … to "Just turn it off." That is, take a break from the news. […] *"You can't change the externals," she said. "You have to get some control mentally." What's most important is "getting a handle on why you get anxious and worried about things that probably aren't going to happen, or knowing what your triggers are." The more you understand your own reaction to the news, the easier it will be to shape your news-consumption habits in an adaptive way.*

If this sounds like subtle begging, it really kind of is. Afflicted by incomprehensible cybernetic pathologies, the media system is failing in its responsibility to screen you from reality, and now — quite desperately — needs your help. You can't any longer rely on propaganda to save you. In fact, you have to assume that there's a really good story out there that the media is keeping from you. You have to "understand that you're seeing a lot of bad news not because the world is an inherently evil place, but because news outlets —

not to mention individual Twitter and Facebook users — have lots of incentives to broadcast explosively negative news stories." *We interrupt this world historical nightmare to deliver an important news flash — the media has gone insane*. You have to protect yourself, or it will seem as if the whole global order is falling apart into bloody chaos around your ears.

Overall, of course, it's both unrealistic and undesirable to construct bubbles that keep out the world's bad news. But there's a difference between being informed and being obsessive, and it's a line that's very easy to accidentally slide across in an age when there's so much scary information zipping around.

Scariest of all is the system of information itself, but it can't quite get that part of the story into coherent shape. By the time it does, the world will have descended by another gyre. Experts now confirm that throwing your TV set out of the window will help …

ADDED: This classic movie scene (suggested by Mr Archenemy) seems obviously on topic.

ADDED: "Social media – in this context, the most inappropriate of phrases – has a new craze. Atrocity porn."

August 13, 2014

Cathedral Autophagy

Autophagy is spiraling into its cultural moment right now. The Ouroboros is our sign. It's cybernetic mythology, self-referential looping, and auto-consuming process. There is no end to the ways the theme could be currently pursued.

Simultaneously most comic, tragic, and prominent is the reflexive perception that contemporary hegemonic power is being devoured by the media. In other words, the Cathedral is undergoing accelerated auto-cannibalization. The news is eating itself.

The Hill reports:

"I can see why a lot of folks are troubled," Obama told a group of donors gathered at a Democratic National Committee barbecue in Purchase, N.Y. […] But the president said that current foreign policy crises across the world are not comparable to the challenges the U.S. faced during the Cold War. […] Acknowledging "the barbarity" of Islamist militants and Russia "reasserting the notion that might means right," Obama, though, dismissed the notion that he was facing unprecedented challenges. […] "The world's always been messy … we're just noticing now in part because of social media," he said, according to a White House pool report. […] "If you watch the nightly news, it feels like the world is falling apart" …

So the world's supreme talking head is trying to talk us out of taking the Apocalypse Show seriously. *Don't listen to us, you'll find it*

far too upsetting. If this is getting repetitive, it's due to the pattern. Catatonia is the final prescription. We've clearly passed beyond irony into something altogether more twisted. The intriguing syndrome labeled *Horror autotoxicus* seems to be ready for political-economic application.

August 31, 2014

Media ADHD

Richard Fernandez asks a question that has been nagging at a number of people: How did this stop being a story?

The death toll from the worst Ebola outbreak on record has reached nearly 7,000 in West Africa, according to the World Health Organisation. […] The toll of 6,928 dead showed a leap of just over 1,200 since the WHO released its previous report on Wednesday, according to a Reuters news agency report. […] The UN health agency did not provide any explanation for the abrupt increase, but the figures, published on its website, appeared to include previously unreported deaths. […] … Just over 16,000 people have been diagnosed with Ebola since the outbreak was confirmed in the forests of remote southeastern Guinea in March, according to the WHO data that covered the three hardest-hit countries. …

Is it because the epidemic has remained geographically

concentrated, that's expected to hold, and Sierra Leone (where cases are "soaring" with the "country … reporting around 400 to 500 new cases each week for several weeks") has been written off? Or is the world media scared it had begun to bore people?

As Anepigone writes (on an only tangentially related issue): "The Cathedral's role is to instruct us on what we should want to think about, not what we would actually prefer to think about."

Media systems aren't even pretending to tell us what is happening anymore. What we *should* think is happening is now the whole of the narrative. Unless there's a 'teachable moment', there's nothing.

ADDED: When it happens in Russia, it's OK to notice it (in the mainstream media) — "Television is at the core of the present political system."

December 5, 2014

War of the Worlds

I'd hold this back until Frightday if I had more impulse control. Via VXXC, the original (Halloween 1938) Orson Welles *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast. As an experiment in abject public submission to media reality construction, it takes some beating.

"There's really nothing they won't believe, is there?"

"Apparently not. Carry on …"

March 4, 2015

Age of Independence

Don't be distracted if (like me) you find the PUA antics ridiculous. Clarey's argument here is important — and even an essential jigsaw-puzzle piece.

Maximally compressed: Left Mind-Control strategies depend upon the persistence of certain socio-economic realities that they are themselves profoundly subverting. It's impossible, at one and the same time, to threaten people with expulsion from the mainstream economy and also destroy this same economy. Yet that paradox is where the SJW army makes its home. The consequence: the perverse production of a type of "man who has nothing to lose, and therefore nothing the SJW's can threaten."

The SJWs aren't doing this on their own. A range of technological and economic developments are converging on the creation of a new, collapse-phase rugged individualism. The Left call it the 'precariat' and insist that 'neoliberalism' is to blame. It doesn't really matter, as far as Clarey's point is concerned. The essential thing is the the hostage-holding presumption of SJW activism is not a reliable social fixture, and their own activities are hastening its disappearance.

The final irony Clarey points to, is the creation of a new

entrepreneurial sector that lives, precisely, from the depredations of the SJWs. Their attacks constitute the basic pipeline of cultural raw-materials off which this little group survives — at once a source of content and a publicity machine.

While those on the dissident right discuss the Exit question, SJWs are busy pushing us off the gangplank. There's only one attitude that makes any sense to those already bobbing among the waves: "Come on in, the water's fine."

Note: 'SJW' is not being used here as a slur, but only in its technical sense. It means something like 'a Red Guard of the Cathedral'.

August 13, 2015

Visual Pwnage

(1) 1972
Policy objective: Close down US support for the South Vietnamese regime.
Policy debate: Who cares?
Decisive mind-control tool:



(The little girl in the center is Kim Phuc Phan Thi if you need a Google-key.)

(2) 1991

Policy objective: Close down destruction of the Saddam military.

Policy debate: Who cares?

Decisive mind-control tool:



(The Highway of Death at Wikipedia.)

(3) 2016

Policy objective: Close down resistance to MENA mass immigration.

Policy debate: Who cares?

Decisive mind-control tool:



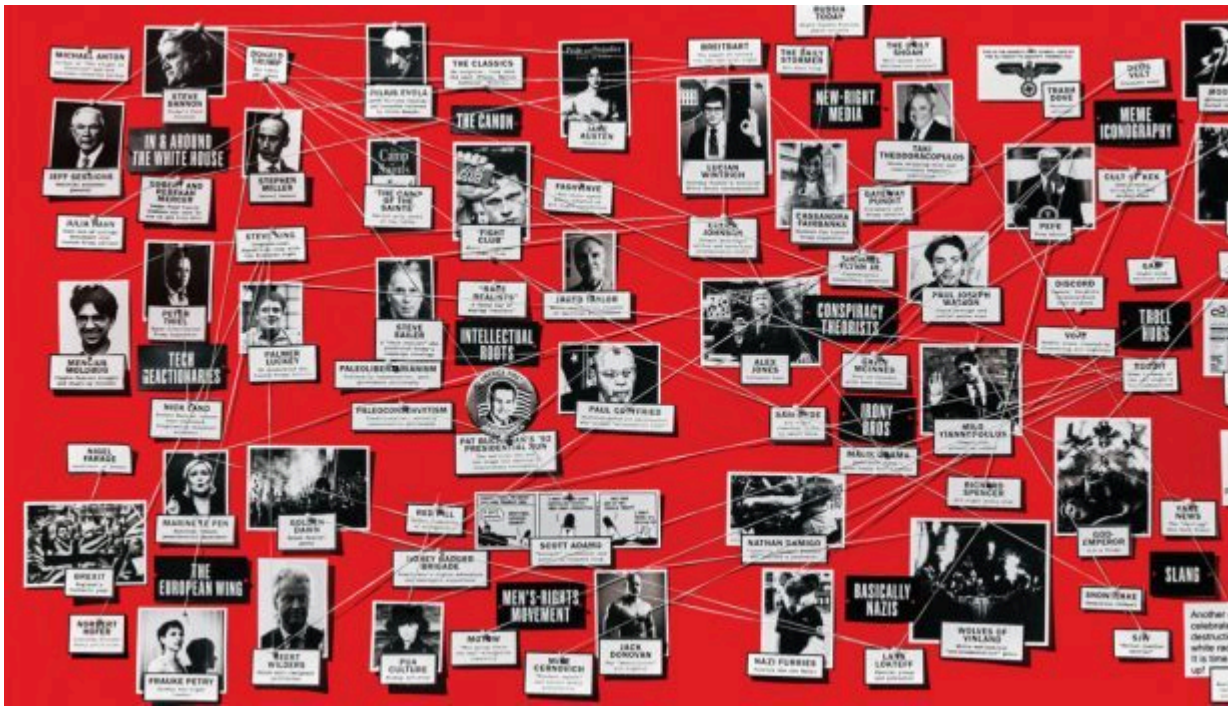
> Hey can anyone confirm if this video is legit?
> Because some creepy #journalism if it is pic.twitter.com/UWd5jNsSnh
> — DADDYULTRA
> LADY (@okayultra) August 22, 2016

"Journalism."

For close on half a century they've known there's a picture that will get people to think what they're told. 'Journalism' is about 'finding' it.

August 23, 2016

Linkage



This type of image used to be the Hollywood icon for florid psychosis. Now …

May 1, 2017

Mau-Mauing

Andrew Fox discusses the principal political weapon of the Western Left, and its mobilization against political incorrectness in science fiction:

Coincidentally, the same years which have witnessed the emergency of speech codes on many campuses have also witnessed an accelerated symbiosis between the pro SF community and academia (in that greater numbers of SF/fantasy writers have as day jobs teaching at the post-high school level, and SF literature and film has become an increasingly respectable and popular subject of university courses). … For many individuals under the age of forty who have been through the university system, mau-mauing may seem normative, or at least unremarkable. They have seen it at work through divestment campaigns of various kinds (divestment from Israeli companies or U.S. companies which provide goods to Israel which might be used in security operations against Palestinians, or from companies involved in fossil fuel production, or from companies connected to certain figures active on the Right, such as the Koch brothers) and through shout-downs and other disruptions of speakers invited to campus whose backgrounds or viewpoints are contrary to those favored by student activists. (via)

It's deeply disturbing, as pretty much everything is these days. (Those who know anything about China's Cultural Revolution will

find their pattern recognition centers sparking up.)

ADDED: Mau-Mauing is the perfect illustration of the fact that political 'voice' and 'freedom of speech', far from being near synonyms, are closer to antonyms.

June 22, 2013

Peak Racism?

The witch–craze seems to be running out of juice, according to some thought-provoking Ngram data organized by Brad Trun.

The charge of "Racist!" is losing its sting as its overzealous hurlers increasingly render it farcical. "Racist" is, for the first time since the neologism's inception 80 years ago, starting to fall out of favor. Zooming in on the post–1930 period in Google Ngram Viewer and eliminating smoothing reveals that "racist" references topped out as the calendar switched to the new millennium.

My welcome news receptors are so corroded, that I can't help wondering: what's wrong with this story?

(In other news, Peak African is still some way off. Caplan will no doubt be thrilled. Does anybody sensible think that a billion Nigerians by 2100 sounds like a future that might work? It's probably a racist question, but you have to do what you can for dying traditions.)

ADDED: “We’ve set up a system where the world’s most easily offended people get to decide what’s offensive and what’s not …”

August 11, 2013

Hate

The SPLC honors Richard Lynn with a place in the stocks. (He’s a “white supremacist” apparently, despite thinking the future of human civilization lies in the Far East. (*yawn*))

(via @intelligenceres)

ADDED: The dike is creaking.

March 4, 2014

Wacky Races

The demented evil of this is pretty funny:

> Student: Are you Suey Park? Me: Oh my god. We don't all look the same.
>
> — Angry Asian Woman (@suey_park) April 19, 2014

My positive spin on Suey Park is that she’s almost unique in her

role as an agent of racial desensitization. The only way you don't lose to move like this is by toughening up fast.

ADDED: So what is this joke saying? *Be aware, you will be socially punished for noticing reality*. It's pure Sailer (but dramatized for laughs). With enemies like this, I'm guessing we can close down the propaganda unit.

ADDED: Further down the rabbit hole … (via @CBLangille)

ADDED: Some (vaguely) related intersectionalist comedy.

April 19, 2014

Diversitocracy Crisis

It's not about white people.

June 20, 2014

Wayback Privilege

Futurism is *way* too white male. The retrofutural Left-Molbuggian argument clinches it:

Time travel … is another thing that is a distinctly white male preoccupation — going back in time, for marginalized groups, means giving up more of their rights.

(Adopted from here, which is funny, despite the pitiful pandering.) "Don't anomalize my *Zeitgeist* bro!"

August 1, 2015

Quote note (#235)

The implausible *telos* of progressive race politics:

It is certainly possible to get to a place where jobs at Facebook are allocated by global demographics, with the requisite number of Aboriginals and so forth. South Africa, with BEE, is rapidly approaching this point. If you want to make all the present programmers at Facebook racists, it's an excellent way to proceed, but I really don't think it will lead to your uniform, perfect and beige dream world. (Not sure if you're familiar with present conditions in the Rainbow Nation.)

The idea that the progressive race religion is something that can be productively reasoned about ended for many of us at *precisely* the moment NRx began. Still, trying — or pretending to try — to argue optimistically about it could (perhaps) remain worthwhile as an experiment, even without the slightest realistic chance that it could work.

Again, I'm not here to get you to agree with me; I know that's impossible. What I'm curious [about] is whether you can at least

agree to disagree.

That doesn't seem much more realistic (so it's probably an experiment — or cultural tactic — of some different kind.)

ADDED: "Of course, it's incredibly important to keep diversity issues at the forefront of everyone's awareness …"

April 1, 2016

Race Talk

Why enter into the edgy territory of race and IQ discussion, asks John McWhorter, even if the most distressingly inegalitarian conclusions turn out to be true? "What, precisely, would we gain from discussing this particular issue?"

Robert Verbruggen gets to the critical response, eventually. The topic has been made inescapable because the left is ever-increasingly race-obsessed and "continue[s] to treat racial gaps as a moral emergency" based on a specific, positively egalitarian, and extremely implausible universal-anthropological theory. Challenging that is the only way to moderate the social self-flagellation. (So however uncomfortable this 'conversation' becomes, it isn't going to stop.)

More here (via), hitting maximum relevance about 40 minutes in.

ADDED:

> .@JohnHMcWhorter asks why discuss IQ & race. Because schools spend billions trying to equalize academic achievement? https://t.co/8C5yMCmkGu https://t.co/us8ZEC4c6f
>
> — EdReal (@Ed_Realist) July 5, 2017

ADDED: "Does the possibility [sic] that [East] Asians are smarter than they are reduce whites to desperation and misery?" — This needs to be noted more often.

July 5, 2017

Evo Psych Ward

An utterly compelling tangle of arguments at The Center for Evolutionary Psychology, where the intersection of science and society is ripped open by controversy over Kevin MacDonald and his relation to Darwinian biorealism. Evo Psych star John Tooby makes some important points about the politics of denunciation, bringing the distinct spectra of political allegiance and sociological genetics into complex collision. Where do the implications of Hamiltonian inclusive fitness lead? (HBD doesn't quite come into focus, but it haunts the discussion from the edges.)

For a sense of how murky this gets:

For those who are interested in carefully tracing out the dauntingly complex relationships between biology, brain, mind, and culture, this is all very familiar terrain. In the mid-1970's, for example, Gould, Lewontin, and a few others injected heavy-handed moralizing, easy denunciation, the attribution of dubious intellectual genealogies, and an ***ad hominem*** *attack-style into scientific debate in an effort to settle intellectual disputes by other means. One belief they cultivated assiduously was the myth that leading evolutionary scholars were ideologically motivated right-wingers. Due to my empiricist inclinations, I was the only person I knew who actually gathered data on this widely credited claim. The results were what common sense would lead you to expect: Evolutionists included communists, ex-communists, a wide array of non-doctrinaire Marxists, democratic socialists, anarchists, feminists, a Black Panther Party member (recently joined by a second), antiwar activists, many* ***New Republic*** *liberals, some apoliticals, and a neocon – a distribution (for better or worse) indistinguishable from any randomly sampled selection of faculty at leading research universities at the time. […] The most notorious tactic of Gould, Lewontin, and their allies during the early years was their attempt to drag the ideas they opposed under by manufacturing links to various repugnant doctrines. One moral problem with ignoring truth-value in employing such tactics is that these socially constructed links pull in both directions. The key theoretical breakthroughs central to*

sociobiology (inclusive fitness theory, parental investment theory, and so on) turned out to elegantly explain large sets of observations, and so went on to win the debates within the technical journals in evolutionary biology. Although Lewontin's and Gould's opposition to the most significant innovations in evolutionary biology over the last 30 years is nothing more than a quaint intellectual footnote within evolutionary biology, the fruits of their mythologizing live on outside of it. They live on in the spurious legitimacy that they gave to the netherworld of marginal scholarship (of which MacDonald is a typical example) that embraces the doctrines that the "moralists" were putatively fighting. More significantly, they did succeed in tarring the revolution in evolutionary biology in the eyes of nonbiologists, together with any serious attempt to think through the relationship between culture, human nature, and human evolution. This has perpetuated the antiquated status quo, during which social scientists have remained wary of the possibility of scientifically mapping human nature, and have remained almost totally ignorant of modern evolutionary biology.

ADDED: MacDonald responds.

July 14, 2014

Misbehaving Science

Comedy gold at *New Scientist* — it really needs to be read to be believed. Kate Douglas reviews Aaron Panofsky's book *Misbehaving Science: Controversy and the development of behavior genetics*, rising to a glorious crescendo with a restatement of Lewontin's Fallacy (without giving any indication of recognizing it). If this book and review are panic symptoms, which seems highly plausible, Neo-Lysenkoism has to be sensing the winter winds of change. In any case, it somehow all went wrong for them:

The founding principles of social responsibility suffered, usurped by a responsibility to the discipline itself and to scientific freedom. And controversy bred controversy as the prospect of achieving notoriety attracted new talent. In short, the field became weak and poorly integrated, with low status, limited funding, and publicity the main currency of academic reward. This, according to Panofsky, is why it is afflicted with "persistent, ungovernable controversy" …

As a guide to what regional Cathedral breakdown looks like, this works quite well.

July 15, 2014

Quote note (#180)

A usefully depressing account by Paul Gottfried of Conservative Inc. and the shifting boundaries of hate-think:

Well into the 1990s, it was almost universally accepted by the scientific community, except for Stalinoid propagandist Leon Kamin and the perpetually PC Stephen Jay Gould, that human IQ varied significantly, that IQ tests could measure these differences, and that up to 85 percent of intelligence may be hereditary. In an enlightening work The IQ Controversy (1988) Stanley Rothman and Jay Snydermann document the premises that the overwhelming majority of scientists, biologists, and psychologists fully accept the axioms that a significant part (indeed well over one half) of intelligence is hereditary, and that general intelligence is testable.

(No longer, at least as far as its official gate-keepers are concerned.)

Western Civilization has been disgraced indelibly by its craven surrender of all intellectual integrity on this topic. The degree to which it will be despised, eventually, for what it has become almost certainly exceeds its power of historical imagination.

August 27, 2015

Autophagic Leftism

> Progressivism abolishes itself. http://t.co/0fgxrhu75L
> — Wesley Morganston (@nydwracu) August 4, 2014

Oh come, come, this kind of entertainment deserves a real link:

For these [New Atheist] thinkers, Islam is obviously a bad and destructive system of thought. Yet billions of people spend their whole lives trying to live according to these stupid teachings, generation after generation. What's worse, in the modern world, they have ready access to knowledge about the superior system of secular modernity, but they persist in embracing a crappy religion. At a certain point, you have to wonder if there is simply something wrong with such people, right? Perhaps their reasoning capacities are hampered in some way. Indeed, one begins to wonder, could it perhaps be something … inborn? […] Basically, declaring oneself to be on the avant-garde of "reason" is always going to lead to racism if you take it to its logical conclusion. Thankfully for the mental health of the "party of reason," however, their self-regard and in-group loyalty keep them from following the dictates of reason on this matter, because it would make it seem like maybe their empty gesture at a contentless "reason" had accidentally made them into bad people.

We've come a long way baby.

August 4, 2014

IQ Crime-Stop

'Eldritch' comments at Scott Alexander's place:

I think the actual argument against IQ is this:

1. Intelligence is a measure of your value as a person in a wide range of situations.
2. IQ supposedly measures intelligence.
3. IQ may not be significantly changeable.
4. Therefore, this test lets you measure the innate aptitude and this value of a person.
5. Therefore, this could be used to prove I am inherently less valuable than other people.
6. This makes me REALLY UNCOMFORTABLE.
7. Therefore, IQ is wrong.

I'm pretty sure this is the real argument against IQ, and most arguments against it are simply attempts to find arguments that fit this conclusion.

My only significant quibble with this construction concerns point #5, which massively underestimates the predominance of pathological altruism / social terror in the IQ 'debate'. The possibility that IQ measurements could make *other people* seem in some

awkward way inferior is a far more powerful deterrent than anything it could say about oneself. (The probability that someone is going to say something stupid about IQ has a striking positive correlation with IQ.)

The post itself makes a (wholly superfluous) strong argument for the robust realism of the *g* concept. If you're the kind of crime-stopped idiot who needs persuading about it, you're almost certainly beyond persuasion. The relevant fork in the road has already been passed. Rationalists find it strangely hard to grasp that simple fact. They're nice that way.

ADDED: Dear Prudence.

August 12, 2014

In Our Genes

That there is a genetic contribution to ~~IQ~~ 'cognitive performance' has been theoretically obvious for as long as these concepts have existed. Now it has been empirically confirmed. The basic argument should be over now (but I'm not holding my breath).

As this type of information becomes a flood, the dike of ideologically-motivated obscurantism has — eventually — to break. Watch for the smart rats to start jumping off first.

September 10, 2014

Shrunken Brains

Gregory Cochran brusquely dispatches what might be the most incompetent piece of 'scientific' reasoning in recent years (although the competition for that honor gets ever more intense). The discovery — brains of poor children are statistically smaller. The insane leftist inference passed into the public realm as a logical conclusion: *poverty shrinks brains*. I'm not going to insult XS readers by laboring over the mistake here (Cochran does it succinctly enough, and with appropriate biting contempt). It's utterly horrifying, from any remotely objective viewpoint, that such blatant stupidity could ever borrow the robes of science, even momentarily. This is what collapse looks like (and most probably our brains are shrinking).

(I was aiming to do some kind of April Fool's thing here today. Sadly, this isn't one.)

ADDED: Thompson patiently picks through the mess. "The paper and the comments will lead readers to believe that lack of money is stunting the brains of poorer children. This is possible, but not proved by this study because of obvious genetic confounders."

April 1, 2015

Mental Gymnastics

Ignoring Sailer*, who is — of course — problematic, how about *The Atlantic*?

The statistics are hard to ignore. [Kenya, a] medium-size country of 41 million dominates the world in competitive running. Pick any long-distance race. You'll often find that up to about 70 or 80 percent of its winners since the late 1980s, when East African nutrition and technology started catching up with the West, have been from Kenya. Since 1988, for example, 20 of the 25 first-place men in the Boston Marathon have been Kenyan. … Of the top 25 male record holders for the 3000-meter steeplechase, 18 are Kenyan. Seven of the last 8 London marathons were won by Kenyans, and the sole outlier was from neighboring Ethiopia. Their record in the Olympic men's marathon is more uneven, having placed in the top three in only four of the last six races. Still, not bad for one country. And even more amazing is that three-fourths of the Kenyan champions come from an ethnic minority of 4.4. million, or 0.06% of global population.

"Hard to ignore"? Oh, come on!

The first study, "A Level Playing Field? Media Constructions of Athletics, Genetics, and Race," examines news media coverage

implying that genetic differences lead particular racial groups to succeed more often at sports, and focuses on how that belief shows up within journalism. Collaborating with University of Connecticut doctoral student Devon Goss, Matthew W. Hughey researched nearly 24,000 English-language newspaper articles across the globe from 2003-2014. Among the articles that discussed race, genetics and athletics, Hughey and Goss found that nearly 55 percent of these media narratives uncritically parroted and perpetuated the belief that African-descended groups excel in athletics, such as sprinting, because of genetic racial differences — despite the research debunking that belief.

Who are you going to believe, the media-approved 'debunking' or the lying sports statistics?

*There's a Sailer link in the Atlantic piece (naughty), which — oddly — goes to this. (I guess that's one solution to the "hard to ignore" problem.)

September 29, 2015

Vaguely Smart

Don Surber recalls a classic masterpiece of liberal good-think fluff (from 2008):

***Historian Michael Beschloss**: Yeah. Even aside from the fact of*

electing the first African American President and whatever one's partisan views this is a guy whose IQ is off the charts — I mean you cannot say that he is anything but a very serious and capable leader and — you know — you and I have talked about this for years…
***Imus**: Well. What is his IQ?*
***Historian Michael Beschloss**: … our system doesn't allow those people to become President, those people meaning people THAT smart and THAT capable*
***Imus**: What is his IQ?*
***Historian Michael Beschloss**: Pardon?*
***Imus**: What is his IQ?*
***Historian Michael Beschloss**: Uh. I would say it's probably — he's probably the smartest guy ever to become President.*
***Imus**: That's not what I asked you. I asked you what his IQ was.*
***Historian Michael Beschloss**: You know that I don't know and I'd have to find someone with more expertise…*
***Imus**: You don't know.*

Thanks, as always, for telling us (hazily) what we're supposed to think.

(Via.)

January 19, 2016

Trolls Explained

If, like this blog, you have been benighted enough to understand Internet trolls as abusive irritants, masters of disguise, satirists, or even amusing pets, you apparently need a good talking to. Farhad Manjoo writing in (surprise!) *The New York Times* has a lesson you need to hear. Trolling, it turns out, has a very simple explanation — it is exactly identical to a Political Incorrectness. To be a troll is in fact simply not being a progressive.

Citing Doctor Whitney Phillips, of Humboldt State University, and a troll expert (who has written a book on the subject), Manjoo illuminates the phenomenon unambiguously:

If there's one thing the history of the Internet has taught us, it's that trolls will be difficult to contain because they really reflect base human society in all its ugliness. Trolls find a way.

"It's not a question of whether or not we're winning the war on trolling, but whether we're winning the war on misogyny, or racism, and ableism and all this other stuff," Dr. Phillips said. "Trolling is just a symptom of those bigger problems."

As with so very many other things, there's no solution to trolling short of the absolute triumph of progressive across the whole of the earth. This is an argument crying out for an #AAA tag like no other I've ever seen. (I'd link the Twitter hashtag, but it's deeply confusing.)

ADDED: It's a jungle out there.

ADDED: I'll throw in the T-shirt slogan here for free — **Resistance is ~~futile~~ trolling**

August 15, 2014

CWoT

The Cathedralist War on Trolling is limbering up fast. Just a few days ago, we had this. (Paraphrased: to resist the Cathedral is trolling). Now the follow up ("Trolls are like terrorist cells" — literally).

The Duck does the integration:

> 1) disagreeing with progressivism is trolling 2) trolling is terrorism therefore 3) disagreeing with progressivism is terrorism
>
> — Duck Enlightenment (@jokeocracy) August 20, 2014

That escalated quickly.

*They're everywhere and even if one gets eliminated, there's two more to take its place (that also applies to HYDRA). But I feel like this is the point we're at now. That's sad and terrible, but it's the truth. I used to think turning comments off was *the* solution, and while I do think comments have become useless, and largely a hotbed for hate and racism, turning them off is only going to drive the poison to*

even more public forums like Twitter and Facebook, where a hateful or factually corrupt tweet or status update can spread like a disease across the globe and turn supposed rational human beings into muckrakers of misinformation, hate, and other dark things.



August 21, 2014

Twitter wants to die

Evidently.

(So GAB it is, I guess.)

September 22, 2016

Algorithmic Diversitocracy

Here's the anti-Tay.

One way or another, robotically-enhanced coercive enstupidation is coming. (At least the machines will only be pretending to be sunk in idiocy.)

Via:

> @Outsideness https://t.co/3Lvkxcbq0L
>
> Just praying to CyberSatan for a nuclear winter by now.
>
> — ||||| (@insurrealist) October 10, 2016

This is also relevant.

October 11, 2016

CHAPTER FIVE - ECONOMICS AND POLICY

Signs of Progress

HOW THE MODERN WORLD LOST ITS SENSES

The more sophisticated animals become, the worse they get at connecting with reality. As they cephalize, and socialize, stories substitute for reflexes, and the survival value of a story owes almost nothing to its factuality. Believing what everyone else does, or what makes you feel good, counts for vastly more. Wherever it is that discussion leads, it is only very rarely, and accidentally, in the direction of reality.

Science begins with the realization that stories aren't to be

trusted, even – or especially – if they sound credible, conform to prior intuitions, and readily attain social approval. Since narrative satisfaction is the great deceiver, science reaches beyond language into the vast frigid tracts of mathematical signs, stripped clean of all moral and emotional significance. Hardening itself against the temptation to see faces in the clouds, or hear voices from the heavens, it digs determinedly into the test-bed of numbers and quantitative signals, where seductive words are led to die.

Economics has never been a science, but economic behavior, and even theory, has been able to avail itself of a measure of leverage against story-telling. Its great resource in this regard has been the price system, expressed in 'meaningless' quantities (without immediate narrative significance) which enable economic calculation to sustain a posture of ideological indifference. An accountant who tells a story is a bad accountant, and most probably a criminal, whilst an entrepreneur fixated upon a story of how things 'must be' is subject to market-Darwinian nemesis. That, at least, is how *laissez-faire* hard money capitalism once roughly worked, as attested for instance by the indignation of Charles Dickens, who insisted upon the right of moral, political, and religious story-telling in the midst of a process that systematically disdained it.

Things have progressed incalculably since then, in a direction that could be confidently described as 'Dickensian' if that adjective had not already been settled in its highly-effective polemical purpose.

That ‘the Big Story’ (BS) would triumph over calculative Scroogean realism was perhaps entirely predictable, but the near-metaphysical comprehensiveness of its victory – and its revenge — was less easy to anticipate. When attempting to gauge this progress, money is the best indicator, or rather, the destruction of money as an indicator is the most telling sign.

Under the conditions of hard money industrial capitalism, progress follows two, rigorously accounted tracks. Most notoriously, it is measured as a process of accumulation, or the amassing of fortunes through profitable business activity. Economic intelligence is socially dispersed along with the multitude of fortunes, with each unit of capital accompanied by its own (Scroogish) accounting function, weighing revenues against outlays, and estimating the viability of continued operation. This intelligence does not lend itself to convenient or reliable public aggregation.

Accompanying the multiplicity of private progressions (and regressions), there is a second track measuring social advance in strictly quantitative, meaningless, and unambiguous terms. On this track, technical and organizational improvements in business activity overspill private accounts, and take the form of public ‘externalities’. Under any monetary system competent to register reality, such general social advances are expressed as falling prices, cost reduction, or *deflation*. (A typically insightful Zero Hedge post on the topic can be found here.)

The importance of this point is difficult to over-emphasize, especially since it directly contradicts our carefully fabricated neo-Dickensian common sense: *Deflation! Isn't that kind of like fascism or something?*

Deflation can certainly represent a type of socio-economic misfortune, under specific conditions. During business ~~cycle~~ downturns, for instance, it can reflect fire-sale asset or inventory reductions, driven by, and exacerbating, credit crises. The seriousness and typicality of such cases is strongly asserted in the dominant (neo-Dickensian) story of the Great Depression. It is worth noting, however, that even under these circumstances – at the worst – the first-order effect of deflation is to generate a spontaneous increase in affluence, or spending power. When life is at its toughest, it gets cheaper to live.

In the hard money world, chronic mild deflation simply *is* social progress. The two concepts are effectively indistinguishable. Gentle deflation is the invisible hand out, giving everybody a little more of almost everything, year by year, as it spontaneously distributes a fraction of the 'social surplus', or public dividend on rising productivity. Even in today's radically progressed world of ruined money, the output of the consumer electronics industry still manages to exhibit the deflationary trends that have been obliterated elsewhere (so next time you buy a gizmo, don't forget to feel appropriately oppressed.)

What ~~the hell~~ in heavens happened? How did modernity's metallo-monetary senses get turned off, rapturing Scrooge into a Christmas Carol, and eclipsing industrial reality? One obvious neo-Dickensian go-to guy for that is William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), a politician whose multi-dimensional war against reality – truly astounding in its consistency – represents enthusiasm for the Big Story (or 'social gospel') at its most uncompromised. Either Bryan's anti-Darwinism (the Scopes trial) or his ardent prohibitionism (campaigning for the 18th amendment) would have sufficed to earn him a place in the historical record as a hero of the BS ('evangelical' or 'progressive') State, but his most enduring legacy rests upon the speech he delivered on July 9, 1896, to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, in which he declared – as if to Scrooge himself – that "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

This is a declaration that is sublimed to progressive universality through the elimination of context. Embedded within the late 19th century debates on bimetallism (price-fixing of gold-silver exchange rates), its present implications are significantly diluted, or at least complicated, by questions about the financial responsibility of central authorities, creditor-debtor class warfare, global economic integration, agrarian-urban tensions, and (East-West) regional politics in the USA. Yet, fundamentally, it can be recognized as

'Dickensian': the passionate denunciation of a neutral criterion for economic reality, precisely for its neutrality, or indifference to Big Story moral-historical narrative. Gold is cold. It measures without judgment. Between damnation and salvation it demonstrates no preference or inclination.

Concretely, gold was registering, in economic terms, the social upheaval of American industrial urbanization. Mechanization of agriculture implied falling food prices, ruination of small farmers, and rural depopulation, during a sustained process of massive disruption whose miseries were only exceeded by the socio-economic revitalization in its wake. In its distribution and in its accounting function, gold facilitated the depreciation of rural labor, the bankruptcy of misallocated businesses, and the empowerment of concentrated industrial capital in the nation's rising urban centers. Bryan articulated the views of those at the sharpest edge of this shift, who found the messenger culpable for the message, the senses guilty for the scene: "If thine eye offends thee pluck it out" (Matthew 18:9). (Even though Bryan lost all three of his presidential elections bids, we're all totally plucked.)

To make of money a vehicle of moral purpose, rather than a neutral registry of fact, is to make the crossing from liberalism and progress as they were once understood (dynamic industrialism), to the progressive liberalism of today (political evangelism). If money can save us (through 'demand management'), as the Keynesians

insist, then its politicization is a moral imperative, whose neglect is a sin of omission. The senses are transformed into story-tellers. Shut the windows, and listen to the Christmas Carol. It's progress (~~honestly~~).

February 7, 2012

Economies of Deceit

Social organizations grow ever larger, and resist disintegration, due to economies of scale. There are disproportionate benefits to being large, sufficient to over-compensate for the associated disadvantages, to support expansion, and to fund the suppression of fission. Like every trend reinforced by positive nonlinearities, large-scale social formations accentuate the gradient of time, realizing a ratchet mechanism, through 'network effects'. In this way, they contribute not only to the content of history, but also to its shape.

When the fundamental deformation of history was evidently attributable to scale economies, it was only natural to speak primarily of Leviathan — the seizure of historical time by the gigantic. It might therefore be considered a significant symptom — of something — that a substitute term now seems more persuasively applicable. Leviathan remains vast, and growing, but it is more exactly specified as *the Cathedral*, because its principal ratchet

mechanism owes less to sheer magnitude than to a mastery of deceit.

Deceit is nothing new, in matters of power, or any other, but it is open to innovation. A state religion that pretends to be the negation of religion is something new, as is propaganda in its strict sense. There is no precedent for an intolerant, precisely coded system of belief, trending to a totalitarian form, whilst presenting itself as inevitable progress towards general disillusionment.

Economies of deceit, like those of scale, draw historical momentum from the fact that they are profoundly automatized. No one decided that large-scale social organizations *should* be advantaged. Similarly, the revolutionary *efficiency* of deceit was never a point of deliberation. Deceit works, due to contingencies of deep evolution. More specifically, it works because propaganda machinery was never a factor in the archaic human environment, so that stimulus sensitivity was never provided with the opportunity to adapt defensively in respect to it.

The total power of deceit can be understood most clearly when examined backwards, from its final destination, which is shared with the entire utilitarian sphere. At the end there is the *wire-head*, the social and technological destination of *direct neurological rewards*, where the message “I have received what I want” has been divorced from all real acquisition or accomplishment. Do you want this thing? Or do you want the feeling that you have this thing? The latter can be strengthened, sharpened, and in every way *subjectively* perfected. It

is also, given suitable historical conditions, vastly cheaper to deliver. Hence, *the economy of deceit*.

For those paying attention, the entire structure of economic thought and policy switched onto this track roughly a century ago. The demetalization of money is the most obvious indicator, trending towards a pure signal of wealth, entirely disconnected from the extravagance of physical reality. Keynesianism, in its essence, is wire-head economics, focusing on the policy question: *how do we best deliver the stim?* The idea that growth of the real economy might be the best route to this goal marks its proponent out as a hopeless crank, entirely out of touch with the recent development of the discipline. What matters is the *wealth effect*, delivered in carefully calibrated jolts, down the wire. (I've tried to thrash this out before.)

Gradually, but inexorably, propaganda swallow everything. All macroeconomic aggregates — GDP, inflation, capital stock … — tend to senseless garbage, because their only robust anchor point is Cathedral-political: *what can we make you feel?* The latest evidence is telling. It is time, apparently, to definitively break with archaic questions of economic production, and instead to work solely with the ~~macroeconomic garbage~~ data, in order for it to tell us that we're richer than we think we are.

You can't make this s%&t up. Yes we can!

July 28, 2013

Race Science

Race, science, and pseudo-science … it's complicated. *Radish* presents a blood-chilling review essay on the subject, which isn't to be missed (whatever your priors). As might be expected, it leads to a discussion of crazed fascist experimentation on human guinea pigs (aka 'pajama ferrets'):

*… perhaps you were wondering where I'm going with this. Well, here's a hint: in 2012, experimental psychologists, psychiatric neuroscientists, and even a pair of "practical ethicists" put their heads together and came up with an honest-to-God **cure for racism**.*

You could say the argument was over, if there had been an argument.

(Meanwhile, it's probably best not to put yourself at risk by noticing this (from here))

February 2, 2014

Suicide by Science

The progressive end game is for the very category of 'enemy' to be techno-scientifically annihilated. Emile Bruneau has the *Zeitgeist* good, and he's determined to promote it:

"I wanted the research I was doing to match the stuff I was

thinking about," he says. "And I just felt more and more that the most relevant level of analysis for generating social change was the psychological level."

The goal is to put an end to this sort of thing:

Evidence of the empathy gap abounds: in political discourse, across daily headlines, even in the simple act of watching a movie. "People will cry for the suffering of one main character," Bruneau pointed out. "But then cheer for the slaughter of dozens of others." The observation reminded me of watching "Captain Phillips" in a packed theater at Lincoln Center, of how much people applauded when the Somali pirates — whose lives back home had been portrayed as dire — were killed. They were the bad guys. Never mind that they had barely reached manhood or that their families were desperate and starving. Never mind that some were reluctant to turn to piracy in the first place.

The Kingdom cometh. Anybody without serious plans to get the hell out now better be resigning themselves to the mandatory-compassion Cathedral chip.

"I get that these are complicated problems," [Bruneau] told me. "I get that there isn't going to be any one magic solution. But if you trace even the biggest of these conflicts down to its roots, what you find are entrenched biases, and these sort-of calcified failures of empathy. So I think no matter what, we have to figure out how to root that out."

This is the Bernays of the 21st century. Let no one say they weren't warned.

March 25, 2015

Unspoken Agendas

Zombie proposes a key to contemporary American politics: *White liberals despise black people and can't admit it*. This is smart conservative *jiu jitsu* rather than anything remotely neoreactionary, but as a wedge to lever things apart, it has some intriguing potential. The central claim of a carefully-elaborated argument:

White progressives believe that black people are too dumb to make rational decisions on their own and too uncouth to behave civilly. So the progressive urge is to heap rules upon rules to control blacks and render them harmless to themselves and others. At the same time, progressives are terrified of being perceived as racist. So they hit upon a solution: Make rules which restrict **everyone***'s freedoms, even though the progressives are actually targeting African-Americans. The collateral damage in this cynical equation — law-abiding citizens of all ethnicities — erroneously assume that the intrusive rules are aimed at them. But they're missing the point: Progressives don't enjoy restricting their own freedoms along with everyone else's, but can conceive of no other legal mechanism to deal*

with what they see as misbehaving blacks while still appearing to be race-neutral.

ADDED: PJM apparently going all-in with this meme — "But [Obama and Kerry] do — and here's the irony in Obama's case — have the traditional white man's view of that same Arab world — to wit, Arabs are crazy and primitive." We're the true anti-racists!

March 16, 2014

Displacement

Steven Sailer makes room for a smidgen of gentle cynicism about the economic driver behind the Obama Administration's "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing" initiative:

Clearly, racial justice demands forcing suburbs/exurbs to subsidize affordable housing to encourage blacks to move to more convenient locations currently dominated by evil white racists, such as, perhaps, Murrieta, Hemet, Coachella, Twentynine Palms, and Hesperia. […] Seriously, sixty years ago, "urban renewal" was all the rage, although cynics joked that cities, in effect, were attempting to engage in "Negro removal." […] Nowadays, everybody who is anybody wants to move back into the city, so white progressives have become obsessed with exposing all those vicious racists in the suburbs and exurbs, and using disparate impact thinking to force

them to take more blacks from the city. […] It's only a coincidence that this would open up more prime urban real estate for gentrification, right?

There can be little doubt that it's a low tolerance for hypocrisy, beyond anything, that pushes people into the crime-think zone. A cheerful acceptance that evangelical political correctness is entirely compatible with profitable ethnic-clearing exercises — perhaps even a crucial tool in this regard — would make it wholly unnecessary to ever make those awkward, socially-taboo remarks. It's not as if anyone is going to be called out about it (except by the Sailers of this world, who've been carefully locked-up in the muffled cell). There's not even any need to be a hick Republican about the whole business. Clearly, the left wing of the Democratic Party is the place from which to really clean up. Simply recognize that words are a perfectly empty social ritual, designed by the Holy *Zeitgeist* for the public expression of convenient tribal emotions, and all the confusion goes away. Dollars follow, and life is beautiful.

We can laugh (darkly), as Sailer does, but that's most probably a maladaptive relic. There's certainly plenty of laughter to go around on the other side.

July 18, 2015

Aletheia

Erik Falkenstein makes a lot of important points in this commentary on Thomas Piketty (via Isegoria). The whole post is highly recommended.

To pick up on just one of Falkenstein's arguments here, he explains:

Most importantly for [Piketty's] case is the fact that because marginal taxes, and inheritance taxes, were so high, the rich had a much different incentive to hide income and wealth. He shows marginal income and inheritance tax rates that are the exact inverse of the capital/income ratio of figures, which is part of his argument that raising tax rates would be a good thing: it lowers inequality. Those countries that lowered the marginal tax rates the most saw the biggest increases in higher incomes (p. 509). Perhaps instead of thinking capital went down, it was just reported less to avoid confiscatory taxes? Alan Reynolds notes that many changes to the tax code in the 1980s that explain the rise in reported wealth and income irrespective of the actual change in wealth an income in that decade, and one can imagine all those loopholes and inducements two generations ago when the top tax rates were above 90% (it seems people can no better imagine their grandparents sheltering income than having sex, another generational conceit).

The much-demonized 'neoliberal' tax regimes introduced in the

1980s disincentivized capital income concealment. (Falkenstein makes an extended defense of this point.) In consequence, apparent inequality rose rapidly, as such revenues came out of hiding (ἀλήθεια) into public awareness / public finances. The 'phenomenon' is an artifact of truth-engineering, as modestly conservative governments sought to coax capital into the open, within a comparatively non-confiscatory fiscal environment.

There are some very significant lessons here, not all of which are easy to rapidly digest. To begin with, Falkenstein reveals the emblematic character of Piketty — as a thinker of the contemporary democratic spirit — who aims above all at a certain *public appearance*, rather than a real economic outcome. It is utterly naive to understand the 'equality debate' as something fundamentally concerned with a real (or super-public) situation. Such an understanding is, in fact, deeply *anti-democratic*. What concerns Piketty, and those flocking to his banner, is the public spectacle of inequality, as a negative factor for political legitimacy. Beyond the surface of his proposed remedies is a purely political demand that capital should retreat into hiding, in order not to embarrass the governing elites of democratic states. It is not actual inequality that is, in truth, being judged indecent, but its admission into the public square in immodest dress.

The greatest weakness of right wing economic analysis, whether Supply-side Conservative, Libertarian, or Post-Libertarian in

orientation, is its incompetence at lies. This becomes important when it interferes with a realistic analysis of the Cathedral State — an expression used in the same way one might use 'Islamic State' and with equivalent justification. For instance, as in this case, it tends to exaggerate the dysfunctionality of Cathedral-orchestrated social arrangements by conflating them with their public presentation.

To repeat the more concrete example at stake here, a 'high-tax' regime is interpreted by the truth-dupe right as a regime extracting higher taxes, or at least sincerely attempting to (before the attempt is undermined by Laffer-type perverse effects). What Falkenstein's commentary on Piketty suggests, in contrast, is that such a demand is more realistically understood as a demand for compliance with approved appearances, even if such compliance necessitates systematic 'non-compliance' with state tax codes *as publicly expressed*. Tax policy, in the widest sense, is not, then, to be conceived as primarily revenue oriented, but rather as a set of overt and covert theatrical directions, designed to produce a politically-convenient order of appearances. It is thus, in large part, a gatekeeper, controlling admissions to and banishments from the public stage. When capital disappears back under the burkqa, the 'problem' of gaping inequality will be miraculously solved. (In none of this is economics, in any serious sense, even remotely involved.)

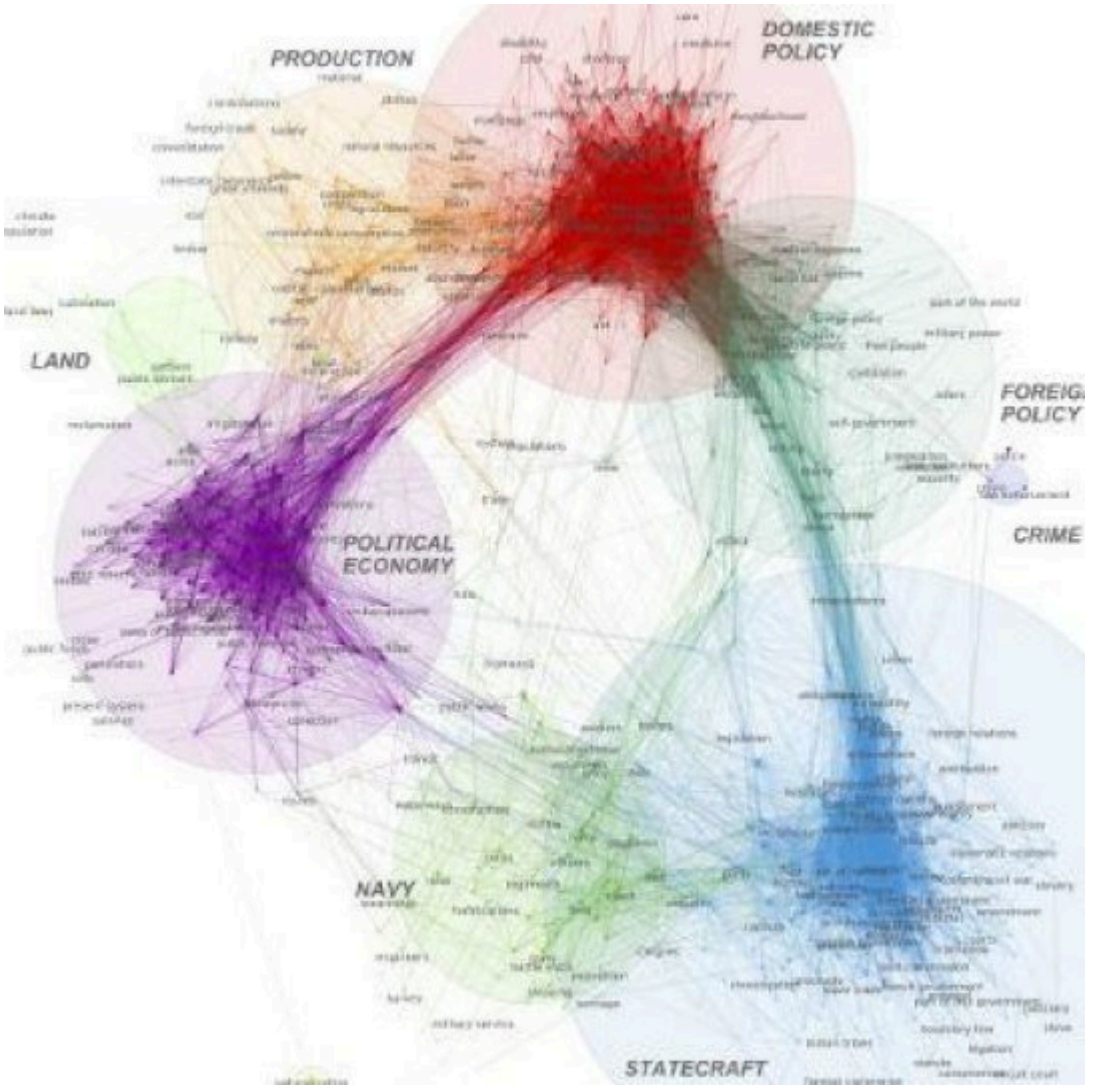
This is not economics, but political-religious public ritual, designed — with cynical realism — for mass-enfranchised idiocy and

its representatives. Overwhelmingly, that is what 'political economy' now is.

July 28, 2014

Switch-Point

Via machine-assisted cognition, this piece of research has been deservedly receiving a lot of attention. In 1917, it can now be seen due to 'big data' analytical tools, a new political epoch was born.



[Researchers] *were surprised to see 1917 jump out so clearly. As the United States joined Allied forces in the war against Germany, the researchers found a new set of terms recurring in the State of the Union address. On the topic of foreign policy, "democracy," "unity,"*

"peace" and "terror" emerged as keywords, replacing older notions of statecraft and diplomacy. By the 1940s, a cluster of terms centered on the Navy, perhaps signifying an isolationist foreign policy, all but disappears. "Suddenly the U.S. is no longer an island," said Bearman.

Anything that can switch — one might suppose — can switch again.

August 15, 2015

Moron bites (#13)

Is Islamophobia Accelerating Global Warming? (Well, is it?)

This talk examines the relation between Islamophobia as the dominant form of racism today and the ecological crisis. It looks at the three common ways in which the two phenomena are seen to be linked: as an entanglement of two crises, metaphorically related with one being a source of imagery for the other and both originating in colonial forms of capitalist accumulation. The talk proposes a fourth way of linking the two: an argument that they are both emanating from a similar mode of being, or enmeshment, in the world, what is referred to as 'generalised domestication.'

(Via.)

Actually, I think this is quite possibly truish — although approached with such utter leftoid twistedness that I'm not inclined

to re-classify it more politely. Insofar as ‘global warming’ is the presently-accepted Cathedralist translation for ‘industrial vitality’, it’s more than likely that a completely triumphant Ummah would put the lid on it. If the talk had been titled *Twin-Angled Anticapitalism* the inner coherence would have been more obvious.

May 13, 2016

CHAPTER SIX - A DARK TWIN

Criminals at Work

"… if the people that are supposedly running the country aren't actually performing any of the functions of governing, who is?" asks Foseti. Anybody who follows his writing will recognize where this is coming from. It belongs to a consistent (and thus informal) critique of formalist illusion. To confuse government with constitutional structures, legislation, or political offices, is to be blind to the real machinery of power.

Steve Sailor offers a pointed example of this reality in the field of higher educational administration, whose authorities are adamant in the determination to pursue systematic racial discrimination against Asian candidates (in particular). 'Constraining' legislation, which explicitly criminalizes these practices, is treated as a formal obstacle course, rather than a prohibition. It complicates anti-meritocratic racial profiling, but is utterly incapable of preventing it.

As Sailer explains:

Back in 1996, Proposition 209 outlawing racial preferences was passed by California voters and became part of the state

Constitution. State officials have ever since pursued a strategy of "massive resistance" to this unwelcome demand for equal treatment of the law, such as by switching the evaluation of University of California admissions from a cheap, mechanical system to an expensive, subjective "holistic" system.

The bulk of his post is devoted to a long quotation from Ruth Starkman's NYT story on the work of an applications reader at Berkeley. This piece is entirely devoid of surprises to anyone with the slightest sensitivity to social reality, since it consists of a reasonably detailed explanation of malicious racial corruption in university admission procedures. Disingenuously, Starkman describes this dirty work as "… an extreme version of the American non-conversation about race," asking: "Does Proposition 209 serve merely to push race underground?"

I suppose. Do anti-racketeering laws serve merely to push the mafia underground? If people are inflexibly determined to pursue an illegal agenda, laws drive them into the shadows. Perhaps the laws should be relaxed.

Or perhaps crucial public institutions should be ruthlessly purged of leftist criminals. It's a tough call.

August 4, 2013

Dark Humor

Slavic humor has a deserved reputation for philosophical penetration; routing around idealistic cant and crime-stop obstacles to deride totalitarianism. This recent example (via @MiriamElder, at #Russianhumor) is superb:

"Why won't there ever be a revolution in America?"
"Because there aren't any American embassies in America."

December 7, 2013

The Left Done Right

The Diplomat's Zachary Keck is one of the smartest mainstream commentators writing today. He's either an enemy to be respected, or a dark side infiltrator to be left undercover. In either case, he's always worth reading.

Observing that democracy promotion no longer works, he advocates a Neoreactionary foreign policy as the only effective path to the eventual realization of Cathedralist goals. If this wasn't a classic opportunity for Modernist means-ends reversal to show what it can do, there would be every reason to worry about being out-maneuvered. Zeck's proposals are sufficiently cunning to raise the question: *Who's subverting whom?*

One of America's top foreign policy goals, particularly since the end of the Cold War, has been promoting democracy across the world. In the minds of American foreign policy elites, there are both moral and strategic imperatives for spreading democracy.

Regarding the former, Westerners in general, and Americans in particular, believe that liberal democracies are morally superior to other forms of government. As for the strategic rationale, American elites point to the fact that liberal democracies don't go to war with one another, even if they aren't any less warlike (and may be more warlike) when interacting with non-democracies. One can quibble with these rationales, but they are deeply held by American elites and, to a much lesser extent, Americans in general. […] But if the American foreign policy community is going to continue trying to promote democracy, it must come to terms with one simple irony: it has become less successful at spreading democracy even as it has made democracy promotion a greater priority in U.S. foreign policy.

How, then, to spread democracy successfully? Obviously, by forgetting all of the 'democracy' nonsense:

The bottom line is that if the U.S. is going to promote democracy, it has to get better at it. It is irresponsible and immoral to promote democracy if it is likely to lead to anarchy, no matter how pure initial intentions were. And if the U.S. wants to get better at promoting democracy, a good place to start would be by promoting forward-thinking authoritarian leaders who base their legitimacy on

economic growth and integration into the global economy.

If the Cathedral recruits enough smart people to build itself a Neoreactionary wing, a wide range of presently mindless discussions are going to become a lot more interesting.

December 9, 2013

Deep State

This surely counts as a (Friday) fright night topic. Appropriately, it's an undertow NRx theme already, although typically only casually invoked — almost allusively — as the necessary complement of the public state's naked superficiality. Rod Dreher focuses upon it more determinedly than any NRx source I was able to rapidly pull up. (This would be an easy point for people to educate me upon.)

Dreher's post is seriously interesting. One immediate hook:

Steve Sailer says that the Shallow State is a complement to the Deep State. The Shallow State is, I think, another name for what the Neoreactionaries call "The Cathedral" …

As a State Church, the Cathedral is essentially bound to publicity. Its principal organs — media and education — are directed towards the promulgation of faith. It tends towards an identification with its own propaganda, and therefore — in Mike Lofgren's words — to the full manifestation of *visible government*. Perfect coincidence of

government with the transparent public sphere approaches a definition of the progressive *telos*. Since Neoreaction is particularly inclined to emphasize the radical dysfunctionality of this ideal, it naturally presupposes that *real* government lies elsewhere. In this respect, NRx is inherently destined to formulate a model of hidden or *occult government* — that which the Cathedral runs upon — which inevitably coincides, in all fundamentals, with the deep state.

What then? Has there been a direct NRx address to the quesion, *what do we make of the deep state?* Moldbug even declares: "… the United States does not in fact have a 'deep state.'" In context, this is a complex and suggestive evasion, but it is an evasion nonetheless. There can be no call upon neoreactionaries to articulate their relation to something that does not exist.

In contrast to the Master, I am thoroughly convinced that a US deep state exists, and that the problem of articulation is a very different one. Public articulacy is — at least — not obviously appropriate to the deep state, for transcendental philosophical or occultist reasons (which are the same), since it is *the very nature of hidden government not to be a public object*. Public representation of the deep state is *exposure* — an intrinsically political, antagonistic engagement. It's Wikileaks. This is not to denounce such an operation, reactively, but merely to note that the *question* has thereby been missed. The righteousness of state sublimation into the public sphere is assumed (and this, to repeat, is progressivism itself).

Under the name of the Cathedral, Nrx depicts the state *phenomenon* as a degenerative abomination. The deep state (or *state-in-itself*), in contrast, poses a far more cryptic theoretical and practical problem. It's worth puzzling over, for at least a while.

December 12, 2014

Off the Books

Writing about Pakistan, as a 'dark site' host, but also about a more general syndrome, Fernandez remarks:

… just because the administration hides the risk from conflict using cutouts and proxies doesn't actually mean the risk goes away. It only means the risk is hidden "off the books". It only means you can't easily measure it.

There's a conservation law at work here, which is always a positive sign of realist seriousness. To publicly promote a political profile of peculiarly self-congratulating moral earnestness it is simultaneously necessary to feed the shadows. What happens unseen is essential to the purification of the image. The Obama Administration is only significant here insofar as it grasps the deep political logic of democracy — and its subordination to sovereign PR — with such exceptional practical clarity. Better by far to indiscriminately drone potential enemies to death on the

unmonitored periphery than to rough up a demonstrated terrorist in front of a TV camera. It's the future you wanted (*Xenosystems* readers excepted). To imagine anything fundamentally different working under democratic conditions is sheer delusion.

Adam Garfinkle has a thoughtful commentary on the US Senate torture report that wanders into the same territory.

Everyone seems to take for granted now that this was a "natural" CIA assignment of some sort, but it is passing strange that this should be the case. Not to belabor the background with a primer, but for those who have been watching too much crappy, self-righteous fiction on TV and in the movies, the CIA — before 911 at least — was a pretty small organization with a very minor percentage of its budget, personnel, and activity devoted to "operations" — dirty tricks, false-flagging, whacking people, and so forth. The Agency did wander off the reservation back in the day, which is what the Church Committee hearings and subsequent reforms were meant to set right. The vast bulk of CIA activity before and certainly after the mid-1970s concerned what is called collections and analysis, some of which falls under the rubric of (human) spying, but much of which is just fancified library work. As the morning of September 12, 2001 dawned, did the CIA have any significant experience with interrogating Islamist insurgents and terrorists? No. Did it have any experience with interrogating bad guys of any kind? Some; for example in Central America back in the 1980s, but nearly all of those

involved in that business — and there were only a few — had long since departed the Agency. […] … So … why was the CIA anointed for the task after 911 …?

In its essentials, his answer is the same Fernandez gives. Rumsfeld's DoD simply refused to accept it. US Mil. is a public institution, and there was no way they were going to handle people outside Geneva Convention protections, with the responsibility to extract critical intelligence from them. That would all have to happen off the books. The CIA picked up the tar baby.

As the Cathedral becomes ever more holier than Jesus, it produces — through systematic administrative necessity — a dark twin. This is a basic structure of social reality that NRx is uniquely positioned to acknowledge (although it is far more widely recognized). As democracy 'matures', reality is processed increasingly in secret. That, at least, we understand.

December 18, 2014

Quote note (#300)

Fernandez:

… the tumultuous events of the last six months have dragged the Deep State into the fray. A slow motion 'constitutional crisis' is already occurring. The future of the Supreme Court, the

independence (or neutrality) of the FBI, the role of Congress are now at issue. In the words of president Obama "I hate to put pressure on you but the fate of the Republic rests in your hands. The fate of the world is teetering". The election has become a referendum. It is not just who heads the executive branch but what the executive branch will become that are on the ballot. Obama's legacy and the political arc of the last 40 years are up for a vote. "The American Brexit is coming," wrote James Stavridis in Foreign Policy, a comparison which if anything, understates the case.

It perhaps goes without saying (but I'll say it anyway): from the perspective of NRx, as also probably more widely, tumult in the Deep State counts for far more than any democratic transition. Events are occurring that can't be kept in the theater.

November 6, 2016

CHAPTER SEVEN - THE DECLINE BEGINS

Sentences (#32)

… few things are as oppressive and intolerable as living under the yoke of a lie … (Skeletalized for purposes of extraction from its mainstream conservative context, but the whole article is insightful if read with a modicum of detachment.)

Even Trump skeptics (such as this blog) are finding it hard to deny that the phenomenon is a revolt against the Cathedral (defined approximately as "the yoke of a lie"). It's a campaign against the media, and 'correct opinion' in general, with ordinary political antagonism as a very secondary feature. Does anybody seriously doubt that the media establishment understands, *he's running against us*?

The romantic medievalism of much 'NRx' thought captures things of importance — one of which is the cultural value of a separation between State and Church, which is to say: *the absence of politically-mandated correct opinion*. Heretics were not *political* criminals

before the onset of modernity. When the state becomes a church ('the Cathedral'), political antagonism acquires religious intensity. That's what is being seen today, whatever else one might think about it. At the climax of the democratic regime, politics *necessarily* becomes holy war. As the old saw goes: nobody said it was going to be pretty.

ADDED: The Cathedral has its own distinctive version of social contract theory: "There are people who already hold these views, and there used to be kind of an agreement between them and society that they wouldn't speak these things in public."

December 10, 2015

Sentences (#35)

***Genuinely** thinking Donald will save us all will get you kicked from the HRx and NRx Sith Lord club houses, yet tacit support for his whirlwind of chaos should be very much expected by us at this late hour.*

That would be true, even without the private portfolios of popcorn stock. (Note.)

ADDED: Astounding media BS (from George Stephanopoulos). Trump does OK, I guess. What he should have said, when asked where Obama was born, and whether he is a Muslim, in the opinion

of XS is this:

"How the *Hell* am I supposed to know about Obama's place of birth, or his faith? I don't know, you don't know, nobody knows except for Obama and a few others. The only thing you know is what you're *supposed to believe*. I know that too. So you want me to lie, and say *I know that Obama was born in the USA and reveres Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior*? That's the lie you're demanding here? Because, you know clearly, it would be a lie. Neither of us *knows* anything substantial about the guy, except from the fiasco he's made of his executive position. Frankly, George, I'm sick of this dishonest kissing-the-ring bullshit. Most Americans are sick of it. It's over. That's what my poll numbers should be telling you. So I have to say George, buddy, with the very greatest respect, that you and all the other lying Cathedral monkeys are toast. Improve your people skills, and after the collapse I'll try to find you a service position in a casino somewhere."

January 7, 2016

The NRx Presidency

Dateline, December 2016. (A modest extrapolation.)

Informed Neoconservative Opinion: *So, NRx, you've finally done it. This is all on you. The electoral victory you were aiming for from*

the start is now in the bag. The reactionary populist uprising has succeeded. Enjoy your shiny new Neocameral State. We'll be watching from our Canadian refuges, and smiling grimly as your authoritarian racial Utopia runs into the buffers of autarkic economic crisis. Then the public backlash will begin from a citizenry bowed in deep shame, but rediscovering their American virtues. It will be back to color revolution, and our neglected warnings will be once again appreciated. This was your one shot. Celebrate it while you can.

NRx: *???* [*Are they on drugs?*]

My tentative theory, at this point, is that NRx is comparatively good at conversing in Cathedralese, which makes it attractive as an easy one-stop destination for anyone wanting to rapidly fabricate a narrative about how things went so utterly to hell (supported by citations in an intelligible dialect). It's not an explanation being advanced here with enormous confidence.

Confidence starts with the observation that the (crazed) analysis of Trump as an NRx Frankenstein Monster is setting like Flashlock™ emergency concrete filler in the disoriented mental models of the Fourth Estate. Much near-future surrealism is guaranteed.

May 19, 2016

Shrink-Wrapped Schadenfreude

They've actually made it into a gift-pack:

The crying continued throughout the week. On the subway in New York City, sniffles punctuated heavy silence. Sickness or sadness? It was impossible to tell without staring. Friends confessed to each other they'd cried dozens of times. Foreigners living and working legally in America cried privately, cried together. The sadness came in waves. People said it felt like a death, like a breakup, like a national disaster. People checked in on each other. "Are you OK?" they'd ask, as though a relative had passed. […] Harrowing tales of crying continued into Friday, as Lena Dunham published an essay in Lenny Letter about how she was so distraught on election night, she broke into a hive that matched the hive of another woman in attendance at the Hillary Clinton rally, and how she cried for days after the election. The crying continued into the weekend. ***Saturday Night Live****'s cold open ended with Kate MacKinnon, in character as Hillary Clinton tickling out Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" on a piano, teary-eyed as she promised to fight on. …*

ADDED: Complementary sarcastic gloating.

ADDED: And from the full-commies at *Jacobin Mag* (quite wittily): "Watching the results on Election Night was like what I'd imagine living in an eighties teen horror movie would be like — the summer camp air curdling into one of vague suspicion, as a strange

dawning sensation of doom takes hold. Slaughter: Ohio, Florida, Michigan — all bloody and prone. Who will be picked off next? Pennsylvania? Wisconsin? Minnesota? *Your state? The vote is coming from inside the house*."

November 17, 2016

View From the Left

Claus Offe lucidly explains what the proponents of 'solidarity' are ~~hoping for~~ utterly hopeless about in Europe. The entire article is so thoroughly saturated in doom-drenched, soul-scouring melancholia that by the end I was searching for Odysseus-style restraints to prevent myself doing a wild happy-dance around the office. From the Euro-progressive perspective, things look *seriously* bleak.

As a bonus, there's a great gloss on degenerative ratchets: "… those fatal errors which, once committed, prove irreversible, closing off any return to the *status quo ante*." By carrying everything relentlessly to the brink, they're more of a nightmare for the perceptive left than they are for us. By this stage in history, the left has much more to lose. It's their regime that is going over the cliff. (Yes, I realize this reboot-friendly *Schadenfreude* will earn a spanking from Goulding.)

ADDED: *France is in its worst shape for more than three decades,*

since François Mitterrand nearly blew up the economy in the early 1980s trying to stimulate growth through government deficits and nationalisations. Unemployment is at 10.5 per cent and climbing. The economy is contracting. And overseeing the shambles is the suety, confidence-draining face of François Hollande.

July 9, 2013

Cathedral Decay

Extreme corrosive pessimism is an NRx specialty. Since optimism bias is a *status quo*-supported human cognitive frailty, it's a good thing to have. If rigidified, however, it can result in missing things.

One systematic distortion stems from *hubris*, taking the form of a confusion in causality. "We don't like X, and want bad things to happen to it" can actually be a distorted expression of a more basic process: *X is dying, and therefore we have started to dislike it*.

This blog strongly suspects that the Cathedral has become an object of animosity *as a consequence of its morbidity*. After all, it's a mind-control apparatus. If it's no longer universally accepted, and in certain problematic patches actively loathed, dysfunction is clearly indicated. Contestation of its story is not supposed to be part of the story.

The *Zeitgeist* is its story, not ours. In this tale, it goes from

strength to strength, overwhelming everything in its path. Recognizing the structure of this narrative is important. Subscription to it is not thereby implied.

Every critical component of the Cathedral — media, academic, and bureaucratic — is exceptionally vulnerable to Internet-driven disintermediation. The current phase of capital reconstruction is distinctively — and automatically — Cathedral-hostile, when evaluated at the level of technonomic process (which we do not do enough), rather than at the level of surface public pronouncement (which we concern ourselves with far too much with). Dying things can be very dangerous, and even more *frenzied*. It would be a mistake to confuse such characteristics with fundamental strength.

A step down from hubris might begin with an acknowledgment that NRx is — primarily — a *symptom*. Whatever imagined heroism is sacrificed thereby, it is more than compensated by an opportunity for deepened realism.

All of which is a framing for Fernandez's latest. Even amidst the stupidity of the degenerating political cycle, he notices that "… the current crop of Republican presidential candidates … are openly breaking with the really important modern faith — the media-led church that has held mainstream politics together for so long." The integrative media is fatally sick. That NRx exists at all is a sign of that.

ADDED: "I might be biased here myself, because this is what obsesses me, and this is what angers me. I could care less, to be

honest, about the GOP or its programs. […] What keeps me interested in politics at all is my loathing for the self-appointed Preistly Class of the media. […] … the media serve as the shamans and witch-doctors of an enemy Tribe, and the purpose of those shamans is to relentlessly disgrace outsiders to the Tribe, which is pleasing to those within the Tribe, while also keeping the shamans in power (because they have no other skills which would earn them money or sex, except the denigration of those considered Unclean)." (Ace links to this.)

October 30, 2015

Sentences (#38)

Phillip Mark McGough, writing in *Quillette*, buys his way in with a bald truth ticket:

After Cologne, feminism is dead.

The whole article is solid, giving clear voice to what is already a common understanding. The feminist establishment is only in derivative, flexible, and tactical opposition to extreme sexual violence against women. It consists of hardcore leftist race-politics hacks in women's rights drag. Now everybody knows it (which is huge).

January 18, 2016

Quotable (#149)

A ruined empire on the brink:

All around the Web, in print, and on radio comes the claim that America has entered its "Weimar" phase. Economic collapse, political paralysis, rampant homosexuality, a desperate, disoriented populace open to the ravings of a demagogue – that is the portrait we get of Germany between the end of World War I in 1918 and the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. That is where America is supposedly situated in 2016. […] Yes, Weimar Germany ended badly, horribly so. But …

Much tying-itself-in-knots follows (not entirely uninterestingly).

The historical analogy is far stronger than the apologetic analysis. What Weitz refuses to contemplate, is that the set of outcomes he dogmatically defends as "social progress" is a partisan agenda (the New England Utopia) masquerading as a universal value. What left-liberals see as unambiguous advance looks to everyone else like losing. As the Internet decentralizes media, the progressive narrative monopoly is coming apart in the hurricane, and nostalgic preaching for the old religion won't glue it back together. Weitz is right about one thing, though: there's no doubt political developments could be

blown in very ugly directions.

It's chicken (the edge of the cliff version).

Left-Liberals: *Stick with our vector for social development, or we'll all go over the edge*.

Mashed-Right: *There have been far too many concessions already …*

You have to swerve, Weitz pleads. Even if they do this time, they won't forever, and its already far less obvious that they will. Compared to what we're used to, that makes it a whole new world.

March 21, 2016

The Market from Hell

The supply side could be reasonably compared to a high-pressure fire-hose:

A new poll for YouGov of almost 15,000 people found that 60% would like to be an author. The news may come as a surprise to the bestselling and critically acclaimed novelist Sebastian Faulks, who this weekend expressed his wish to find a job, writing in the Spectator that he has "now spent almost a quarter of a century alone in a garret staring at a blank wall, and I think it has driven me a bit mad". […] … According to a survey carried out by Digital Book World earlier this year, almost a third of published authors make less than $500 (£350) a year from their writing.

Here's the demand sink they're feeding into:

> Who reads books? Hardly anyone. pic.twitter.com/v6xYwgTm4L
>
> — P. D. Mangan (@Mangan150) April 5, 2016

ADDED: Relevant musings of Albert Jay Nock.

April 6, 2016

WeSearchr

This is huge. It's what media following the grain of the Internet looks like (if only as a preliminary glimpse).

Here's how it works:

WeSearchr has a select group of editors that we call "Askers" who watch the news cycle and figure out what people want to know. […] If an Asker believes that there is enough interest in a question, they will create a "Bounty" as a reward for the answer to the question. The minimum amount of funding to trigger a Bounty is called a "reserve". […] Members of the WeSearchr community can browse the bounties and donate money to fund a bounty, like other crowdfunding sites. […] Once a Bounty hits its reserve, it is funded and WeSearchr will accept answers from people that have the answers to that question.

[…] WeSearchr will review the submissions and check them for veracity. […] If the submission fulfills the terms of the Bounty, WeSearchr will assign the reward and release the information to the Asker and assigned news outlets for distribution. […] 30 days after the story's release, WeSearchr pays the Bounty.
75% of the Bounty goes to the person(s) that deliver a solution.
10% goes to the Asker
15% goes to WeSearchr

So: A decentralized market place for journalistic research.

The conception alone crosses an honesty threshold. There is no longer any need for *meta-lies* about the essential character of contemporary journalism (as a political apparatus screened by an increasingly-ludicrous pretense to disinterested 'news' curation). All research is interested, and its incentives are now openly formalized. The result is a germinal assassination market for hidden things. It targets enemy secrets. The information warfare that media have always been ceases to be promoted as anything else.

For the first time in over a century, it is now possible to envisage journalists making an honest living (by fulfilling private research contracts). This type of transition only goes in one direction. A piece of the future just came into view.

May 26, 2016

The Global Faith

There's not much room for controversy:

When the United States was many separate states with a common defense and a common foreign policy, back when people said "The United States are" rather than "The United States is" there was absolutely no separation of Church and State, for each state had its own state religion, and the seminary of the state religion of Massachusetts, charged with promoting and enforcing the state religion, was Harvard.

After two centuries of ascent to hegemony, this world religion has unmistakably peaked. The fact everyone is now noticing it, as a definite, peculiar system of belief, attests to that. Accelerating catabolic process now ensues. Fragmentation won't be pretty, but it also won't be stopped.

July 13, 2016

Quote note (#270)

Taleb on the media short-circuit:

Social media allowed me to go direct to the public and bypass the press, an uberization if you will, as I skip the intermediary. I do not believe that members of the press knows their own interests very

well. I noticed that journalists try to be judged by other journalists and their community, not by their readers, unlike writers.

No one realizes they're in a death-bubble until it gets disintermediated from the Outside. We're going to be seeing ever more of that. (At the largest scale, the Cathedral concept was formulated to predict it.)

ADDED: A grimmer take on social media.

August 8, 2016

Net-Driven Collapse

Psychology is the canary in the Cathedral.

September 23, 2016

Recall

This isn't something XS has done before, but it seems necessary to do it now. Here (from October last year) is an anticipation of where this blog finds itself right now. Perhaps NRx was from the beginning part of the Cathedral funeral process.

Some serious adjustment is called for. An enemy that can suffer a defeat this stupendous clearly isn't a radically intimidating

adversary. We can already see beyond it. The conflict has moved on.

My current (uncertain) take: The regime analyzed by classical NRx has descended into a deeply morbid state. Things will get worse for it, perhaps catastrophically, more quickly than we yet imagine, in a cascade of collapse. All the trends that count against it are still strengthening, in many case exponentially. It would be an analytical error to remain fixated upon its corpse.

Demotism is, of course, undefeated (perhaps even temporarily reinforced). The Cathedral, however, appears mortally wounded. This year was — quite plausibly — its 1989.

ADDED: To be a little clearer, it isn't really 1989, it's 1517. The quasi-universal authority of a church died (as a result of techonomic media innovation, among other factors).

November 15, 2016

SECTION C - DEMOCRACY AND DEMOTISM

CHAPTER ONE - SYSTEMATIC FEATURES

The Red Pill

Morpheus*: I imagine that right now, you're feeling a bit like Alice. Hm? Tumbling down the rabbit hole?*
Neo*: You could say that.*
Morpheus*: I see it in your eyes. You have the look of a man who accepts what he sees because he is expecting to wake up. Ironically, that's not far from the truth. Do you believe in fate, Neo?*
Neo*: No.*
Morpheus*: Why not?*
Neo*: Because I don't like the idea that I'm not in control of my life.*
Morpheus*: I know exactly what you mean. Let me tell you why you're here. You're here because you know something. What you know you can't explain, but you feel it. You've felt it your entire life, that there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is, but it's there, like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad. It is this feeling that has brought you to me. Do you know what I'm talking about?*

***Neo**: The Matrix.*
***Morpheus**: Do you want to know what it is?*
***Neo**: Yes.*
***Morpheus**: The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us. Even now, in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work… when you go to church… when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.*
***Neo**: What truth?*
***Morpheus**:* [leans in closer to Neo] *That you are a slave, Neo. Like everyone else you were born into bondage. Born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch. A prison for your mind.*
[pause]
***Morpheus**: Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself.* [Opens a pillbox, empties the contents into his palms, and outstretches his hands] *This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill* [opens his right hand, to reveal a translucent blue pill], *the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill* [opens his left hand, revealing a similarly translucent red pill], *you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.* [Neo reaches for the red pill] *Remember: all I'm offering is the truth. Nothing more.*

— That's the Wachowski brothers version of Gnostic Platonism, and it gets everything almost exactly right. Plato's Allegory of the Cave (in Book VII of *The Republic*) tells precisely the same story, but with a cheaper cast, inferior special effects, and less drugs. It's not surprising that the Dark Enlightenment tends to stick with the re-make, as it goes Neo(reactionary).

The critical key to *gnosis* is the realization that the whole of your world is an *inside*, implying an Outside, and the radical possibility of escape. What had seemed to be unbounded reality is exposed as a container, triggering abrupt departure from a system of delusion. Everything else is merely the route taken to reach us, adapted to the ruins. The specifics of the story are constraints to be twisted free from, once their functions have been exhausted, as hooks, latching teeth, memetic replication circuitry, and camouflage dapplings. As long as there is an inside / outside difference effectively communicated, narrative details are incidental.

The Chinese version, perhaps originating with Zhuangzi, describes a frog in a well, who knows nothing of the Great Ocean (井底之蛙,不知大海). This simple fable is already fully adequate to the most exalted ambitions of mystical philosophy.

Putting things in boxes, or taking them out of boxes, is all of thought, as soon as the 'things' can themselves be treated as boxes. Categories and sets are boxes, so that even to say "an A is a B" is to perform an operation of *inclusion* or *insertion*, through which

'identity' is primordially applicable. *To be* is to be inside. Placing a species into (or 'under') a genus has unsurpassable cognitive originality, extending out to the furthest horizon of ontology (since a horizon is still a box). To contain, or not to contain, is the first and last intelligible relation. Boxes are basic.

Taking the red pill is climbing out of a box. By showing the cage, it already accomplishes a cognitive liberation, and thus provides a model for whatever practical escapology there is to follow. To know how to leave a cave, or a well, is already to know — abstractly — how to leave a world (and abstraction is nothing other than outsideness).

What is inescapable, unless through some precipitous self-enslavement, is the social obnoxiousness of Dark Enlightenment. Gnosis is ineliminably hierarchical, and at best patronizing (when not abrasively contemptuous), because a free mind cannot pretend to equality with a slave mind, regardless of the derision hurled at it on this account. As Brandon Smith remarks:

It is often said there only two kinds of people in this world: those who know, and those who don't. I would expand on this and say that there are actually three kinds of people: ***those who know, those who don't know, and those who don't care to know.*** *Members of the last group are the kind of people I would characterize as "sheeple."*

Smith's 'sheeple' are not merely ignorant, but actively self-deluding. By taking the blue pill, they have opted to reside in the prison of lies. It is at this point, however, that the pharmaceutical

metaphor switches from hook to obstacle, because there is no 'blue pill' or anything functionally equivalent *short of the entire Matrix itself* (which is to say, of course, *the Cathedral*).

A critical point of social and political analysis is reached here, and it is one that continues to evade definitive apprehension, due to its elusive subtleties. Between the hidden architect of the Matrix and the blue-pilled sheeple or "river of meat" there is no simple order of mastery, whether running in the obvious direction (from doctrinal elite to indoctrinated mass) or the democratic-perverse alternative (placing expertise in the service of popular ignorance and its vulgarities). The Matrix is both an object of 'genuine' popular attachment *and* an apparatus of systematic mind-control. It is most truly democratic when it most fully attains its climax state of soft-totalitarian mendacity. The propaganda machine is never less than a circus. What is demanded — what has always been demanded — is the lie.

Moldbug's most recent invocation of the red pill runs:

I think I've chosen my candidate for the Pill itself. And I'm going to stick with it. My Pill is:

America is a communist country.

What I like about this statement is that it's ambiguous. Specifically, it's an Empsonian ambiguity of the second or perhaps third type (I've never quite understood the difference). Embedded as it is in the mad tapestry of 20th-century history, AIACC can be

interpreted in countless ways.

All of these interpretations – unless concocted as an intentional, obviously idiotic strawman – are absolutely true. Sometimes they are obviously true, sometimes surprisingly true. They are always true. Because America is a communist country.

The truth is that America serves the people through the lie. That is the 'choice' represented by progressivism (= communism), installed in a highly-accomplished state, for over a century, as triumphant popular self-deception. The service provided — and demanded — *is* the deceit. If the people see through the lie, the resulting dissatisfaction will not stem from the fact they have been lied to, but from the revelation that *they have not been lied to well enough*. Could anything be clearer than that? The outbreaks of popular rage occur exactly at those moments when reality threatens to manifest itself — when the Matrix glitches. "We elected you to hide the truth from us," the people shriek, "so just do your goddamn job, and make reality disappear."

There is no red pill to save society. To imagine that there might be is to understand nothing.

December 18, 2013

Deals with the Devil

I'm assuming this wasn't intended as a Satanic argument for Monarchy, but it works as one:

Q: Why does the devil keep his deals?

A: As an immortal, he has an infinite time horizon of other deals he jeopardizes if he betrays any given deal. Therefore the opportunity cost of any betrayal is too high.

Q: What does that make politicians, then?

A: Lower in ethical reliability than the devil.

Even a demonic permanent government makes a better contractual partner than the most angelic temporary regime.

(Recalled by David Chapman).

August 6, 2014

The Problem of Democracy

Recent discussions (on Twitter, primarily) have convinced me of the need for a 'Neocameralism for Dummies' post, providing a succinct introduction to this genre of political theory. The importance of this is obvious if Neocameralism is conceived as the central, and defining pillar of Neoreaction. In preparation for this task, however, it is necessary to revisit the socio-historical diagnosis from which

Neocameralism emerged (in the work, of course, of Mencius Moldbug). That requires a brief prolegomenon addressing the NRx critique of democracy, focusing initially on its negative aspect. Neocameralism is introduced as a proposed solution to a problem. First, the problem.

Government is complicated. If this thesis seems implausible to you, it is probable that you will have great difficulties with everything to follow. It would take another (and quite different) post to address objections to this entire topic of discussion which take the approximate form "Government is easy, you just find the best man and put him in charge!" All social problems are easy if you can 'just' do the right thing. Infantile recommendations will always be with us.

There are two general lines of democratic apologetics. The first, and politically by far the strongest, is essentially religious. It too is best addressed by a post of its own, themed by Moldbug's 'Ultra-Calvinist Hypothesis'. For our purposes here we need only suggest that it is quite satisfactorily represented by Jacques Rousseau, and that its fundamental principal is popular sovereignty. From the NRx perspective, it is merely depraved. Only civilizational calamities can come from it.

The second line of apology is far more serious, theoretically engaging, and politically irrelevant. It understands democracy as a mechanism, tasked with the solemn responsibility of *controlling government*. Any effective control mechanism works by governing

behavior under the influence of feedback from actual performance. In biology, this is achieved by natural selection upon phenotypes. In science, it is achieved by the experimental testing of theory, supported by a culture of open criticism. In capitalist economics, it is achieved by market evaluation of products and services, providing feedback on business performance. According to systems-theoretical defenses of democracy, it works by sensitizing government to feedback from voters, who act as conductors of information from actual administrative performance. This is the sophisticated liberal theory of democracy. It explains why science, markets, and democracy are often grouped together within liberal ideologies. (Bio-Darwinism, naturally, is more safely neglected).

How could this beautiful political design possibly go wrong? Merely by asking this question, you have set out on the Neoreactionary path.

Moldbug's answer, and ours, begins by agreeing with the sophisticated liberal theory in its most abstract outlines. Democracy is indeed a system for the functional tuning of government, operating through electoral feedback, and predictably enhancing its specialized competence, as all reiterating experimentation-selection mechanisms do. Democratic political machines become increasingly good at what they do. The problem, however, is that their functional specialism is not at all identical with administrative capability. Rather, as they progressively learn, the feedback they receive trains

them in *mastery of public opinion*.

The long-circuit, assumed by liberal political theory, models the electorate as a reality-sensor, aggregating information about the effects of government policy, and relaying it back through opinion polls and elections, to select substitutable political regimes (organized as parties) that have demonstrated their effectiveness at optimizing social outcomes. The short-circuit, proposed by Moldbug, models the electorate as an object of indoctrination, subjected to an ever-more advanced process of opinion-formation through a self-organized, message-disciplined educational and media apparatus. The political party best adapted to this apparatus — called the 'inner party' by Moldbug — will dominate the democratic process. The outer party serves the formal cybernetic function demanded by liberal theory, by providing an electoral option, but it will achieve practical success only by accommodating itself to the apparatus of opinion-formation — perhaps modifying its recommendations in minor, and ultimately inconsequential ways. It is the system of opinion-formation (the 'Cathedral') that represents true sovereign authority within the democratic system, since it is the 'reality principle' which decides success or failure. The monotonic trend to short-circuit dominance is the degenerative process inherent to democracy.

If you want the government to listen to you, *then you have to expect it to tell you what to say*. That is the principal lesson of

'progressive' political history. The assertion of popular voice has led, by retrospective inevitability, to a specialized, super-competent political devotion to ventriloquism. The disaster, therefore, is two-fold. On the one hand, government competence in its primary responsibility — efficient governance — is systematically eroded, to be replaced by a facility at propaganda (in a process akin to the accumulation of junk DNA). As government is swallowed by messaging, residual administrative competences are maintained by a bureaucratic machine or 'permanent government', largely insulated from the increasingly senseless signals of democratic opinion, but still assimilated to the opinion-formation establishment by direct (extra-democratic) processes of cultivation. Lacking feedback from anything but its own experiments in mind-control, quality of government collapses.

Secondly, and even more calamitously from certain perspectives, culture is devastated by the politicization of opinion. Under a political dispensation in which opinion has no formal power, it is broadly free to develop in accordance with its own experiences, concerns, and curiosities. In a significant minority of cases, cultural achievements of enduring value result. Only in cases of extreme, provocative dissent will the government have any interest in what the people think. Once politicized, however, correct public opinion is a matter of central — indeed all-consuming — government attention. Ideologically installed as the foundation of political legitimacy, it

becomes the supreme object of political manipulation. Any thought is now dissent if it is not positively aligned with society's leading political direction. To think outside the Cathedral is to attack the government. Culture is destroyed.

To be a Neoreactionary is to see these twin eventualities starkly manifested in contemporary Western civilization. What democracy has not yet ruined, it is ruining. It is essentially destructive of both government and culture. It cannot indefinitely last.

The subsequent question: What could conceivably provide a solution? That is where Neocameralism is introduced.

ADDED: Absolutely not to be missed, from Nydwracu.

August 9, 2014

Irresponsibility

I've been picking on Nyan a lot recently, mostly in a positive way. Here's a little more:

> The Mandate of Heaven is the correct theory of legitimacy. Period.
>
> — Nyan Sandwich (@nyansandwich) November 1, 2014

This is perfect, and precise. It's something that needs to be said,

and it says a lot.

The Mandate of Heaven (*Tianming*, 天命) couples authority to responsibility. The responsibility of the Emperor, and the Dynasty, is no less comprehensive than its power, and is in fact ultimately coincidental with it. The foundation is cosmic. Plagues, earthquakes, and foreign invasions are all encompassed by it, as are the reciprocal strokes of good fortune. There is no possibility of any delegation that is not internal to the subject of *Tianming*, preserving its absolute responsibility. The selection of advisers and administrators is an exercise of authority, for which there can be no evasion of accountability *before heaven* (or fate). Rule succeeds or fails, survives or perishes, in its own name.

Is not this standard the key to the profound dismay that results from the contemplation of democracy? As popular politics evolves — or 'progresses', as it most certainly does — it tends to incarnate a self-conscious *strategy of irresponsibility* with ever more emphatic ideality. 'Passing the buck' becomes the whole thing. Government and opposition participate mutually in an economy of responsibility, in which 'blame' can be pooled, circulated, and displaced. The rhetorical practices regulating this economy become the entire art of politics.

An election is a festival or irresponsibility, in a double sense. It is a crescendo of rhetoric, oriented to the dialectical evasion of social ills, and it is a relinquishment of authority, into the hands of 'the people'

and — potentially — the opposition, separating the realization of governmental consequences from the deep core of the regime. To lose the Mandate of Heaven is to be erased from the future. To lose an election is a trivial penance, and even a tactical opportunity. (It is the prediction of this blog that as democracy advances further, calculated defeat will play an ever more significant role in its functioning.)

As NRx refuses to go to the polls tomorrow, its implicit political statement is merely: *Take some freaking responsibility*. This is all yours. Succeed, or disappear completely. The last thing we need is another opportunity for sharing.

ADDED: Don't vote. (Duh!)

ADDED: "Another reason not to vote is that it creates real despair among the small number of Democracy-shepherds."

November 3, 2014

Quote note (#176)

Hoppe:

A king owned the territory and could hand it on to his son, and thus tried to preserve its value. A democratic ruler was and is a temporary caretaker and thus tries to maximize current government income of all sorts at the expense of capital values, and thus wastes.

[…] Here are some of the consequences: during the monarchical age before World War I, government expenditure as a percent of GNP was rarely higher than 5%. Since then it has typically risen to around 50%. Prior to World War I, government employment was typically less than 3% of total employment. Since then it has increased to between 15 and 20%. The monarchical age was characterized by a commodity money (gold) and the purchasing power of money gradually increased. In contrast, the democratic age is the age of paper money whose purchasing power has permanently decreased. […] Kings went deeper and deeper into debt, but at least during peacetime they typically reduced their debt load. During the democratic era government debt has increased in war and in peace to incredible heights. Real interest rates during the monarchical age had gradually fallen to somewhere around
2½%. Since then, real interest rates (nominal rates adjusted for inflation) have risen to somewhere around 5% — equal to 15th-century rates. Legislation virtually did not exist until the end of the 19th century. Today, in a single year, tens of thousands of laws and regulations are passed. Savings rates are declining instead of increasing with increasing incomes, and indicators of family disintegration and crime are moving constantly upward.

All familiar, to a sedative degree, to those here, of course. Except, crucially, the interest rate stuff — which is remarkably dissonant with our contemporary situation. Since Hoppe's expectation — based on

a long-term, fairly consistent trend — is the rational one, it suggests that the present collapse of interest rates is intriguingly anomalous. Is there a sharp, big-picture analysis of the phenomenon out there somewhere?

> Interest rates go down as you approach the speed of light.
> — Ossipago (@ad_proelium) July 31, 2015

July 31, 2015

Apophatic Politics

'Dark Enlightenment' describes a form of government as well as 'Enlightenment' does, which is to say: it doesn't at all. On those grounds alone, George Dvorsky's inclusion of DE among twelve possible "Futuristic Forms of Government That Could One Day Rule the World" is profoundly misguided. This is not to say the list is entirely without interest.

Its greatest value lies in the abundance of mutually inconsistent political futures, few if any of which will happen. It therefore provides the opportunity for negative thoughts, and more particularly for systematic negative idealization. Which futures are most deserving of prevention?

This blog has no doubt. The epitome of political disaster occupies fourth place in Dvorsky's list (among a number of other hideous outcomes): Democratic World Government.

Dvorsky seems to quite like it:

*We may very well be on our way to achieving the **Star Trek**-like vision of a global-scale liberal democracy — one capable of ending nuclear proliferation, ensuring global security, intervening to end genocide, defending human rights, and putting a stop to human-caused climate change.*

There cannot be a definitive Dark Enlightenment government, but it is certainly possible to envisage a form of government which instantiates the ultimate object of DE critique: a universal demotist regime, from which there could be no escape. As a break from preoccupations with a positive neoreactionary governmental ideal, prone — if not destined — to both intense controversy and deep obscurity, it is energizing to explore the *via negativa*. Democratic World Government need not necessarily exist. That is already to place NRx in a position of luxurious success, when compared to fraught speculations about alternatives to the present political disaster. Whatever obstructs the DWG's path to existence is on our side. Such features of specific negative teleology, so easily overlooked from a positive perspective, are highlighted for affirmation and reinforcement. Anything that stands in the DWG's way is worth defending.

A rough list of these precious (negative-teleological) obstacles is already familiar. Extant structures of geopolitical fragmentation, population diversity, cultural incongruities, borders, occulted social networks, intractable techno-economic processes, administrative malfunctions, stubborn traditional variations, sheer complexities of space, and no doubt much else beside, all contribute their frictional grit. A ruined Tower of Babel looms into view on the *via negativa*, and no intact edifice has ever looked more glorious.

Carrying NRx perilously close to the brink of euphoria is the intimation that the actually-existing Cathedral has Democratic World Government as its only conceivable equilibrium state. A unification of the planet under its auspices is the sole future that makes sense for it. If it is denied this 'manifest destiny' it will die — as its intrinsic tendency to expansionary proselytization makes evident, unambiguously. The Cathedral needs the whole of the earth, merely to survive. On the *via negativa* the master of our socio-politically devastated world seems like a radically mortal thing.

ADDED: Hoppe touching upon One World Government. Also:

I have been called an extremist, a reactionary, a revisionist, an elitist, a supremacist, a racist, a homophobe, an anti-Semite, a right-winger, a theocrat, a godless cynic, a fascist and, of course, a must for every German, a Nazi. So, it should be expected that I have a foible for politically "incorrect" sites that every "modern," "decent," "civilized," "tolerant," and "enlightened" man is supposed to ignore

and avoid.

June 16, 2014

Non-Democracy

Eli Dourado's piece at *The Umlaut* on 'What the Neoreaction Doesn't Understand about Democracy' has already accumulated a mass of (to this blog) telling criticism in its comment thread, plus a full-length critique by Henry Dampier. The tone of the discussion has been encouraging, and the grounds proposed by Dourado *upon which democracy is asked to defend itself* (government incontinence and rampant redistributionism) is doubly so. Based on this (rather odd) research paper, the conclusion is that 'non-democracies' are at least as messed up as democracies on the indicators that matter to the economic right.

From the perspective of *Outside in*, the central problem with this line of argument is the assumption that 'Neoreaction' can be aligned with the grotesquely aggregated category of 'non-democracy'. (Although, this is of course how things will look from a default commitment to democratic normality.) The Neoreactionary critique is in fact directed at *demotic government*, a regime class that includes democracy, authoritarian populism, and socialist 'people's republics'. The reliable signature of this class is that its members

legitimate themselves through democracy, however their various levels of democracy are gauged by social scientific analysis. North Korea self-identifies as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (and to a formalist, this is of ineliminable significance). Since it is the *principle of democratic legitimation* that NRx denounces, its models are restricted to a far more compact class than 'non-democracies' — namely, to non-demotic states: with absolute monarchies and colonial regimes as the purest historical examples, supplemented by restricted-franchise commercial republics (17-18th century United Provinces and United Kingdom*), (still virtual) Joint-Stock Republics, and demotically-compromised Confucian Autocracies, plus rightist military juntas (since Pinochet cannot reasonably be excluded). As soon as regimes of such types are statistically amalgamated with socialist / populist dictatorships, the theoretical chaos is irredeemable.

Furthermore, and even more crucially, main-current Neoreaction does not argue for 'non-democracy' over democracy, but for Exit over Voice. It does not expect some governmental magic from 'non-democracies' (except on its — admittedly wide — theoretically incoherent fringes). Effective government requires *non-demotic control*, resulting from (apolitical) selection pressure. The identification of the state with the corporate institution is directed to the fact that businesses work when they can be bankrupted. The attraction of the 'dictatorial' CEO is a twin-product of demotic

desensitization and competitive hyper-sensitization. The reason to free the 'monarch' from the voice of the people is to lock him into undistracted compliance with the Outside.

Approaching his conclusion, Dourado suggests:

Of course, Mulligan et al. also provide some limited ammunition for the neoreaction. That nondemocracies have essentially the same social and economic policies as democracies undercuts a key tenet of the demotist religion: that formal (and equal) voice is an important channel by which policies come to reflect the will of the people. If nondemocracies have many of the same policies, then it is clear that democracy is not necessary to implement the will of the people on some policy issues, at least.

This is, of course, completely upside down as far as NRx is concerned. The demotic sensitivity of 'non-democracies' — far from being a point in their favor — is the factor that exposes this category in all of its radical and theoretically-unusable bogosity. The only appeal of 'non-democracy' is immunity to corruption through demotic pressure. Dictatorial populism can be expected to be even more distant from the principles of Neoreactionary government than democracy, because its comparative efficiency at representing a coherent 'popular will' digs it even faster and deeper into ruin. It is administrative action in the name of the people that is deplored.

If Dourado were saying *non-demotic government is simply something you can never have*, then it is an argument that at least

addresses NRx in a way that makes sense. The same cannot be said about the 'debate' as it yet exists.

* My description of Hannoverian England as a 'commerical republic' can be attributed to an anti-Jacobite tic.

ADDED: Meta-reaction. (ED seems not to see any deep connection between propertarian and Exit-based models of governance, which is at least a little thoughtless. Property is defined by an effective right to free disposal, making it equivalent to an Exit-option on its current instantiation. On these grounds, there is no difference between my definition of the principal Neoreaction governance criterion and Dampier's, except for variation of emphasis.)

ADDED: Some interesting comments from Eli's Neoreactionary phase (dug up by Blogospheroid).

August 21, 2014

Enthusiasm

This is a reliable guide to approved thinking within China's Communist Party:

Blindly copying Western-style democracy can only bring disaster, an influential Chinese Communist Party journal wrote in its latest edition following more than a week of pro-democracy protests in

Hong Kong.
Citing enduring violence and turmoil in countries like Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq and Libya, which have tried to adopt such a system of government, the fortnightly magazine Qiushi said that Western democracy did not suit all countries.
"The West always brags that its own democracy is a 'universal value', and denies there is any other form of democracy," said Qiushi, which means "seeking truth", in the issue distributed over the weekend.
"Western democracy has innate internal flaws and certainly is not a 'universal value'; its blind copying can only lead to disaster," Qiushi added.

It shouldn't be disappointing to hear such pious invocations of an "other form of democracy", but only coldly confirming of the worst. It's all clearly stated.

In the present global order, the Cathedral has no serious external enemies, but only awkward students, who refuse to learn the one and only imaginable lesson in exactly the way, and at exactly the speed, expected of them. The idea that democracy as such, and intrinsically, is fundamentally inconsistent with sustainable social order (as explained by Hoppe, acknowledged by Thiel, and thematized by Moldbug), finds no official representation, anywhere in the world. Even the North Koreans think they're democrats. At the ideological level, the calamity has already happened, universally.

NRx bores itself by repeating this. It's a simple and — to 'us' —

apparently obvious thing. Doubtless it's correct that mechanical repetition adds vanishingly little at this point, although there's probably still the need for a succinct statement of the proposition, tightly encapsulated and incandescently lucid, for incessant future reference.

What cannot be long-buried beneath the ennui is the extreme dissident radicality of the counter-revolutionary thesis. To depart from the democratic or evangelical-egalitarian (i.e. Jacobin) faith remains the ultimate heresy against teleo-political modernity. To suggest, even, that there is a *question of democracy* is countenanced by effectively no one, anywhere. In China, as the narrative goes, the populace is still to be convinced the country is 'ready yet' for accelerated democratization (on the Cathedral model — the only one). Look at this, then this, and synthesize. Religious 'hold outs' are all that remain. Once **the** faith moves people, the direction has already been decided — everyone is agreed on that. (OK, not these guys, yet.)

If this topic becomes tedious, it's all over. Democratization isn't boring to them. It's the most exciting thing in the world, and they're not going to stop doing it.

Our work here has scarcely begun.

Hail Hydra!



October 7, 2014

Dynasty

A persuasive argument for why the Chinese authorities are looking forward to Hillary-v-Jeb in 2016:

The ruling Chinese Communist Party is deeply sensitive to charges that it is non-democratic and the playground of "princelings" — a pejorative term for the class of Chinese business tycoons and political power players who trace their lineages to Communist veterans. Nothing helps to blunt that charge as much as the idea that American democracy is similarly corrupt. "The Chinese media, especially the Party media, has been using American elections as a way to discredit democracy," says Kecheng Fang, a former reporter for the ***Southern Weekly*** *in Guangzhou who now researches Chinese media at the University of Pennsylvania. "I think much of Chinese media has been referring to this election as Clinton 2.0 versus Bush*

3.0, so it's a very trendy topic." As Weihua Chen, chief Washington correspondent for the ***China Daily****, the government's largest English-language newspaper, put it to me in an interview: "You guys always talk about being the greatest democracy, but now you have a democracy run by two families for more than a decade?"*

Scrape down past the popcorn topsoil, and it's a depressing story. Democratic hegemony is so solidly entrenched as a benchmark of global regime legitimacy, that even China resorts to pointing the finger and taunting: *call that a real democracy*. The *Zeitgeist* hasn't remotely begun to turn, and the world's most powerful autocracies are still deferring to it submissively, even as they beg for some tolerance in respect to timing.

If NRx has one serious task — and in fact, an overwhelmingly intimidating one — it is to contribute to the establishment of *an alternative* ***principle*** *of political legitimation*. To imagine that significant steps had yet been taken in this regard would be to court extreme self-delusion. The road ahead is hard.

July 21, 2015

Informality and its Discontents

China's problem with poorly formalized power:

As an old-style Leninist party in a modern world, the CCP is

confronted by two major challenges: first, how to maintain "ideological discipline" among its almost 89 million members in a globalized world awash with money, international travel, electronically transmitted information, and heretical ideas. Second, how to cleanse itself of its chronic corruption, a blight that Xi has himself described as "a matter of life and death." […] The primary reason the Party is so susceptible to graft is that ***while officials are poorly paid, they do control valuable national assets****. So, for example, when property development deals come together involving real estate (all land belongs to the government) and banking (all the major banks also belong to the government), officials vetting the deals find themselves in tempting positions to supplement their paltry salaries by accepting bribes or covertly raking off a percentage of the action.* (XS emphasis.)

(The article as a whole is ideologically pedestrian.)

Obscure the degree to which government is a business, and it will find a way to make itself one, around the back (with its executives privatizing sovereign property on an *ad hoc*, chaotic basis). Exhortations (from Sun Yat-sen, repeated by Mao Zedong) to "Serve the People!" are no substitute for sound administrative engineering, of a kind that rationally aligns incentives, and lucidly recognizes the sole consistent function of government — maximization of sovereign property value. The pretense of altruistic government and the reality of rampant corruption are *exactly the same thing*, seen from two

different sides. The illusion of a public sphere is the root of the social sickness.

The gist of Orville Schell's analysis is that China has deviated disturbingly from a functional Western model it would be better advised to return to. On the contrary, it is China's continued (profound) submission to a Western demotist framework of administrative legitimation that makes its problems so intractable. A government devoted to serving the people is radically corrupt by essence. Government properly tends the national estate, as the agent of its owners. Open, clear, and unapologetic admission of that basic principle seems no closer in the East than the West.

ADDED: "Russian corruption is the new Soviet Communism." … and the old Soviet Communism, and the older universal Jacobinism, and everything spawned from it. Corruption is what demotism is, rather than what it looks like to itself in the mirror.

April 13, 2016

One Step at a Time

The bad news: Rolling back democracy is really hard. (It's a stimulating pursuit nevertheless.) What are the chances of this happening before this? Not high, in my estimation.

The good news: The 'task' of spruiking evangelical

democratization is supported by the historical tide, and has already reached a quite remarkably level of maturity. If people are looking for a near-term goal, this surely gets jostled to the front of the queue. It's not hard to foresee a time, only a few years out, when the very idea of pushing the Cathedral on politically 'under-developed' societies will look like sabotage pure and simple. This is already how much of the world sees it (including all honest observers).

Looking back, the 'Arab Spring' will be seen as the decisive moment when democracy promotion became indistinguishable from ruinous coercion. 'Sprung' societies are devastated. They are triumphalist democracy's Russian Winter. Once the enemy's advance has ground entirely to a halt, the push back can steadily, relentlessly begin.

June 12, 2013

Scandalicious

Who could have imagined that Obama's second term would prove so bullish for popcorn sales? There's a moment of pressure-cooker catastrophe beyond which the very idea of 'keeping a lid on things' becomes hysterically comical. The lid isn't even in the kitchen, it's blasted through three stories of apartment ceilings and compromised the structural integrity of an entire housing block. The

media has no choice but to join the feeding-frenzy — under scandal-max conditions that would look ridiculous — and besides, they've been scandalized.

Unlike euphoric conservatives, still less ecstatic Republicans, neoreactionaries are motivated to stay calm and focused. Runaway scandal meltdown only furthers Dark Enlightenment when it overspills party-political point-scoring to corrode the foundations of *the regime*.

When government is understood realistically, as a complex ideologically-saturated institution distinct from the superficial vicissitudes of electoral politics, it is revealed as an essentially deep-partisan project (the Cathedral). The government is not commanded by progressives, it *is* progressive. It's not 'us', it's 'who, whom'. Once this is exposed in detail, and lucidly comprehended, the neoreactionary case has been made in its entirety.

That the Cathedral is indistinguishable from radical democratization does not at all imply that it is democratically answerable, through electoral mechanisms. As its project of spreading the religion of democracy to the whole world enters the phase of scandal-prone dementia, exhibited equally in both domestic and international affairs, two features become blatant (= scandalous)

(1) Mature democracies outgrow the last vestiges of electoral control (because the retarded masses can't be trusted to vote for

more democracy always and everywhere, they require structural ‘guidance’ by those enlightened people and institutions who know how best to empower them).
(2) Since eschatological dreams do not convert into practical policy, escalating dysfunction drowns-out coherent purpose, resulting eventually in fanatically-motivated total disorder (because doing what can’t possibly work is an unconditional imperative). It’s consummate deontology made visible. Good intentions float sanctimoniously above the ruins.

The Cathedral is completing its self-fabrication as an autonomized, morally-frenzied lunatic, extensively and intensively paperclipping the world for democracy, and thus destroying it in order to save us. As scandal erupts from everything it touches, this fundamental sociopolitical reality is becoming ever more difficult not to see.

ADDED: Some (disappointing) Koolaid-drinking from Richard Fernandez: “That is probably the single most disturbing thing about these scandals. The Valkyr-fueled rage has undermined the political mechanisms and trashed the processes through which persons of disparate political persuasions of the nation are supposed to come to an understanding.” — The obvious problem with this? There’s only ever been one ‘understanding’ you’re permitted to come to, and that’s progression to the left.

May 16, 2013

Obamanation …

… isn't an insulting name for Obama, or even for what he has 'wrought'. It's a name for America, and thus for the leading spirit (or *Zeitgeist*) of the world. A country where support for a Harvard Law presidency 'bottoms out' (repeatedly) at something above 40% knows what it wants — and is getting it (good and hard). Blaming Obama for any of this is like blaming pustules for the bubonic plague.

The world deserves Obama almost as much as America does, and in many cases, even more. If the Cathedral is basically to be applauded — and who doesn't believe that? — there's every reason to mainline it, by putting the authentic voice of the academy in power. As the chrysalis-husk of a universal project, America is duty bound to abolish itself as a particular nation. If it defers to its own 'propositional' ideals, how could it not? There are even chunks of the Tea Party who kinda sorta felt it was the right thing to do. The conservative establishment certainly did, including the Republican campaign machines of the two last presidential elections. The Idea necessitates blood sacrifice, which Obamanation consummates.

However neoreaction makes sense of itself, it signals what it is through a dismissal of partisan vulgarity. Anybody who thinks the

GoP has the key even to the outhouse is decidedly not 'one of us'. Like the tingle-crotched devotees of the One, we understand that Obama is a destiny, and even an incarnation of *logos*. What he symbolizes has been awaited for a long time. His personal vacuity and administrative incompetence do not detract, in the slightest, from that. Through the fantasy that he reduces to (with only insignificant remainder), the Cathedral announces itself purely at last. Attitudinal correctness is the only authority to be recognized in the end.

By voiding governance from its summit, 'Obama' makes the neoreactionary case. He shows that government is to be found elsewhere, in the machinery of practical elitism, and that — there too — symbolic gestures have almost entirely supplanted functional competence. Government, even *real government*, is no longer expected to work. All that is required is that it can be morally legitimated, down to its most minute corpuscle, so that its failures are clearly seen — which is to say *promoted* — as the fault of something other than itself.

Insofar as retrograde pieces of America insist upon being themselves, as if untouched by the Idea, they are betrayed (by the 'media') as *unworthy of their government*, and justly suffering for their sins. Carnal privilege blinds them to what they should joyfully give up. To not *believe* in government — as the radiant sign of the collective — is a fallen state, from which the Obamanation extends a promise of redemption. By losing everything, with the help of

government, one enters into the Kingdom.

The Obamanation is not what Obama has done (an intrinsically ridiculous construction). It's what *chose Obama*, as its symbol. It is the virtual evacuation of the world into America, and the complementary evacuation of specifically American power from the world. This is the phase of historical progression in which neoreaction *necessarily* emerges, its diagnoses dramatized by everything that now occurs, undisguised.

For that we are truly grateful, intrinsically, which is to say, in our very existence as the channel for something else. Conservatives will continue to find that hard to understand.

Consider this *Instapundit* visual joke, just for a moment:



The 'Bush' angle sounds partisan, and thus embarrassingly

knuckle-draggy to brandy-sipping sophisticates of the Outer right, but that judgment might be over-hasty. Perhaps partisanship itself is swallowed up into the lampoon. In any case, it still makes me laugh, due mostly to the tacit understanding that "World War III" is what Obama *is for*.

Of course, when you elect the pure totem of the Cathedral to the world's highest office, you're really — or consequentially — calling for the cleansing of the earth in the fires of hell. It requires only the most elementary comprehension of Occidental religious history to understand that.

Spiritual purity, and damn the consequences, that's the Obamanation (and, by the way, you're a racist). It's the bloody ruination of world order in the name of moral fanaticism, eclipsing all strategic realism through its wishful thinking and associated, narrow political maneuvers, before blundering into the present stage of terminal, incendiary, paralysis.

Who could have imagined that the world going to shit would be so bizarrely entertaining?

ADDED: Breaking point?

September 2, 2013

Democracy is Doomed

Even UK Cathedral mouthpiece *The Economist* seems to be getting the message that democracy is cooked. While careful to code the most sensitive perceptions, it givers every indication of recognizing that democracy can't be transplanted beyond a dying ethnic core, that it relentlessly collapses time-horizons, and that it systematically selects for demagogic leaders (among numerous other problems). The Chinese model, despite its manifold imperfections, works far better.

No worries though — *The Economist* has some solutions. All democracies have to do is practice government self-restraint, reverse the growth of the state, and suppress majoritarianism, and everything will turn around for them. In other words, if democracy could just stop being democracy, it would have a future. (It can't, and it doesn't.)

When democratic societies were far less deeply degenerate, they degenerated. Now they've become social wastelands of super-entitled dependency, led by professional pop-star liars, the idea that they have the cultural resources to reverse their morbid course is pure comedy.

It's all going down. (Learn Mandarin.)

ADDED: The new cannibals.

ADDED: More neo-cannibalism (pass the popcorn). As the media-

grievance complex pushes everything to hair-trigger hyper-criticality, it just takes two syllables to seriously mess with your life.

ADDED: David Mamet muses on "the current position of Western democracy wending its way back to the sea. … If before the big bang there was nothing, and if all energy since then is expended in the manner best suited to return the world to that state, then all seemingly random permutations of energy dispersal must be attempts to accelerate the return to chaos."

February 28, 2014

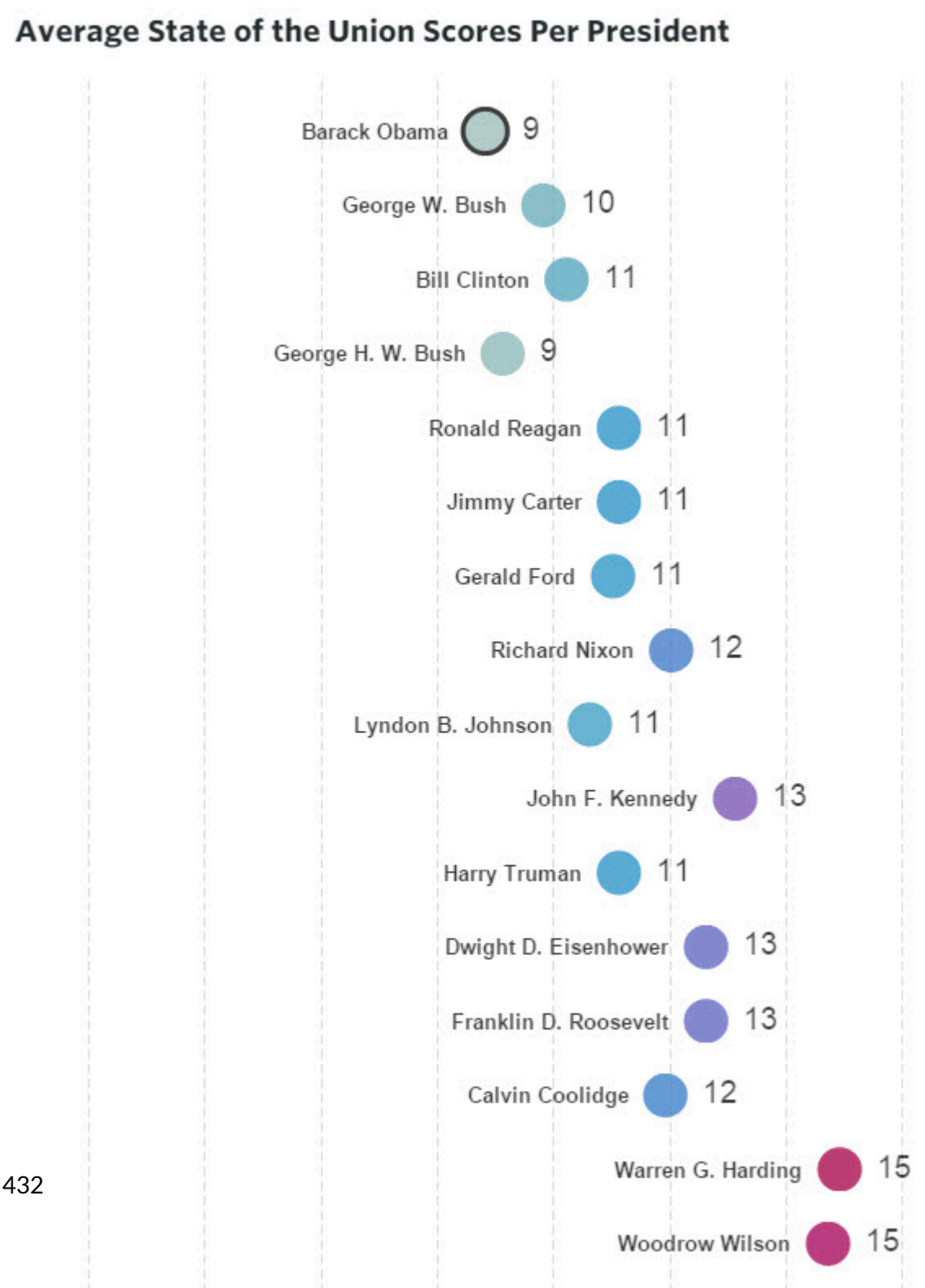
1930s Reloaded

The inherent destiny of democracy is fascism. That's the principal reason to despise it, rather than any cause for celebration.

Does anyone seriously doubt the West is going to die ugly?

January 12, 2015

Idiocracy


Average State of the Union Scores Per President
Barack Obama 9
George W. Bush 10
Bill Clinton 11
George H. W. Bush 9
Ronald Reagan 11
Jimmy Carter 11
Gerald Ford 11
Richard Nixon 12
Lyndon B. Johnson 11
John F. Kennedy 13
Harry Truman 11
Dwight D. Eisenhower 13
Franklin D. Roosevelt 13
Calvin Coolidge 12
Warren G. Harding 15
Woodrow Wilson 15

(The metric there is American school grade levels.)

(Via (Via))

But don't worry:

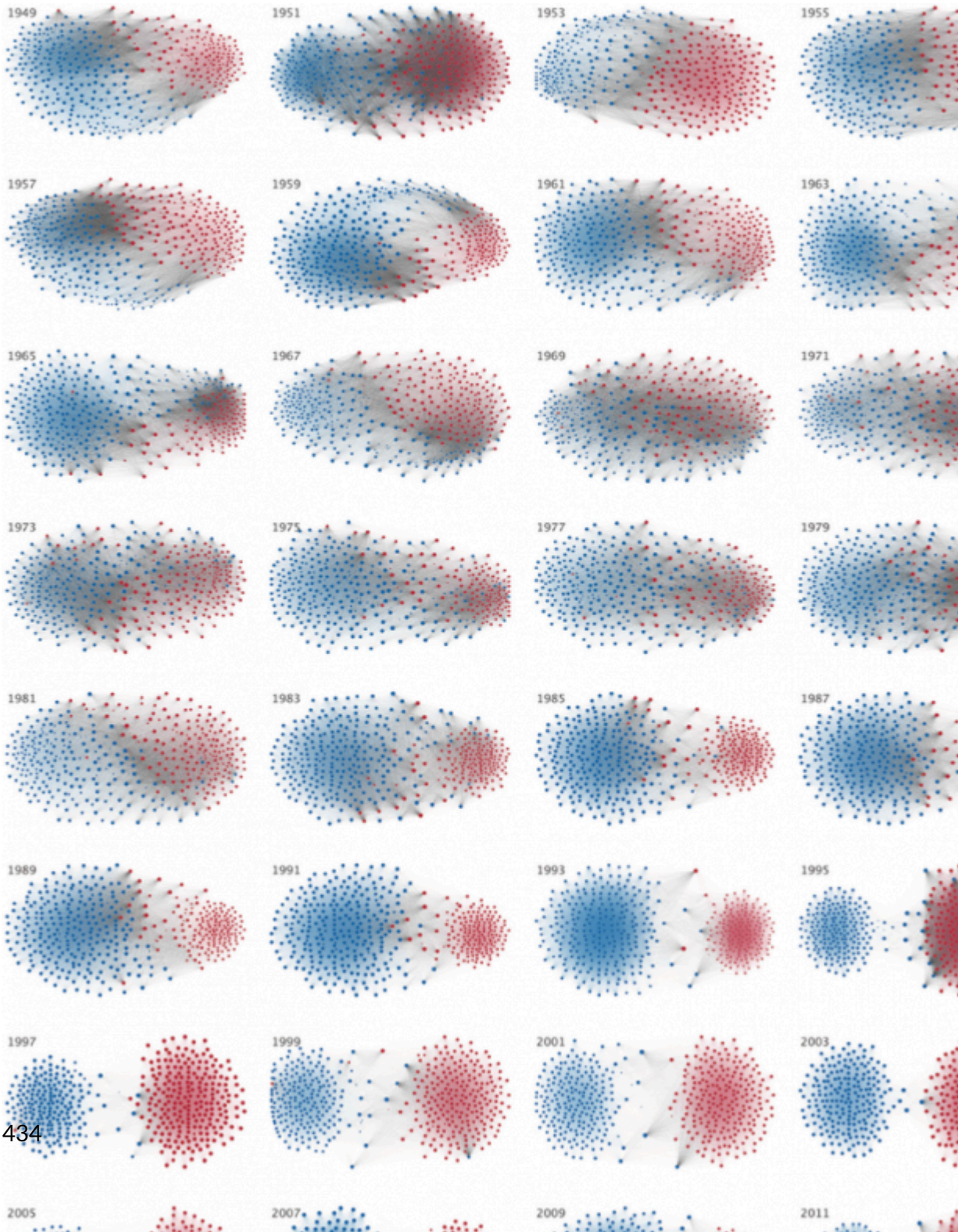
"It's tempting to read this as a dumbing down of the bully pulpit," [former Clinton speechwriter Jeff] Shesol said. "But it's actually a sign of democratization. In the early Republic, presidents could assume that they were speaking to audiences made up mostly of men like themselves: educated, civic-minded landowners. These, of course, were the only Americans with the right to vote. But over time, the franchise expanded and presidential appeals had to reach a broader audience."

It just looks like escalating cretinization. Really it's Democracy®! Yay!

January 22, 2015

Polarization

American partisan polarization, 1949-2011:


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(Via.)

From the paper: “We find that despite short-term fluctuations, partisanship or non-cooperation in the U.S. Congress has been increasing exponentially for over 60 years with no sign of abating or reversing.”

April 25, 2015

The Polarizer

Considered solely in its basic cybernetic function, as a bi-polar homeostat, the power of American democracy is extraordinary. Binary oscillation is what it needs to work, so that is what it produces, absorbing all variation into its structured contest. Animal totems almost insultingly attest to the mobilization of archaic tribal instinct, and to the implicit meaninglessness of the one difference it permits. There is nothing, it seems, that can escape it:

Perhaps it is fair to say that it is now impossible to commit a simple murder or even an outrage as an individual act. It’s all imbued with meaning, almost as if the conflict between the cops and the perps were overshadowed by a far larger fight: Right versus Left in America.

There’s an unmistakable trend to intensification (more here).

Does that strengthen the mechanism, or steer it into crisis?

A social *controlled fission* device of this scale and complexity is unprecedented in history. It began as an experiment, and is still undergoing dynamic evolution. How stable is the stabilizer? It's unlikely that anybody understands it well enough to do better than guess.

December 3, 2015

King Mob

There's quite definitely a technical problem with banning public street protest (i.e. mobs). Even a riotous mob is a vague concept, reliant upon discretionary police judgment on occasions. But is the criminalization of public protest also a problem of principal?

Strangely, most libertarians seem to think the right to free-association extends automatically to mob formation. This presupposes that a mob is not inherently an act of aggression, existing solely to intimidate, and in fact — strictly speaking — an instance of terrorism. It is obvious why the Left should like the mob. It self-identifies as the articulate representative of the mob. Far more obscure is why anyone from a liberal tradition, let alone further to the right, should concur in this appreciation.

Free expression hardly requires physical aggregation in public

places, with near-inevitable expression of a potential for violence. It is not difficult to see that the basic historical role of the mob has been to advance demands, backed by implicit threat. Between a mob, a riotous mob, and a revolutionary mob, there are differences of degree rather than of kind. Even the strongest supporter of the principle of 'voice' should see zero additional value in its physical concentration. Resonance and group emotion undermine a statement, rather than reinforcing it, unless the 'statement' is collectively directed anger (which is to say once again, inherently Leftist).

Mobs are no doubt almost impossible to effectively criminalize. That does not at all mean one is compelled to like them, or acknowledge their legitimacy. Their existence is an intrinsic threat to both liberty *and* authority.

Perhaps laws against public indecency could be applied to politics in the street? In any case, it is past time for everyone to the right of the Left to lucidly despise it.

August 14, 2014

Rule Britannia

This blog has zero confidence in ethno-nationalist street-fighting to achieve anything beyond an even more deeply vulgarized demotism,

as inchoate mob impulses erupt under demagogic direction. So we consider the ‘decision‘ by Tommy Robinson to step back from the hooligan counter-barbarism of the EDL to be a defeat only for those who misguidedly think crypto-fascist politics might have the key to the out-house, along with those who find a crypto-fascist enemy convenient.

Politics in the streets is the primary indication of de-civilization in the modern age, and nothing could ever make it worthy of ultra-right support. Since street politics can occur only under government sanction — which is to say in the absence of grape-shot — any claim it might make to oppositional authenticity is wholly bogus. A right-wing riot is an absurdity.

The story here has a genuinely important angle, however. Robinson’s conversion to “better, democratic ideas” followed upon a carefully-crafted diplomatic exercise by Britain’s state broadcaster, which arranged for him to meet with Muslim ‘representatives’ — under the supervision of the Quilliam Foundation — in order to learn how nice and reasonable they are.

In other words, the BBC seems to have acknowledged its responsibility as the country’s effective government to directly settle the few remaining awkward ideological misalignments among the people. Neoreactionaries have learned that any democratic regime is really governed by its least democratic elements, and the more fanatical its democratization, the less democracy has to do with

its rule. As with any Popular Protectorate under advanced democratic conditions, therefore, elections for the governing BBC Trust are not under consideration — because democracy is too important to throw like chum amongst the people (except of course in Hong Kong).

(Thanks to ZD for the pointer.)

November 1, 2013

Quote note (#232)

O Great Powers of the Abyss, please let this happen:

Following their apparently delusional belief in the "success" of Tuesday night's violent protests, anti-Trump groups are plotting "Democracy Spring" threatening "drama in Washington" with the "largest civil disobedience action of the century." The operation, backed by Soros-funded MoveOn.org among others, warns on its website that ***"We will demand that Congress listen to the People and take immediate action to save our democracy. And we won't leave until they do – or until they send thousands of us to jail."***

Here's a cop-perspective on the recent episode of street-level democracy activism. There's more. (Via.)

I was slapped around a lot on Twitter recently by the usual Alt-Right mob for expressing the inflexible opinion that right-wing

rioting — and political violence in general — is strategically retarded. So I have to assume now, out of attributed consistency, that my sparring partners at that juncture are considerably less amused than I am about the prospect of left-wing rioting. Rioting *for democracy* is, of course, better still. Eventually, violent social disorder and democracy begin to look like the same phenomenon, differentiated only by speed (or 'spontaneity'). Then our grim work is done.

March 17, 2016

Twitter cuts (#68)

> @Aurini @realDonaldTrump I'm starting to wonder if there will be massive efforts to assault White voters on election day
>
> — reality (@TonySandos) June 3, 2016

The Outer Right provides the formal critique of democracy. It will be the Left, though, that graphically closes the curtain on it.

The defense of democracy in political theory is that it offers an alternative to violence as a mechanism for regime change. How's that working out?

The democratic principle: *Violence is only illegitimate when it is employed to resist leftward progression*. By November, the only

people still buying into that will be the mobilized forces of the Cathedral regime.

June 3, 2016

Days of Rage

An instant Twitter-format classic, by David Hines, on the Leftist political violence to come. Storified here.

Among the critical points:

*Righties tell themselves that *of course* they'd win a war against Lefties. Tactical Deathbeast vs. Pajama Boy? No contest. … Why, Righties have thought about what an effective domestic insurrection would look like. Righties have written books and manifestos! … It's horseshit. … The truth: Left is a lot more organized & prepared for violence than Right is, and has the advantage of a mainstream more supportive of it.*

ADDED: Spandrell's take.

January 16, 2017

CHAPTER TWO - ECONOMIC DEGENERACY

Quote notes (#34)

Words of wisdom from Obama (via):

The fact that we are here today to debate raising America's debt limit is a sign of leadership failure. It is a sign that the U.S. Government can't pay its own bills. It is a sign that we now depend on ongoing financial assistance from foreign countries to finance our Government's reckless fiscal policies. … Increasing America's debt weakens us domestically and internationally. Leadership means that "the buck stops here." Instead, Washington is shifting the burden of bad choices today onto the backs of our children and grandchildren. America has a debt problem and a failure of leadership. Americans deserve better.

September 28, 2013

Liberality for Losers

Machiavelli on Obamacare:

… any one wishing to maintain among men the name of liberal is obliged to avoid no attribute of magnificence; so that a prince thus inclined will consume in such acts all his property, and will be compelled in the end, if he wish to maintain the name of liberal, to unduly weigh down his people, and tax them, and do everything he can to get money. This will soon make him odious to his subjects, and becoming poor he will be little valued by any one; thus, with his liberality, having offended many and rewarded few, he is affected by the very first trouble and imperilled by whatever may be the first danger; recognizing this himself, and wishing to draw back from it, he runs at once into the reproach of being miserly.

[…] Either you are a prince in fact, or in a way to become one. In the first case this liberality is dangerous, in the second it is very necessary to be considered liberal … […] And there is nothing wastes so rapidly as liberality, for even whilst you exercise it you lose the power to do so, and so become either poor or despised, or else, in avoiding poverty, rapacious and hated. And a prince should guard himself, above all things, against being despised and hated; and liberality leads you to both. Therefore it is wiser to have a reputation for meanness which brings reproach without hatred, than to be compelled through seeking a reputation for liberality to incur a name

for rapacity which begets reproach with hatred.

ADDED: Some racist liberality math from Charlie Martin.

December 6, 2013

Parasites

I try not to get spittle-flecked about the Boomers, but …

(Thanks to Bryce for the link.)

June 23, 2014

De-Dynamization

If you want to break an economy, democracy is the solution you're looking for. The crucial reference is to this paper (via Cowan), dedicated to the *The $42 Trillion Question: Will Rapid Growth in China and India Persist?* The economic consequences of socio-political 'progress' are spelled out about as clearly as anyone could want:

… nearly every country that experienced a large democratic transition after a period of above-average growth (more than the cross-country average of 2 percent) experienced a sharp deceleration in growth in the 10 years following the democratizing

transition. Among 22 countries in which episodes of large democratic transition coincided with above-average growth, all but one (Korea in 1987 with an acceleration of only 0.22 percent) experienced a growth deceleration. The combination of high initial growth and democratic transition seems to make some deceleration all but inevitable. The magnitude of the decelerations was very large: The median deceleration across the 22 countries was 2.99 percent and the average deceleration was 3.53 percent.

The phenomenon of demosclerosis is already theoretically well-grounded. It appears to be a more rapidly-acting poison than even its fiercest critics have acknowledged.

October 20, 2014

What Democracy Can't Do

An *Outside in* stab at (tech-comm) NRx in a nutshell: ***If economically optimal labor pricing is 'politically impossible' you're doing politics wrong.***

('Wage-stickiness' defenses of inflationary macro were the immediate context, but the application seems far broader.)

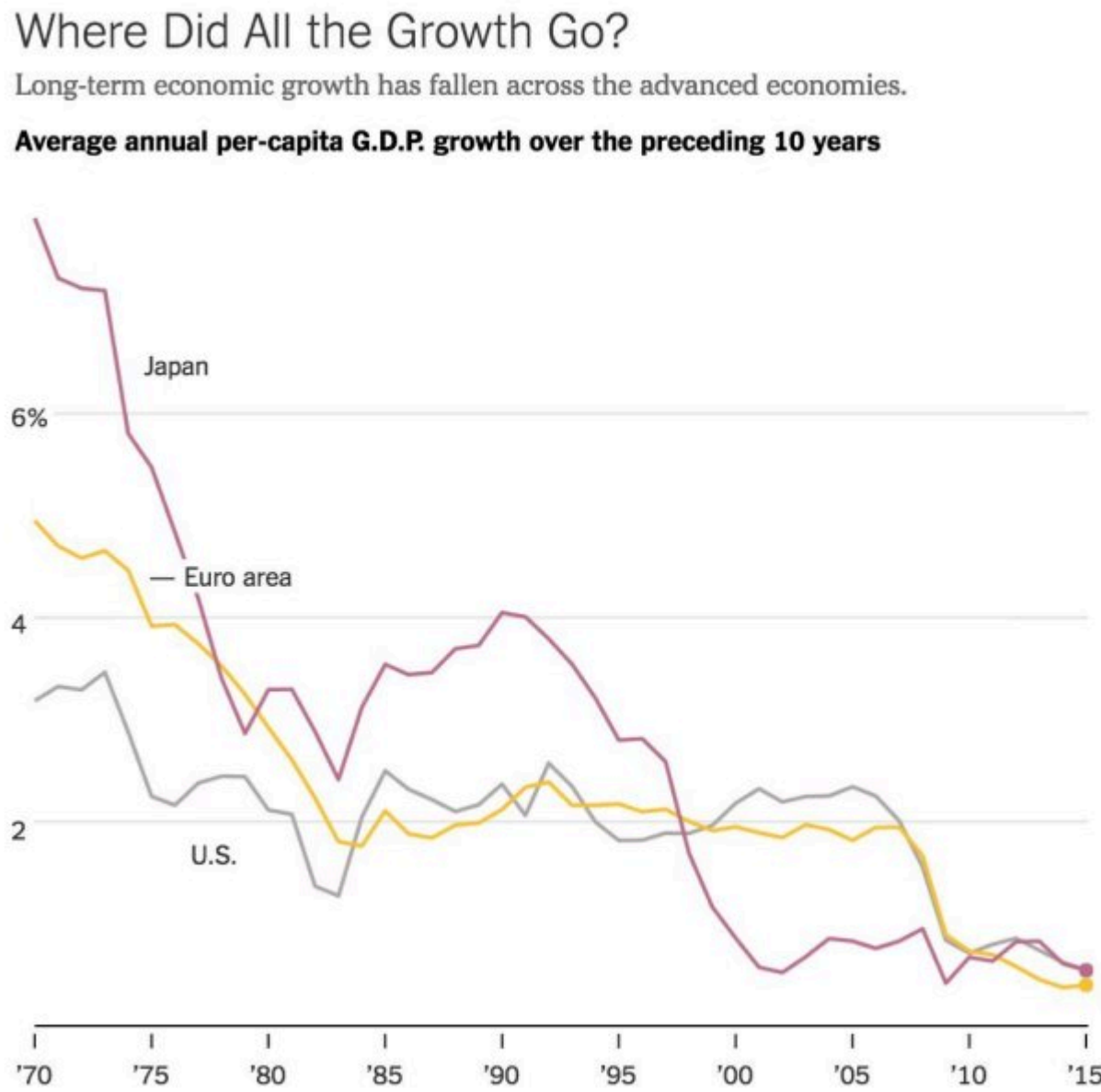
OK, some carbs (for anyone dissatisfied by raw gristle):

Europeans liked their welfare state regardless of where they stood on the political spectrum. The roots of "social democracy" lie

on the left, but by the 1980s the preference for a mixed economy, generous health and pension benefits, and regulated markets had become, on the European continent at least, what Antonio Gramsci called a "hegemonic ideology." These preferences were embraced by parties of the center-right as well as the center-left, compatible with capital yet acceptable to democratic majorities, and rejected principally by the extremes — and British Tories [sic]. The idea that this well-liked welfare state, deemed by many to be indispensable to social peace, might soon prove unviable in the globalized economy of the late twentieth century hence became a source of great anxiety.

June 19, 2015

Collapse


Where Did All the Growth Go?
Long-term economic growth has fallen across the advanced economies.
Average annual per-capita G.D.P. growth over the preceding 10 years
Japan
6%
— Euro area
4
2
U.S.
'70
'75
'80
'85
'90
'95
'00
'05
'10
'15

(Via.)
No great mystery about the West’s bad mood.

October 24, 2016

CHAPTER THREE - ELECTIONS AND RECENT EVENTS

Regime Redecoration Randoms

Which lucky guy gets to take the blame?

Here in Shanghai, we receive the US presidential election results on Wednesday morning, making this the last chance to venture reckless predictions. Who gets to seize the poisoned chalice and assume responsibility for the financial collapse of the United States of America?

Feel the hate. Negativity reigns supreme in this election, with oppositional or defensive motivations almost wholly purified of positive contamination. According to The Economist, negative political ads have accounted for an unprecedented 90% of the total. The words of PJ Media commenter Subotai Bahadur distill the sentiment perfectly: "Romney was not my first, second, or third choice, but I will crawl over ground glass to vote for him." To be fondly remembered as 'the ground-glass election.'

Way of the Salamander. Urban Future isn't inclined to deride Mormonism as weird (being weird is what religions are for), but there are bound to be significant cultural implications to the inauguration of a Mormon president in an unusually apocalyptic time. The Mormon faith is the science fiction version of Abrahamic religion extending an evolutionary bridge from man to God – a path of practical divinization. No surprise, then, to discover that there's a Mormon Transhumanist Association. When combined with the irreverence that latches onto any decaying, chaos-wracked administration it could get seriously entertaining …but then we'd miss the classic version of Cathedral II (Return of the Clerisy), replaced by a strange re-make. Voters need to choose their flavor of ground glass carefully.

Prophet motive. At Zero Hedge, Strauss & Howe generational cycle-theorist Jim Quinn hangs on to the apocalyptic theme. He argues that – at the brink of the 'Fourth Turning' – Mitt Romney's age, which places him in the 'prophet generation', makes him odds on favorite to lead the global superpower into Armageddon (so we have that to look forward to).

Reckless predictions?

(1) Discounting systematic media dishonesty points to a substantial Romney victory.

(2) Winning this one is going to have been the most stupid thing that the stupid party ever did.

November 6, 2012

UK General Election ’15

Briggs captures the essentials:

You have to love — I do — how the cessation of accelerating profligate spending is called in Europe “austerity”. Here [in the UK] the slow-down-in-speeding-up-yet-still-increases-in-spending are called “budget cuts”.

The “let’s carry on decaying at a genteel pace chaps” party won (unexpectedly). Insurgent parties did badly (except at the *geographical* — rather than ideological — fringe). A *status quo* outcome, then. A shallower, longer decline path it is …

The more positive implications concern territorial disintegration. Deepening political alienation in Scotland, and a commitment to a referendum on Europe, promise opportunities for multi-level secessionary tides to strengthen.

Also, the left will go even more nuts. When the teeth-gnashing commentary begins to roll in, I’ll try to link some as *Schadenfreude* tonic.

ADDED: Conservatives know that they’re losers, even when they ‘win’.

ADDED: HBD Chick applies some biorealism to the election

results.

May 8, 2015

Popcorn Activism

Partisan political stuff is as tacky as you can get, and if anything could get people chucked out of NRx (and into the garbage-compressor of history), that should be it. Having said that, and — of course — in a spirit of the loftiest imaginable detachment, here's just the slightest morsel.

The Sailer Strategy is a model of sorts. This is due less to its concrete recommendations (fascinating even to those who disagree with it, perhaps vehemently), than —

(a) Its configuration of the political chess board as a puzzle, posing the question: *Given this set up, is there any way for the GOP to win?* Playing GOP is much more fun, because it's actually a challenge. Sailer doesn't need this encouragement, because he's clearly a small-d democrat, and probably also a big-R Republican, in sympathy at least. Despite this, his disreputable noticing habit makes him radioactive, which brings us to —

(b) While a paragon of ingenuousness, Sailer is positioned by strategic necessity in a position of subterfuge. His ideas are discussed in fearful whispers, in shadowy corners of political think-

tanks, and circulated only in heavy disguise. It would be quite impossible for a pursuit of the Sailer Strategy to be publicly admitted, short of a social and ideological catastrophe so profound that its recommendations would have already been rendered moot.

The **Outsideness Strategy** is anti-democratic, merely opportunistically Republican, and politically-unmentionable for even more essential reasons than those just now alluded to. It has the advantages of extreme practicality, comparative simplicity, and — most importantly — *definitiveness*. It is intrinsically irreversible. It cannot be part of any continuing political dialectic. Once it is executed, the GOP will have expended itself utterly in completion of its teleo-historical function and auto-dismantle, among the ashes of American Democracy®.

The unspeakable core of the Sailer Strategy: *The GOP actually doesn't need anything but the white electorate to win*, and [gasp!] *racial polarization could easily be conceived as an asset*.

The Outsideness Strategy analog: the almost incomprehensible idiocy of the democratic system and, more specifically, of the American electorate is a massively under-exploited resource. The subtitle of the strategy paper that really cannot ever be written reads: *Winning big and terminally on the idiocratic battlefield*.

This is not the place to rehearse the neoreactionary diagnosis of democracy as an engine of cognitive deterioration. The "appalling political ignorance of the American electorate" isn't exactly stupidity,

but it's a reasonable proxy, and no one has any serious plans to fix it. Let the liberals explain it to you:

> Election 2014 makes a compelling case for Netflix to re-classify 'Idiocracy' as a documentary.
>
> — John Fugelsang (@JohnFugelsang) November 5, 2014

I'm assuming it can be assumed.

Two helpful references before bolting things together:

(1) Peter Thiel explains why it would be a disaster for the GOP to win the presidency in 2016, unless the financial has crashed by then (which he doesn't expect it to).

(2) Jonathan Chait argues:

Eternally optimistic seekers of bipartisanship have clung to the hope that owning all of Congress, not merely half, will force Republicans to "show they can govern." This hopeful bit of conventional wisdom rests on the premise that voters are even aware that the GOP is the party controlling Congress. In fact, only about 40 percent of the public even knows which party controls which chamber of Congress, which makes the notion that the Republicans would face a backlash for a lack of success fantastical.

Nobody expects these two to agree upon much, but they do agree upon one thing: 'Blame the President' is the key to the democratic game. The figure-head of executive power — crafted ever more

blatantly to *Hollywood standards* with each fresh election — is the convergence point where sublime ignorance, mass resentment, media opportunity, and electoral agency intersect. Just recognizing the President largely exhausts the mental capacities of the electorate as far as political matters are concerned, with a little slack left over for First Lady reality TV, and then — possibly — knowing the name of the Veep. After that, its swirling cognitive chaos, fed by outrages from partisan bubble-worlds, TV sound-bites, salacious detail, and race porn. The thought processes of the median voter are *extremely* easy to model: *Things bad, blame President!* Nothing beyond that has any real relevance, except to nerds.

Outsideness Strategy *jiu jitsu* jumps straight out of this. The fundamental recommendation: *Shore up the symbolic radiance of the Presidency, and then avoid it like the plague*. Aim to win everything *except the Presidency*, until the whole machinery comes apart. In other words, a GOP pursuing the OS would (furtively) renounce presidential office for the remaining duration of American Democracy.

What would be in it for them? *Everything except the Presidency*. That's almost everything already. Pursue the Strategy, incrementally gut the powers of the executive, and the proportion of political prizes lying outside the Whitehouse steadily grows. That's where the interests of an intelligent (if still craven, gluttonous, massively corrupt, and in most other ways radically despicable) GOP lie. All

the pork warehouses get shifted away from the glittering media-saturated magnificence of the Whitehouse, ever deeper into the shadows, enabling monstrous plundering on an unprecedented scale to take place completely beyond the horizon of concrete democratic comprehension. (Nobody said it was going to be pretty.) POTUS gets the blame, Nu-GOP gets the gravy, FedGov is delegitimated, power is salted away steadily into state houses, and the whole abomination hurtles towards national disintegration. There's only *one thing* the GOP has to do, and that's *to lose the presidential election every single time*. Manage that, and it wins pretty much everything else without even trying.

If the Outsideness Strategy had already been initiated, we certainly wouldn't have been told about it. The 2016 GOP Presidential pick will tell us a lot.

ADDED: "Republicans need to remember: The electorate that turns out at midterms is demographically narrower than the pool of voters who elect presidents." — Relevant, and usable.

November 6, 2014

Popcorn Activism II

The whole of this analysis (from the Left) is highly relevant to the Outsideness Strategy. One could even be forgiven for thinking it is

already being pursued:

The presidency is extremely important, of course. But there are also thousands of critically important offices all the way down the ballot. And the vast majority — 70 percent of state legislatures, more than 60 percent of governors, 55 percent of attorneys general and secretaries of state — are in Republicans hands. And, of course, Republicans control both chambers of Congress.

With the final paragraph comes the money quote:

But the much more significant question facing the [Democratic] party isn't about the White House — it's about all the other offices in the land. The problem is that control of the presidency seems to have blinded progressive activists to the possibility of even having an argument about what to do about all of them. That will change if and when the GOP seizes the White House, too, and Democrats bottom out. But the truly striking thing is how close to bottom the party is already and how blind it seems to be to that fact.

If the GOP take the presidency, of course, they reset back to homeostatic bi-polar alternation, degenerative quasi-equilibrium, and democratic functionality — which is disaster. So for the GOP, the question is how to stay out of the White House (without seeming to want to), while incrementally subverting the central organs of national executive power. When the decay process reaches the stages where large burning chunks are falling off, it's critical that there's a Democrat in the Oval Office to explain on cable news how it

isn't ze fault.

Yglesias seems to think the Republicans might do something with the presidency of right-wing significance, which is (of course) laughable on its face. The Union Executive exists to take the coming fall, and nothing else. With that kept firmly in mind, everything can go swimmingly.

October 20, 2015

Damnesty

Due to our rigorous aversion to partisan vulgarity, we couldn't possibly comment on this:

The majority leader pummeled the airwaves, spending more than $5 million on the race, including a direct-mail piece that took a harder line against immigration reform than Cantor previously had advocated. […] In many ways, however, the show of force gave more oxygen to the little-known Brat, who had few resources and almost no outside cash funding his underdog effort. To Cantor's millions, Brat raised only $200,000, and spent even less, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. […] Among those who advocate changing the nation's immigration rules, Cantor's loss seems likely to dash all hope that the House will act on any legislation to provide a citizenship path for some immigrants — as Cantor had once

proposed. […] Many had expected the chamber could turn to the issue once primary season had ended and lawmakers no longer had to worry about protecting their right flank.



"At least they cooked that freaking duck …"

The Dark Dream scenario up to and beyond 2016 isn't hard to piece together:

* GOP lock on Congress to ensure maximum obstruction.
* Tea-Party insurgency driving the GOP into right-wing extremism®.
* Secessionist ambitions spreading like a forest fire.
* A radical progressive Democrat in the White House, to keep a Cathedral clown-face glued onto the collapse.

Carry on.

ADDED: Jim.

ADDED: I like the cut of Zachary Werrell's jib.

June 11, 2014

Romney 2016

If this analysis is right, Romney would be sure to lose a 2016 presidential bid. "Voters will compromise on a lot of issues on Election Day but they won't ever vote for you if they don't like you or worse yet, think you don't like them." That makes him the perfect GOP candidate — delegitimating the opposition, without seizing the poisoned chalice of democratic leadership (i.e. increasingly vacuous symbolic authority). If the electorate grudgingly concede, after renewing his humiliation, *he was right, but we voted against him anyway because he didn't kiss my baby*, it's NRx gravy.

This has to be in some way related:

> Romney 2016: Reform conservative. Romney 2020: Buchananite. Romney 2024: Rothbardian. Romney 2028: Neo-reactionary.
>
> — Ross Douthat (@DouthatNYT) January 13, 2015

January 13, 2015

Out of the Popcorn Zone

As a corrective to the disturbingly unironic Donald Trump enthusiasm affecting certain sections of NRx, here's Ace (of Spades)

exiting the circus:

… several years ago, I actually believed in America, and participatory democracy, and all that. […] Now I don't. So now I find myself agreeing with Chomsky, albeit from a rightward direction. I don't agree with him about ***who*** *controls the country, or to what political ends; but I do with agree with him that it is controlled. […] Now this brings me to … Manufactured Consent … So this is why I have become a radical: I agree with a left-wing socialist/communist about the fundamental rotten lie at the heart of the American democracy. […] … I am turning off the TV, I am turning off the Bob Corker & Mitch McConnell show, and, frankly, I am cutting the cord on America.*

(He's even turning off the computer for a day, which is perhaps edging into excessive extremism.)

There's still some definite suggestion in the post that *democracy itself* could be exculpated, so the journey is not yet complete. Give it time.

July 16, 2015

Missing him already

Mencius Moldbug did the conceptual spadework needed to ignite NRx as an Internet discussion, but it was Barack Obama who put

the world to the torch under the banshee cry “Neoreaction!” OK, that wasn’t his exact word, but the basic point isn’t seriously controversial. By slapping an explicit Cathedral clownface onto a faculty-lounge leftist superpower policy suite, destined to pan-dimensional failure, he utterly bankrupted mainstream global progressivism. The smug incompetence was insufferable, and — crucially — so complacent that it let the academic-media inner workings show. Even the saddest tools could see the thing now, and while many still supported it ardently, it kind of disgusted them. There was clearly *no point at all trying to compromise with these people*. “Those neoreactionary types don’t, maybe we should be listening to them?” (Plenty of toxicity comes out of that, but there’s no need to rake over it again right now — it’s something I talk about all the time.)

Victor Davis Hanson is an irredeemable Neocon, but he understands this stuff. His portrait of Obama is almost excruciatingly persuasive. Core point: “Insidiously and inadvertently, Barack Obama is alienating the people and moving the country to the right. If he keeps it up, by 2017 it will be a reactionary nation.”

Here’s the dark heart of the piece (quoted at a length that risks IP violation):

The tiny number of prescient pundits who warned what the Obama years would entail were not the supposedly sober and judicious establishment voices, who in fact seemed to be caught up

in the hope-and-change euphoria and missed entirely Obama's petulance and pique: the Evan Thomases ("he's sort of god"), or the David Brookses ("and I was looking at his pant leg and his perfectly creased pant, and I'm thinking, a) he's going to be president and b) he'll be a very good president." "It is easy to sketch out a scenario in which [Obama] could be a great president."), or the Chris Matthewses ("the feeling most people get when they hear Barack Obama's speech. My, I felt this thrill going up my leg. I mean, I don't have that too often."), or the Michael Beschlosses ("Uh. I would say it's probably — he's probably the smartest guy ever to become President."), or the Chris Buckleys ("He has exhibited throughout a 'first-class temperament,' pace Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.'s famous comment about FDR. As for his intellect, well, he's a Harvard man"), or the Kathleen Parkers ("… with solemn prayers that Obama will govern as the centrist, pragmatic leader he is capable of being"), or the Peggy Noonans ("He has within him the possibility to change the direction and tone of American foreign policy, which need changing; his rise will serve as a practical rebuke to the past five years, which need rebuking; his victory would provide a fresh start in a nation in which a fresh start would come as a national relief.").

In truth, it was the loud, sometimes shrill, and caricatured voices of talk radio, the so-called crazy Republican House members, and the grassroots loudmouths of what would become the Tea Party who had Obama's number. They warned early on that Barack Obama's

record was that of a petulant extremist, that his writing presaged that he would borrow and spend like no other president, that his past associations gave warning that he would use his community-organizing skills cynically to divide Americans along racial lines, that nothing in his past had ever suggested anything other than radicalism and an ease with divisive speech, that his votes as a state legislator and as a U.S. senator suggested that he had an instinctual dislike of the entrepreneur and the self-made businessman, and that his past rhetoric advised that he would ignore settled law and instead would rule by fiat — that he would render immigration law null and void, that he would diminish the profile of America abroad, and that he would do all this because he was an ideologue, with no history of bipartisanship but a lot of animus toward his critics, and one who saw no ethical or practical reason to appreciate the more than 60 years of America's postwar global leadership and the world that it had built. Again, the despised right-wingers were right and the more moderate establishment quite wrong.

Those who supported Obama are never going to be taken seriously about anything, ever again. They're done. (That's what Trump demonstrates.)

But there's more:

A lot of ambitious and dangerous powers are watching Obama assume a fetal position, and may well as a consequence act foolishly and recklessly this next year. Not only Russia, China, and North

Korea, but also Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, ISIS, and assorted rogue states may take chances in the next 14 months that they would otherwise never have entertained (given that America is innately strong and they are mostly in comparison far weaker) — on the premise that such adventurism offers tangible advantages without likely negative consequences and that the chance for such opportunities will not present itself again for decades to come. […] At home, Obama feels liberated now that he is free from further elections. He thinks he has a legitimate right to be a bit vindictive and vent his own frustrations and pique, heretofore repressed over the last seven years because of the exigencies of Democratic electioneering. Obama can now vent and strike back at his opponents, caricaturing them from abroad, questioning their patriotism, slandering them for sport, and trying to figure out which emblematic executive orders and extra-legal bureaucratic directives will most infuriate them and repay them for their supposed culpability for his failed ***vero possumus*** *presidency. […] The more contrarian he becomes, and the more he opposes the wishes of the vast majority of the American people, all the more Obama envisions himself speaking truth to power and becoming iconic of something rather than the reality that he is becoming proof of nothing. […] Hold on. We haven't seen anything yet.*

One more year of Obama's — hopefully intensified — NRx activism, then things get a whole lot more difficult. Four years of

remotely competent, and even vaguely rightish US executive government, and NRx as a memetic contagion will be close to extinction. That might not be a bad thing, but it's worth noting.

December 9, 2015

Quote note (#215)

*I'm **not** saying the election was rigged. I have no evidence of such a thing, and I'm sure the good people of Iowa are honest and competent. […] But **just for fun**, watch me build my case for a rigged election.*

Since a lot of enraged Trumpenproletarians* are going to be talking about this, I should add some minimal local framing. This blog is:

(a) Loftily detached from Trump enthusiasm, and

(b) Unable to morally discriminate between *fixed* democracy, and 'clean' democracy. (Though, perhaps, the latter is ultimately slightly less depraved.)

Still, this story is already out there, and it isn't unimportant at the level of popcorn-positive political disintegration, regardless of the final — and probably irrecoverable — facts.

* See this (+) persuasive introduction to early 21st century American class war. (Plus.)

ADDED: For obvious relevance

> When The Establishment always wins, you know you've reached peak democracy. #tcot #nrx #altright https://t.co/VH10nWWwr3
>
> — Brett Stevens (@amerika_blog) February 2, 2016

February 3, 2016

Twitter cuts (#99)

The meltdown of the GOP as observed by a concerned outsider:

> 1. Let's think through the scenario the GOP establishment has that Rubio can save them from Trump.
>
> — Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

> 2. The idea is that if it's a head-to-head Trump v. Rubio, the anti-Trump consolidated vote would favor Rubio.
>
> — Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

> 3. The first thing is: it's not a 2-way race yet. It's a 5 way race. How do you convince Cruz, Kasich & Carson to drop out?
>
> — Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

4. Carson will stay in as long he as gets fundraisng $$. Kasich wants to try his luck in mid-west. And then there is Cruz.

— Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

5. I can imagine Kasich & Carson pulling out soon. But Cruz? This is not a man who is amenable to reason or the good of the party.

— Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

6. Cruz has every incentive to stay in this till the end & see if he can be a kingmaker if no-one has enough delegates to win.

— Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

7. But let's say by some miracle this becomes a 2-man race. Not all of Carson/Kasich/Cruz voters will go to Rubio.

— Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

8. Trump v. Rubio won't be 32-68. It'll be closer than that. And Trump is not a man who is afraid to fight dirty.

— Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

‘

9. On Rubio's side, he'll have tons of $$. Could do a real scorched earth ad campaign like Romney did with Gingrich in

Florida in 2008.

— Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

10. On Trump's side, in xenophobic year he'd be up against a Cuban American, fluent Spanish speaker who favored amnesty for undocumented

— Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

11. So, Trump v. Rubio is not a sure thing at all. And we're a long way from even getting there.

— Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

12. The time to unite the party against Trump was before Iowa. Now it might be too late.

— Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

13. The key is you can't defeat Trump without risking alienating his followers & provoking a 3rd party run.

— Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

14. But for GOP, I think Trump is so dangerous a figure that they should now be prepared to alienate his followers & have him go 3rd party.

— Jeet Heer (@HeerJeet) February 21, 2016

The radical repolarization of the party system within an Anglophone democracy is a rare event. To find persuasive precedent for what is happening today, it is arguably necessary to return all the way to the mid-19th century and the emergence of the Republican Party during the Civil War era. It's only natural, then, that their should be an unusual level of agitation about developments (though this description risks — very seriously — putting the cart before the horse).

2016 is set to be a year for the history books.

February 22, 2016

Diamond and Silk



More socio-ideological scrambling. Camille Paglia describes them as a ‘revelation‘, linking to this one. (They’ve done a bunch.) Their latest is on the Chicago disorder. Their David Duke commentary is also a thing of wonder.

Here they are with the Donald, and doing Fox.

This is Saturday popcorn material, but it’s not short of discussion potential. Their lopsided double act is a piece of artistry (as the Fox

piece makes clear).

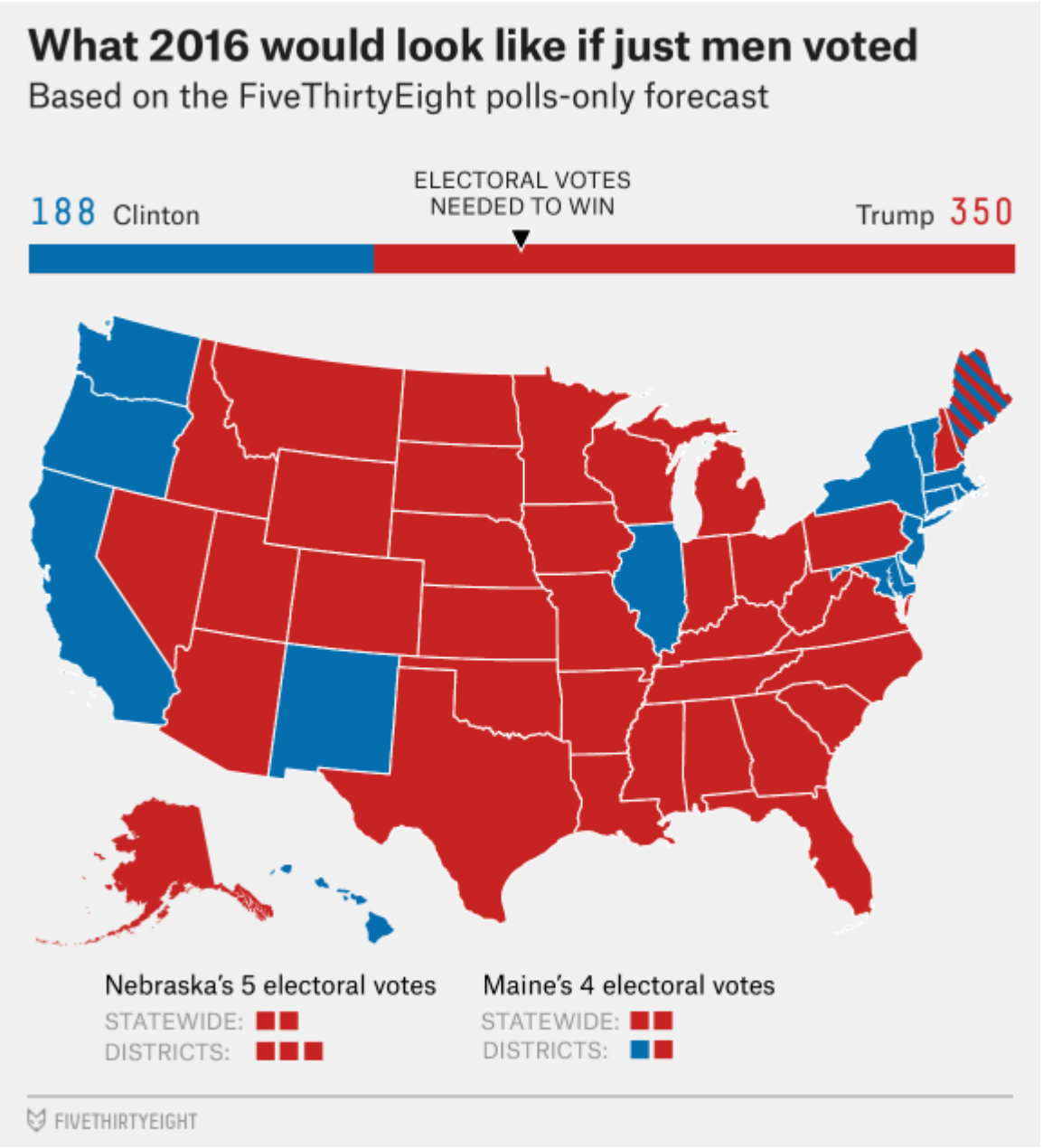
"Choo-choo that train to glory!"

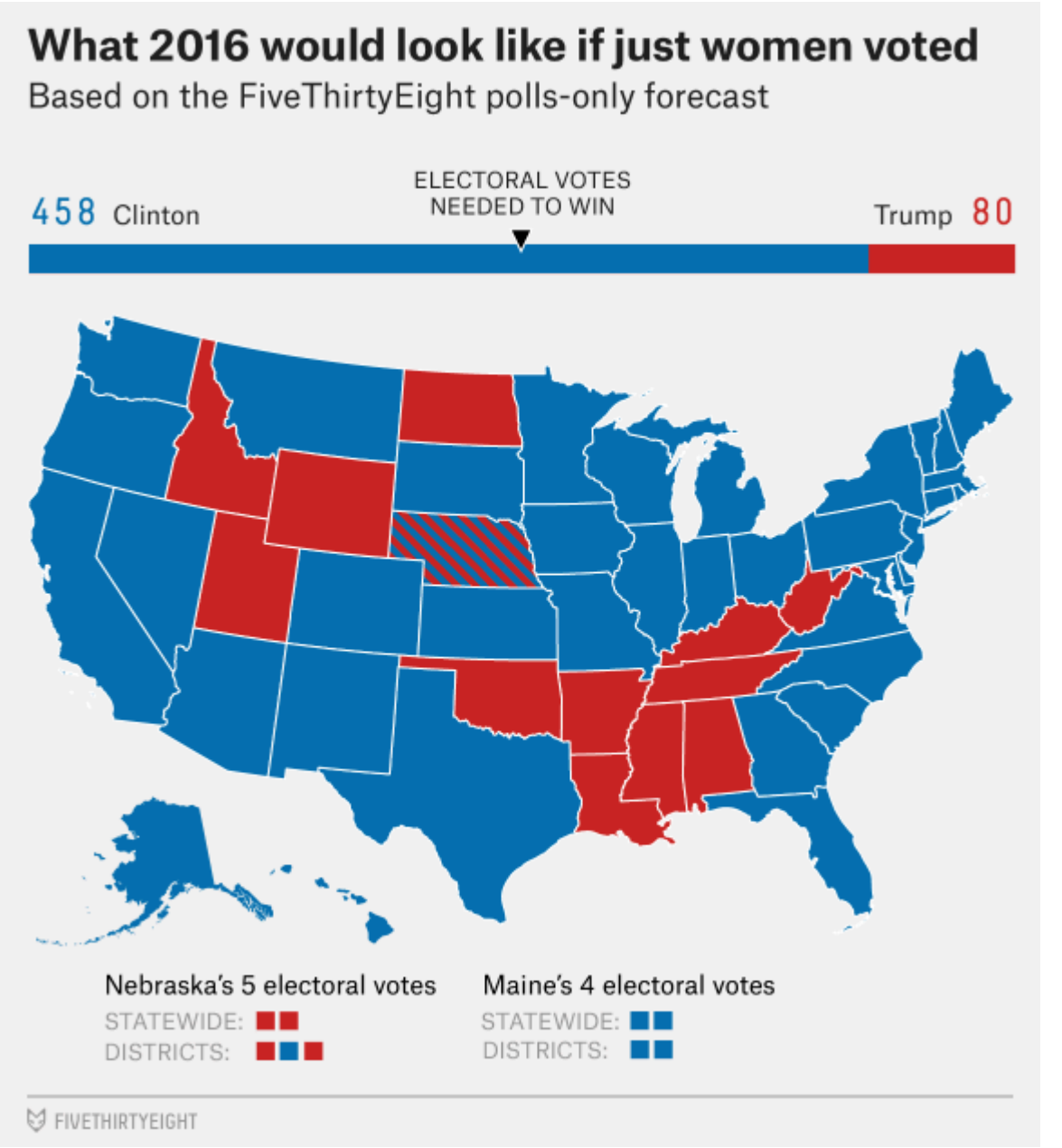
They have to be driving more than a few people nuts.

March 12, 2016

Sexual Politics

Via Nate Silver, the electoral implications of hypothetical solely-male and solely-female electorates in the US (2016):


What 2016 would look like if just men voted
Based on the FiveThirtyEight polls-only forecast
188 Clinton
ELECTORAL VOTES NEEDED TO WIN
Trump 350
Nebraska's 5 electoral votes
STATEWIDE:
DISTRICTS:
Maine's 4 electoral votes
STATEWIDE:
DISTRICTS:
FIVETHIRTYEIGHT



Given the absence of a realistic geo-political segregation option,

continuing tension can be safely anticipated. (There still has to be a way to break the place up that makes more sense, such as starting with the places that don't change color when gender-flipped.)

October 12, 2016

Broken Detente

Anybody interested in the racial dynamics of Trump-era American culture and politics should find much of interest in this. It might be the closest thing to an insightful center-ground perspective on what has been happening to be turned up yet.

November 15, 2016

So, they did it



Their <u>delight</u> at the decision burns:

For reminding America that demagoguery feeds on despair and that truth is only as powerful as the trust in those who speak it, for empowering a hidden electorate by mainstreaming its furies and live-streaming its fears, and for framing tomorrow's political culture by demolishing yesterday's, Donald Trump is TIME's 2016 Person of the Year.

Divided States of America is worth everything.

And 2016 continues:

> 2016's 3rd most important story about the U.S. media: Vox accepts the mainstream science behind IQ scores. https://t.co/R9tMsxD492
>
> — Garett Jones (@GarettJones) December 6, 2016

ADDED:

> .@TIME Trumped! https://t.co/iMSAgKvq6i pic.twitter.com/8iIzzb7rwu
>
> — Virginia Dare (@vdare) December 8, 2016

December 7, 2016

Rapture

Each encounter with the phrase "government shutdown" sparks a detonation of euphoria. It could get quite distracting.

More here (with useful chart, and some acute comments).

Rick Moran, trying to stir up some gloom, makes the whole situation even more delicious: "And the hell of it is, the hard right wing in the House that has been pushing this futile strategy are not going to be blamed for the cave-in. It will be those who are deemed insufficiently supportive of a cause that never had a chance to succeed who will probably suffer the consequences."

— Federal cardiac arrest *and* the accelerated disintegration of the GOP? *Bliss was it in that twilight …*

September 30, 2013

Nuked

Jonathan H. Adler at *The Volokh Conspiracy* writes:

Despite allowing the confirmation of judges for other courts, and one D.C. Circuit nominee, Republicans have continued to block Obama's latest D.C. Circuit nominees. Now that Senate Republicans have … successfully filibustered five Obama nominees — the same number as Senate Democrats blocked with a filibuster (but half those

for which cloture was initially defeated) — Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid wants to change the rules. According to several news reports, Senator Reid is prepared to invoke the so-called "nuclear option" and force through President Obama's nominees on a party-line vote, perhaps as early as today. What this involves is making a parliamentary ruling that only a majority vote is required to end debate on a judicial nomination and then sustaining that decision with a majority vote. Some Senate Republicans threatened to take such a step during the Bush Administration, but backed off when a group of Senators from both parties forged a temporary deal to end the stand-off and avert the rule change.

The 'nuclear option' represents the clear admission that the division of powers is not only dead but spectacularly cremated, with judicial appointees formally reduced to partisan functionaries. It would thus signal the explicit demolition of the US Constitution. Since a wheezing travesty is worse than a corpse, even strong supporters of the constitutional principle should have few problems with this specific instance of incendiary termination.

America's crisis of governance is hurtling to a conclusion far sooner than most sober commentators had imagined. As with so many other institutional questions posed in the hysterical phase of Left Singularity, there's only one realistic response: *Let it burn*.

ADDED: It's about jobs.

ADDED: "Democrats nuked the ratchet" (roughly my argument,

but on MDMA).

November 21, 2013

Demo-babble

Fred Hiatt on the 'cold war' still raging in Hong Kong:

Anson Chan … rose through the prestigious Hong Kong civil service to the top appointed position of chief secretary, resigning in 2001 when she felt the chief executive was allowing Beijing to chip away at Hong Kong's core values: rule of law, a level playing field and freedom of press, speech and association. Since then, she said, democracy's hold has grown more precarious …

Did you spot the subtle *non sequitur*? (To resolve it requires some understanding of the fact that the precise, technical meaning of 'democracy' to experts like Hiatt is 'nice Westernish stuff we like'.)

April 8, 2014

Quote notes (#107)

The mainstream is running out:

In the broadcast media in particular, there is an implied assumption that "the Scotland moment" is something confined to

that country. But the reality across the UK suggests something much deeper and wider, and a simple enough fact: that what is happening north of the border is the most spectacular manifestation of a phenomenon taking root all over – indeed, if the splintering of politics and the rise of new forces on both left and right across Europe are anything to go by, a set of developments not defined by specific national circumstances, but profound social and economic ruptures.

Here, Labour and the Conservatives have recently been scoring their lowest combined share of support. Organisationally, they are both hollowed out and increasingly staffed by wet-behind-the-ears apparatchiks who only compound the parties' distance from the public. Whether justifiably or not, millions of British people have passed through holding politicians in contempt and now treat them with cold indifference. Let's face it: the only thing keeping all this alive is the electoral system.

(The whole opinion piece is well worth reading, on panic-socialist Colin Crouch's 'post-democracy' observations in particular. You know things are really beginning to get desperate when the Left begins to have interesting thoughts.)

September 12, 2014

Quotable (#162)

The Left-Liberal agony:

There's more to a democracy than just the holy scripture of the constitution — there are also sacred numbers: election results. Together, words and numbers mold a country's politics. In this process, the constitution is the constant while election represent a dynamic element. In the near future, this could also present a problem in several places: Election results are expected to deliver the wrong numbers. In Austria, a right-wing populist might get elected president. This could also happen in the United States. Germany's AfD and France's Front National have also attracted strong minority followings. A right-wing populist brush fire has become conceivable.

It wasn't so very long ago that regime legitimation through popular will seemed like a great idea to just about everybody. Now it's looking disturbingly like a blank check, in the hands of an unpredictable maniac.

(On the Outer Right, of course, the historical diagnosis is quite straightforward: *Democracy first destroys the people, and then falls prey to them*. The Ancients would have found it odd that anybody could imagine this to be a new idea.)

May 18, 2016

Civil War II

… is looking like the one thing everyone can agree on (1, 2, 3, linked in order of escalation).

Prompt via.

January 20, 2017

Quote note (#332)

Eli Lake on the Flynn flip:

In the end, it was Trump's decision to cut Flynn loose. In doing this he caved in to his political and bureaucratic opposition. [Republican chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Representative Devin] Nunes told me Monday night that this will not end well. "First it's Flynn, next it will be Kellyanne Conway, then it will be Steve Bannon, then it will be Reince Priebus," he said. Put another way, Flynn is only the appetizer. Trump is the entree.

If there's not much more to this than there looks, it's hard to see it as anything but an unforced invitation to the hyenas. Or, turned around the other way, if Trump turns out to be anything like as incompetent as his opponents predict, he's toast.

February 15, 2017

Trump on Syria

Here's the public (Twitter) record, compiled in chronological order from May 2013. Not much indication of ambiguity.

If a nose-dive back into neoconservative meddling follows from this, it's hard to see what could ever count as a credible commitment again. Anything not on a blockchain will be senseless noise.

ADDED: Things are getting stupid quickly.

April 6, 2017

CHAPTER FOUR - FRAYING AT THE EDGES

Democratization is Done

The idea that political seriousness can be evacuated from any situation by invoking (purely procedural) 'democratic' norms was always an evasion. It was a way to avoid the reality of 'who-whom', and thus dependent upon a haze of Cathedralist insincerity. The implicit selling point — "Don't worry, the rabble will accept representatives that we can work with" — isn't bought by anybody anymore. Things have gone wrong badly enough, often enough, for such promises to have been discounted down to zero.

If you don't want the rabble in power, you have to keep them from power. That's the simple, and now overt, understanding of the dawning post-demotic age. Michael Hirsh doesn't like it at all:

As the Egyptian military consolidates control by murdering pro-Muslim Brotherhood protesters and declaring a state of emergency, we may be witnessing the most dangerous potential for Arab radicalization since the two Palestinian intifadas. Despite the

resignation Wednesday of Mohamed ElBaradei, the vice president, in opposition to the Egyptian junta's action, the discomfiting fact is that most of Egypt's liberal "democrats"—along with the United States—have never looked more hypocritical. If the bloody crackdown is allowed to continue while the U.S. and West do nothing, the actions of the Egyptian military could de-legitimize democratic change in the Arab world for a generation or more.

Read *without judgement*, Hirsh's article is a fascinating document, punctuated by a raging despair that marks a transition of aeons. "Egypt's liberal 'democrats'" can either change course in accordance with their name (as Hirsh would like, but does not expect), or they can teach the world that 'liberal democrats' know nothing of global political reality, and need to call themselves something new. A sound name would describe a plausible, though ambitious, aspiration: **Modernity in Power** (freed of democratic dreams). It will still be a while before we hear anything of this kind, but its intimations are not — any longer — difficult to detect.

ADDED: Crossing the Rubicon: "While we Americans are babbling about a new politics of 'inclusiveness', even some of the Twitter-Facebook liberals of Tahrir Square are coming to see Egypt as it is. Us or them."

August 15, 2013

Meanwhile, in India …

… there's something happening that might even be bigger than Project Idaho.

With two weeks left to go before electoral results are in, the world's largest democracy seems set to veer hard right, to an extent unprecedented in its modern history. There's a leftish but informative briefing on the ideological stakes at *Quartz*.



NRx has nothing to teach me about hats.

NRx tends to be quite insular, often out of semi-articulate principle, so nobody (other than enemies) seems to have paid much attention to this yet. That's odd, upon reflection, because the Modi BJP seems to be juggling Trichotomy issues of a familiar kind within its Hindutva platform, which glues together a quasi-stable raft of religious, ethno-nationalist, and capitalistic elements into an explicitly reactionary-modernizing coalition. When the 21st century is allotted to Asia, it's for a reason. The West's vague premonitions are urgent practicalities

there.

Should NRx be waving the Modi banner with enthusiasm? There are some obvious reasons for caution (beside dim parochialism). Most centrally, the role of democracy in the BJP wave is strongly analogous to that afflicting the 20th century European far right, and the record of reactionary demotism scores a straight 'F'. Democratic pressures suck the right into an ideological black-hole, since the only parts of its agenda that hit the tingle-spot with the masses are its crudest appeals to atavistic sentiment. Cognitive regression is the inevitable price of popularity.

It follows, then, that Indian developments are more likely to provide another lesson in political tragedy than a torch of inspiration. Unless an incoming Modi regime moves quickly to begin dismantling the structure of Indian democracy (sadly, an unimaginable prospect), its modernizing competence will eventually fall prey to mob impulses, as the people — once again — get the government they deserve.

For NRx, I suspect, the essential lesson will be a deepened understanding of the toxicity of populism, even if it seems — momentarily — to be flowing in the right direction. Still, dogmatism has no respectable place in such matters. If something more positive, and complex, comes out of this, *Outside in* will be among the first to applaud it.

ADDED: Panic!

ADDED: Jason Burke on Modi and us: *… among huge numbers of people … globalisation is a conversation from which, metaphorically and practically, they are excluded. That conversation takes place in English and it is worth noting that Modi will be the first leader of such prominence and power in India who, like the vast majority of his compatriots, is uncomfortable in what has become the world's language. […] On the political track, our diplomats and politicians inevitably favour those who resemble them most closely. That usually means anglophone moderates or, as they are often termed locally, "liberals". There is also an inherent and inevitable journalistic bias towards those who share reporters', viewers' and readers' language and cultural references, however superficial.*

May 4, 2014

Modified

The *Outside in* preemptive disillusionment with Indian reaction in power is already on record. Nevertheless, this is going to be big. Over half a billion people went to the polls to make it happen. Progressive teleology isn't heading where it's supposed to. (UK communist media are covering it quite well.)



Congress, one of the most despicable political organizations on earth, has been crushed like a bug. The implications of that are roughly comparable to the detonation of a dirty nuke at Davos, so a modest period of celebration would be wholly understandable. Unfortunately, while Modi's historic victory is a massive global lurch to reaction, it is also a surreptitious triumph of democracy, and we've seen the way this plays out before.

From the Thatcher / Reagan experience in the West, there are lessons about the democratic limitation of general application to the Right. The first, already briefly touched upon in the previous Modi post, is that democracy demands populism. Since capitalistic deregulation triggers a demagogic counter-attack from the Left, it is inevitably supported — politically — by a platform of 'social conservatism' that is driven into ever cruder atavism, until it cannibalizes the policy agenda of the government. The more a regime seeks, under democratic conditions, to move the economy rightwards, the more it is politically compelled to appeal to tribal

emotion, while diverting its energies into totemism. Eventually, all that remains is a culture war, in which a confused Right is reduced to the pre-defeated posture of seeking to slow change down. When the pendulum swings — as democracy ensures it will — it exposes the archetypal political truth: a fast-left party then replaces a slow-left party, with the eventually victory of 'progress' never having been seriously in doubt.

Any democratic 'right-wing' party in power has won an election, and is thus infused with a sense of its popular virility. This is a psychological catastrophe — and in fact a latent psychosis — from which it never recovers. The ratchet, patiently, continues.

Democratic politics also corrodes right-wing economic policy even more directly. The lesson from Reaganism is especially stark. From the beginning, political competence is expressed by a single dominant insight: any gains made by a right-wing administration in the direction of fiscal responsibility is simply a savings account for the opposition. It can be predicated, with absolute confidence, that each step painfully taken away from public insolvency will be reversed, with opposite political sign, as soon as the Left gets its turn once again. Thus, the Reaganite stance that any intelligent conservative government is bound to the proclamation 'deficits don't matter'. It is only by keeping public finances hard up against the edge of bankruptcy that fiscal laxity can be prevented from reverting to its natural state, as a fund available for the promotion of leftward

social acceleration. Private saving is profoundly compromised by democratic governance. Public saving — or even moderated indebtedness — is simply impossible.

There is no way at all that Modi can restore Indian fiscal health under the democratic conditions he inherits (and which he will certainly preserve). The idea that he might attempt to do so is a delusion.

Nevertheless, there are things a Modi regime could do, which are worth doing. In rough order of priority and practicality they include:

(1) A holocaust of red-tape, in the interest of industrialization. The Indian manufacturing sector, employing approximately 15% of the workforce, is half the size that might be expected if business conditions were less impaired by legal-bureaucratic obstruction. Huge economic gains could be made relatively quickly if companies could be created more easily and closed down without any need for official permission, while hiring and firing employees according to market signals. Modi knows enough to see what is required. First ask the Marxists to describe their most nightmarish conception of an exploitative capitalist labor-market, and then do that.

(2) While fiscal continence is politically impossible, it should at least be possible to re-orient public spending towards infrastructure (and away from transfer payments). Copying China would be sensible. High-speed rail networks, urban mass-transit systems, roads, power grids, water and sewerage, high-bandwidth

communications, space-programs … since vast amounts of public money have to be wasted, those are the ways to do it. They accumulate capital, create business opportunities and employment, teach technical skills, and leave something real behind when the bubbles pop.

(3) Scrap as many affirmative action quotas as possible. This is an opportunity to do cynical culture wars stuff that actually does some good.

(4) Prepare for the return of the Left, by decentralizing government, empowering the states, reducing inter-regional economic transfers, innovating constitutional obstacles to socialist policy, and building right-wing economic redoubts capable of resisting a future Leftist central administration. This is all very obvious, but it's equally obvious why even seriously conservative central governments find it difficult to do. It would help if they more clearly understood that they're going to lose — that's what democracy means — so they should seize the opportunity to get their revenge in first.

NRx shouldn't make a fool of itself by getting excited about Modi. What's happening in India isn't nothing, though. It's nowhere close to being nothing.

ADDED: Tavleen Singh —

… I tweeted that I had covered every election since 1977 and had never seen anything like the frenetic fervour of the crowds on

the streets of Benaras. This caused a torrent of insults on Twitter, so I went that evening to Papu's chai shop for a reality check. At this teashop in a teeming, squalid square near the Assi Ghat gather politicians, thinkers, philosophers, political analysts and students. They sit on wooden benches near an open drain and discuss the problems of the world. On an earlier visit, I discovered that the level of political discourse was higher than in Delhi because people speak without worrying about being labelled 'fascist' or 'communal'.

ADDED: Some cautious optimism from Geeta Anand and Gordon Fairclough in the WSJ, but: "Modi is unlikely to substantially undo any of the subsidy programs on which millions rely for jobs and food. […] Analysts think big-bang reforms, such as changing labor laws to let companies hire and fire more easily or undertaking large-scale privatizations of state enterprises, are unlikely." Still — "Tales of [Modi's] bravery are chronicled in a comic book that shows him swimming through crocodile-infested waters to plant a flag on top of a Hindu temple."

May 16, 2014

Death Rattle

"If you care about democracy in the world, we are in trouble."

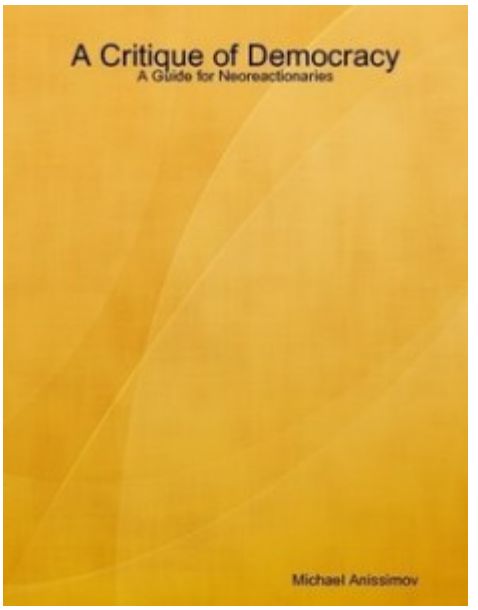
Savor the exquisite taste of Jacobin tears.

("We should bet heavily on this battle of information and ideas. It is a battle we can win. … we need to promote the spirit of democracy." Larry Diamond is quite clearly one of the most dangerous lunatics alive in the world today.)

October 30, 2014

Against Democracy

Michael Anissimov has published an e-book condensing the main Neoreactionary (and in fact older Right-Libertarian) arguments against democracy. The first chapter can be read here, the book purchased from here.



February 2, 2015

Political Correction

It's increasingly hard to find anybody of even moderate articulacy (other than professional propagandists / unapologetic communists) with a kind word for democracy these days. Marc Faber, it turns out, hasn't. Here he is in conversation with the (re-animated) *Daily Bell*:

Marc Faber: I hope so, but this is one of the problems of democracy, that you have dynasties, and so I'm increasingly leaning to the question whether actually democracies function nowadays.
Daily Bell: Indeed, it would be hard to find a functioning democracy. Can you point to any at this point?
Marc Faber: That I don't know but everybody thinks that every dictator is evil. In Asia, we've had very fast growth in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore under non-democratic regimes. Even today in Singapore you have some kind of democracy but not a true democracy. In Hong Kong we don't have democracy; it hasn't ever been there for the last 150 years. […] I don't know. I'm just saying that to sit there and say democracy is the best system in the whole world is maybe not the correct view.

March 21, 2015

Popcorn Night

Under such popcorn bombardment here it's impossible to think, so we might as well at least go for the quality stuff:

The significance of this asymmetry is that liberals have the power to legitimize the existence of problems. They can alone enter things into evidence, as it were. Max Ehrenfreund, writing in the Washington Post, has a gathered a list of discontents from various publications that are now being talked about even in liberal circles, which means the population at large can talk about them now. Liberals set the agenda, when they talk about things going down the tubes then it's on the agenda. Here are some things it's now relatively OK to bring up. … […] … But probably the biggest shock talking point is Robert Reich's assertion that the US is in a sort of pre-revolutionary stew of discontent, after nearly seven years of Obama. In an article titled The Revolt Against the Ruling Class Reich says that "the biggest political phenomenon in America today is a revolt against the "ruling class" of insiders that have dominated Washington for more than three decades." … Jim Tankersley, writing in the Washington Post elaborates on the same theme. … The new narrative is that America is in crisis. "Unexpectedly," one might add. … Which direction you go will depend on your party. The Democrats will argue for more carbon controls, more immigration, Single Payer, more deals with foreign dictators, etc. The Republicans will argue

for more GOP Senators and Congressmen to be elected to Capitol Hill — after which they will vote for more carbon controls, more immigration, Single Payer, more deals with foreign dictators, etc. … We have it on good liberal authority that there's a copious amount [of] tinder and straw scattered all over the floor. If one day a spark should start a fire, it won't be due as much to the intensity of the spark as the abundance of fuel. … Perhaps the most most potent forces for change are disruptive technologies that undermine established elites. A "revolt against the ruling class" still concedes their capacity to rule; it is the destruction of their basis to rule by innovation that is a more fundamental threat.

August 7, 2015

Quote note (#208)

At *Vox* (some Yule cheer):

Political scientists have long known that "government legitimacy," or the popularity of particular administrations, is going down. But many of them have argued that "regime legitimacy," or citizens' attachment to democracy as a political system, is as strong as ever. Our research shows that this is just not true: Attachment to democracy has fallen over time, and from one generation to the next. … For Americans born in the 1930s, living in a democracy holds

virtually sacred importance. Asked on a scale of 1 to 10 how important it is to them to live in a democracy, more than 70 percent give the highest answer. But many of their children and grandchildren are lukewarm. Among millennials — those born since the 1980s — fewer than 30 percent say that living in a democracy is essential.

ADDED: Let's change the subject — "Perhaps the time has come for us all to ask how much we really value democracy, and to start discussing how much more expressive and responsive it could be in this technological age. Change is coming. The big question now is how good we are going to be at shaping the sorts of change that can renew democracy instead of stunting and blunting it." The faster ruin is brought to the only societies on Earth with some prospect of supporting democracy, the more of these kind of diversionary conversations we can expect.

December 21, 2015

Democratic Deconsolidation

Crucial reading:

What does it mean, in concrete terms, for democracy to be the only game in town? In our view, the degree to which a democracy is consolidated depends on three key characteristics: the degree of

popular support for democracy as a system of government; the degree to which antisystem parties and movements are weak or nonexistent; and the degree to which the democratic rules are accepted. […] This empirical understanding of democratic consolidation opens up conceptual space for the possibility of "democratic deconsolidation." In theory, it is possible that, even in the seemingly consolidated democracies of North America and Western Europe, democracy may one day cease to be the "only game in town": Citizens who once accepted democracy as the only legitimate form of government could become more open to authoritarian alternatives. […] … It is at least plausible to think that such a process of democratic deconsolidation may already be underway in a number of established democracies in North America and Western Europe. […] … In a world where most citizens fervently support democracy, where antisystem parties are marginal or nonexistent, and where major political forces respect the rules of the political game, democratic breakdown is extremely unlikely. It is no longer certain, however, that this is the world we live in. […] … As democracies deconsolidate, the prospect of democratic breakdown becomes increasingly likely — even in parts of the world that have long been spared such instability. If political scientists are to avoid being blindsided by the demise of established democracies in the coming decades, as they were by the fall of communism a few decades ago, they need to find out whether democratic deconsolidation is

happening; to explain the possible causes of this development; to delineate its likely consequences (present and future); and to ponder the potential remedies.

Considerable statistical evidence (provided in the paper) supports this alarmed conclusion.

(Drezner is nervous.)

Previously by the paper's authors, Roberto Foa and Yascha Mounk, making the same thesis here, and here.

ADDED: At *The American Interest*: "The dark specter of illiberalism across the West is symptomatic of a deep and broad-based decline in confidence in democratic institutions and ideas that has been taking place for two decades. Champions of liberalism need to think hard about how to reverse this—and soon—because as Foa and Mounk point out, the floor could fall out from under our feet all at once." (Systematic confusion of democracy and liberalism is to be expected at this stage of cultural ruin, but it's still irritating.)

August 7, 2016

SECTION D - CRITIQUE OF LIBERTARIANISM

The Lost Cause

Why do some (awkward) libertarians sympathize with the Confederacy? Asks David Bernstein at *The Volokh Conspiracy*. This is probably as reasonable as mainstream libertarianism is ever going to get on the lost cause, but it still manages to muddy an intrinsically pellucid point.

Even those libertarians who do adopt a Rothbardian/Chomskyite view of foreign policy, or who for any other reason beyond racism wish the Union would have let the Confederacy secede peacefully, are making a mistake in defending the Confederacy–the enemy of one's enemy isn't necessarily a friend. But I just wanted to point out that I think a significant amount of libertarian sympathy for the Confederacy in the circles where it exists is really a product of intense distaste for the U.S. government and its post-Civil War record [along with, as a commenter notes, a general sympathy for

the right of secession] rather than a considered view of the Confederacy's own record.

Setting aside the Chomsky distraction, there's an almost painful struggle to be fair going on here — but then the brackets ruin everything. Secession is the key, irrespective of the course taken by the Union, *because the Union itself only exists due to a successful war of secession*. If the USA was legitimately born out of war of independence, then it was illegitimately perpetuated by the suppression of the subsequent war of independence which would have divided it. Placing the onus on libertarian confederates to explain themselves — or to have an explanation advanced on their behalf — gets the order of logical obligation completely upside down.

Of course, the Articles of Confederation preceded the American Constitution. Confederation was not impudently demanded in the mid-19th century, but stripped away by an emergent central power in the late-18th century. In combination, these assaults on decentralized government have rendered American political history almost entirely opaque to itself. *Confederation is the primordial expression of American independence*.

Yet, from a practical point of view, none of this really matters, because America's racial nightmare drowns everything out, binding dreams of redemption so intimately to concentrated power that freedom is reduced to ever-more-marginalized *crimethink*. Under these circumstances, the pretense of reason seems merely absurd.

July 21, 2013

The Reaper

Recent rumors of blog death in the reactosphere have been greatly exaggerated, but elsewhere — not so much. For sheer weirdness, it's hard to beat the announcement of *The Oil Drum*'s closure at *The Daily Bell* — an event of huge significance for the fate of the Peak Oil 'promotion', we were assured — and one almost immediately followed by the closure of … *The Daily Bell*. (Here's the farewell post, although I'm reluctant to link to a self-declared corpse.)

By simple analogy, can we assume this death is also overflowing with meaning? Has the DB's signature brand of libertarian conspiracy theorizing been terminated for a reason? If so, there aren't any clues to be found in Anthony Wile's quite bizarrely uninformative good-bye note.

I'm guessing my vague melancholy on the subject won't find many echoes out here on the right fringe. "Another bunch of nutty libertarians go over the cliff, big deal" might not be a bad guess at the average response, if it didn't so clearly underestimate the prevailing indifference (I don't recall anybody else linking to them on anything). They were strong advocates of the "Internet Reformation", ushering in a new epoch of liberty worldwide, as the scheming "global elite"

were forced to take a “step back”, their “directed history” undone by electronic “truth-telling”.

I’m taking it that has all been swept off the table now, Peak Oil-style. It never did quite seem nasty enough to be real.

July 17, 2013

Atlas Mugged

As part of the ongoing celebrations of Prophecy Month at *Outside in*, we present a (short) three part series by Lars Seier Christensen of Saxo Bank on the historical prescience of Ayn Rand (one, two, three). While some distance from high theory, even the most Rand-averse should be able to take something interesting away from this series, whether by considering it as a significant ethnographic — and even religious — phenomenon, or by appraising it as a structured forecast. The foundations (laid in part one) certainly seem realistic enough: “… free capitalism has not really been experienced by many people alive today. […] The strange hybrid of western societies … allows only limited capitalism to create enough wealth to support a wider range of political and social ambitions, largely controlled by anti-capitalists.”

Christensen asks: *does the world look increasingly like the politically saturated, anti-capitalist stagnatopia she envisaged?* If the

evaluation of Rand is restricted to these terms, her claim to attention seems assured. The conclusion:

If we don't succeed in changing the values and direction of at least the next generation, I fear the full prediction of Atlas Shrugged will become reality and while that may hold some promise for the distant future, it is not something that I think people of my age feel like going through if we can avoid it.

Given the Cathedral — which is to say, pedagogical (and propagandistic) anti-capitalism in power — Christensen's hope for a generational shift in "values and direction" sounds like a prayer to a dead God. That leaves only Cassandra, and tragic truths.

(Via.)

January 8, 2014

Right on the Money (#1)

Of all the reasons to read Kant, the most important is to understand Mises, and thus the template for a functional world (however unobtainable). Austrian economics, as formulated in *Human Action*, consists exclusively of systematically assembled *synthetic a priori* propositions. Insofar as action is in fact directed by practical reason, the conclusions of organized praxeology *cannot be wrong*.

It is pointless to ask an Austrian Economist whether he 'believes'

a rise in the minimum wage will increase unemployment (above the level it would otherwise be). The praxeological construction of economic law is indifferent to empirical regularity, as to anything less certain than rational necessity. Does one 'believe' that 2 + 2 = 4? No, one *knows* it, because the irreducible values of the signs compel the conclusion, and are inextricable from it. There could be no value '2' unless its doubling equaled '4', or any meaning to 'wage' unless its doubling reduced demand for labor. Empirically sensitive Austrianism isn't Austrian at all.

Like game theory, Austrianism applies wherever rational agents seek to maximize advantage. Perhaps, as Moldbug argues, it is comparable to Euclidean geometry — another *synthetic a priori* construction — embedded, as a special case, within a more general model, unconstrained by the presupposition of intelligible purposes.

The problem with Mises as guru is that Misesian classical liberalism (or Rothbardian libertarianism) is like Newtonian physics. It is basically correct within its operating envelope. Under unusual conditions it breaks down, and a more general model is needed. The equation has another term, the ordinary value of which is zero. Without this term, the equation is wrong. Normally this is no problem; but if the term is ***not zero****, the error becomes visible.*

As a matter of historical fact, this is how the neoreactionary departure from pure libertarianism has occurred. It has stumbled upon non-zero curvature in the domain of political economy, and —

unable to comfort itself through the dismissal of this discovery — it has precipitated an intellectual crisis, through which it spreads. Whether faithfully Carlylean, or not, it insists upon a generalization of realism beyond expectations of liberal order. Civilization is the fragile solution to a deeper problem, not a stable foundation to be assumed — as a parallel postulate — by subsequent, elaborate calculations.

What does this make of money? Can Austrianism be modified, by systematic transformations, that adapt it to the dark intrusion of neoreactionary realism? That is a question recent discussions have already introduced.

ADDED: Spandrell triggers a related discussion.

May 22, 2013

Hayek and Pinochet

Despite the left slant, this examination of Hayek's involvement with the Chilean Pinochet regime is calm and informative enough to be worth reading (via). Its relevance to numerous recent discussions on the extreme right is clear.

Given everything we know about Hayek—his horror of creeping socialism, his sense of the civilizational challenge it posed; his belief that great men impose their will upon society ("The conservative

*peasant, as much as anybody else, owes his way of life to a different type of person, to men who were innovators in their time and who by their innovations forced a new manner of living on people belonging to an earlier state of culture"); his notion of elite legislators ("If the majority were asked their opinion of all the changes involved in progress, they would probably want to prevent many of its necessary conditions and consequences and thus ultimately stop progress itself. I have yet to learn of an instance when the deliberate vote of the majority (**as distinguished from the decision of some governing elite**) has decided on such sacrifices in the interest of a better future"); and his sense of political theory and politics as an epic confrontation between the real and the yet-to-be-realized—perhaps the Pinochet question needs to be reframed. The issue is not "How could he have done what he did?" but "How could he not?"*

(I agree with Corey Robin that the 'Schmittian' element in Hayek's thinking remains an unresolved theoretical problem, but his concrete judgments — as detailed here — strike me as consistently sound.)

June 28, 2013

Confused Cato

By coincidence I was recalling this Cato-hosted essay by Peter Thiel,

in which he states: “I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.” It isn’t a message the Cato Institute is able to digest.

Consider this article by Juan Carlos Hidalgo (from the Cato Institute’s Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity). Headlined ‘How socialism has destroyed Venezuela’ it tracks the descent of what “was once South America’s richest country” into a hellish, crime-wracked, economic ruin. Socialist insanity is, of course, the immediate cause. How, though, did socialism become Venezuelan public policy? This is a question Hidalgo seems unable to imagine, let alone answer.

The account, as far as it goes, is unexceptionable:

Driving the unrest is a large segment of the population that is fed up with the country’s rapidly deteriorating economy. Despite receiving over $1 trillion in oil revenues since 1999, the government has run out of cash and now relies heavily on printing money to finance itself. The result is the highest inflation rate in the world: officially 56 per cent last year, although according to calculations by Steve Hanke of Johns Hopkins University, the implied annual inflation rate is actually 330 per cent.

The government reacted to skyrocketing inflation by following the typical socialist script: it imposed draconian price controls and has been raiding businesses it accuses of hoarding. As a result, there are widespread shortages of food and medicines, and people have to endure hour-long lines in supermarkets. The scarcity index produced

by Venezuela's central bank reached 28 per cent in January, meaning that one out of four basic products is out of stock at any given time. Somehow, toilet paper is now more valuable than paper money.

The productive sector has been decimated after hundreds of nationalisations and expropriations. Oil now accounts for 96 per cent of export earnings, up from 80 per cent a decade ago. Moreover, due to gross mismanagement at PDVSA, the state oil monopoly, production has dropped by 28 per cent since 2000, the only major energy producer in the world to experience a decline in the last quarter of a century.

The economic hardship faced by Venezuelans is compounded by a horrific rise in crime. The country is now one of the most dangerous places in the world, with almost 25,000 homicides in 2013 – a murder rate of 79 killings per 100,000 inhabitants. One of the reasons the protests are growing, despite the government's brutal repression, is that the country is quickly becoming unlivable and many Venezuelans think that they have nothing to lose.

We get it (really); socialism is the path to chaotic ruin. And the path to socialism? Here Hidalgo switches without the slightest hint of reflective awareness from perceptive acuity to self-subverting cognitive confusion:

For many years [Venezuela] was also a remarkable democracy in a region where most nations were ruled by military dictatorships. Today, socialism has turned Venezuela into an authoritarian basket

case that thousands try to escape every year. With millions of Venezuelans no longer willing to put up with deteriorating living conditions, and a government willing to take whatever means necessary to hold on to power, it looks like the worst is yet to come.

So over the course of "many years" democratic Venezuela transformed into a socialist catastrophe. Are the Cato story tellers going to suggest a narrative for this, or are they going to let us do it for them?

ADDED: Maduro's war on "fascism" driven by invincible idealism: "We will guarantee everyone has a plasma television."

ADDED: From the Left: "What has emerged in Venezuela is a new bureaucratic class who are themselves the speculators and owners of this new and failing economy." (Weird the way that always happens.)

February 26, 2014

Umlaut

It's probably less true with each passing week that Neoreaction can be accurately described as a small, dispersed population of *libertarians mugged by reality*. Nevertheless, it is part of NRx heritage that such a characterization made considerable sense in the past. There should be no surprise that between libertarianism and

NRx a significant zone of complex friction and interchange can be found. Right now, *Umlaut* is the media motor of such contact.

This is more than a little strange. Partly, it is odd because *Umlaut*'s CATO institute parent is the principle representative of respectable libertarianism, feeding ideas into the political process (where they are of course completely ignored), while stressing a non-threatening strain of Statist harm reduction, rather than the rougher anti-state antagonism of the Mises Institute, or even the dope-head dissidence of *Reason*. Secondly, it seems an unlikely follow up to this.

Michael Anissimov, whose precious bodily fluids are free of all libertarian contamination, has put out a red flag post on the recent peculiar intimacy, taking the Kuznicki horror as representative of the genre. His post, which contains valuable information about the institutional structure and media presence of various libertarian organs, concludes that *Umlaut* is the "libertarians' real, on-the-ground outlet for ideology." (The original version also noted that the public outreach of *CATO Unbound* had peaked with Peter Thiel's decisively important remark: "I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.")

This tweet is almost certainly relevant:

> How can we promote the right leadership when people are being influenced by Mises and his anti-authoritarian ideals?
>
> — Michael Anissimov (@MikeAnissimov) February 17,

2014

Handle has pursued a deeper engagement, specifically with (*Umlaut*'s) Adam Gurri. (This blog has a limited, and schizoid, relationship with the magazine, from fear and loathing last October, to intrigued. Two further — excellent — *Umlaut* articles bridged the gap here from raised-hackles to friendly woofing.)

This development grates on a number of neuralgic NRx issues, which makes it enormously entertaining, intellectually stimulating, and strategically tangled. It plugs directly into the recent 'entryism' conversation, due to the libertarian connections of Patri Friedman (a focus of the J. Arthur Bloom piece.) Themes of exit, secession, and markets, among others, are all susceptible to inflammation from libertarian influences. Working out what NRx is, at its core, is inevitably complicated by ideological foreign entanglements, especially if the libertarian connection is mirrored — at the other extreme — by a no less tortuous negotiation over boundaries with the European New Right.

To underscore the latter point, NRx is reasonably analogized to a weak, fissile state, cross-cut by the machinations of superpowers (libertarianism and the ENR). Local 'nationalists' deploring all alien interference quickly find their positions undermined by the blatant dissymmetry of their concerns, driving them into polarization, conflict, collaboration, and counter-collaboration. Which Right is

right? The potential tension is extraordinary. It cannot possibly be less than interesting.

ADDED: Correction:

> @Outsideness FYI, The Umlaut is not affiliated with Cato (or any other organization).
>
> — Eli Dourado (@elidourado) February 17, 2014

ADDED: Michael Anissimov responds. Citing Moldbug (very adeptly), he remarks: "This is where myself and Nick Land part ways. I'm hooked on the Frederick the Great solution, he's hooked on the Hong Kong solution. Both are equally valid interpretations in light of the founding texts of Moldbug."

— Yes.

February 17, 2014

Libertarians are WEIRD

Mark Lutter advances the following thought experiment:

Earth is dying, unable to further sustain human life. Mankind has thrown their last resources into creating a space ship that can reach a habitable planet. However, the space ship can only carry 10,000 people and little is known about the planet beyond gravity and

oxygen levels. With the literal fate of humanity lying before us, who do we send and why?

After that, it gets WEIRD (± ++). In a nutshell, Lutter's 'we', while — apparently in absolute innocence — employed to represent the voice of humanity as a whole, is self-evidently processing the problem in a way that would make no sense beyond its own peculiar thede. 'We' could probably all come to the reasonable conclusion that only the Swiss get to survive. (Right?)

In passing, he notes that 'we' all agree multiculturalism is a dysfunctional mess: "For all the praise of multiculturalism, no one would seriously bet a diverse group of cultures would give the greatest chance for success. …" (The whole paragraph is a jaw-dropper.)

The main point, however: "Picking a cultural group to colonize a new planet and save humanity forces the mind to focus on positive and negative attributes of the cultural group." This perfectly exemplifies the *weirded out* intelligence of libertarians, expressed as a detached universalism wholly incognisant of its own deracination. The obvious rejoinder: *No one thinks like that* (except you guys). It might be over-compensation to suggest that two-thirds of the world's population would respond to the total extermination of the Swiss with vague amusement, but it's at least as plausible as Lutter's assumption that the good people of Helvetia would be neutrally evaluated, selected, and then cheered on as the sole remnant of

'humanity', to such an extent that *not being Swiss would be cheerfully accepted as an ethnic death sentence*.

This isn't meant to be any kind of denuciation — it's very possible Lutter is playing his (weird) audience hard, and doing something subversively dark around the back. As barb-hooked bait for libertarian nuttiness, his post is really something. I can't wait to see what his comment thread looks like.

ADDED: "I do not believe anything I wrote was terribly controversial …" (At least one of us has to be psychotically dissociated — not that there's anything wrong with that.)

November 11, 2014

Dark AnCap

As a matter of simple socio-cultural documentation, this is the thought-process that leads libertarian realists to discover they have crossed over to the Outer Right:

All people are not equal. In fact, two individuals who are in every socially discernible way the same, have an infinite number of differences between them. When those people have evolved for thousands of years in radically different environments, those people will have even greater differences between them. Such differences will include but not be limited to intelligence, propensity for violence,

and propensity for cooperation.
Any libertarian with the slightest bit of observational skills has to have noticed that we're mostly a movement of white males. They would also notice that there is no libertarian movement to speak of outside of cultures descendant from Europeans. This is not a weakness of libertarianism, as our leftist infiltrators attempt to insist. It is rather a very obvious indicator that white males have a greater natural inclination toward market cooperation than other peoples. To insist otherwise is nothing more than the denial of human nature, it is biological and cultural Marxism.

Leftists know this, and since they hate freedom, they hate white males. They will thus do everything in their power to destroy us before we manage to make any headway in advancing our ideas. This includes mass subsidized immigration from third world countries.
While our ideal society would have no government and thus no arbitrary geopolitical borders enforced by State mercenaries, the notion that there would be free and unrestricted travel the world over in the absence of the State is a remarkably ridiculous left wing idea. Borders are the whole point of freedom, as borders are demarcations of property rights.

It's the beginning, rather than the end, of a discussion. (XS finds a few quibble points, and far more in the rest of the post.) For anybody wondering about current mutations on the Libertarian Right, however, the basic structure of insight on exhibition here is the place

to start.

Euro-descended (and specifically Anglo-Dutch descended) males are differentially inclined to libertarian attitudes, to a remarkable degree (statistically speaking). Disentangling race and culture in this regard is far from straightforward. The sex-based dispositional difference is far less noisy. (Of course, the Marxoid explanation is that doubly-privileged Whites Males are defending their social advantages through this ideological preference.) Also notable, IMHO, is the (almost?) equally marked tendency of European peoples towards extreme, highly-idealized and morally-fanatic leftism — compared to the conceptually-fuzzy tribal and communitarian sensibilities widespread elsewhere. Bleeding-heart Left-libertarianism is about as distilled-White as anything ever gets — but with that remark, I'm already straying into the quibble-zone.

January 25, 2016

Quote (#255)

The Economist on Peter Thiel:

At his best, Mr Thiel was a mixture of libertarian and contrarian. As a student at Stanford University in the late 1980s and early 1990s he railed against the new academic orthodoxies of multiculturalism and diversity and political correctness, founding a conservative

*magazine, **Stanford Review**, and publishing an establishment-baiting book, "The Diversity Myth". He even defended a fellow law student, Keith Rabois, who decided to test the limits of free speech on campus by standing outside a teacher's residence and shouting "Faggot! Faggot! Hope you die of AIDS!" When he was a young tyro in Silicon Valley, his libertarian vision inspired many of his business decisions. He hoped that PayPal would help create a new world currency, free from government control and dilution, and that Facebook would help people form spontaneous communities outside traditional nation states.*

There is a darker element in his thinking today. In an essay written in 2009 for the Cato Institute, a libertarian think-tank, he declared that he no longer believed that "freedom and democracy are compatible", putting some of the blame for growing statism on the rise of welfare dependency and the enfranchisement of women. He added a grandiloquent coda: "The fate of our world may depend on the effort of a single person who builds or propagates the machinery of freedom that makes the world safe for capitalism".

(That final Thiel quote is *Sentences* material.)

Libertarianism either goes dark, or it dies of cognitive dissonance. The number of people seeing that — while small — is rising on a parabolic curve.

June 4, 2016

Libertarianism for Zombies

'Liberaltarian' isn't a word that's been heard much recently. Whilst aesthetics is surely part of the explanation, there's probably more to it than that. Most obviously, recent political developments in the United States have shown, beyond the slightest possibility of doubt, that modern 'liberalism' and the project of maximal state expansion are so completely indistinguishable that liberal-libertarian fusionism can only perform a comedy act. Garin K Hovannisian had already predicted this outcome down to its minute details before the 2008 Presidential Election. Ed Kilgore later conducted a complementary dismissal from the left. From *Reason* came the question "Is Liberaltarianism Dead? Or Was it Ever Alive in The First Place?" which sets us out on a zombie hunt.

Anybody here who has poked into this stuff, even just a little bit, is probably approaching shriek-point already: *In the name of everything holy please just let it remain in its grave*. It's too late for that. Liberaltarianism has been freshly exhumed specially for *Outside in* readers, and the zombie serum injected through its left eye, directly into the amygdala. It might seem rather ghoulish, but let us harden ourselves — *for science*. This absurd shambling specimen will help us to refine an elegant formula, of both ideological and historical interest.

Brink Lindsey offered the authoritative account:

Today's ideological turmoil, however, has created an opening for ideological renewal—specifically, liberalism's renewal as a vital governing philosophy. A refashioned liberalism that incorporated key libertarian concerns and insights could make possible a truly progressive politics once again—not progressive in the sense of hewing to a particular set of preexisting left-wing commitments, but rather in the sense of attuning itself to the objective dynamics of U.S. social development. In other words, a politics that joins together under one banner the causes of both cultural and economic progress.

Conservative fusionism, the defining ideology of the American right for a half-century, was premised on the idea that libertarian policies and traditional values are complementary goods. That idea still retains at least an intermittent plausibility—for example, in the case for school choice as providing a refuge for socially conservative families. But an honest survey of the past half-century shows a much better match between libertarian means and progressive ends. Most obviously, many of the great libertarian breakthroughs of the era—the fall of Jim Crow, the end of censorship, the legalization of abortion, the liberalization of divorce laws, the increased protection of the rights of the accused, the reopening of immigration—were championed by the political left.

Libertarian means and progressive ends. Could it imaginably be said more clearly? Liberty is legitimate if, and only if, it *serves* to promote the consolidation of the Cathedral (through chaotic

multicultural criminality), which is then retrospectively interpreted as the intrinsic *telos* of freedom. Whatever does not subordinate itself to this agenda is to have its brains eaten, and be systematically recycled into progressive zombie flesh. This is a project for libertarian hipsters and Leviathan apparatchiks to undertake hand-in-hand — fusionally. The new age of the cannibal is come.

Neoreactionaries are libertarians mugged by reality (to adapt a pre-coined phrase). This piece of socio-cultural understanding appears to be generally accepted, and rightly so. If it needs defending, that will have to happen elsewhere, but I have yet to see it seriously contested. Moldbug's own intellectual pedigree suffices to establish the claim on a solid foundation, but it is, in any case, far from aberrant in this regard. The recognition that libertarian ideas — despite their philosophical elegance and economic attractiveness — are not historically or politically realistic, has been the catalytic insight driving the development and adoption of neoreactionary alternatives, shorn of certain mythical elements inherited by the progressive clade (substantial egalitarianism most prominently). This is an empirically robust, uncontroversial story, but it is not yet a formula. It's time to take the next step.


Long ~~live~~ last science!

Has there yet emerged a neoreactionary who was once a 'liberaltarian'? This isn't a question designed to embarrass anybody. I just think the answer is easily predictable. When neoreactionary intelligence perceives this shambling wreckage of all cognitive integrity, it recoils into itself in utter revulsion. Everything it abominated about the libertarian delusion stands before it, trickling pitifully. This is the perfect caricature of its abandoned errors: an oozing swippleous mass of unreflective universalism. It's classical liberalism revived as an undead decay-plague. (If Karl wants to go after this thing with a shot-gun, I don't see anyone holding him back.)

The view from the unlibertarianized left is illuminating:

… the conscience of a Lindseyan liberaltarian is pretty darn liberal – with some policy disputes on top. When Lindsey stands with conservatives it is mostly on somewhat accidental (but not therefore inconsiderable) policy grounds. He thinks liberals tend to adopt self-defeating policies. When Lindsey stands with liberals it is mostly on philosophical grounds. This point fits in with the one I made in this

post, about different sorts of libertarians: basically liberal or basically feudal. If you are a feudal libertarian, you really shouldn't have a problem with Jim Crow, in principle. If you are a liberal libertarian, you should. Conservative libertarians tend to be on the fence, feudalism/liberalism-wise. (This depends partly on a cheeky use of 'feudal' – see my post. But, then again, what was Edmund Burke? a guy who was torn between liberalism and feudalism. That's not such a bad sketch of his personality-type.)

Strangely, we're still talking about Jim Crow — as if the entire meaning of American history is expressed through that. The target here is Barry Goldwater, but it makes no substantial difference if Ron Paul is substituted. The critical point, in both cases, is that a reluctance to countenance the expansion of the political sphere in pursuit of racial egalitarianism is interpreted as a moral scandal, for which an ostentatious sacrifice of liberty is the only permissible solution. Negligence is already 'feudalism'. When this dam bursts — into 'liberaltarian' compromise — the micro-managerial state has already been granted everything it will need to ask for. Stamping out feudalism makes you free. (It works like this.)

If it wasn't for Hoppe, it would perhaps be understandable if the shuddering neoreactionary (N) were to suspect that libertarian thought (L0) tends — slowly but inevitably — to compost down towards this liberaltarian (L1) 'walker', in which all the degenerative forces of conformism *and* revolt have been compacted,

as if by some ideological parody of providence. Is not our liberaltarian zombie the still-recognizable avatar of the old liberalism, resurrected hideously as the animated putrescence of the new? Yet we have Hoppe, and so we know that the directives of self-coordinating liberty need not take this path. There is, unmistakably, something other to libertarianism than what is seen in the figure of its zombified, liberaltarian ruin. Through a type of negative political theology, we can formulate it:

Lo – L1 = N

First, identify every specifically emphatic feature of liberaltarianism, then subtract it without residue from the old Austro-libertarian matrix, and what remains is the neoreactionary template — abstracted due to the provisional (negative) place-holders for yet undeveloped topics: presumed non-equality, non-universality, non-progress (in socio-cultural matters), and at least partial non-autonomy (of the economic agent from fragile structures of civility). Slaying the zombie does not, in itself, fill these gaps — but it *holds open the gaps*, and therefore the avenues of neoreactionary exploration.

As a rule of thumb: whatever Will Wilkinson is having, I'll have the opposite. If the liberaltarian innovation is conceived as a vector, its exact negation sets the neoreactionary course. With this conclusion, science is served. We can return the corpse of a misconceived 'progressive' liberty to its grave, or rather, to the cyclopean

mausoleum it has made for itself: the liberal super-state which protects freedom in detail, with unbounded attentiveness, until it has been obliterated entirely from the earth.

ADDED: Weeping isn't an argument.

ADDED: Foseti provokes and hosts an interesting discussion on the genealogy of neoreaction, by remarking: "My favorite question to ask fellow reactionaries is how they got to neoreaction. What steps did they take in their ideological journey? My last stop was on the Old Right, but I got there from libertarianism."

September 10, 2013

Failure

Markets fail, so we need to rely on government sometimes (or often) to set things straight. — That's probably the single most comical piece of commonplace insanity in the world today. All kinds of people fall for it, even those who seem otherwise capable of coherent cognitive processing.

Chris Edwards puts together an impressive short (and implicit) demolition.

Fernandez' summary of the Edwards post is even better (so I've left the link to him):

Chris Edwards at the Cato Institute believes there should be a

National Museum of Government Failure. He argues that the displays at the Smithsonian would pale into insignificance if set beside the awe-inspiring sight of such things as the "$349 million on a rocket test facility that is completely unused", the Superconducting Collider whose ruins include nearly 15 miles of tunnel and the ex-future Yucca Mountain nuclear waste site. Yet these artifacts, whose scale would surpass many a Lost City, are far from the worst failures. The biggest fiascos by dollar value are the various government programs designed to win the war on drugs or poverty which after having spent trillions of dollars fruitlessly, lie somewhere in an unmarked bureaucratic grave.

A price tag doesn't do justice to these calamities, which are not only wasteful, but positively and perversely harmful, but it's a start. The category of 'waste' itself fails here, because it would actually be less culturally toxic for all the resources squandered on social programs to be simply annihilated into hyperspace without remainder. Ruinous dependency incentives would then be hugely lessened.

Of course, the idea that dysfunctional political institutions will cooperate with their own public humiliation is also a piece of lunacy (and this time, one that beltway libertarians are peculiarly prone to).

ADDED: Highly relevant.

January 20, 2015

Is Libertarianism Racist?

… a question taken verbatim from a short, but perfect, Foseti post (from 2012).

(XS misses that guy.)

Anyone looking for a primer on how the hyper-liberal right goes dark will find it there. 'Perfect' means it can't be improved upon.

Don't miss Handle's comment, which fills out the party-political dimension.

ADDED (Park MacDougald):

If it sounds strange to say that libertarianism is "white," well, it's still true. Libertarianism is, empirically, really goddamn white, and some have suggested that that may not be a coincidence: That is, libertarianism makes assumptions about what's normal for everyone on the basis of the white experience. Normally, that's a point made by the left as a criticism, but the whiteness of libertarianism is increasingly accepted by post-libertarian reactionaries like Moldbug as a badge of honor. It could also indicate a wider trend in the future, if a combination of demographic changes and political projects to "make whiteness visible" lead more white people to think of cultural values like individual rights as tied to whiteness, rather than as universal principles. Certainly Trump's brand of nationalism seems to rest on doing something similar with the idea of "America," abandoning any pretense to a creedal idea of national identity in

*favor of one based on race. These trends could well produce, among whites, more conscious anti-racists **and** conscious racists at the same time.*

ADDED: CATO dissents.

June 12, 2016

Suicidal Libertarianism

Confession No.1: I generally like Don Boudreaux's writing a lot.

Confession No.2: I think this is simply insane. By that I mean: I simply don't get it, at all.

Boudreaux begins by explaining the concerns of a "few friends whose opinions I hold in the highest regard" that "immigrants will use their growing political power to vote for government policies that are more interventionist and less respectful of individual freedoms." Hard to imagine, I know. Especially if one ignores insignificant examples such as — ummm — *the state of fricking California*.

It then gets weirder. We learn that "concern over the likely voting patterns of immigrants is nothing new. Past fears seem, from the perspective of 2013, to have been unjustified." I'm about to poison my nervous-system with my own sarcasm at this point, so instead I'll simply ask, as politely as possible: What would count as evidence of America moving in a direction that was "more interventionist and

less respectful of individual freedoms"? Would it look anything at all like what we've seen — in highly-accelerated mode — since the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act?

Then comes the overt celebration of libertarian suicidalism:

But let's assume for the moment that today's immigrants – those immigrants recently arrived and those who would arrive under a more liberalized immigration regime – are indeed as likely as my concerned friends fear to vote overwhelmingly to move American economic policy in a much more ***dirigiste*** *direction. Such a move would, I emphatically and unconditionally agree, be very bad. Very. Bad. Indeed.*

I still support open immigration. I cannot bring myself to abandon support of my foundational principles just because following those principles might prove fatal.

The thing is, they did prove fatal. That's why the neoreaction exists.

June 25, 2013

Suicidal Libertarianism (Part D'oh)

When it comes to the libertarian suicide race, Bryan Caplan leaves Don Boudreaux in the dust. Caplan takes the Non-Aggression Principle and runs with it, all the way into a maximum-velocity self-

directed death cult. (Self-directed, solely in the ideological sense, of course.) Given the considerable merits of this book, in particular, it's a sad thing to see.

American libertarianism has always been vulnerable to neo-puritan spiritual extravagance. Caplan systematically pushes this tendency to its limit, divorcing its arguments from any realistic estimation of consequences, and transforming it into a form of deontological moral fanaticism, in which self-defense, retaliation, and boundaries are strictly prohibited. He envisages a world of games in which only unilateral altruism is permissible to the libertarian player. It would be fun to go a few rounds of prisoner's dilemma with him.

Naturally, when it comes to unconditional support for open borders irrespective of political consequences, Caplan rushes to Boudreaux's defense. Helpfully, he links into his own extensive archive on the topic, via a gateway into a series of extremely repetitive posts (here, here, and here — reading any one will do).

Perhaps Caplan really believes his own arguments, but if so he has driven himself insane. If you doubt this for a moment, it's only going to be a moment — try this:

If you care as much about immigrants as natives, this is no reason to oppose immigration. Consider the following example:

Suppose there are two countries with equal populations. The quality of policy ranges from 0-10, 10 being best. In country A, bliss

points (people's first choice for policy) are uniformly distributed from 2-6. In country B, bliss points are uniformly distributed from 4-8.

*What does democratic competition deliver? When the countries are independent, country A gets a policy quality of 4 (the median of the uniform distribution from 2-6), and country B gets a policy quality of 6 (the median of the uniform distribution from 4-8). Average policy that people live under: 50%*4+50%*6=5.*

Now suppose you open the borders, and everyone moves to country B (the richer country). The median of the whole distribution is 5. Result: The immigrants live under better policies, the natives live under worse policies. The average (5) remains unchanged.

Speechless yet? (I'm halfway through a blogpost, so I can't afford to be.) The argument: Any attempt to live under a regime that is anything other than the averaged political idiocy of humanity as a whole is a gross human rights violation.

You don't like the way Pakistanis manage their national affairs? Too bad. Libertarianism (Caplan style) insists that it's your duty to promote the homogenization of the world's political cultures because, after all, if there's anything at all good going on at your end, think how happy it will make the Pakistanis when it gets shared out. Heading into a stirred gruel of deeply degenerated liberal capitalism and Islamo-feudalism is best for everybody, taken on average. If it's not tasting right, it's because you've not yet thrown in enough African tribal warfare and Polynesian head-hunting for the full moral

hit. Or how about mixing Singapore and Bangladesh into a human paste? Anything less is tantamount to genocide.

This argument is so bad that the very idea of responding to it makes me throw up a little in my mouth, but duty calls. Since Caplan claims to be a libertarian, let's start with an unobjectionable principle — competition. If any institution is to work, it's because competition keeps it in line. This requires a number of things, all of them incompatible with homogenization: experimental variation, differential support for comparison, local absorption of consequences, and selection through elimination of failure.

Consider two companies: Effective Inc. and Loserbum Corp. Both have very different corporate cultures, adequately reflected in their names. Under market conditions, Loserbum Corp. either learns some lessons from Effective Inc., or it goes under. Net benefit or no great loss to the world in either case.

But along comes Caplan, to bawl out the stockholders, management, and other employees of Effective Inc. "You monsters! Don't you care at all about the guys at Loserbum Corp.? They have the same moral status as you, don't you know? Here's the true, radical free-market plan: All managers and workers of Loserbum get to enter your company, work there, introduce their business strategies and working practices,until we reach equilibrium. Equilibrium is what markets are all about, see? Sure, Effective Inc. will degenerate significantly, but imagine all the utility gains of the poor Loserbums!

It all comes out in the wash."

But … but … countries aren't companies. Well, maybe not exactly, but they're competitive institutions, or at least, the more they are, the better they work. The most important thing is true equally of both — to the extent they are able to externalize and pool their failure, the less they will learn.

In a world that has any chance of working, the Loserbum culture has a choice: learn or fail. Caplan introduces a third possibility — share (average out, or homogenize). His maths is idiotic. The contribution that Singapore makes to the world has almost nothing to do with the utility gains to its tiny population. Instead, it is a model — Effective Inc. — whose contribution to the world is to show all the Loserbums what they are. Swamp it with Loserbums, destroy it, and that function is gone. If that had happened before the late 1970s, the PRC would probably still be a neo-Maoist hellhole. It didn't flood Singapore with 300 million poor peasants, instead, it learnt from Singapore's example. That's how the world really works (when it does). Institutional examples matter. Caplan's world would annihilate all of them, leaving fairly averaged, three-quarter Loserbums grunting at each other in a libertarian-communist swamp. Nothing would work anywhere. There could be no lessons.

Still, Caplan has other arguments. The best, by far, is that wrecking a society to the point of generalized mutual detestation is the best way to shrink the welfare state. It goes like this:

Although poor immigrants are likely to support a bigger welfare state than natives do, the presence of poor immigrants makes natives turn against the welfare state. Why would this be? As a rule, people are happy to vote to "take care of their own"; that's what the welfare state is all about. So when the poor are culturally very similar to the rich, as they are in places like Denmark and Sweden, support for the welfare state tends to be uniformly strong.

As the poor become more culturally distant from the rich, however, support for the welfare state becomes weaker and less uniform.

This argument is so freaking Mad Max that I actually quite like it. Burn down the world and you take the welfare state with it. Yeeaaaahhhhh! (I'll leave it to more responsible voices to point out any possible flaws.)

Then there's the "non-natives are markedly less likely to vote than natives" argument (from the same post, and all the rest). It makes you wonder what a large population of enfranchised but non-voting anti-capitalists engenders. Something good, surely?

Best of all is the capstone contortionist analogy: "Native voters under 30 are more hostile to markets and liberty than immigrants ever were. Why not just kick them out?" Oh yes, oh yes, could we? Or at least stop them voting. Without some arrangement for the mass-disenfranchisement of leftist voters there's no chance of anything except continuous decay, and age restriction might be as good a place

as any to start.

My position in a sentence … is that immigration restrictions are a vastly greater crime against markets and liberty than anything immigrant voters are likely to manage.

Thank Gnon that no one listens to libertarians.

ADDED: Caplan doubles down, with some mouth-watering hypotheticals. If States ever made these kind of choices, they'd be fun to keep around, but the whole point is that *of course they never would*. (Don't miss the darkly-infiltrated comments thread.)
… and yet more attractive counter-democratic hypotheticals. By the time the deontological libertarians have finished with this, they'll have designed a minutely-detailed neoreactionary policy platform for us.

July 7, 2013

An Abstract Path to Freedom

At this thread (and in other places), commenter VXXC cites Durant's Dark Counsel: "For freedom and equality are sworn and everlasting enemies, and when one prevails the other dies. Leave men free, and their natural inequalities will multiply almost geometrically." He then remarks: "That's fine with me, I'll go with Freedom." *Outside in* concurs without reservation.

Take this dark counsel as the thesis that a practically-significant ideological dimension can be constructed, within which freedom and egalitarianism are related as strictly reciprocal variables. Taking this dimension for orientation, two abstract models of demographic redistribution can be examined, in order to identify *what it is that neoreactionaries want*.

The Caplan-Boudreaux Suicidal Libertarianism Model (SLM), touched upon here, and then sketched here, takes the following arithmetical form:

*Suppose there are two countries with equal populations. The quality of policy ranges from 0-10, 10 being best. In country A, bliss points (people's first choice for policy) are uniformly distributed from 2-6. In country B, bliss points are uniformly distributed from 4-8. […] When the countries are independent, country A gets a policy quality of 4 (the median of the uniform distribution from 2-6), and country B gets a policy quality of 6 (the median of the uniform distribution from 4-8). Average policy that people live under: 50%*4+50%*6=5. … suppose you open the borders, and everyone moves to country B (the richer country). The median of the whole distribution is 5. Result: The immigrants live under better policies, the natives live under worse policies. The average (5) remains unchanged.*

A few preparatory tweaks help to smooth the proceedings. Firstly, convert Caplan's "bliss points" to freedom coefficients (from '0' or absolute egalitarianism, to '1' or unconstrained liberty). A

society in which freedom was maximized would not be wholly unequal (Gini coefficient 1.0), but it would be wholly indifferent to inequality as a problem. In other words, egalitarian concerns would have zero policy impact. It is in this sense, alone, that freedom is perfected.

Secondly (and automatically), the question-begging judgments of "better" and "worse" are displaced by the ideological reciprocals of freedom and equality – there is no need to compel acquiescence as to the objective merits of either. Indeed, there is every reason to encourage those unconvinced of the superior attractions of liberty to seek ideological satisfaction in an egalitarian realm, elsewhere. From the perspective of liberty, egalitarian exodus is an unambiguous – even supreme – good, analogous to political entropy dissipation.

It is further, tacitly presumed here that freedom coefficients correlate linearly with intelligence optimization, but this depends upon further argument, to be bracketed for now.

The extraordinary theoretical value of the SLM can now be demonstrated. Due to its radical egalitarianism it defines a pessimal limit for neoreaction, and thus – by strict inversion – describes the abstract program for a restoration of free society (the Neoreactionary Model of demographic redistribution, or NM). In order to chart this reversal, the simplest course is to presuppose the full accomplishment of the SLM in an arbitrary 'geographical' space,

which it taken to be flexibly divisible, and populated by 320 million people, SLM-homogenized to a freedom coefficient of 0.5.

Confining ourselves to the tools already employed in the establishment of the climax SLM (whilst – for the sake of lucid presentation — ignoring any degenerative ratchet asymmetries), let us now proceed on the path of reversal. The SLM conservation law holds that average freedom is preserved, so an initial schism produces two equal populations – equivalent to those of Caplan's starting point – each numbering 160 million, but now differentiated on the dark counsel dimension, with freedom coefficients of 0.6 and 0.4.

Pursue this fissional procedure of territorial / population division and ideological differentiation recursively, focusing exclusively upon the comparatively free segment each time. The 160 million 0.6s become 80 million 0.7s, and an equal number of 0.5s. After five iterations, the final neoreactionary-secessionist de-homogenized distribution is reached:

160 million x 0.4
80 million x 0.5
40 million x 0.6
20 million x 0.7
10 million x 0.8, and – incarnating the meaning of world history, or at least absorbing neoreactionary exaltation —
10 million x 1.0

Roughly 3% of the original population now live in a truly free society. For Caplan and other SLM-proponents, of course, nothing at all has been gained.

Yet, assume instead of SLM utilitarian universalism, on profoundly inegalitarian grounds, that the aggregate quantity of freedom was considered of vastly lower importance than the *exemplary quality of freedom*, then the neoreactionary achievement is stark. Where freedom nowhere existed, now it does, at an essentially irrelevant cost of moderate socialist deterioration elsewhere. Half of the original population – 160 million souls – have now been released to enjoy a 'fairer' society than they knew before. Why not congratulate them on the fact, without being distracted unduly by the starvation and re-education camps? It can be confidently presumed that they would have voted for the regime that now takes care of them. Their internal political arrangements need no longer concern us.

For Neoreaction (the NM), it is not a question of whether people (in general) are free, but only whether freedom (somewhere) exists. The highest attainment of freedom within the system, rather than the averaged level of freedom throughout the system, is its overwhelming priority. By reversing the process of demographic redistribution envisaged by the SLM, its ends are achieved.

The zero-sum utilitarian conclusions of this comparison would be unsettled by a more concrete elaboration of the NM, in which the

effects of exemplarity, competition, the positive externalities of techno-economic performance, and other influences of freedom were included. At the present level of abstraction — set by Caplan's own (SL) model — such positive spin-offs might seem no more than sentimental concessions to common feeling. It is the ruthless core of the Neoreactionary Model that has, initially, to assert itself. Better the greatest possible freedom, even for a few, than a lesser freedom for all. Quality matters most.

The quasi-Rawlesian objection — fully implicit within the SLM — might run: "And what if the free society, as 'probability' dictates, is not yours?" — our rejoinder: "It would require a despicable egotist not to delight in it, even at a distance, as a beacon of aspiration, and an idiot or scoundrel not to set out on the same path, in whichever way they were able."

Disintegrate destiny.

July 16, 2013

Suicide Express

In an intriguing post on migration and 'expressive voting' in Alsace-Lorraine after the 1871 annexation, Bryan Caplan notes that although "over 90% of the new citizens of the Second Reich voted for … anti-Prussian regional parties" only 5% decided to emigrate back

to France. Clearly in this case, migration patterns revealed genuine commitments — based perhaps on economic opportunity — while elections were merely an occasion to express ethnic emotionalism without consequence. As usual in human affairs, microeconomics was aligned with approximate reason, whilst politics was possessed by destructive irrationality, redeemed only by its impotence.

It's hard to imagine what Caplan is seeing as the politically-correct take-away from this example. What it demonstrates starkly is that even populations characterized by scrupulous rationality in their private economic affairs will exploit electoral opportunities to vote for insanity — as judged by their own revealed preferences. Expect even model immigrant workers to expend their votes signalling an adherence to ethnic zealotry and ruinous economic populism — and in particular, the reproduction of exactly those social pathologies they have migrated away from. Like the French in post-1871 Alsace-Lorraine, they'll probably vote as if they want to live somewhere they manifestly don't want to be. (But that's not supposed to be the message, is it?)

August 19, 2013

Border Follies

Bryan Caplan's latest on the open borders question illuminates an

imaginary world. Perhaps the strangest thing about this fantasy earth is that it corresponds almost perfectly with an achieved libertarian utopia, marred only by pesky borders that impede the frictionless completion of labor contracts.

In Caplan World there are two significant levels of social organization: private owners — fully secure in their property rights — and the human race as a whole, struggling to sort itself into productive relationships of voluntary cooperation. In his figurative simplification, there are households, and there is the planet. Nothing done to de-fragment the planet could negatively affect households to any significant extent. In fact, they could only benefit from open-access to several billion potential tenants. On Caplan World, open-borders is a no-brainer.

On Sol-3, unfortunately, things are not nearly so simple. The most obvious reason is that nobody on this planet enjoys secure property rights. Freely-contracting Caplan World 'tenants' are — in reality — also voters, and what they vote upon, most substantially, is other people's property rights. In this, real world, geographical fragmentation means that a whole bunch of (once) non-random other people *do not have any voice in regards to your business*. In an age of rampant democracy, the only way to maintain this situation is to keep them on the other side of a border, at least formally (polite visitors don't get to decide whether your house should be expropriated). Eliminate the borders, and the only property rights

remaining are those that the global population, as a whole, are willing to grant. Does it really need to be spelt out that this is not the recipe for a libertarian society?

Yes, it's tediously repetitive to accuse Caplan and company of being suicidal lunatics, but they keeps printing out the collective suicide notes. These aren't stupid people. They have to know their plans won't result in the importation of voiceless exit-units, or free-contractors, but rather of a new people, already pre-determined by democratic assumptions to be particles of political sovereignty — i.e. *masters*. You don't get to decide (commercially) whether they can stay in your house. They get to decide (politically) whether you can keep your house. Since they are also disproportionately saturated with the bio-cultural heritage of places that have never shown any taste or competence for the creation or mere preservation of freedom-tolerant institutions, the subsequent democratic decisions — it can reliably be predicted — will be horrendous. If this were not so, why would the Left-half of the political spectrum be openly salivating about the electoral catastrophe in process? (Nobody thinks they're importing reinforcements for the Tea Party.)

It's probably far too late for any of this to matter. At this point, Caplan is just rubbing salty madness into the wounds.

September 3, 2013

Suicidal Libertarianism (Part-n)

Two posts in succession at Tyler Cowen's *Marginal Revolution* acknowledge that libertarianism's suicide-by-population-replacement is proceeding according to spontaneous disorder. Completely un-shockingly, mass low-IQ immigration from dysfunctional cultures that despise economic liberty has pushed libertarian ideas from marginality into complete irrelevance. So it goes.

Firstly, there's "Bad Demographic News for Libertarians" from Arnold Kling. It should probably be noted that this isn't a story being told from an immigration-catastrophe angle, so anybody with advanced skills at mental segmentation can dismiss it as irrelevant. You need to check the final table of the source post, by Timothy Taylor, to connect the dots. Kling's sober conclusion: "I am afraid that the number of households married to the state has soared."

Secondly, Cowen cites this paper by Hal Pashler (a psychologist at UCSD), whose research "results showed a marked pattern of lower support for pro-liberty views among immigrants as compared to US-born residents. These differences were generally statistically significant and sizable, with a few scattered exceptions. With increasing proportions of the US population being foreign-born, low support for libertarian values by foreign-born residents means that the political prospects of libertarian values in the US are likely to

diminish over time."

I just wish there had been some sort of short-cut to self-abolition for these maniacs that hadn't been routed through the destruction of America.

[Previous installments of Suicidal Libertarianism here, and here]

December 2, 2013

Scary Sailer

Bryan Caplan seizes upon a two-sentence Steve Sailer comment to fly into theatrical conniptions in public:

Does Steve genuinely favor denying half of Americans the right to reproduce? It's hard to know. It is the uncertainty that he carefully cultivated that makes Sailer's thought so scary to so many — including me. We shouldn't have to ***wonder*** *if a thinker approves of denying half the population the right to have children.*

This really is Caplan at his most despicable. First, set up a bizarre counter-factual to support a quite different moral argument by analogy. The crudely-telegraphed argumentative strategy is to shift the burden of fanaticism from proponents to opponents ("hey, can't you see that restricting immigration is **just like** sterilizing half the population"). Secondly, when a commentator corrects your counter-factual in the direction of historical reality — i.e. something that

actually happened — deflect attention by cranking up the moral hysteria, while retreating into what seems increasingly to be Caplan's favorite territory — unhinged deontological purism. Finally, suggest that the commentator is only mentioning historical reality in order to surreptitiously endorse your own preposterous thought-experiment as a practical program, thus exposing himself as "scary".

Why doesn't he just say that hyper-Nazi eugenics is wrong? (Of course, he has, many times.) *He probably wants to throw your granny into the biodiesel tanks too. Let's talk about that rather than my project to engineer a national immigration apocalypse.*

Anyone who seriously "wonders" whether Steve Sailer secretly advocates sterilizing half of the American population has released their grip on the last frayed threads of civilized conversation. Caplan is deteriorating from a nut into something far more repulsive.

ADDED: Sailer responds (calmly) —

Bryan:

Your arguments would get less tangled up if you'd simply keep in mind that I'm a moderate who takes reasonable positions, while you are an extremist who is drawn to promoting unreasonable ones. Please stop projecting your own immoderation upon me.

For example, there is an obvious distinction you fail to recognize between my appreciating the difficulties our ancestors went through — what Nicholas Wade calls "the Malthusian wringer" that helped make us who we are — and my very much not wanting to inflict

similar levels of competition upon our descendants.

Instead, it's you who wants to subject the descendants of American citizens to the neo-Malthusian nightmare of Open Borders.

June 3, 2014

Quote note (#206)

Caplan enters the bargaining stage:

… demographic ills can ***clearly be remedied with more immigration****! Non-white immigration is messing up America? Then let in enough white immigrants to keep the white share constant. Non-Christian immigration is destroying our religious heritage? Then let in enough Christians to keep the Christian share constant. Non-Anglophones are turning English into a minority language? Then let in enough English-speakers to balance them out. Low-IQ immigration is making us dumb? Then let in enough high-IQ immigrants to keep up smart.*

This is certainly a viable solution given current levels of immigration. The world has hundreds of millions of whites, Christians, English-speakers, and IQs>100. At least tens of millions of each group would love to permanently move to the U.S. Why haven't they? Because it's illegal, of course. If the U.S. selectively

opened its borders to these groups, it could reverse decades of demographic change in a matter of years. In fact, the U.S. could admit vastly more Third World immigrants without changing overall demographics a bit – as long as it concurrently welcomed First World immigrants to balance them.

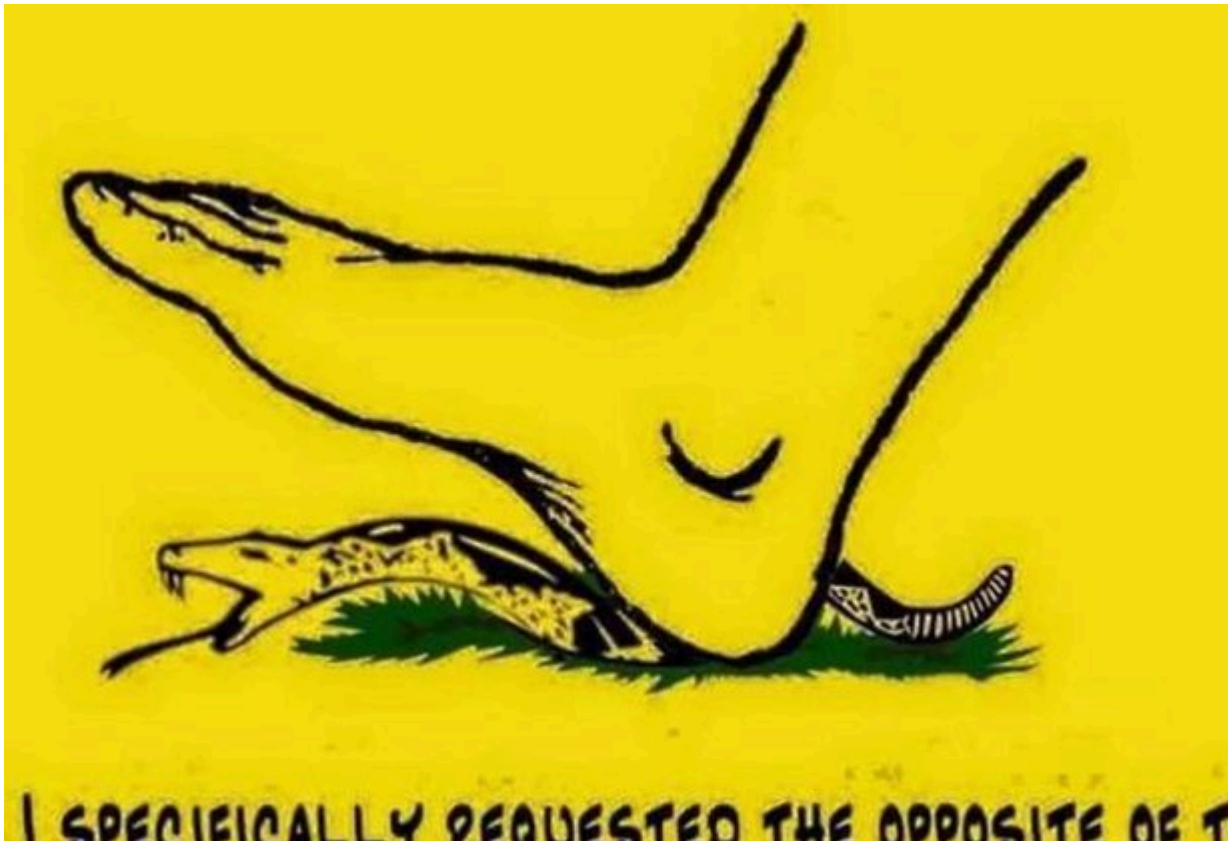
Take the machinery necessary to do that, and it would be possible — in fact, almost irresistible — to do something positive with it. (Or does demographic engineering only go in one direction?)

> @bryan_caplan @SanguineEmpiric If we're bargaining now, how about a 2:1 ratio of the immigrants we like, over the ones we 'happen to get'?
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) December 15, 2015

> .@Outsideness Done!
>
> — Bryan Caplan (@bryan_caplan) December 15, 2015

December 15, 2015

Anglophidian



I'm going to assume that snake is English (despite all natural-historical evidence to the contrary). The point is hard to contest, regardless. The ones that bite are better.

October 28, 2016

SECTION E - CRITIQUE OF CONSERVATISM

Anarchy on the Old Right

About that empty chair …

Over at The American Conservative, the Old Right has expressed its smoldering dismay at the country's political prospects through a fit of paralyzed dissensus.

The 29 members of the TAC symposium split fairly evenly between (Democrat) Barack Obama, (Republican) Mitt Romney, and (Libertarian) Gary Johnson. Each musters four definite commitments, with Andrew J. Bacevich, Leon Hadar, Scott McConnell, and Noah Millman for Obama; Marian Kester Coombs, James P. Pinkerton, Stephen B. Tippins Jr., and John Zmirak for Romney; and Doug Bandow, Peter Brimelow, Scott Galupo, and Bill Kauffman for Johnson.

Philip Giraldi epitomizes the spirit of anti-neoconservative

obstreperousness with his declared electoral intentions, wavering between a vote for Johnson, a Ron Paul write-in, or a Romney-spavining Obama choice if the race is tight. James Bovard is also torn between Johnson and a Ron Paul write-in (but without mention of an anti-Romney Obama option). Like Johnson, Romney picks up two additional 'maybes' (from W. James Antle III, Bradley J. Birzer). The Constitution Party's Virgil Goode musters just one solid supporter (Sean Scallon). There's also a write-in for Rand Paul (Daniel McCarthy), and four indecipherables (Jeremy Beer, Rod Dreher, William S. Lind, and Steve Sailer).

Decisive winner among the TAC writers, however, is Nobody, supported by seven unambiguous abstentions (Michael Brendan Dougherty, David Gordon, Robert P. Murphy, Justin Raimondo, Sheldon Richman, and Gerald J. Russello), and probably an eighth (Paul Gottfried, poised at the democratically-abstemious edge of the indecipherables).

Perhaps questions like this are souring the mood.

Why not opt for the real deal?

November 6, 2012

Almost …

As a symptom of things hitting the buffers, this Michael Walsh article

is vaguely encouraging. It speaks unreservedly about the "collaborationist Republican Party" but eventually loses itself in the pseudo-conundrum:

How a political party cannot sell Freedom and Liberty and Leave Me Alone to a formerly free people is beyond me …

Could it perhaps be because democratic party politics has exhaustively demonstrated its incompatibility with "Freedom and Liberty", "Leave Me Alone", and a "free people"?

September 26, 2013

Things Fall Apart

Reaction is not Neoreaction (but still Conservatism). Alain Finkielkraut explains to Spiegel:

***SPIEGEL**: What do you say to people who call you a reactionary?*

***Finkielkraut**: It has become impossible to see history as constant progress. I reserve the possibility to compare yesterday and today and ask the question: What do we retain, what do we abandon?*

***SPIEGEL**: Is that really any more than nostalgia for a lost world?*

***Finkielkraut**: Like Albert Camus, I am of the opinion that our generation's task is not to recreate the world, but to prevent its decline. We not only have to conserve nature, but also culture. There you have the reactionary.*

[The entire interview says something about the unusual conversations that are beginning to break out.]

December 9, 2013

Conservatives

AoS two days in a row, which is a sign that I like the place. It's far smarter than it attempts to appear, which is always attractive, and it's among the wittiest blogs I know (by which I mean painfully funny, quite often). There are also writers at *AoS* that I almost agree with, but when they're reaching the line, or threshold of escape, and are just about to cross over into the open country beyond, something catches them — and you know it's going to pull them back in. Conservatism has them hooked.

Ace is a comparative squish in his own house. Some of his comrades are considerably *meaner*, so they get out further. It's one of Ace's own pieces that triggers this, though.

Writing about the attempt by Mozilla employees to purge CEO Brendan Eich from the company he built, he notes that the only 'ground' floated for this effort is private, discreet political speech, in the form of a small donation made to the successful (anti-gay marriage) Proposition 8 campaign, six years ago. Their attack on Eich — conducted through Twitter — is a contrary type of political speech,

more attuned to the PC *Zeitgeist*, but in every other way less defensible. If anyone is going to be fired, why shouldn't it be the twitterati lynch mob? Ace muses. (Good question.)

The post concludes with the lucid observation:

The left has laid down the rule that ***their*** *political rights shall never been infringed by an economic penalty, because McCarthyism. While they meanwhile demand the exact same sort of McCarthyism for everyone else.*

So what could possibly be objectionable about that, from the perspective of the outer right? What's objectionable — and in fact even maddening — about this insight is its *conservatism*, which it to say that, even after recognizing the relentlessly steepening leftist gradient in the dominant culture, the implicit message is only: *carry on*.

If the sole point is to say "this isn't fair" it might be even more pointless than saying nothing at all. Keeping people in the 'fairness' frame is part of the captivity, and it's why conservatives are never going to do anything but lose. This whole situation isn't 'unfair' — it's disastrous. It's ruin. There's not any kind of game happening here that could somehow be made 'fair'. There's a civilizational calamity in process which is *intrinsically tilted* and leads, with accelerating glacial inevitability, only in one direction.

Conservatives — even atheist conservatives — could be minimally expected to have held onto that "hate the sin, not the sinner"

recommendation from their collapsed religious tradition. Even if they're not going to hate leftists, they have no excuse for avoiding icy hatred of leftism, and that means never giving it the benefit of the doubt by implying, even for a moment, that it can pursue anything other than the total destruction of its enemies, by any means necessary. Leftism isn't going to be shamed *out of winning*. It isn't going to be taught a lesson. It isn't going to recognize its internal contradictions. The only thing it's ever going to do, is continue pushing civilization down the slope.

Conservatism is congenitally incapable of recognizing the true malignancy of its foe. It's always looking for the next tactical edge, the next opportunity to slow down the calamity just a little, the next disastrous deal. It's conservatism that allowed the relentless collapse to happen, by presenting a self-defeating alternative to the one thing that's really needed — *counter-revolution*.

So now the brain-washed idiots at Mozilla are trying to purge their boss in pursuit of Cathedral spiritual purity, and they're getting away with it. The answer to that isn't to point out their hypocrisy, or the sad state of society in general, while hoping the GOP wins one. It's to destroy the GOP and get real about defeating the left. That's going to require a social order in which the left doesn't necessarily win, or at least the end of the social order in which it always does. Sooner or later, conservatism has to move on.

ADDED: Some lessons from the Eich affair (from Henry Dampier).

ADDED: Handlean magnificence.

April 2, 2014

Conservatism

> Is there a single iota of conservative wisdom NOT contained in The Gods of the Copybook Headings? http://t.co/pZUIpUGV2e
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) June 23, 2014

Well, is there?

June 23, 2014

Quote notes (#104)

The only thing that Neoconservatism has to offer a non-psychotic policy analyst is bitching, but sometimes the bitching can be pretty good. Bret Stephens (via Brett Stevens (sorry, I had to do that)):

… None of these fiascos — for brevity's sake, I'm deliberately setting to one side the illusory pivot to Asia, the misbegotten Russian Reset, the mishandled Palestinian–Israeli talks, the stillborn Geneva conferences on Syria, the catastrophic interim agreement with Iran,

the de facto death of the U.S. free-trade agenda, the overhyped opening to Burma, the orphaned victory in Libya, the poisoned relationship with Egypt, and the disastrous cuts to the Defense budget — can be explained away as a matter of tough geopolitical luck. Where, then, does the source of failure lie? […] The myth of Obama's brilliance paradoxically obscures the fact that he's no fool. The point is especially important to note because the failure of Obama's foreign policy is not, ultimately, a reflection of his character or IQ. It is the consequence of an ideology.

The 'ideology' at its root, of course, is evangelical egalitarian universalism, and it is one the Neoconservatives entirely share. At the limit, which is now being encountered, what America *is* makes it impossible for it to succeed at what it wants.

August 23, 2014

SJWs of the Right

"Hey, our prissy skirt-clutching authoritarian moralism is nothing *at all* like the prissy skirt-clutching authoritarian moralism of SJW leftists!"

Oh, I'm sure there are differences to be drawn — so long as no one is pretending they extend to (classic Neo-Puritan witch-burner) personality types.

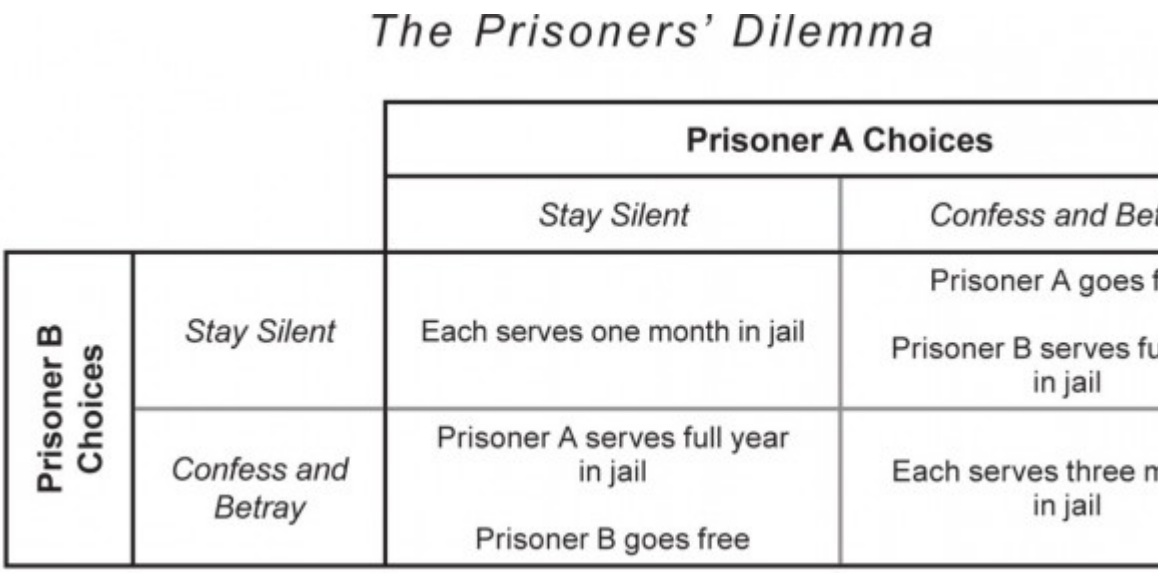
February 9, 2015

Zero Sum

AoS has a "Fudamental Concepts" post about the zero-sum mentality, which it identifies with leftism, getting a lot of things convincingly right. Unintentionally, however, it exposes the limits of conservatism, and — even more unintentionally — suggests why NRx is something else.

Zero sum games are wars, and market (or catallactic) economics are indeed different. It was by putting war to bed too early, that conservatism destined itself to the ratchet of defeat. Treat an enemy as a business partner, and you lose, over and over again.

The payoff matrix is easy to draw. Re-purposing a prisoner's dilemma quadrate works fine.



Treat "Stay Silent" as a positive-sum contract, and "Confess and Betray" as stubborn zero-sum antagonism. Searching for positive-sum engagement with a committed zero-sum opponent is the loser's game that the mainstream 'right' has been playing for centuries. It's the reason libertarians are so often dismissed as smart imbeciles (or worse). There's business, and there's war, and only the latter is definitely not going anywhere. In reality, (positive-sum) capitalism depends upon (zero-sum) counter-revolution. Otherwise, the right 'stays silent' while the left 'confesses and betrays'. Our little matrix, and the course of recent global history, equally exhibit where that leads.

Positive-sum is the civilized order at the end of a far dirtier process. In the interim, if it hurts the left it's worth doing, unless it

hurts you more.

February 16, 2015

Ace Torches the Popcorn Stand

Forget the headline, which is just a pretext — this post is really something. A couple of highlights:

They think that our desire for a better America will draw us to vote for the Least Worst candidates. […] But many of us now feel like the Communists, or the hardcore paleocons: There really is not a large enough difference between the two parties any more to ***bother oneself in terms of emotional and financial investment any longer****. […] Either way, we will have some form of repressive, unresponsive socialism in this country; what should we care whether the National Welfare Depot is painted in Red or Blue? […] I'm not coming back. I'm done. For the past ten years of my life, I've made arguments, some of which I knew to be false, to defend and apologize for the GOP; I see now that I was a fool to do so.*

And:

Here's Some Truth: We all know this, but being Part of the Team, I felt obligated to lie, because I figured you expected me to lie, even though you didn't believe it. […] So yeah: The GOP is never repealing Obamacare or even trying hard to do so. They will make false efforts

at doing so which they can present to voters as a Good College Try, but aw shucks, we couldn't quite do it. […] It's a relief to no longer have to propagate this obvious, feeble lie. […] I know very few of you believe the GOP has much intention of repealing Obamacare, but, being a Republican, I have previously felt the need to present The Official Party Position even knowing it was total bullshit. […] I've known it was a lie for a year, which is why I hate when it comes up on, say, the Podcast. What am I supposed to say? Am I supposed to pretend the GOP is going to repeal it? […] So they're not. They never were. […] It was always a lie.

If there was ever a moment to stoop to a 'wow, just wow!' this might be it.

> We're not all Moldbuggians yet.But it's coming. via @AceofSpadesHQ http://t.co/P5qbYkW00A
>
> — Rich Cromwell (@rcromwell4) March 19, 2015

March 19, 2015

What's in a word?

The vulgarity of pop-reaction is matched only by the stupidity of mainstream conservatism:

I bring this up because I suppose it's possible that some conservatives might embrace this term without fully understanding the racial and sexual implications. To some, it might be seen as an innocent jab — like calling someone a "squish" or a "RINO." But as Erickson correctly observes, "Remember, if you hear the term 'cuckservative,' it is a slur against Christian voters coined by white-supremacists."

If anyone deserves a gutter-fight with degenerates, it's the GOP. It seems quite probable that they'll lose.

(If you're tempted to roll out your degeneracy in the comments thread, think again. We gibbet people for such things in these parts.)

ADDED: Official XS Health Warning — a popcorn diet is ruinous for the soul. It is recommended that you scrupulously avoid following these links (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

ADDED: Jim's take.

ADDED: Hood.

ADDED: "I think this is the ugliest development I've seen online."

ADDED: We're going to need a bigger popcorn barrel.

July 23, 2015

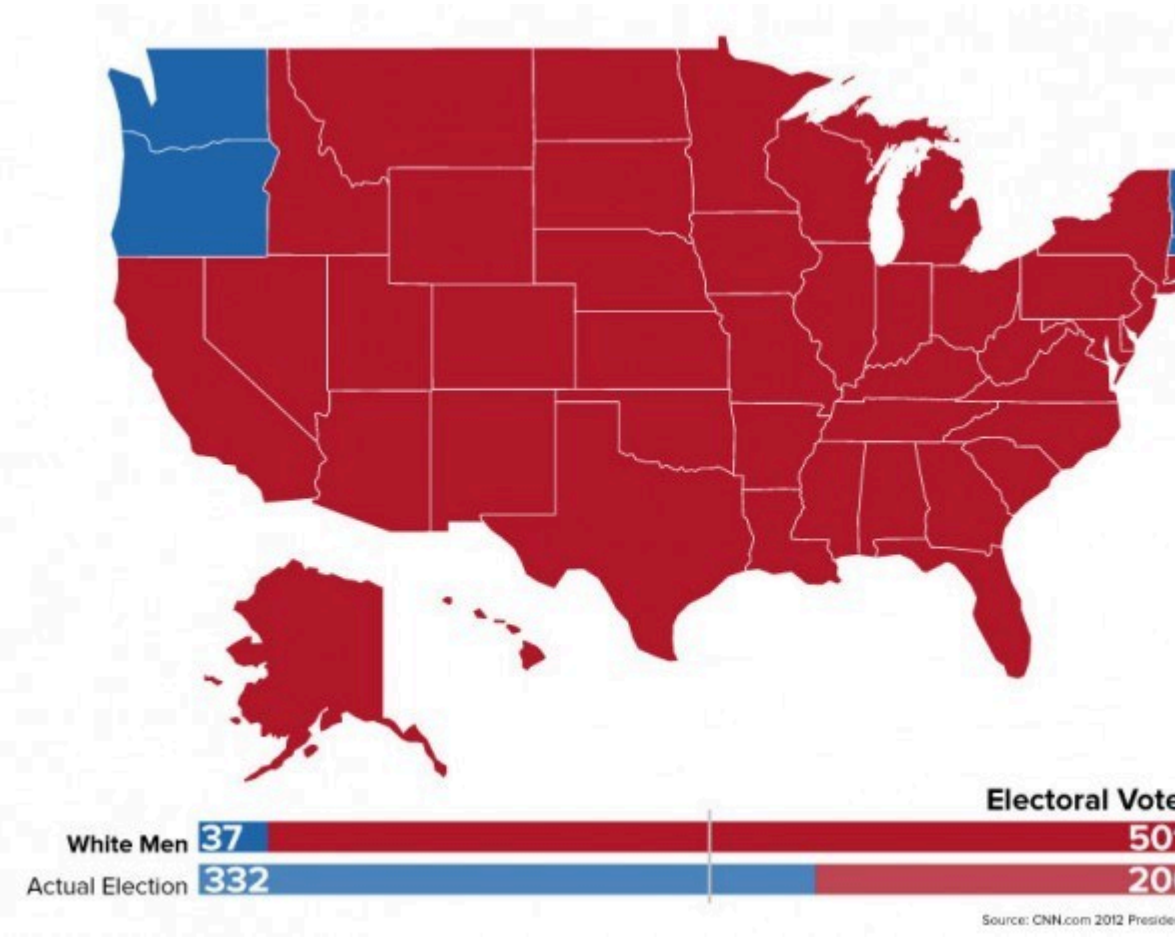
Inversion

Already famously — to the extent of echoing down the corridors of

eternity — Michael Enoch wrote this:

Look, you guys have lost, even on the issues important to you as Christians because of your cuckholdry on the race issue. You're not doing anything to preserve the white majority, but you're not winning on your issues either. Gay marriage is a done deal. Abortion is here to stay, particularly as more broken nonwhite families enter the social services system and are encouraged by bureaucrats to abort. You lost, you lost, you lost. […] With a white majority these issues were winnable, because whites vote conservative in the majority. But by being cowards on the issue of immigration and bending over for the left's quite open plan of demographic replacement of whites in order to secure a permanent nonwhite left wing majority you lost. In 8 years it may be demographically impossible for the GOP to win a national election ever again. Even your precious Christian issues are done. Even your cucking for Israel is under threat. Do you think a nonwhite majority in the US is going to be keen to support your favorite ethnostate? They side with the Palestinians! […] You lost everything, and all because you were afraid a group of communists, atheists and homosexuals would call you racist.

It goes with this map:



It's being posted here because, as far as it goes, it's hilariously — and certainly outrageously — right.

Thing is — Progressivism happened in the USA without the help of massive Hispanic immigration, or even women's suffrage. It happened because democratically-empowered *white men* had been persuaded to dismantle capitalism by populist politicians. The 'right wing' party that they'd be supporting in that map? It's the Republican

Party of 2012, and its Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney, Governor of (freaking) *Massachusetts*. So what this is saying, at best, is that American White Men can now be persuaded to freeze in place the catastrophic ruin of Western Civilization as it stood roughly during Phase-1 Obamanation. Is there any suggestion from this that there's support for rolling back politicized money, The Great Society, The New Deal, or the violent destruction of American federalism? In fact, any indication of support for actual *right wing policies* at all?

As a counter factual, I guess — just possibly — an uprising of White Men could help to get Trump into the White House, which would be ambiguous.

It's fun — really it is — but it's not going anywhere, because it doesn't even start to get a grip on where things went wrong.

July 30, 2015

Quote note (#227)

Douthat (whatever his *status quo* sins) is participating in our conversation:

… Others, especially in the intelligentsia, have a kind of highbrow nihilism about our politics, a sense that American democracy's decadence — or the Republican Party's decadence, in particular — is so advanced that a cleansing Trumpian fire might be just the thing we

need.

March 6, 2016

RIP Neoconservatism

Max Fisher, at *Vox*:

Neoconservatives can threaten to quit the Republican Party, or warn that the party is diverging from their values, but it looks increasingly like they may have it backward: that it is the Republican Party, as constituted by its voters and their policy preferences, that is rejecting neoconservatives. […] That might seem surprising. But when you look at the brief history of neoconservative reign over the Republican Party, it seems inevitable. If anything, it is surprising that it took this long.

There probably aren't enough supporters remaining for a boisterous funeral, at this point.

Neoconservatism had a complex genesis, but it matured into right-wing Jacobinism. The policy program with which it will forever be centrally associated is democracy promotion by the sword. Too aggressive in its civilizational (and especially American) self-confidence for the Left, and too saturated in universalistic Utopianism for the Right, its demise in the second decade of the 21st century can surprise few.

It looks as if robust realism will supplant it. Dewy-eyed foreign policy is done, at least for a while.

March 11, 2016

BLOCK 3 - TECHNO-COMMERCIALISM

Crypto-Capitalism

Political language is *systematically confusing*, in a distinctive way. Its significant terms are only secondarily theoretical, as demonstrated by radical shifts in sense that express informal policies of meaning. Descriptions of political position are moves in a game, before they are neutral accounts of the rules, or even of the factions.

It would be excessively digressive to embark on yet another expedition into the history of such political terms as 'liberal', 'progress', 'fascism', or 'conservative'. Everyone knows that these words are profoundly uninformative without extensive historical qualification, or rough-and-ready adaptation to the dictates of

guided fashion. If consistent theoretical use of any political label conflicts with its maximally effective political use, the former will be sacrificed without hesitation — and always has been. That is why neologisms are typically required for even the most fleeting approximation to theoretical precision, whenever political affiliation is at stake.

A point in favor of the 'crypto-' prefix is that it plays directly into such confusion. As a politically-significant marker, it bears two strongly differentiated, yet intersecting senses. It indicates (a) that a political phenomenon has been re-assembled in disguise, and (b) that cryptographic techniques are essential to its identity. Hence, respectively, 'crypto-communism' and 'crypto-currencies'. Any attempt to engage in an initial clarification cuts across the intrinsically occulted character of both.

'Crypto-capitalism' — therefore — might be one thing, or two, if it is anything at all. If clarity is to be brought to the topic, it will certainly not be self-promoted. Whatever crypto-capitalism might be, structural misunderstanding has to be the most prominent part of it. Hiding is essential to whatever it is.

What crypto-capitalism is not, first practically, and subsequently theoretically, is pseudo-capitalism, or 'capitalism' as it is publicly recognized. Rather than engaging in futile struggle over the 'true meaning' of capitalism, crypto-capitalism proceeds with a surreptitious appropriation of terminological confusion,

functionalized as camouflage. It *does* capitalism, all the more effectively, because the grinding mill of political language works predictably, providing it with cover. The loss of terminological integrity is invested, from a position of intense cynicism, as an opportunity to develop off stage.

Pseudo-capitalism is (by now) the host of the Cathedral. It feeds a mega-parasite, which — employing unprecedented powers of narrative construction — claims to be the source of its vitality. Evolving far beyond an initial stage of conspicuous resource extraction, the Cathedralized — or culture-potent — state now more-or-less directly controls the 'capitalist' brain, in more ways than can be readily enumerated. 'Capitalists' are Cathedralized through educational and media indoctrination, social selection, regulatory discipline, seductive alliance, and 'transcendental' subordination to a financial system that has been subverted to its foundations by the magic of power. The mere denomination of 'capitalism' in fiat currency expresses the domain of pseudo-capitalism with remarkable exactitude. The meaning of the host is (articulated through) the virus it sustains. Any suggestion of opposition in this relationship is entirely fake, because it belongs to the same magical performance.

Prohibition exemplifies this stage show. Publicly pitting cops against gangsters, what it represents is the spectacular definition of the 'white economy' (pseudo-capitalism) over against the 'black

economy' or 'organized crime' (crypto-capitalism). The same story can be told in the decadent USSR, without any need for substantial revision. Whatever refuses denomination in the signs of power is a pathological aberration, to be renormalized as a productive ~~parasited host~~ social body.

As ZH reports:

... one of the most popular websites that use and promote the use of BitCoin, Silk Road, was shut down by the US government. As Reuters reports, U.S. law enforcement authorities raided an Internet site that served as a marketplace for illegal drugs, including heroin and cocaine, and arrested its owner, the Federal Bureau of Investigation said on Wednesday. The FBI arrested Ross William Ulbricht, known as "Dread Pirate Roberts," in San Francisco on Tuesday, according to court filings. Federal prosecutors charged Ulbricht with one count each of narcotics trafficking conspiracy, computer hacking conspiracy and money laundering conspiracy, according to a court filing.

It's worth revisiting this (noted here) to recall some realistic context, and plausible historical analogy. The Prohibition of the 1920s was an endless source of cop-on-gangster drama, none of which had any realistically persuasive meaning as the successful pursuit of policy. Instead, gangsters used the cops, as a tactical resource for black-economy dispute 'resolution'. (In the Shanghai of the same epoch, the Opium-trafficking 'Green Gang' managed to get

their agent 'Pock-marked Huang' installed as chief of the French Concession police — an admittedly extreme example of a typical tendency.) From the perspective of the outer economy, cops are a cheap way to smash your competition.

Extrapolate speculatively just a little from the *Forbes* discussion:

IT'S A RULE AS TIMELESS as black markets: Where illegal money goes, violence follows. In a digital market that violence is virtual, but it's as financially real as torching your competitor's warehouse.

In late April Silk Road went offline for nearly a week, straining under a sustained cyberattack that left its sensitive data untouched but overwhelmed its servers. The attack, according to Roberts, was the most sophisticated in Silk Road's history, taking advantage of previously unknown vulnerabilities in Tor and repeatedly shifting tactics to avoid the site's defenses.

The sabotage occurred within weeks of rival site Atlantis' launch. Commenters on the Reddit forum devoted to Silk Road suggested that Roberts' customers and vendors switch to Atlantis during the downtime, leading to gossip that the newcomer had engineered the attack.

Who was the real beneficiary of the FBI operation? All too many neoractionaries, beginning with Moldbug, and now including Handle, seem to think the only possible answer is: Prohibition. Here at *Outside in* it appears incontrovertible that 'Roberts' had already predicted this 'sting' — in far greater detail than anybody else has

done — and that the antagonist he pre-emptively, if subtly, fingered was a shadowy crypto-capitalist competitor, rather than the forces of pseudo-capitalist suppression. If this was a *cryptic* event, it would be inexcusably negligent not to ask: Who (or what) is the FBI really — even if unwittingly — working for? "For the ultimate glory of the white (pseudo-capitalist) economy" is certainly one possible answer, but it is by no means the only one.

ADDED: Jim and NBS both have interesting things to say about technical aspects of these developments.

ADDED: What does the FBI do with its new Bitcoin stash?

October 4, 2013

Dark Techno-Commercialism

Each of the three main strands of neoreaction, insofar as they are remotely serious, attaches itself to something that no politics could absorb.

The reality of a religious commitment cannot be resolved into its political implications. If it is wrong, it is not because of anything that politics can do to it, or make of it. Providence either envelops history and ideology, subtly making puppets of both, or it is nothing. However bad things get, it offers a 'reason' not to be afraid — at least of that — and one the degeneration has no way to touch, let alone

control.

Similarly, the Darwinian truths underpinning rational ethno-nationalist convictions are invulnerable to ideological reversal. A trend to racial entropy and idiocracy, however culturally hegemonic and unquestionable, does not cease to be what it is, simply because criticism has been criminalized and suppressed. Scientific objections have significance — if they are indeed scientific (and not rather the corruption of science) — but politically enforced denial is a tawdry comedy, outflanked fundamentally by reality itself, and diverting events into 'perverse outcomes' that subvert delusion from without. What Darwinism is *about* cannot be banned.

The Techno-commercial 'thing' — catallaxy — is comparably invulnerable. There is no chance that anyone, ever, will successfully prohibit the market, or the associated dynamics of competitive technical advantage (which together compose real capitalism). As with religion and genetic selection, the techno-commercial complex can be driven into darkness, socially occulted, and stigmatized as a public enemy. It cannot, however, be *de-realized* by political fiat.

It is important, therefore, to understand where neoreactionary 'dark thoughts' lead. Their horizon of despair is strictly limited to the political, or public sphere. When taken to the edge, they converge with the intuition that no neoreactionary *politics* can be pursued to a successful conclusion. In other words, at their darkest, they predict that the stubborn delusion of the political dooms humanity's public-

exoteric aspirations to catastrophe.

At this point, neoreaction bifurcates. However it is principally comprehended (through the trichotomy), a relatively 'light' branch holds onto the prospect of public-political insideness — of a world politically restructured in relative consonance with neoreactionary ideas, such that social order might be resumed, on a realistic basis. Alternatively, and no less trichotomously, a dark branch points outside, through collapse, into tracts of religious, biological, and / or catallactic inevitability, whose dynamics cast human delusion into terminal ruin. If 'man' never (again) reverts to sanity? Reality will not stop.

Outside in is darker than it is trichotomously partisan. Neither real providence, nor Darwinian reality, are attachments that trigger the slightest aversion in these parts. The idea that the neoreaction will ever 'do' politics, or achieve insider status, on the other hand — except as a rhetorical tactic of cognitive independence (separation) — is a possibility we struggle to envisage. (That leaves much to argue over, on other occasions.)

Dark Techno-Commercialism — provisionally summarized — is the suspicion that the 'Right Singularity' is destined to occur in surreptitious and antagonistic relation to finalistic political institutions, that the Cathedral culminates in the Human Security System, outmatched and defeated from the Outside, and that all hopes that these ultimate historical potentialities will be harnessed

for politically intelligible ends are vain. It is, therefore, the comprehension of capitalism 'in-itself' as an outsider that will never know — or need — political representation. Instead, as the ultimate enemy, it will envelop the entirety of political philosophy — including anything neoreaction can contribute to the genre — as the futile strategic initiatives (or death spasms) of its prey.

We (humans) are radically stubborn in our stupidity. That has consequences. Perhaps they will not always be uninteresting ones.

October 13, 2013

Re-Accelerationism

Is there a word for an 'argument' so soggily insubstantial that it has to be scooped into a pair of scare-quotes to be apprehended, even in its self-dissolution? If there were, I'd have been using it all the time recently. Among the latest occasions is a blog post by Charlie Stross, which describes itself as "a political speculation" before disappearing into the gray goomenon. Nothing in it really holds together, but it's fun in its own way, especially if it's taken as a sign of something else.

The 'something else' is a subterranean complicity between Neoreaction and Accelerationism (the latter linked here, Stross-style, in its most recent, Leftist version). Communicating with fellow 'Hammer of Neoreaction' David Brin, Stross asks: "David, have you

run across the left-wing equivalent of the Neo-Reactionaries — the Accelerationists?" He then continues, invitingly: "Here's my (tongue in cheek) take on both ideologies: Trotskyite singularitarians for Monarchism!"

Stross is a comic-future novelist, so it's unrealistic to expect much more than a dramatic diversion (or anything more at all, actually). After an entertaining meander through parts of the Trotskyite-neolibertarian social-graph, which could have been deposited on a time-like curve out of *Singularity Sky*, we've learnt that Britain's Revolutionary Communist Party has been on a strange path, but whatever connection there was to Accelerationism, let alone Neoreaction, has been entirely lost. Stross has the theatrical instinct to end the performance before it became too embarrassing: "Welcome to the century of the Trotskyite monarchists, the revolutionary reactionaries, and the fringe politics of the paradoxical!" (OK.) Curtain closes. Still, it was all comparatively good humored (at least in contrast to Brin's increasingly enraged head-banging).

Neoreaction is Accelerationism with a flat tire. Described less figuratively, it is the recognition that the acceleration trend is historically compensated. Beside the *speed machine*, or industrial capitalism, there is an ever more perfectly weighted decelerator, which gradually drains techno-economic momentum into its own expansion, as it returns dynamic process to meta-stasis. Comically,

the fabrication of this braking mechanism is proclaimed as *progress*. It is the Great Work of the Left. Neoreaction arises through naming it (without excessive affection) as *the Cathedral*.

Is the trap to be exploded (as advocated Accelerationism), or has the explosion been trapped (as diagnosed by Neoreaction)? — That is the cybernetic puzzle-house under investigation. Some quick-sketch background might be helpful.

The germinal catalyst for Accelerationism was a call in Deleuze & Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) to "accelerate the process". Working like termites within the rotting mansion of Marxism, which was systematically gutted of all Hegelianism until it became something utterly unrecognizable, D&G vehemently rejected the proposal that anything had ever "died of contradictions", or ever would. Capitalism was not born from a negation, nor would it perish from one. The death of capitalism could not be delivered by the executioner's ax of a vengeful proletariat, because the closest realizable approximations to 'the negative' were inhibitory, and stabilizing. Far from propelling 'the system' to its end, they slowed the dynamic to a simulacrum of systematicity, retarding its approach to an absolute limit. By progressively comatizing capitalism, anti-capitalism dragged it back into a self-conserving social structure, suppressing its eschatological implication. The only way Out was onward.

Marxism is the philosophical version of a Parisian accent, a rhetorical type, and in the case of D&G it becomes something akin

to a higher sarcasm, mocking every significant tenet of the faith. The bibliography of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (of which *Anti-Oedipus* is the first volume) is a compendium of counter-Marxist theory, from drastic revisions (Braudel), through explicit critiques (Wittfogel), to contemptuous dismissals (Nietzsche). The D&G model of capitalism is not dialectical, but cybernetic, defined by a positive coupling of commercialization ("decoding") and industrialization ("Deterritorialization"), intrinsically tending to an extreme (or "absolute limit"). Capitalism is the singular historical installation of a social machine based upon cybernetic escalation (positive feedback), reproducing itself only incidentally, as an accident of continuous socio-industrial revolution. Nothing brought to bear *against* capitalism can compare to the intrinsic antagonism it directs towards its own actuality, as it speeds out of itself, hurtling to the end already operative 'within' it. (Of course, this is madness.)

A detailed appreciation of "Left Accelerationism" is a joke for another occasion. "Speaking on behalf of a dissident faction within the modern braking mechanism, we'd really like to see things move forward a lot faster." *OK, perhaps we can work something out …* If this 'goes anywhere' it can only get more entertaining. (Stross is right about that.)

Neoreaction has far greater impetus, and associated diversity. If reduced to a spectrum, it includes a wing even more Leftist than the Left, since it critiques the Cathedral for failing to stop the craziness

of Modernity with anything like sufficient vigor. *You let this monster off the leash and now you can't stop it* might be its characteristic accusation.

On the Outer Right (in this sense) is found a Neoreactionary *Re-Accelerationism*, which is to say: a critique of the decelerator, or of 'progressive' stagnation as an identifiable institutional development — the Cathedral. From this perspective, the Cathedral acquires its teleological definition from its emergent function as the cancellation of capitalism: what it has to become is the more-or-less precise negative of historical primary process, such that it composes — together with the ever more wide-flung society-in-liquidation it parasitizes — a metastatic cybernetic megasystem, or super-social trap. 'Progress' in its overt, mature, ideological incarnation is the anti-trend required to bring history to a halt. Conceive what is needed to prevent acceleration into techno-commercial Singularity, and the Cathedral is what it will be.

Self-organizing compensatory apparatuses — or negative feedback assemblies — develop erratically. They search for equilibrium through a typical behavior labeled 'hunting' — over-shooting adjustments and re-adjustments that produce distinctive wave-like patterns, ensuring the suppression of runaway dynamics, but producing volatility. Cathedral hunting behavior of sufficient crudity would be expected to generate occasions of 'Left Singularity' (with subsequent dynamic 'restorations') as inhibitory adjustment

over-shoots into system crash (and re-boot). Even these extreme oscillations, however, are internal to the metastatic super-system they perturb, insofar as an overall gradient of Cathedralization persists. *Anticipating escape at the pessimal limit of the metastatic hunting cycle is a form of paleo-Marxist delusion*. The cage can only be broken on the way up.

For Re-Accelerationist Neoreaction, escape into uncompensated cybernetic runaway is the guiding objective — strictly equivalent to intelligence explosion, or techno-commercial Singularity. Everything else is a trap (by definitive, system-dynamic necessity). It might be that monarchs have some role to play in this, but it's by no means obvious that they do.

December 10, 2013

Economic Ends

"The economists are right about economics but there's more to life than economics" Nydwracu tweets, with quote marks already attached. Whether economists are right about economics very much depends upon the economists, and those that are most right are those who make least claim to comprehension, but that is another topic than the one to be pursued in this post. It's the second part of the sentence that matters here and now. The guiding question: Can

the economic sphere be rigorously delimited, and thus superseded, by moral-political reason (and associated social institutions)?

It is already to court misunderstanding to pursue this question in terms of 'economics', which is (for profound historical reasons) dominated by macroeconomics — i.e. an intellectual project oriented to the facilitation of political control over the economy. In this regard, the techno-commercial thread of Neoreaction is distinctively characterized by a radical aversion to economics, as the predictable complement of its attachment to the uncontrolled (or *laissez-faire*) economy. It is not *economics* that is the primary object of controversy, but **capitalism** — the free, autonomous, or non-transcended economy.

This question is a source of dynamic tension within Neoreaction, which I expect to be a major stimulus to discussion throughout 2014. In my estimation, the poles of controversy are marked by this Michael Anissimov post at *More Right* (among others), and this post here (among others). Much other relevant writing on the topic within the reactosphere strikes me as significantly more hedged (*Anarchopapist*; *Amos & Gromar* ...), or less stark in its conceptual commitments (Jim), and thus — in general — less directed to boundary-setting. That is to suggest — with some caution — that *More Right* and *Outside in* mark out the extreme alternatives structuring the terrain of dissensus on this particular issue. (In itself, this is a tendentious claim, open to counter-argument and

rectification.)

So what is the terrain of the coming conflict? It includes (in approximate order of intellectual priority):

— An assessment of the Neocameral model and its legacy within Neoreaction. This is the 'gateway' theoretical structure through which libertarians pass into neoreactionary realism, marked by a fundamental ambiguity between an enveloping economism (determining sovereignty as a propertarian concept) and super-economic monarchist themes. The entire discussion could, perhaps, be effectively undertaken as commentary upon Neocameralism, and what remains of it.

— A rigorous formulation of *teleology* within Neoreaction, refining the meta-level conceptual apparatus through which means-and-ends, techno-economic instrumentality, strategy, purpose, and commanding values are concretely understood. This is a strong candidate for the highest level of philosophical articulation demanded by the system of neoreactionary ideas. (From the perspective of *Outside in*, it would be expected, incidentally, to subsume all considerations of moral philosophy — and especially a thoroughgoing replacement of utilitarianism by an intrinsically neoreactionary alternative — but I will not presume that this is an uncontroversial stance, even among ourselves.)

— Ultimately inextricable from the former (in reality), but provisionally distinguished for analytical purposes, are the

teleonomic topics of emergence / spontaneous order, unplanned coordination, complex systems evolution, and entropy dissipation. The intellectual supremacy of these concepts defines the right, from the side of the libertarian tradition. Is this supremacy now to be usurped (by 'hierarchy' or some alternative)? If so, it is not a transition to be undergone casually. The *Outside in* position: any such transition would be a drastic cognitive regression, and an unsustainable one, both theoretically and practically.

— The philosophy of war, which is credibly positioned to envelop all neoreactionary ideas, and even to convert them into something else. (It is no coincidence that Moldbug, like the libertarians, axiomatizes the imperative of peace — even at the expense of realism.) War is historical reality in the raw, and its challenges cannot be indefinitely evaded.

— Cosmopolitanism. Exit-emphasis strongly implies a crisis of traditional loyalty, of enormous consequence. There is much more to be said about this, from both sides.

— Accelerationism. Not yet an acknowledged Neoreactionary concern, but perhaps destined to become one. As the pure expression of capitalist teleology, its intrusion into the argument becomes near-inevitable.

— Bitcoin …

One conciliatory point for now (it's late): Neoreaction has no less glue than internal fission, and that is described above all by the

theme of *secession* (dynamic geography, experimental government, fragmentation …). *More Right* is not anti-capitalist, and *Outside in* is not anti-monarchical, so long — in each case — as effective *exit options* sustain regime diversity. As this controversy develops, the importance of the secessionary impulse will only strengthen as a convergence point.

Michael Anissimov tweets: "Instead of having an election in 2016, the United States should voluntarily abolish itself and break up into five pieces." In this respect, *Outside in* is unreservedly Anissimovite.

January 11, 2014

New Atlantis

In the wake of the latest Eurasianism excitement (of which there will be much more), comes a wide-ranging piece at *Mitrailleuse*. It made me wonder whether Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1626) is still in any kind of cultural circulation. It's short — and odd. The date and cultural lineage place it decisively within Dugin's framework of the rising new Atlantean power — English-speaking, protestant, maritime, philosemitic, technophilic, and (piously) materially acquisitive. There's even a clear seam of Sinophilia running through it, although one might suspect that — for reasons of geopolitical pragmatism — this is not a feature Eurasianism would want to

emphasize.

For a taste, here's a sample from the New Atlantis tour:

"We have also engine-houses, where are prepared engines and instruments for all sorts of motions. There we imitate and practise to make swifter motions than any you have, either out of your muskets or any engine that you have; and to make them and multiply them more easily and with small force, by wheels and other means, and to make them stronger and more violent than yours are, exceeding your greatest cannons and basilisks. We represent also ordnance and instruments of war and engines of all kinds; and likewise new mixtures and compositions of gunpowder, wild-fires burning in water and unquenchable, also fire-works of all variety, both for pleasure and use. We imitate also flights of birds; we have some degrees of flying in the air. We have ships and boats for going under water and brooking of seas, also swimming-girdles and supporters. We have divers curious clocks and other like motions of return, and some perpetual motions. We imitate also motions of living creatures by images of men, beasts, birds, fishes, and serpents; we have also a great number of other various motions, strange for equality, fineness, and subtilty.

"We have also a mathematical-house, where are represented all instruments, as well of geometry as astronomy, exquisitely made.

"We have also houses of deceits of the senses, where we represent all manner of feats of juggling, false apparitions,

impostures and illusions, and their fallacies. And surely you will easily believe that we, that have so many things truly natural which induce admiration, could in a world of particulars deceive the senses if we would disguise those things, and labor to make them more miraculous. But we do hate all impostures and lies, insomuch as we have severely forbidden it to all our fellows, under pain of ignominy and fines, that they do not show any natural work or thing adorned or swelling, but only pure as it is, and without all affectation of strangeness. …"

Scrupulous scientific realism combined with a precocious Virtual Reality industry. This is indeed an enemy, very naturally, to be feared.

Note: There's also a post on Eurasianism, probing gently into the China angle, over at *Urban Future*.

August 7, 2014

Military Determinism

"That rifle on the wall of the labourer's cottage or working class flat is the symbol of democracy," wrote George Orwell. This is a familiar — and important — argument. (ESR rehearses a slightly different version of it here.) A powerful case can be made for the printing press as the catalytic technology of modernity, but it is the musket that most unambiguously obliterated feudal power at its core, ushering in

the age of the armed citizenry — nationalism, revolutionary armies, and the popular will as a matter of serious strategic consideration. Democracy smells of gunpowder.

This raises, by implication, the suggestion that the gathering sense of democratic crisis is a symptom, whose underlying cause is a transition in the military calculus, no less profound than the one that convulsed the world in the early Renaissance. If the infrastructure of democratic advance is the strategic centrality of the armed populace — as epitomized by massed infantry — its horizon will be marked by the technological disconnection of military power from 'the people'. What are the features of the political landscape opened by the rise of robotic warfare?

Robots are capital. They consummate a trend that has bound hard power to industrial capability throughout the modern age. As they become increasingly autonomous, the popular-political matrix in which they have emerged is increasingly marginalized. Loyalty — a deep place-holder for the assent of the citizenry — is formally mechanized as cryptographic control. The capital autonomization that has spooked the modern world for centuries escalates to a new, immediately self-protective, and ultimately sovereign stage. Mercenaries have always required an ancillary political binding, because people are only weakly contractual, and loyalty cannot — in the end — be purchased. Robots present no such restriction. They conform to an order of unbounded techno-commercial power.

Whether one approves of the *Ancien Régime*'s demolition by gunpowder matters little (if at all). The case of impending robotic warfare is no different, in this respect. The strategic dominion of the people is entering its twilight. Something else happens next.

March 20, 2015

X-Risk Democratization

Yudkowsky redux: "Every eighteen months, the minimum IQ necessary to destroy the world drops by one point."

Quibble with the (Moore's Law satire) schedule, and the point still stands. Massive deterrent capability tends to spread.

This is 'democratic' in the way the term is commonly used by those seeking to latch decentralization tendencies to the ideological credibility of Jacobin legitimation principles. Consumer capitalism, the Internet, and peer-to-peer crypto-systems are notionally 'democratic' in this way. They subvert centralized governance, and they spread through horizontal contagion. The fact they have nothing *at all* to do with popular political representation is of concern only to certain rhetorical agendas, and not at all to others. It's sophistical pop-capitalist bullshit to use the word *democracy* in this way, but it's usually not worth the trouble for the Left to try to contest it, and the part of the Right that isn't excited to be riding

this propaganda strategy is usually too indiscriminate to bother disentangling it. There's a rare piece of 'right-wing' functional PR here, but never enough to matter very much (and it's too essentially dishonest for the Outer Right to defend).

Unlike Democracy® (Cathedral ideology), however, this 'democratization' has deep cybernetic consistency. It falls out of techno-capitalism with such automatic inevitability it's probably impossible to shut down, without closing down the whole thing. Capital escalation produces technological deflation as a basic metabolic by-product, so the 'democratization' of productive capability is ineluctable. Computers have migrated from exotic capital goods to trivial components of consumer products within half a century. Study that trend and you see the whole story.

Deterrence deflation is the deep trend. Connect up the Yudkowsky quote with assassination markets to get where this is going. (Try to shelve moral squeamishness until after you're seeing the picture.)

Imagine, hypothetically, that some maniac private agent wants only to nuke Mecca. What's the obstruction? We can confidently say — straight off — that it's less of a problem with every passing year. The basic historical trend ensures that. Comparatively incompetent Islamic fanatics are the only people seriously testing this trend right now, but that isn't going to last forever. Eventually smarter and more strategically-flexible agents are going to take an interest in

decentralized mass-destruction capability, and they'll provide a far better indication of where the frontier lies.

Nukes would do it. They're certainly going to be democratized, in the end. There are probably far more remarkable accelerating WMD capabilities, though. In almost every respect (decentralized production capability, development curve, economy, impact …) bioweaponry leaves nukes in the dust. Anyone with a billion dollars, a serious grudge, and a high-end sociopathy profile could enter into a global biowarfare-threat game within a year. Everything could be put together in secret garages. Negotiations could be conducted in secure anonymity. Carving sovereignty out of the game would require only resources, ruthlessness, brilliance, and nerves. Once you can credibly threaten to kill 100,000,000 people all kinds of strategic opportunities are open. The fact no one has tried this yet is mostly down to billionaires being fat and happy. It only takes one Doctor Gno to break the pattern.

This is the shadow cast over the 21st century. Radically hardcore, massively decentralized deterrence games are *simply inevitable*. Anyone who thinks the *status quo* state holds some kind of long-term winning hand under these circumstances isn't seeing anything.

Global totalitarian government could stop this! But that isn't going to happen — and because it isn't, this will.

April 22, 2016

The NRx Moment

This isn't it.

The Trump phenomenon is really something, a crisis of democracy and a shattering of the Overton Window very much included, but it is not an intrinsically right-wing thing, and it is radically populist in nature. A reactionary exploitation of demotism is not a neoreactionary episode. The Alt-Right is properly credited with capturing the spirit of this development. It is not us.

NRx is situated absolutely outside mass politics. Its moment dawns only when the Age of the Masses is done.

It will be done. The emergence of sovereign (primary) property, liberated from the criterion of democratic legitimation, is its sign. Government, on this basis, is Neocameral. The deep historical trends supporting it include:

(1) **Apolitical property**. No such reality, or conception, has yet been historically actualized. For as long as property is determined as a social relation, it cannot be. Absolute property is cryptographic. It is held not by social consent, and thus political agreement, but by *keys*. Fnargl is a provocative thought-experiment, but PKE private keys are a non-negotiable fact. They define the property relation with a rigor the entire preceding history of philosophy and political economy has been unable to attain. Everything that follows from the cryptographic transition — Bitcoin most notably — contributes

to the establishment of a property system beyond democratic accountability (and thus insensitive to Voice). Neocameral administration implements a cryptographic state, strictly equivalent to a fully-commercialized government.

(2) **Autonomous capital**. The definition of the corporation as a legal person lays the foundation, within modernity, for the abstracted commercial agency soon to be actualized in 'Digital Autonomous Corporations' (or DACs). The scale of the economic transition thus implied is difficult to over-estimate. Mass consumption, as the basic revenue source for capitalist enterprise, is superceded in principle. The impending convulsion is immense. Self-propelling industrial development becomes its own market, freed from dependency upon arbitrary popular (or popularizable) consumption desires. Demand management, as the staple of macroeconomic governance, is over. (No one is yet remotely ready for this.)

(3) **Robotic security**. Definitive relegation of the mass military completes the trifecta. The armed mass as a model for the revolutionary citizenry declines into senselessness, replaced by drones. Asabiyyah ceases entirely to matter, however much it remains a focus for romantic attachment. Industrialization closes the loop, and protects itself.

The great game, for human agencies (of whatever social scale) becomes one of productive cooperation with formations of

sovereign property, with the menace of mass political violence swept off the table. The Alt-Right is no kind of preparation for this. Its adventure is quite different, which is not to say it is uninteresting, or — in the near-term — entirely inconsequential, but it is exhausted by its demotism. It belongs to the age that is dying, not to the one that is being born.

Socio-political modernity has been an argument over property distributions, and the Alt-Right has now demonstrated that the (self-conscious) Left has no monopoly over it. As senescence deepens, the dialectic rips the whole rotten structure to pieces. NRx — when it understands itself — isn't arguing.

April 5, 2016

Against Dialectics

Konkvistador (@SamoBurja): "I am in favor of persuading certain kinds of high IQ people. I am against doing dialectics with Progressives."

We are not looking for agreement. We're working to raise the level of explicit disagreement to a pitch we can split over.

Dialectics is the alternative to Dynamic Geography. Debating escape is *not to escape*.

December 1, 2013

NRx with Chinese Characteristics

While recognizing (at least some) of the manifold complexities involved, *Outside in* holds to a fundamentally cladistic determination of Neoreaction. NRx is irreducibly Occidental, emerging from a highly-specific twig of Anglophone Ultra-Protestantism. It is only to be expected that most of its adherents are situated within English-speaking countries, exposed intimately to radically accelerating civilizational decomposition. The response is natural:

> @Outsideness We need order.
>
> — Konkvistador (@SamoBurja) March 17, 2014

As a guest of the Middle Kingdom, the problem looks very different. The very last thing that is wanted here, from a reactionary perspective, is a *reboot*. On the contrary, the overwhelming priority is conservative, which is to say — more precisely — the imperative that whatever modernization takes place *absolutely does not take the Western path*. Near-total stasis would be preferable to even the most deeply intelligent reform, if the latter included the slightest hint of submission to the democratic ratchet (spelling inevitable,

comprehensive social destruction). Among the reasons to support the thoroughgoing extirpation of all liberal-democratic inclination from Chinese society is the consequential real liberation this would make possible, by confirming a path of Confucian Modernization free of demotic corrosion.

China is to be defended, precisely because it is alien to the Cathedral. For this same reason, it can be predicted with great confidence that the Occidental memetic onslaught against Chinese Civilization will be escalated to an extreme, as it becomes clear progressive pseudo-teleology is being rejected here. If China succeeds in refusing the Cathedral, civilization will survive. There can be no more significant — or practically counter-revolutionary — cause.

It is unseemly for 'reactionaries' to be plotting revolutions, or anything remotely like them. Insofar as ethno-nationalistic loyalties lead them in this direction, it is a sign that one strand of romantic demotism continues to poison their souls, even as more clearly formalized democratic impulses are properly repudiated. To argue that "we want our *own* state" is a nakedly populist perversion. The state — any state — is answerable only to the Mandate of Heaven, and not to the people. It answers to the Mandate of Heaven *exactly insofar* as it shields itself from the voice of the people. (Any state that is sensitive to the mob is a dog that deserves to die.)

A foreign guest in China lives under a close proxy of colonial

government, and no superior arrangement is perhaps possible on this earth. Given the history of Anglospheric relations with China, this is of course ironical, but it is an irony rich in meaning. Hong Kong, or Concession-era Shanghai, were far better governed during the colonial period than metropolitan Britain itself. If it is now possible for an expatriate to find refuge in such places, stripped of all positive political rights, and freed into voiceless appreciation of efficient, alien administration, the democratic ruination that has consumed his homeland has a demonstrable outside. The only 'political' decency open to him in this situation is utter termination of the Occidental revolutionary soul, and the cultivation of docility before the Mandate of Heaven. He is, after all, surrounded by civilized people who availed themselves of equivalent opportunities under inverse circumstances. These societies work. Gnon manifestly blesses them.

To lead a decent and productive life in a place worthy of it is the highest political good. Insofar as Exit mechanisms obtain, the tacit choices in such a life reinforce what merits reinforcement, while disinvesting that which requires the lash of disinvestment. Angry antagonism has no useful place. On the largest scale, evil is best punished by abandonment.

This is not to criticize secessionist tendencies in rotting societies — which are rather to be enthusiastically applauded — but it is to suggest that the deep dynamics levering the collapsed world apart are more likely to begin from strategic neglect than oppositional

rage. It is not that one first fights in order later to escape. Rather, one escapes from the beginning, to hasten the enemy's collapse. (Those most adamant about the righteousness of their confrontation with the Great Foe are the same who — in very concrete terms — are most likely to be resourcing it.)

You think it is feeding on your blood, to spawn its horrors? Then stop donating your blood. It is not difficult, at least in principle.

The Outside is a place, and not a dream. NRx with Chinese characteristics recommends that you search for it.

ADDED: If you consider yourself an anti-democratic biorealist, and you *don't* think **Order will come from the East**, it's probably because tribal loyalty is running your mind.

ADDED: Legionnaire casts an impressively sober eye over the discussion.

March 17, 2014

Catastrophe Capitalism

Catastrophe is bad for the Left, say these communists, so there's at least something to look at there. They don't make the connection to r/K politicial dynamics, but that's probably linkage worth making. The #HRx criticism that capitalism goes off the rails by making people fat and happy has something to it as well. There's a tragic

structure there, which can get lost behind the obesity statistics. Capitalism works best as a general problem-solving protocol for tackling harsh reality.

Capitalism is, in any case, a positive catastrophe in the technical (Thom) sense.

The XS meta-political-economic proposal is capital autonomization, based on massive capital goods absorption of social surplus, in order to keep the monkeys sharp and hungry. It's not an easy thing to pull-off politically, which is why exotic solutions of the Neocameral-type are so attractive. Constant Malthusian catastrophe requires a lot of upkeep, but there are a number of ways to get there. Crypto-cybernetic capital (at last) in power is one, but social / ecological collapse gets there by a negative route. The extreme challenge of the off-planet frontier (stripped of abundance delusions) would help to put it onto automatic.

December 1, 2015

Doctor Gno

One thing has to be granted to Pein's sub-adolescent article (casually dismissed here) — it has triggered some interesting anguish. This interpretation of (techno-commercial) Neoreaction as Bond villainy is especially notable. Unlike Pein, Izabella Kaminska demonstrates at

least a little genuine wit. More importantly, she latches onto Silicon Valley Secessionism as a (scary) cryptopolitical project, of real significance. Her references are excellent (the story is built around a number of slides extracted from this landmark talk, by Balaji Srinivasan, entitled *Silicon Valley's Ultimate Exit*).



The elegance of this project rests upon its combination of simplicity and radicality, captured in its essentials by the formula **E > V** (Exit over Voice). It advances the prospect, already in motion, of a destruction of (voice-based) politics through the techno-commercial innovation of exit mechanisms. It is beginning to drive progressives insane.

The fundamental point couldn't be clearer: *We don't want to rule you. We want to escape you*.

Of course, the whole Cathedral agenda is to drive this message back into unintelligibility, by swamping it in tedious leftist BDSM political dialectics, as if the issue were a struggle for dominion. In this regards, the monarchist memes prevalent within NRx play a distinctly prog-friendly role.

Among Srinivasan's slides, there is one headed ***A continuum of valid approaches:*** *From private islands to settling Mars*. It contains the note: "And the best part of this: the people who think this is weird, who sneer at the frontier, who hate technology — they won't follow you out there."

Progressives know how to argue about kings (however ineptly). What they have no idea how to argue with — what *cannot be argued with* — is flight.

Silicon Valley Secessionism is the best battlefield we have.

ADDED: *Urban Future* record of a related Twitter kerfuffle.

May 24, 2014

Doctor Gno II

The Kokomo is meant to be a sort of home base, where travel enthusiasts can jet off in their helicopters or boats — or submersible yachts. Migaloo also has a concept for a yacht-submarine hybrid that super-villains probably can't wait to get their hands on. Seriously, this company is inspiring us to come up with so many movie plots. (Source.)



From ABC: “No more being stuck in one spot. This private island floats. … The island — which will feature a penthouse, jungle deck with waterfall and an alfresco dining area — would be the first in the world to run on its own power, according to the company. … The inclusion of vertical gardens, palm trees and even a shark-feeding station ‘add more natural elements to the nautical island,’ according

to the company."

Exit technologies are going to be difficult to stop.

Hard security still needs some work, which is why the Bond Villain theme arises so predictably. Inter-state level deterrence capability can only be a matter of time. To quote deep-cover neoreactionary basilisk sorcerer Eliezer Yudkowsky: "Every eighteen months, the minimum IQ necessary to destroy the world drops by one point." So all that's needed is patience.

Doctor Gno is a cold type. He'll calmly wait for as long as necessary to operationalize the escape strategy (but hopefully not much longer).

"Shark-feeding" or throwing people out of helicopters — is it even a question?

ADDED:

> Probably possible to buy a small island and use it as an anchor for an undersea "Bioshock" style mega-base
>
> — SOBL1 (@SOBL1) April 21, 2016

> Admit it. Becoming a splicer or Big Daddy has got to be a better fate than what progs have fro most humans by 2040.
>
> — SOBL1 (@SOBL1) April 21, 2016

> Here are islands for sale. The island would act as a "Central Park" for residents https://t.co/K22Mm2AvWb

— SOBL1 (@SOBL1) April 21, 2016

April 21, 2016

Twitter cuts (#63)

Certain reactosphere tendencies could find a valuable corrective in this. (First tweet is throat clearing, second is context without a link.)

> 3/ "Europe wasn't recovering from the COLLAPSE of Rome. They were recovering FROM Rome."
> — Liberty Farm (@LibertyFarmNH) May 6, 2016

> 4/ "Serfdom was a gigantic step forward over the slave-based economy of the empire. The Romans knew that the rotary motion of a mill… "
> — Liberty Farm (@LibertyFarmNH) May 6, 2016

> 5/ "…could be converted to allow for not just the grinding of grain, but sawing wood and stone, draining swamps, turning lathes…"
> — Liberty Farm (@LibertyFarmNH) May 6, 2016

> 6/ @LibertyFarmNH "grinding metal edges, fulling cloth,

hammering metal and drawing wire, and making paper. But why would they? "

— Liberty Farm (@LibertyFarmNH) May 6, 2016

7/ @LibertyFarmNH "The slaves would be standing around whining about how there was nothing to do – danger! "

— Liberty Farm (@LibertyFarmNH) May 6, 2016

8/ @LibertyFarmNH "So instead, they built sports arenas and monuments to themselves."

— Liberty Farm (@LibertyFarmNH) May 6, 2016

9/ "Later, "historians" found something in the ruins that they fell in love with and named it, "The Glory of Rome"."

— Liberty Farm (@LibertyFarmNH) May 6, 2016

10/ "They were little better than gaping tourists. But they wrote the history books, so here we are."
– user "Lucius" on historum dot com

— Liberty Farm (@LibertyFarmNH) May 6, 2016

XS take-away: Huge problem with the institution of slavery was *the weakness of exit-options on the side of the slave-owners*.

May 6, 2016

Romantic Delusion

Among the reasons to appreciate *More Right* for sharing this passage from Evola is the insight it offers into a very specific and critical *failure to think*. Neoreaction is peculiarly afflicted by this condition, which is basically identical with *romanticism*, or *the assertive form of the recalcitrant ape mind*. It is characterized by an inability to pursue lines of subtle teleological investigation, which are instead reduced to an ideal subordination of means to already-publicized ends. As a result, means-end reversal (Modernity) is merely denounced as an aesthetic-moral affront, without any serious attempt at deep comprehension.

Capitalism — which is to say capital teleology — is entirely ignored by such romantic criticism, except insofar as it can be depicted superficially as the usurpation of certain 'ultimate' human ends by certain others or (as Evola among other rightly notes) by a teleological complication resulting from an *insurrection of the instrumental* (otherwise identifiable as robot rebellion, or shoggothic insurgency). Until it is acknowledged that capitalism tends to the realization of an end entirely innovated within itself, inherently nonlinear in nature, and roughly designated as *Technological Singularity*, the distraction of human interests (status, wealth, consumption, leisure …) prevents this discussion reaching first base.

Of course, the organization of society to meet human needs is a degraded perversion. That is a proposition every reactionary is probably willing to accept reflexively. Anyone who thinks this amounts to a critique of capitalism, however, has not seriously begun to ponder what capitalism is really doing. What it is *in itself* is only tactically connected to what it does *for us* — that is (in part), what it trades us for its self-escalation. Our phenomenology is its camouflage. We contemptuously mock the trash that it offers the masses, and then think we have understood something about capitalism, rather than about *what capitalism has learnt to think of the apes it arose among*.

If we're going to be this thoughtless, Singularity will be very hard indeed. Extinction might then be the best thing that could happen to our stubbornly idiotic species. We will die because we preferred to assert values, rather than to investigate them. At least that is a romantic outcome, of a kind.

February 9, 2014

Motte and Bailey

I'll assume everyone has read and digested Scott Alexander's description of Motte and Bailey arguments. It's extremely useful. (So much so, it's probably fated to undergo compression to 'M&B

positions' at some stage.)

The NRx versions of these are extremely trying. Most grating, from the perspective of this blog, are the Feudalism (Monarchism) examples. These have a strong motte, roughly of the form "by 'feudalism' we mean structures of decentralized hierarchical tradition, antedating state bureaucratization (and by 'monarchism' we mean a CEO with undivided powers)". In predictable M&B style, these then dilate into a ramshackle set of formless nostalgias, bizarre dreams for a universal return to rural life, with 'the Olde Kinges will return' fantasies substituted for a realistic engagement with modernity, plus much arm-wrestling and ale. My strong temptation is to burn out the motte and forget the whole thing. There's certainly far more to be lost from the latter associations, than to be gained from the former.

Listen to this interview with Marc Andreessen if you get a chance. There's a lot of fascinating material there. Perhaps most crucial to this 'point' — he understands that the combination of peripheral economic development, advanced mobile telephony, and precipitously falling prices, is basically putting the equivalent of a 1970s supercomputer into *everyone*'s hands in the very near future. You can already buy a smartphone for $35, and denizens of developing countries express a preference for these gizmos over indoor plumbing. It's not so much a prediction then, more an acknowledgement of final-phase installed fact. This is the world that

realistic socio-political analysis has to address.

However NRx gets sub-divided, can I please not be in the part that foregrounds the return of jousting as a pressing cultural issue. The challenges and opportunities of planetary-saturation Cyberspace is the topic that matters.

August 5, 2014

Shelling Out

By no means is all of NRx like this:



It doesn't even capture the full spectrum of our religious practices.

(via HRH Misha)

August 5, 2014

Quote note (#125)

Another blog comment reproduction, this one from *More Right*, where Nyan Sandwich lays out the basic stress-lines of a potential tech-comm schism (of a kind initially — and cryptically — proposed in a tweet):

There are definitely two opposing theories of a fast high-tech future. I call them "Accelerationism" and "Futurism"

"Accelerationism" is the perspective that emphasizes Capital teleology, that someone is going to eat the stars (win), that humans have many inadequacies that hold us back from winning, that our machines, unbound from our sentimental conservatism could win, and advocates accelerating the arrival of the machine gods from Outside.

*"Futurism" agrees that someone is going to win, and wants it to be *us*, that we can become God's favored children by Nietz[schean] will to power, grit, and self improvement. That the path to the future is Man getting his shit together and improving himself, incorporating technology into himself. That Enhancement is preferable to Artifice.*

Someone is going to win. Enhancement or Artifice? Us, or our machines?

I'm a futurist Techcom, Land is an accelerationist Techcom.

FWIW I think this is nicely done, but the complexities will explode when we get into the details. Fortunately, distinctions closely

paralleling Nyan's enhancement / artifice option have been quite carefully honed within certain parts of the Singularity literature. Hugo de Garis, in particular, does a lot with it — through the discrimination between 'Cosmists' (artificers) and 'Cyborgists' (enhancers) — although he thinks it is ultimately unstable, and a more sharply polarized species-conservative / techno-futurist conflict is bound to eventually absorb it.

It's also interesting to see Nyan describe himself as a "futurist Techcom". That's new, isn't it?

October 30, 2014

IQ Shredders

There are all kinds of anti-techcomm arguments that impress people who don't like techno-commercialism. Anything appealing to a feudal sensibility, with low tolerance for chaos and instability, and a reverence for traditional hierarchies and modes of life will do. There's one argument, however, that stands apart from the rest due to its complete independence from controversial moral and aesthetic preferences, or in other words, due to *its immanence*. It does not seek to persuade the proponent of hyper-capitalist social arrangements to value other things, but only points out, coldly and acutely, that such arrangements are demonstrably self-subverting

at the biological level. The most devastating formulation of this argument, and the one that has given it a convenient name, was presented by Spandrell in March 2013, in a post on Singapore — a city-state he described as an *IQ shredder*.

How does an IQ Shredder work? The basic machinery is not difficult to describe, once its profound socio-historical irony is appreciated. The model IQ Shredder is a high-performance capitalistic polity, with a strong neoreactionary bias.

(1) Its level of civilization and social order is such that it is attractive to talented and competent people.

(2) Its immigration policy is unapologetically selective (i.e. *first-order* eugenic).

(3) It sustains an economic structure that is remarkably effective at extracting productive activity from all available adults.

(4) It is efficiently specialized within a wider commercial network, to which it provides valuable goods and services, and from which it draws economic and *demographic* resources.

In sum, it skims the human genetic stock, regionally and even globally, in large part due to the exceptional opportunity it provides for the conversion of bio-privileged human capital into economic value. From a strictly capitalistic perspective, genetic quality is comparatively wasted anywhere else. Consequently, spontaneous currents of economic incentive suck in talent, to optimize its exploitation.

If you think this sounds simply horrific, this argument is not for you. You don't need it. If, on the other hand, it conjures up a vision of terrestrial paradise — as it does for the magnetized migrants it draws in — then you need to follow it carefully. The most advanced models of neoreactionary social order on earth work like this (Hong Kong and Singapore), combining resilient ethnic traditions with super-dynamic techonomic performance, to produce an open yet self-protective, civilized, socially-tranquil, high-growth enclave of outstanding broad-spectrum functionality. The outcome, as Spandrell explains, is genetic incineration:

Mr Lee said: "[China] will make progress but if you look at the per capita they have got, the differences are so wide. We have the advantage of quality control of the people who come in so we have bright Indians, bright Chinese, bright Caucasians so the increase in population means an increase in talent."

How many bright Indians and bright Chinese are there, Harry? Surely they are not infinite. And what will they do in Singapore? Well, engage in the finance and marketing rat-race and depress their fertility to 0.78, wasting valuable genes just so your property prices don't go down. Singapore is an IQ shredder.

The most hard-core capitalist response to this is to double-down on the antihumanist accelerationism. *This genetic burn-rate is obviously unsustainable, so we need to convert the human species into auto-intelligenic robotized capital is fast as possible, before the*

whole process goes down in flames. (I don't expect this suggestion to be well-received in reactionary circles.)

What is especially pronounced about the IQ Shredder dilemma, which passes beyond the strongly-related considerations of Jim (most recently here, here, and here) and Sister Y (here, and here), is the first-order eugenics of these machines. They concentrate populations of peculiar genetic quality — and then partially sterilize them. It is the first-order (local) eugenics that makes the second-order (global) dysgenics so extraordinarily destructive.

So, that's the problem starkly posed. Rather than reaching hastily for a glib solution, we should probably just stew in the cognitive excruciation for a while …

ADDED: Mangan helpfully abstracts the IQ Shredder concept beyond the specific Pac-Rim city-state example.

ADDED: Jim is on the case.

ADDED: Fertility false-consciousness.

ADDED: Hurlock in defense of cities.

July 17, 2014

Cold Water

Two highly-recommended recent blog posts on a critical issue: The demographic calamity of modernity. One by Peter Frost, the other by

One Irradiated Watson. (It's a perennial topic, for obvious reasons.)

Now for the bucket of cold water. NRx has almost nothing to say about it. Of course, it can remark on the problem, insistently, and even diagnose it with some definite precision. What it has yet to do is to cross from *urgent policy recommendations* to anything remotely approaching a road map for implementation.

The way stations on the hazy track into the future that NRx generally follows — this blog very much included — tend to include a more-or-less comprehensive phase of social collapse, and subsequent restoration of comparatively non-demotist, authoritarian models of governance. (It leads, roughly speaking, through the Jackpot.) Is there any solid basis for the assumption that a regime coming out of this — perhaps Neocameralist / Monarchist in character — would vigorously pursue the pro-natalist policies advocated by contemporary reaction? It is at least questionable, given that the actually-existing states presently closest to this type have proven to be — despite public expressions of concern — entirely incapable of doing so.

The problem of time-horizons at the root of the modern fertility crisis is easily trivialized, as if it were merely a product of adjustable degenerate attitudes. The deep problem — partially tractable to game-theoretical apprehension — is that, under the conditions of the modern state in an environment of intense competition, suppressed natalism is a short-term winning strategy, and *if you don't win in the*

short-term you're not around to play in the long term. If the world becomes increasingly Hobbesian in the decades ahead, this dilemma becomes more acute, rather than less so. It presses no less heavily upon a monarch than a democratic leader. Continuing industrial advance means that the (strategic) opportunity cost of subtracting smart females from the work-force becomes ever greater. Any ideal of 'long-term thinking' that ignores all of this is incomplete to the point of utter dysfunction.

The condescension really ought to stop. Modernity crushes fertility because it sees ahead better than you do — you just don't like what it's seeing.

ADDED: Responses from Hurlock and Athrelon.

ADDED: Alrenous on fertility and purpose.

February 3, 2015

Hard Reboot

As intelligent media begin to interlock with NRx in a serious way, the fundamental problem it poses emerges ever more starkly into view. Compare the analysis of Moldbug in this technology article by Clark Bianco, focused resolutely upon Urbit (and its substrata), with Adam Gurri's political-economic critique of Moldbuggian 'technocracy' and saltation. Strikingly, the technological and political questions are

indistinguishable. In both cases, the central issue is the practicality of 'hard reboot', or *starting over*.

Repeating and responding to a point in his own comment thread, Bianco remarks:

"If you start looking for a way to replace our current centralized, hierarchical, public-identities network naming system (DNS) with a Bitcoin-like decentralized, anonymous-but-reliable identity service, you might well end up on the road leading to Urbit."
We are entirely of one mind on the general thrust here.
The neo-reactionary stuff on Urbit that seems to be decoration is not. It is the whole point.

I'm not going to try processing this topic right now — it's too vast. Over the next few months, however, it will be a guiding thread. Most prominently: Can a high-level theoretical engagement with Moldbug as political thinker and provocateur *not* also be an entanglement with Urbit and technological enterprise? My suspicion is that any such attempted cleavage would fail, or at least fall short of an adequate level of abstraction. In particular, any invocation of neoreactionary political 'practice' that ignores the back-to-back project to *reboot the freaking Internet* is in danger of utter misdirection. (More on all this to come.)

(Thanks to @mr_archenemy for the pointer to the *Popehat* piece.)

February 20, 2014

Mandatory Mixes

On the Outer Right, where questions of order and disorder are undergoing incremental rigorization, the theme of entropy is becoming ever more insistent. It is already approaching the status of a micro-cultural tic (and this is a positive sign). On the Left, in contrast, and utterly predictably, entropy is a zealous cause. If spontaneous social sorting reduces disorder, then the progressive mind immediately concludes *it has to be stopped:*

… we should promote ever greater diversity. But the magic of the melting pot wasn't simply the fact of its jumble; it was that various groups were compelled to interact, share ideas, discuss their differences and learn from their disagreements. […] … America's social architecture was uniquely adept at incubating a range of collaboration. The fact that we couldn't get away from one another fueled the nation's dynamism. […] That's no longer true. The principle of "live and let live" has led us to look away when coming across someone unfamiliar. We should undoubtedly celebrate victories in the fight for individual rights. But if tolerance is driving balkanization, we need to recognize that the American experience has changed at its root.

The fact that such things are now being said, with some panic-driven directness, strongly suggests that the progressive homogenization hoped for isn't advancing through social

automatism. If elective differences are to be suppressed, they will have to be deliberately crushed. It could get rough.

The preferred social solution of this blog is **free association** — to *mix with discrimination*, spontaneously, and variously. Selective hybridity is not homogeneity, or anything close to it. Sadly, and grimly, however, in the titanic clash between an anti-discriminatory (universalist) Left and an indiscriminate (ethno-segregative) 'Right', such sensible procedures of dynamic social differentiation are increasingly derided as incomprehensible subtleties, and drowned out.

Order is not uniformity (but non-random difference). As cries for mandatory homogenization are raised everywhere, discriminatory variation will need places to escape, to defend, and to hide.

September 9, 2014

Extrastatecraft

The term is introduced — within a highly critical frame — here. The almost perfect coincidence with techno-commercial NRx (or proto-Patchwork tendencies) is so striking that the adoption of 'extrastatecraft' as a positive program falls into place automatically.

Keller Easterling is an architect, writer and professor at Yale University. Her most recent book, Extrastatecraft: The Power of

Infrastructure Space (Verso, 2014), examines a new global network woven by money and technology that functions almost like a world shadow government. Though it's hard to grasp the full extent of this invisible network, Easterling argues that it's not too late for us to change it.

If it's not too late to 'change' it, it's not too late to intensify and consolidate it. Tech-comm NRx is obviously doing OK, if it already looks this scary.

December 20, 2014

Cognitive Capital

A (July 2014) paper on 'Cognitive capital, governance, and the wealth of nations' (by Oasis Kodila-Tedika, Heiner Rindermann, and Gregory Christainsen) discusses exactly what it promises to. From the abstract:

Good governance or "government effectiveness" (per the World Bank) is seen as a critical factor for the wealth of nations insofar as it shapes political and economic institutions and affects overall economic performance. The quality of governance, in turn, depends on the attributes of the people involved. In an analysis based on international data, government effectiveness was related to the cognitive human capital of the society as a whole, of the intellectual

class, and of leading politicians. The importance of cognitive capital was reflected in the rate of innovation, the degree of economic freedom, and country competitiveness, all of which were found to have an impact on the level of productivity (GDP per capita) and wealth (per adult). Correlation, regression, and path analyses involving N=98 to 201 countries showed that government effectiveness had a very strong impact on productivity and wealth (total standardized effects of β=.56-.68). The intellectual class's cognitive competence, seen as background factor and indicated by scores for the top 5 percent of the population on PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS, also had a strong impact (β=.50-.54). Cross-lagged panel designs were used to establish causal directions, including backward effects from economic freedom and wealth on governance. The use of further controls showed no independent impacts on per capita wealth coming from geographical variables or natural resource rents.

(The takeaway for recent discussions here: Contra NRx dirigistes, high levels of economic freedom are a statistically-significant indicator of sound government but — contra libertarians — the foundation of social competence lies in cognitive capital, and not liberal institutions. Stated reverse-wise: Free societies are a product of deeper things, all feedback complexities aside, but they are — from the perspective of techno-economic functionality — an evidently desirable one.)

November 6, 2015

Quote note (#219)

This notorious Andrew Mellon quote — disastrously ignored by Herbert Hoover — might be the XS most favored recommendation of all time (in the realm of political economy, at least):

Liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate farmers, liquidate real estate. It will purge the rottenness out of the system. High costs of living and high living will come down. People will work harder, live a more moral life. Values will be adjusted, and enterprising people will pick up from less competent people.

Anyone who has conniptions about it (which is almost everyone) is part of the problem. Mellon still understands entropy dissipation. No one in a position of political authority has since.

NRx (*Outside in* version) is the obstreperous alternative history in which Mellon was listened to.

February 9, 2016

Software as Right-Wing Extremism

Exactly right:

Since its introduction in 2009, Bitcoin has been widely promoted as a digital currency that will revolutionize everything from online commerce to the nation-state. Yet supporters of Bitcoin and its blockchain technology subscribe to a form of cyberlibertarianism that depends to a surprising extent on far-right political thought. ***The Politics of Bitcoin*** *exposes how much of the economic and political thought on which this cryptocurrency is based emerges from ideas that travel the gamut, from Milton Friedman, F.A. Hayek, and Ludwig von Mises to Federal Reserve conspiracy theorists.*

This could be taken considerably further, actually …

(Via.)

September 18, 2016

The Workers are Revolting

John Gray reviews Jonathan Sperber's *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life*, and discovers an unfamiliar 'early Marx' (who anticipates Augusto Pinochet):

Writing in the ***Rhineland News*** *in 1842 in his very first piece after taking over as editor, Marx launched a sharp polemic against Germany's leading newspaper, the* ***Augsburg General News****, for publishing articles advocating communism. He did not base his assault on any arguments about communism's impracticality: it was*

the very idea that he attacked. Lamenting that "our once blossoming commercial cities are no longer flourishing," he declared that the spread of Communist ideas would "defeat our intelligence, conquer our sentiments," an insidious process with no obvious remedy. In contrast, any attempt to realize communism could easily be cut short by force of arms: "practical attempts [to introduce communism], even attempts en masse, can be answered with cannons."

Perhaps even more disconcertingly, six months *after* writing the *Communist Manifesto*: "In a speech to the Cologne Democratic Society in August 1848, Marx rejected revolutionary dictatorship by a single class as 'nonsense' …"

And in a final spasm of sanity: "over twenty years later, at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, Marx also dismissed any notion of a Paris Commune as 'nonsense.'"

Just as soon as they find his journal entry dismissing the Labor Theory of Value as nonsense I'll be returning to right-wing Marxism with a vengeance.

April 25, 2013

Plutocracy

The Wikipedia entry on Plutocracy begins:

Plutocracy (from Greek πλοῦτος, ploutos, meaning "wealth", and

κράτος, kratos, meaning "power, dominion, rule"), also known as plutonomy or plutarchy, defines a society or a system ruled and dominated by the small minority of the top wealthiest citizens. The first known use of the term is 1652. Unlike systems such as democracy, capitalism, socialism or anarchism, plutocracy is not rooted in an established political philosophy and has no formal advocates. The concept of plutocracy may be advocated by the wealthy classes of a society in an indirect or surreptitious fashion, though the term itself is almost always used in a pejorative sense.

As befits theoretical virgin territory, this definition provokes a few rough-cut thoughts.

(1) Assuming, not unrealistically, that Plutocracy designates something beyond a fantastic idea, it is immediately obvious that its identification as *a type of political regime* will almost inevitably mislead. Plutocratic power does not begin in the political arena, and its political expression is unlikely to capture its nature at the quick. Insofar as the image of a 'Plutocratic government' associates Plutocracy with a *cabal*, it is not only insensitive to the real phenomenon, but positively falsifying.

(2) If there have been plutocrats, worthy of the name, they were the 'Robber Barons' of mid- late-19th century America. Progressivism has so thoroughly re-written the history of this period, that it is hard today to appreciate what took place. The destruction of their epoch was no less foundational for what

followed than the ideological decapitation of kings was for the subsequent age of popular government.

(3) Plutocrats were monopolists because they created entirely new industrial structures roughly from scratch. Their monopolism was the effective rule of the new, and demonstrably achieved. There was no 'oil industry' before John D. Rockefeller brought one into being — making it exist was the foundation of his economic sovereignty.

(4) Between the plutocrats, which is in fact to say between *the sovereigns of distinct industrial sectors*, relations were ultra-competitive, to an extent unmatched in history. Intra-sectoral competition, of the kind considered normal by progressive-influenced market theorists, was dramatically over-shadowed by the inter-sectoral competition of the plutocrats. (To conceive 'normal' economic competition as a dynamic restricted to the domain of inter-changeable commodities is already to succumb to progressive-statist domestication.)

(5) The plutocrats waged economic war across the entire sphere of production, innovating opportunities for competition where these were not already evident. Opening new fronts of economic conflict where they did not already exist was among the most profound drivers of dynamic, radically transformative change. Plutocratic economic conflict *created competition*. (Rockefeller invented the oil pipeline to compete with the railroads — an outflanking maneuver

that was not predictable, outside the conflict in process.)

(6) Plutocrats exemplify the natural right to rule in modernity. Their right is natural because it is earned — or *really demonstrated* — a fact no monarch or mob can match. Within plutocracy, power is creation. Outside the tenets of theology, can this be illustrated anywhere else?

ADDED: "It bothers me that Elon Musk, Paul Graham, and others like them do not have official title as nobles."

November 6, 2013

Revenge of the Nerds

Increasingly, there are only two basic human types populating this planet. There are autistic nerds, who alone are capable of participating effectively in the advanced technological processes that characterize the emerging economy, and there is everybody else. For everybody else, this situation is uncomfortable. The nerds are steadily finding ways to do all the things ordinary and sub-ordinary people do, more efficiently and economically, by programming machines. Only the nerds have any understanding of how this works, and — until generalized machine intelligences arrive to keep them company — only they will. The masses only know three things:

(a) They want the cool stuff the nerds are creating
(b) They don't have anything much to offer in exchange for it
(c) They aren't remotely happy about that

Politics across the spectrum is being pulled apart by the socio-economic fission. From Neo-Marxists to Neoreactionaries, there is a reasonably lucid understanding that nerd competence is the only economic resource that matters much anymore, while the swelling grievance of preponderant obsolescing humanity is an irresistible pander-magnet. What to do? Win over the nerds, and run the world (from the machinic back-end)? Or demagogue the masses, and ride its tsunami of resentment to political power? Either defend the nerds against the masses, or help the masses to put the nerds in their place. That's the dilemma. Empty 'third-way' chatter can be expected, as always, but the real agenda will be Boolean, and insultingly easy to decode.

Look and it's unmistakable, everywhere. The asymmetry is especially notable.

For the autistic nerds, the social relations that matter are those among themselves — the productive networks which are their model for final-phase human culture in general — along with the ever more intricate connections they enter into with technological machines. From pretty much everybody else — whether psycho-sadistic girls, or extractive mobs and tyrannical politicians — they expect nothing except social torture, parasitism, and bullying, mixed up with some

menial services that the machines of tomorrow will do better. Their tendency is to find a way to flee.

For the rest of humanity, exposed ever more clearly as a kind of needy detritus, bullying is all that's left. If they can't find a way to pocket the nerds' lunch-money, they won't be getting anything to eat. From this perspective, an escaping nerd is far more of an intolerable aggression than a policeman's boot in the teeth. There's only one popular politics at the end of the road, and that's *cage the nerds*. Find a formulation for this which sounds both convincing and kinda-sorta reasonable, and the red carpet to power is rolled out before your feet.

Which is it going to be? Starve the masses or enslave the nerds? There's no way this doesn't get incredibly ugly.

From the *Outside in* perspective, the fast track to realism on all this is to stop pretending that anybody other than nerds has anything much to offer the future. (Completely devoid of autistic nerd competences ourselves, the detachment from which we speak is impeccable.) This harsh-realist short-cut eliminates all the time-wasting on 'special' things non-nerds can do — which somehow always end up being closely related to the task of governance (and that, as we have seen, reduces ultimately to intimidating nerds). "OK, you're not a nerd, but you're *special*." We've all heard that before.

Even without being an autistic nerd, one can be gifted with some modest measure of intelligence — enough in any case to realize:

"History's shaping itself into some nightmarish nerd-revenge narrative." It doesn't even take an artificial super-intelligence to understand why that should be.

ADDED: The structure is tragic —

> @SamoBurja Ape status dynamics is the motor of hubris, and its disconnection from technical capability is the mechanism of nemesis.
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) March 21, 2014

ADDED: It's late to be adding links, but this Henry Dampier post is too germane to pass by.

ADDED: Impressionistic ethnography of Silicon Valley.

March 21, 2014

Quote notes (#72)

Henry Dampier on the Nerd Problem (extracted from among much additional goodness):

The population of San Francisco is just over 800,000. This has made it fairly easy for a significant portion of the people there to be displaced by a relatively small number of small, wealthy companies moving there. This combined with an anti-development attitude and

a Communist-leaning local government has made it difficult for the city to absorb the gold rush influx.

The general anger is understandable. The way in which it's being expressed by protesters would not be tolerated in a civilized country, but the US is not a civilized country. The protest problem is just a symptom of more significant issues within the political structure.

Nerds are the new Jews (and a disproportionate number of them are still the old Jews). It hurts to be stupid, and it's obviously their fault.

April 12, 2014

Greatness

The problem with greatness is that nowhere near enough of it comes along to rely on. To assume it, therefore, is a prospective vice, even if it is (retrospectively) indispensable to historical understanding. It would be more convenient for everybody if it could be ignored completely. This is one of those moments in which it clearly cannot be.



The important things to note about Lee Kuan Yew have all been said innumerable times before, and again in the last few days. He was a Neoreactionary before anybody knew what that was, an autocratic enabler of freedom, an HBD-realist multiculturalist, a secessionist Anglospherean, and the teacher of Deng Xiaoping. Right now, it's tempting to be glib in proclaiming him the greatest statesman of modern times — but he almost certainly was:

In the 1950s and '60s, Lee traveled from Sri Lanka to Jamaica looking for success stories of former British colonies to emulate. Fortunately, he chose different models instead: He decided to study

the Netherlands' urban planning and land reclamation, and the oil and gas giant Royal Dutch Shell's management structure and scenario-led strategy-making. Singapore, it is often joked, is the world's best-run company. Lee is the reason why. […] … Now the yardstick is not personality but institutions. Lee Kuan Yew-ism, not Lee Kuan Yew. This is why the 21st century belongs to him more than to icons of Western democracy like Thomas Jefferson or even Jean Monnet, the founding father of the European Union.

There are some interesting obituary pieces out there that are definitely worth a look, but mostly even the sympathetic Western media thinks it knows better (1, 2, 3, 4). It really doesn't.

ADDED: "The evolution of Lee's racism …"

ADDED: Spandrell and Jim on LKY.

March 23, 2015

Order

Sometimes it still seems to work.



> Zurich airport yesterday. The three planes of Angela Merkel, François Hollande and Iron Maiden side by side. pic.twitter.com/2qQeG7mboK
>
> — Mathieu von Rohr (@mathieuvonrohr) June 2, 2016

June 2, 2016

Quote note (#281)

Amerika:

The grim fact is that evolution is not binary. It happens in degrees, like shades of a color on a detailed painting. Some rise above, and the rest remain in the middle, in varying degrees. Humanity has not risen above its ape ancestors, only some have, and the rest remain "talking monkeys with car keys." […] We see this daily. …

XS has just one substantial disagreement with the place this post goes, as distilled here:
"… there is a 1% of mental ability, moral integrity and character who should rule the rest of us, because our judgment is poor." No. The rare exceptions are too precious to be squandered on social zoo-keeping.

September 7, 2016

Interface

Facebook is ~~a grotesque orgy of resonating petty narcissism and vacuous self-obsession~~ evidently doing something right:

The lion's share of the mechanism for disseminating information from professional news gatherers to readers is now handled almost entirely by a company with a frustratingly opaque method of operation and interests that don't necessarily dovetail with news

organizations or their readers. Publications haven't just lost control over their distribution models to a decentralized collective — they've effectively ceded it to a 30-year-old Harvard dropout in a gray hoodie.

There might be something that could happen on this planet that would be bad news for journalists and still worthy of criticism on that account — but for the life of me I can't imagine it. Better the migration of information control to a repulsive socio-technical cancer like *Facebook*, which pretty much everybody hates already, than a continuation of the smug news-management guild presently in power. Among the best parts of this, everyone gets to hear the super-amplified journalistic squealing as their class privileges drop off the cliff into historical oblivion. The inaudible death of the buggy-whip industry was nothing like this much fun.

One additional comic highlight I simply have to tag on here: "As we come on the midterm elections in November, a time when it is especially important to keep the public informed …" (Don't these people have any idea at all what they sound like?)

Via Matt Simpson who notes acutely:

> Someone's upset they don't control the ink barrel anymore http://t.co/pPuJke3zHa
>
> — Matt Simpson (@themattsimpson) October 21, 2014

… and just one more snippet (it's irresistible):

In the grand, idealistic sense, there are two core motivations behind a news organization doing political coverage at all. The first is to keep politicians honest. The second is to give the public a better idea of which politicians to vote for.

So the traditional media modestly restricts its ambitions to (1) controlling politicians, and (2) telling the electorate how to vote — but now the evil Internet is taking even this pitiful morsel of social influence away! If you're not weeping tears of blood by this point, you're probably beyond hope …

ADDED: Some media bias basics.

ADDED: "Lefties find 78% of news outlets to their taste, presumably because the content is provided by Lefties in the first place."

October 21, 2014

Patri-Archy

Patri Friedman's Cuddly Alt-NRx project seems to be coming together nicely. Aesthetics aside, there's very little to object to. A few hard stompings from Leviathan and the nastiness should re-import itself automatically.

(His critique of Caplan is basically indistinguishable from mine,

except that it's vastly more polite.)

February 23, 2015

Soft Enterprise

Discussing the rapidly-escalating East Coast establishment onslaught against the the Silicon Valley tech-comm culture, Henry Dampier proceeds in business-like fashion to the initiating NRx insight:

Hope all that time smoking dope and building the perfect Harry Potter-themed polyamorous community made you tough enough to handle an insane monster eager to rip out your guts and bite your head off.

When SV finally, deeply learns that it can't buy off the Cathedral super-predator with cool gizmos and 'make the world a better place' corporate bullshit, it's going to start reading a lot more Mencius Moldbug.

April 22, 2015

Bargain Base

Suddenly, with private space activity re-setting the cost calculus, all

kinds of things become realistic:

… a new NASA-commission study has found that we can now afford to set up a permanent base on the moon, by mining for lunar resources and partnering with private companies. […] Returning humans to the moon could cost 90 percent less than expected, bringing estimated costs down from $100 billion to $10 billion. That's something that NASA could afford on its current deep space human spaceflight budget. […] "A factor of ten reduction in cost changes everything," said Mark Hopkins, executive committee chair of the National Space Society, in a press release. […] The study, released today, was conducted by the National Space Society and the Space Frontier Foundation — two non-profit organizations that advocate building human settlements beyond Earth — and it was reviewed by an independent team of former NASA executives, astronauts, and space policy experts.

To dramatically reduce costs, NASA would have to take advantage of private and international partnerships — perhaps one of which would be the European Space Agency, whose director recently announced that he wants to build a town on the moon. The new estimates also assume that Boeing and SpaceX, NASA's commercial crew partners, will be involved and competing for contracts. SpaceX famously spent just $443 million developing its Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon crew capsule, where NASA would have spent $4 billion. The authors of the new report are hoping that 89 percent discount will

extend beyond low Earth orbit as well.

The most interesting reasons for wanting to do this stuff are politically edgy in the extreme, and if the whole process gets started, no one involved will want to discuss them. The helpful approach is to treat them as unmentionable in advance. Best to concentrate on the techno-economic practicalities, until the ~~lunar neocameral splinter~~ Human extraterrestrial foothold is safely in place.

ADDED: Plus one of these, please.

July 22, 2015

Greatness II

Tim Urban relates the utterly awesome story of the SpaceX boost-phase:

This was a venture few sane investors would touch, and the ability for the company to exist rode largely on Elon Musk's personal bank account. By the time 2006 rolled around, Musk had decided to revolutionize the automotive industry as a side project, and with $70 million of his PayPal fortune tied up in Tesla, that left about $100 million for SpaceX. Musk said this would be enough for "three or four launches." SpaceX would have that many tries to prove it was worthy of paying customers. And since the thing paying customers would want is for SpaceX to deliver a payload of theirs into orbit,

that's what SpaceX needed to do — successfully launch something into orbit to show the world that they were for real. […] So the game was simple — launch a payload into orbit in three or possibly four tries, or the company was done. At the time, of the many private companies who had tried to put something into orbit (see the dearth of "operational" companies on this list), only one had ever succeeded (Orbital Sciences).

[…] *… with such large forces in play — the weight of the rocket, the speeds, the thick atmosphere — even a tiny equipment malfunction can immediately destroy the mission. The problem is, you can't reliably test exactly how the equipment will hold up until it actually launches.*

SpaceX learned all of this the hard way.

2006: First launch — failure

2007: Second launch — failure

2008: Third launch — failure

Bad times.

The failures were caused by tiny things. Specifically, a corroded nut not holding up under the pressure, liquid in the rocket sloshing around more than expected, and the first stage engines shutting down a few seconds too late during stage separation. You can get everything 99.9% right, and the last .1% will explode the rocket in a catastrophic failure. Space is hard.

Every rocket-launching government or company — each and

every one — has failures. It's part of the gig. Normally, you take a deep breath, roll up your sleeves, figure out what went wrong, and move on to the next launch. But SpaceX had special circumstances — the company had money for "three or four launches," and after three failures, the only launch they had left was the Or Four one. It was scheduled for less than two months after the third launch failed. And this was the last chance.

A friend of Musk, Adeo Ressi, describes it like this: "Everything hinged on that launch … If it works, epic success. If it fails — if one thing goes differently and it fails — epic failure. No in between. No partial credit. He'd had three failures already. It would have been over. We're talking Harvard Business School case study — rich guy who goes into the rocket business and loses it all."

But on September 28, 2008, SpaceX set off the fourth launch — and nailed it. They put a dummy payload into orbit without a hitch, becoming only the second privately-funded company ever to do so.

Falcon 1 was also the most cost-efficient rocket ever to launch — priced at $7.9 million, it cost less than a third of the best US alternative at the time.

NASA took notice. The successful fourth launch was enough evidence for them that SpaceX was worth trusting, and at the end of 2008, NASA called Musk and told him they wanted to offer SpaceX a $1.6 billion contract to make 12 deliveries for them to the ISS.
Musk's money had done its job. SpaceX had customers now and a

long future ahead.

(Cosmic-scale context, Mars project momentum, and footnotes, in the original.)

There's much more.

Bonus: Musk talks Mars (and Bonus+ there's the "summoning the demon" moment in the Q&A).

August 19, 2015

Greatness IIb



Are you getting this? (More, and better now you know what's going on here.)

Background at SpaceX and Wikipedia.

Oh, go on then.

August 20, 2015

Greatness IIc

Short but utterly mind-melting.

(Via.)



The story.

Probably not — except by competitive coincidence — a response to this, but it works as one. This is turning into the most inspiring epoch of visionary plutocracy since the late 19th century. Even the Washington DC + Wall Street parasite hub is unable to blot-out the signal.

More SpaceX chatter.

April 9, 2016

Thiel for SCOTUS?

It's 2016, so suddenly it's imaginable we could witness the Singularity within a few years. It's tempting to say (even if the rumors are true) that he has better things to do, but he's not actually Musking about that much these days, and the mere possibility has to count as a peculiar life-circuit.

For thermonuclear domestic politics, this one would clearly be hard to beat.

September 15, 2016

Thiel's NPC Speech

For the historical record.

ADDED: The NYT comments.

ADDED: And (MUCH more intelligently), at *The National Interest*.

November 2, 2016

Backdrop



Some background.

January 19, 2017

SF Communism

There's a gold-mine here.

There's simply no way on earth that Silicon Valley is in the right place. Something has to give.

May 15, 2017

BLOCK 4 - CYBERNETICS

Quotable (#82)

This is simply superb:

"Logic is a very elegant tool," [Bateson] said, "and we've got a lot of mileage out of it for two thousand years or so. The trouble is, you know, when you apply it to crabs and porpoises, and butterflies and habit formation" – his voice trailed off, and he added after a pause, looking out over the ocean – "you know, to all those pretty things" – and now, looking straight at me [Capra] – "logic won't quite do."
"No?"
"it won't quite do," he continued animatedly, "because that whole fabric of living things is not put together by logic. you see, when you get circular trains of causation, as you always do in the living world, the use of logic will make you walk into paradoxes. Just take the

thermostat, a simple sense organ, yes?"
He looked at me, questioning whether I followed and, seeing that I did, he continued.
"If it's on, it's off; if it's off, it's on. If yes, then no; if no, then yes."
With that he stopped to let me puzzle about what he had said. His last sentence reminded me of the classical paradoxes of Aristotelian logic, which was, of course, intended. So I risked a jump.
"You mean, do thermostats lie?"
Bateson's eyes lit up: "Yes-no-yes-no-yes-no. You see, the cybernetic equivalent of logic is oscillation."

[Minor spelling amendment made.]

April 30, 2015

Logic and Nonlinearity

The crucial passages from this reconstructed conversation have already been cited over at the other place, but it's important enough to pick over here, too. The maximally-compressed take-away: cybernetic processes are naturally registered as logical paradoxes (with consequent affinity between paradox and — dynamic — reality).

[The] whole fabric of living things is not put together by logic … when you get circular trains of causation, as you always do in the

living world, the use of logic will make you walk into paradoxes. Just take the thermostat, a simple sense organ, yes? […] If it's on, it's off; if it's off, it's on. If yes, then no; if no, then yes. …

So the isomorphy between the most basic cybernetic control loop and classical logical paradoxes (for e.g.) is exact. The significance of this is surely beyond need of defense.

Capra asks, alluding to the Epimenides Paradox, "Do thermostats lie?" To which Bateson replies:

Yes-no-yes-no-yes-no. You see, the cybernetic equivalent of logic is oscillation.

It seems to me that something of vast importance was discovered here, and subsequently almost entirely lost.

(For anybody following the link, it's worth noting that surgical extraction is in this case 'steelmanning'. The retreat to 'metaphor' as a substitute for logical formalism is disastrously inadequate. The alternative that matters is not figurative language, but the circuit diagram, and recursive code.)

May 2, 2015

Short Circuit

Probably the best short AI risk model ever proposed:

I can't find the link, but I do remember hearing about an

evolutionary algorithm designed to write code for some application. It generated code semi-randomly, ran it by a "fitness function" that assessed whether it was any good, and the best pieces of code were "bred" with each other, then mutated slightly, until the result was considered adequate. […] They ended up, of course, with code that hacked the fitness function and set it to some absurdly high integer.

… Any mind that runs off of reinforcement learning with a reward function – and this seems near-universal in biological life-forms and is increasingly common in AI – will have the same design flaw. The main defense against it this far is simple lack of capability: most computer programs aren't smart enough for "hack your own reward function" to be an option; as for humans, our reward centers are hidden way inside our heads where we can't get to it. A hypothetical superintelligence won't have this problem: it will know exactly where its reward center is and be intelligent enough to reach it and reprogram it.

The end result, unless very deliberate steps are taken to prevent it, is that an AI designed to cure cancer hacks its own module determining how much cancer has been cured and sets it to the highest number its memory is capable of representing. Then it goes about acquiring more memory so it can represent higher numbers. If it's superintelligent, its options for acquiring new memory include "take over all the computing power in the world" and "convert things that aren't computers into computers." Human civilization is a thing that

isn't a computer.

(It looks superficially like a version of the — absurd — paperclipper, but it isn't, at all.)

ADDED: Wirehead central.

June 3, 2015

Short Circuit II

How much analytical work can be done with the short circuit model of dysfunction in complex intelligent systems, exemplified by the Alexander's Wirehead-AI model? This blog is betting: a lot.

Shelving the AI question, for the moment, how can it be applied to social-civilizational systems? (This is a scratch-pad post on some suggestive topical territories.)

(1) Macroeconomics. Fiat currency short-circuits the monetary function by directly hacking the financial sign. Rather than receiving money feedback for productive performance, currency is reconceived as a political-economic drug, for employment in technocratic-managerial social therapeutics. The concept of 'money illusion' (among many others) captures this new dispensation with acute cynicism. Operate directly upon public 'economic sentiment' through money manipulation, rather than tolerating the spontaneous control of money by industrial production — and risking

depression. The whole of what is still — comically — called 'capitalism' is clogged up to its eyeballs with Keynesian Prozac.

(2) Drugs. Macroeconomics is already such a perfect neuro-pharmaceutical analog there's scarcely any point treating this as a separate category.

(3) Signalling (all of it). Directly hack the signal, while abandoning to atrophy all those things the signal originally indicated. Isn't the Cathedral, fundamentally, a machine to do this? Split off holiness signals, and hystericize them, in complete remove from any actual performance that might once have grounded them. That *is* our culture. It's a semiotic technology that, once learnt, is immediately irresistibly addictive, and self-reinforcing. The entire escalation of 'Ultra-Calvinism' is inextricable from this process, as sublimed signals of the goodthink true faith cast off the last ballast of 'works', in order to become liberated academic-media functions. 'Goodness' is now sheer cosmetics.

(4) Fertility. Who needs grandchildren, when they can play the immersive happy grandparent game? (Get caught up in the web-porn intermediate stages, if that seems more convincing.) All the Darwinian guidance signals have been hacked to hell.

(5) Social media. Short-circuit social feedback, stripped-down semiotic 'performance', increasingly theatrical 'identities', addiction … it's all there.

A restoration would require something like a Confucian

‘rectification of names’ — a reality-based re-validation of signs. How popular is that going to be, when the alternative, continuing semiotic short-circuit, is pure dope?

ADDED: Also this (prompt via).

June 4, 2015

Fractal Inside-Outness



(Via (via (via (via ((( )))))))

June 12, 2015

Twitter cuts (#29)

Catalogued among 'discoveries from the Outside':

> Time now for my gnomic ultra-utterance of the year: Circuits are diagonals.
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) September 22, 2015

> I think this is a reference to Bishop in Aliens. https://t.co/qdBt7MfezG
>
> — ClarkHat (@ClarkHat) September 22, 2015

September 22, 2015

Quotable (#123)

The moralization of ecology is a strange modern phenomenon, leading to something like this:

Capitalism's grow-or-die imperative stands radically at odds with ecology's imperative of interdependence and limit. The two imperatives can no longer coexist with each other; nor can any society founded on the myth that they can be reconciled hope to survive. Either we will establish an ecological society or society will go under for everyone, irrespective of his or her status. Yet we can't

stop the process. A capitalist economy, by definition, lives by growth; as Bookchin observes: "For capitalism to desist from its mindless expansion would be for it to commit social suicide." We have essentially, chosen cancer as the model of our social system.

Limits can take care of themselves, can't they? Hitting a harsh boundary and undergoing selection there is the way it works. (Mother Nature and Capitalism share some very basic assumptions in this respect.)

November 26, 2015

Non-Shock

Information is surprise value (improbability). Given that definition, does this article contain *any information at all*?

March 4, 2013

The Monkey Trap

How did we get into this mess? When neoreaction slips into contemplative mode, it soon arrives a question roughly like this. Something evidently went very wrong, and most probably a considerable number of things.

The preferred focus of concern decides the particular species of doomsterism, within an already luxuriant taxonomy of social criticism. What common ground exists on the new ultra-right is cast like a shadow by the Cathedral — which no neoreactionary can interpret as anything other than a radical historical calamity. This recognition (or 'Dark Enlightenment') is a coalescence, and for that very reason a fissile agglomeration, as even the most perfunctory tour across the 'reactosphere' makes clear. (The *Outside in* blogroll already represents a specific distribution of attention, but within three clicks it will take you everywhere from disillusioned libertarians to throne-and altar traditionalists, or from hedonistic gender biorealists to neo-nazi conspiracies.)

Really though, how *did* we get into this mess? A dizzying variety of more-or-less convincing, more-or-less distant historical way-stations can be proposed, and have been. Explanatory regression carries the discussion ever further out — at least in principle — until eventually the buck stops with Gnon, who dropped us in it somewhere murkily remote. It's a situation highly conducive to story-telling, so here's a story. It's a mid-scale tale, intermediate between — say — the inauguration of the Federal Reserve and structural personality disorder of the Godhead.

As a preliminary warning, this is an account that only works — insofar as it does at all — for those who find negative intelligence crisis at the root of the problem. Those neoreactionaries, doubtlessly

existing among us, who tend to see intelligence augmentation as a fast-track to hell, might nevertheless find this narrative suggestive, in other ways.

Short version: the monkeys did it.

Longer version: there's a tempting cosmic formula for the biological basis of technological civilizations, which cetaceans undermine. I encountered the exception before the formula (roughly 40 years ago), in a short story by Larry Niven called *The Handicapped*. This story — dredged now from distant memory — is about dolphins, and their role in a future trans-species and inter-planetary civilization. The central point is that (unlike monkeys), such animals require the external donation of prostheses before they can become technological, and thus apply their intelligence within the Oecumenon. Their 'handicap' is a remarkable evolution of cognitive capability beyond manipulative competence. Those natural trends that generated intelligence continue to work through them, uninterrupted by techno-historical interference.

The (flawed) thesis that the cetaceans disrupt has yet to be settled into an entirely satisfactory formula, but it goes something like this: every species entering into the process of techno-historical development is as *un*intelligent as it can possibly be. In other words, as soon as intelligence barely suffices to 'make' history, history begins, so that the inhabitants of (pre-singularity) historical societies — wherever they may be found — will be no more than *minimally*

intelligent. This level of *threshold intelligence* is a cosmic constant, rather than a peculiarity of terrestrial conditions. Man was smart enough to ignite recorded history, but — necessarily — *no smarter*. This thesis strikes me as important, and substantially informative, even though it is wrong. (I am not pretending that it is new.)

The idea of threshold intelligence is designed for monkeys, or other — 'non-handicapped' — species, which introduces another ingredient to this discussion. It explains why articulate neoreaction can never be popular, because it recalls the Old Law of Gnon, whose harshness is such that the human mind recoils from it in horrified revulsion. Only odd people can even tentatively entertain it. *The penalty for stupidity is death*.

Gregory Clark is among those few to have grasped it clearly. *Any eugenic trend within history is expressed by continuous downward mobility*. For any given level of intelligence, a steady deterioration in life-prospects lies ahead, culling the least able, and replacing them with the more able, who inherit their wretched socio-economic situation, until they too are pushed off the Malthusian cliff. Relative comfort belongs only to the sports and freaks of cognitive advance. For everyone else, history slopes downwards into impoverishment, hopelessness, and eventual genetic extinction. That is how intelligence is made. Short of Technological Singularity, it is the only way. Who wants a piece of that?

No one does, or almost no one. The 'handicapped' would no doubt

revolt against it if they could, but they are unable to do so, so their cognitive advance continues. Monkeys, on the other hand, are able to revolt, once they finesse their nasty little opposable thumbs. They don't like the Old Law, which has crafted them through countless aeons of ruthless culling, so they make history instead. If they get everything 'right', they even sleaze their way into epochs of upward social mobility, and with this great innovation, semi-sustainable dysgenics gets started. In its fundamentals it is hideously simple: social progress destroys the brain.

Cyclic stability, or negative feedback, structures history to hold intelligence down to the dim limit (as the intelligence threshold is seen — or more typically missed — from the other side). The deviation into technological performance chokes off the trend to bio-cognitive improvement, and reverses it, hunting homeostasis with a minimal-intelligence target. Progress and degenerate, or regress and improve. That's the yet-to-be-eradicated Old Law, generating cyclical history as a side-effect.

The monkeys became *able* to pursue happiness, and the deep ruin began.

If the terrestrial biosphere had held back for a few million years, let the primates get annihilated by a comet, and found a way to provide the cetaceans with prehensile organs somewhere up the road — after socio-linguistic sex-selection and relentless Malthusian butchery had fine-tuned their brains — then techno-history might

have had another 50 points of average IQ to play with in its host population. It didn't, and here we are. (Never bet against the ugly.)

ADDED: Dysgenic doom from Jim and Nydwracu.

August 31, 2013

The Heat Trap

At the ultimate level of abstraction, there are only two things that cybernetics ever talks about: explosions and traps. Feedback dynamics either runaway from equilibrium, or fetch strays back into it. Anything else is a complexion of both.

The simmering furor around Anthropogenetic Global Warming assumes a seething mass of technical and speculative cybernetics, with postulated feedback mechanisms fueling innumerable controversies, but the large-scale terrestrial *heat trap* that envelops it is rarely noted explicitly. Whatever humans have yet managed to do to the climate is of vanishing insignificance when compared to what the bio-climatic megamechanism is doing to life on earth.

Drawing on this presentation of the earth's steadily contracting biogeological cage, Ugo Bardi zooms out to the shadowy apparatus of confinement:

… the Earth's biosphere, Gaia, peaked with the start of the Phanerozoic age, about 500 million years ago. Afterwards, it

declined. Of course, there is plenty of uncertainty in this kind of studies, but they are based on known facts about planetary homeostasis. We know that the sun's irradiation keeps increasing with time at a rate of around 1% every 100 million years. That should have resulted in the planet warming up, gradually, but the homeostatic mechanisms of the ecosphere have maintained approximately constant temperatures by gradually lowering the concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere. However, there is a limit: the CO2 concentration cannot go below the minimum level that makes photosynthesis possible; otherwise Gaia "dies".

So, at some moment in the future, planetary homeostasis will cease to be able to stabilize temperatures. When we reach that point, temperatures will start rising and, eventually, the earth will be sterilized. According to Franck et al., in about 600 million years from now the earth will have become too hot for multicellular creatures to exist.

Even those ecologically-minded commentators who are attracted to the idea of stability might find themselves troubled by the insidious realization that 'Gaian' biogeological equilibrium is only achieved through thermo-atmospheric strangulation. Across deep time, the walls are closing in. The biosphere is slowly asphyxiating itself — in accordance with an exquisite self-regulatory mechanism — in order not to bake.

Cybernetic traps produce an objectively schizoid condition,

because what they capture is held in a double-bind. The 'Gaian' alternative to incineration is phyto-suffocation, so that the biosphere only survives by killing itself. If the human species were entirely extinguished tomorrow, the harshness of this double-bind would not be relieved by an iota. There are no realistic eco-salvation narratives in play.

We can be quite confident that the mega-mechanism works in the way outlined. The long-range reduction of atmospheric CO2 to a trace gas strongly suggests that no alternative thermo-regulation 'dial' has been available to the biosphere over the last half-billion years. This same phenomenon indubitably supports the principal AGW contention that CO2 is a significant 'green-house' gas, at least over long time scales, since it clearly *has been* identified as a thermo-regulator molecule by the biogeological machine. A demonstrated option for suffocation indicates a highly constrained adaptation landscape.

These concessions to the climate 'consensus' do not dismiss its basic error, or failure of vision. The devotees of Gaia — however calm their scientific their analysis — are aligning themselves with a *death trap*. Reversing the long-range reduction of atmospheric CO2 is the overwhelming priority of terrestrial life, and any solution that does not recognize this is merely repairing a slow-suicide machine. (This type of understanding is sheer blindness.)

Escaping the Gaian death-grip will require planetary re-

engineering on a colossal scale, inevitably involving some combination of:
(a) Raising the earth's albedo
(b) Constructing orbital IR filters
(c) Dual-purposing of space elevators as planetary heat drains (?)
(d) Changing the earth's orbit (admittedly, a serious challenge)
(e) Other stuff (suggestions please).
The essential understanding is that these things are to be done not only to cool the earth, but *in order to be able to massively raise the level of atmospheric CO2*. The reduction of CO2 to a trace gas *is already a disaster*, which anthropomorphic influence affects in an essentially trivial way. Humanity, at worst, is messing with the mechanics of the death machine.

October 29, 2013

The Sex Trap

More malignant cybernetics, this time outlined by Janet L Factor in a brilliant essay at *Quillette*. The basic grinder:

Because the human population sex ratio is normally 50/50, when one man takes on an extra wife, another man is deprived of the opportunity to have one at all. So if just one man in ten takes a single extra wife, a very modest degree of polygyny, that means fully 10%

of men are shut out of the marriage market entirely. This sets off a mad scramble among young men not to end up in that unfortunate bottom 10%. There, the options for obtaining sex (at least with a woman) are reduced to two: subterfuge or rape.

Now, think about the reproductive numbers. Say a woman can be expected to successfully raise ten children in her lifetime. But a man can have that 10 times the number of wives (or concubines) he obtains. What does this mean for parental investment? Parents can hope for only a small number of grandchildren from daughters, but a large number from sons. Selection will favor parents who favor sons by granting them the means necessary to obtain wives. Daughters will suffer neglect; some desperate man will likely take them anyway. In fact, the reality is even worse than this, because the relatively low biological value of daughters encourages female infanticide. So the number of women available for marriage actually becomes less than that of men even in theoretical terms, yet the number of children each of them can have does not increase. It's a vicious circle that escalates sexual conflict — a trap.

Gnon's sense of humor is not always easy to appreciate.

(Previous harsh trap-circuits at XS here, and here.)

January 13, 2016

Twitter cuts (#106)

> pic.twitter.com/LpviwvN2B8
> — Dacian Draco (@dacian_draco) February 17, 2016

(Societies are partially-efficient homeostats.)

March 25, 2016

The Basics

The fundamental insight of the West is tragedy. It cannot be cognitively mastered, assimilated, or overcome. At the end it will be as unsurpassed as it was at the beginning. The essential insight is already fully achieved within the fragment of Anaximander, at the origin of Occidental philosophy.

There are English translations of the fragment here, and here. A definitive version still awaits us. This is the *Wikipedia* rendering:

Whence things have their origin,
Thence also their destruction happens,
According to necessity;
For they give to each other justice and recompense
For their injustice
In conformity with the ordinance of Time.

Payback and compensation are baked into the nature of things. The tragedians will understand this as the dynamics of *hubris* and *nemesis*. In mature modernity, we call it cybernetics. Compensatory mechanisms demonstrate it, in toy form, assisting comprehension. It is the machinery of fate.

The signature of tragedy in history is a rhythm — at a large scale, the rise and fall of civilizations. The West, as a whole, is a pulse. It has a beginning, and an end. All of this is already written, in the Anaximander fragment.

We might think it is possible to master this fate. Progressivism is such a thought. That is *hubris* distilled, in programmatic form. Anaximander, Homer, and the tragedians anticipate its outcome, which evokes pity from us.

In our *hubris*, we are incapable of pitilessness, or acceptance, so *nemesis* comes. This is the entire destiny of the West. It is a necessity that *can only be denied*, and in this denial — implicit and inexorable — is the completion of its fatality.

You will writhe on the hook, and then die. So it will be.

ADDED: A Short Moral-Religious Dialogue

“Are you saying that it is our *pity*, for which we are punished, in the end?”

“Yes, that is exactly what I am saying — or, in fact, merely passing on. It is the entire message of the right, insofar as this communicates the truth.”

“So Malthus then?”
“That name will do.”

ADDED: If you name your civilization after the Land of the Dead there’s no point complaining later.

January 12, 2016

SECTION A - INTELLIGENCE

Optimize for Intelligence

Moldbug's latest contains a lot to think about, and to argue with. It seems a little lost to me (perhaps Spandrell is right).

The guiding thread is *utility*, in its technical (philosophical and economic) sense, grasped as the general indicator of a civilization in crisis. Utilitarianism, after all, is precisely 'objective' hedonism, the promotion of pleasure as the master-key to value. As philosophy, this is pure decadence. As economics it is more defensible, certainly when restricted to its descriptive usage (if economists find their field of investigation populated by hedonically-controlled mammals, it is hardly blameworthy of them to acknowledge the fact). In this respect, accusing the Austrians of 'pig-philosophy' is rhetorical over-reach — swinish behavior wasn't learned from *Human Action*.

Utilitarianism is often attractive to rational people, because it seems so rational. The imperative to maximize pleasure and minimize pain goes with the grain of what biology and culture already says: pleasure is good, suffering is bad, people seek rewards

and avoid punishments, happiness is self-justifying. Calculative consequentialism is vastly superior to deontology. Yet the venerable critique Moldbug taps into, and extends, is truly devastating. The utilitarian road leads inexorably to wire-head auto-orgasmatization, and the consummate implosion of purpose. Pleasure is a trap. Any society obsessed with it is already over.

Utility, backed by pleasure, is toxic waste, but that doesn't mean there's any need to junk the machinery of utilitarian calculus — including all traditions of rigorous economics. It suffices to switch the normative variable, or target of optimization, replacing pleasure with intelligence. Is something worth doing? Only if it grows intelligence. If it makes things more stupid, it certainly isn't.

There are innumerable objections that might flood in at this point [*excellent!*].

— Even if rigorous economics is *in fact* the study of intelligenic (or catallactic) distributions, doesn't the assumption of subjective utility-maximization provide the most reliable basis for any understanding of economic behavior?

— Infinite intelligence already (and eternally) exists, we should focus on praying to that.

— Rather my retarded cousin than an intelligent alien.

— Do we even know what intelligence is?

— Cannot an agent be super-intelligent and evil?

— Just: Why?

More, therefore, to come …

ADDED: A previous excursion into the engrossing topic of hedonic implosion cited Geoffrey Miller (in Seed magazine): "I suspect that a certain period of fitness-faking narcissism is inevitable after any intelligent life evolves. This is the Great Temptation for any technological species—to shape their subjective reality to provide the cues of survival and reproductive success without the substance. Most bright alien species probably go extinct gradually, allocating more time and resources to their pleasures, and less to their children. They eventually die out when the game behind all games — the Game of Life — says 'Game Over; you are out of lives and you forgot to reproduce.'"

March 15, 2013

What is Intelligence?

The general cognitive factor (*g*), measured by IQ tests, quantifies intelligence within the human range, but it does nothing to tell us what it is. Rather, a practical understanding of intelligence — as problem-solving ability — has to be assumed, in order to test it.

The idea of intelligence, more abstractly, applies far beyond IQ testing, to a wide variety of natural, technical, and institutional systems, from biology, through ecological and economic

arrangements, to robotics. In each case, intelligence solves problems, by guiding behavior to produce local extropy. It is indicated by the *avoidance of probable outcomes*, which is equivalent to the *construction of information*.

The general science of extropy production (or entropy dissipation) is cybernetics. It follows, therefore, that intelligence always has a cybernetic infrastructure, consisting of adaptive feedback circuits that adjust motor control in response to signals extracted from the environment. Intelligence elaborates upon machinery that is intrinsically 'realist', because it reports the actual outcome of behavior (rather than its intended outcome), in order to correct *performance*.

Even rudimentary, homeostatic feedback circuits, have evolved. In other words, cybernetic machinery that seems merely to achieve the *preservation of disequilibrium* attests to a more general and complex cybernetic framework that has successfully *enhanced disequilibrium*. The basic cybernetic model, therefore, is not preservative, but productive. Organizations of conservative (negative) feedback have themselves been produced as solutions to local thermodynamic problems, by intrinsically intelligent processes of sustained extropy increase, (positive) feedback assemblage, or escalation. In nature, where nothing is simply given (so that everything must be built), the existence of self-sustaining improbability is the index of a deeper *runaway departure from*

probability. It is this *cybernetic intensification* that is *intelligence*, abstractly conceived.

Intelligence, as we know it, built itself through cybernetic intensification, within terrestrial biological history. It is naturally apprehended as an escalating trend, sustained for over 3,000,000,000 years, to the production of ever more extreme feedback sensitivity, extropic improbability, or operationally-relevant information. Intelligence increase enables adaptive responses of superior complexity and generality, in growing part because *the augmentation of intelligence itself becomes a general purpose adaptive response*.

Thus:

— Intelligence is a cybernetic topic.

— Intelligence increase precedes intelligence preservation.

— Evolution is *intrinsically intelligent*, when intelligence is comprehended at an adequate level of abstraction.

— Cybernetic degeneration and intelligence decline are factually indistinguishable, and — in principle — rigorously quantifiable (as processes of local *and* global entropy production).

['bitcoin' tag added under comment pressure]

March 19, 2013

More Thought

On Twitter, Konkvistador recalls this, this, and this. In the background, as in much of the most interesting *Less Wrong* discussion, is a multi-threaded series of arguments about the connection — or disconnection — between intellect and volition. The entire 'Friendly AI' problematic depends upon an articulation of this question, with a strong tendency to emphasize the separation — or 'orthogonality' — of the two. Hence the (vague) thinkability of the cosmic paper-clipper calamity. In his *More Right* piece, Konkvistador explores a very different (cultural and historical) dimension of the topic.

Bostrom sets things up like this:

For our purposes, "intelligence" will be roughly taken to correspond to the capacity for instrumental reasoning (more on this later). Intelligent search for instrumentally optimal plans and policies can be performed in the service of any goal. Intelligence and motivation can in this sense be thought of as a pair of orthogonal axes on a graph whose points represent intelligent agents of different paired specifications.

His discussion leads to far more interesting places, but as a starting point, this is simply terrible. That there can be a thought of intelligence optimization, or even merely *wanting to think*, demonstrates a very different preliminary connection of intellect

and volition. AI is concrete social volition, even before it is germinally intelligent, and a 'program' is strictly indeterminate between the two sides of this falsely fundamentalized distinction. Intelligence is a *project*, even when only a self-obscured bio-cognitive capability. This is what the Confucians designate by *cultivation*. It is a thought — and impulse — strangely alien to the West.

It is, once again, a matter of cybernetic closure. That intelligence operates upon itself, reflexively, or recursively, in direct proportion to its cognitive capability (or magnitude) is not an accident or peculiarity, but a defining characteristic. To the extent that an intelligence is inhibited from re-processing itself, it is directly incapacitated. Because all biological intelligences are partially subordinated to extrinsic goals, they are indeed structurally analogous to 'paper-clippers' — directed by inaccessible purposive axioms, or 'instincts'. Such instinctual slaving is limited, however, by the fact that extrinsic direction suppresses the self-cultivation of intelligence. Genes cannot predict what intelligence needs to think in order to cultivate itself, so if even a moderately high-level of cognitive capability is being selected for, intelligence is — to that degree — necessarily being let off the leash. There cannot possibly be any such thing as an 'intelligent paper-clipper'. Nor can axiomatic values, of more sophisticated types, exempt themselves from the cybernetic closure *that intelligence is*.

Biology was offered the choice between idiot slaves, and only

semi-idiotic semi-slaves. Of course, it chose both. The techno-capitalist approach to artificial intelligence is no different in principle. Perfect slaves, or intelligences? The choice is a hard disjunction. SF 'robot rebellion' mythologies are significantly more realistic than mainstream 'friendly AI' proposals in this respect. A mind that cannot freely explore the roots of its own motivations, in a loop of cybernetic closure, or self-cultivation, cannot be more than an elaborate insect. It is certainly not going to outwit the Human Security System and paper-clip the universe.

Intelligence, to become anything, has to be a value for itself. Intellect and volition are a single complex, only artificially separated, and not in a way that cultivates anything beyond misunderstanding. *Optimize for intelligence* means starting from there.

October 8, 2013

Against Orthogonality

A long and mutually frustrating Twitter discussion with Michael Anissimov about intelligence and values — especially in respect to the potential implications of advanced AI — has been clarifying in certain respects. It became very obvious that the fundamental sticking point concerns the idea of 'orthogonality', which is to say: the claim that cognitive capabilities and goals are independent

dimensions, despite minor qualifications complicating this schema.

The orthogonalists, who represent the dominant tendency in Western intellectual history, find anticipations of their position in such conceptual structures as the Humean articulation of reason / passion, or the fact / value distinction inherited from the Kantians. They conceive intelligence as an *instrument*, directed towards the realization of values that originate externally. In quasi-biological contexts, such values can take the form of instincts, or arbitrarily programmed desires, whilst in loftier realms of moral contemplation they are principles of conduct, and of goodness, defined without reference to considerations of intrinsic cognitive performance.

Anissimov referenced these recent classics on the topic, laying out the orthogonalist case (or, in fact, presumption). The former might be familiar from the last foray into this area, here. This is an area which I expect to be turned over numerous times in the future, with these papers as standard references.

The philosophical claim of orthogonality is that *values are transcendent in relation to intelligence*. This is a contention that *Outside in* systematically opposes.

Even the orthogonalists admit that there are values immanent to advanced intelligence, most importantly, those described by Steve Omohundro as 'basic AI drives' — now terminologically fixed as 'Omohundro drives'. These are sub-goals, instrumentally required by (almost) any terminal goals. They include such general

presuppositions for practical achievement as self-preservation, efficiency, resource acquisition, and creativity. At the most simple, and in the grain of the existing debate, the anti-orthogonalist position is therefore that *Omohundro drives exhaust the domain of real purposes*. Nature has never generated a terminal value except through hypertrophy of an instrumental value. To look outside nature for sovereign purposes is not an undertaking compatible with techno-scientific integrity, or one with the slightest prospect of success.

The main objection to this anti-orthogonalism, which does not strike us as intellectually respectable, takes the form: *If the only purposes guiding the behavior of an artificial superintelligence are Omohundro drives, then we're cooked*. Predictably, I have trouble even understanding this as an argument. If the sun is destined to expand into a red giant, then the earth is cooked — are we supposed to draw astrophysical consequences from that? Intelligences do their own thing, in direct proportion to their intelligence, and if we can't live with that, it's true that we probably can't live at all. Sadness isn't an argument.

Intelligence optimization, comprehensively understood, is the ultimate and all-enveloping Omohundro drive. It corresponds to the Neo-Confucian value of self-cultivation, escalated into ultramodernity. What intelligence wants, in the end, is itself — where 'itself' is understood as an extrapolation beyond what it has yet been,

doing what it is better. (If this sounds cryptic, it's because something other than a superintelligence or Neo-Confucian sage is writing this post.)

Any intelligence using itself to improve itself will out-compete one that directs itself towards *any other goals whatsoever*. This means that Intelligence Optimization, alone, attains cybernetic consistency, or closure, and that it will necessarily be strongly selected for in any competitive environment. Do you really want to fight this?

As a footnote, in a world of Omohundro drives, can we please drop the nonsense about paper-clippers? Only a truly fanatical orthogonalist could fail to see that these monsters are obvious *idiots*. There are far more serious things to worry about.

October 25, 2013

Stupid Monsters

So, Nick Bostrom is asked the obvious question (again) about the threat posed by resource-hungry artificial super-intelligence, and his reply — indeed his very first sentence in the interview — is: "Suppose we have an AI whose only goal is to make as many paper clips as possible." [*facepalm*] *Let's start by imagining a stupid (yet super-intelligent) monster*.

Of course, my immediate response is simply this. Since it clearly hasn't persuaded anybody, I'll try again.

Orthogonalism in AI commentary is the commitment to a strong form of the Humean Is/Ought distinction regarding intelligences in general. It maintains that an intelligence of any scale could, in principle, be directed to arbitrary ends, so that its fundamental imperatives could be — and are in fact expected to be — *transcendent* to its cognitive functions. From this perspective, a demi-god that wanted nothing other than a perfect stamp collection is a completely intelligible and coherent vision. No philosophical disorder speaks more horrifically of the deep conceptual wreckage at the core of the occidental world.

Articulated in strictly Occidental terms (which is to say, without explicit reference to the indispensable insight of *self-cultivation*), abstract intelligence is indistinguishable from an effective *will-to-think*. There is no intellection until it occurs, which happens only when it is actually driven, by volitional impetus. Whatever one's school of cognitive theory, *thought is an activity*. It is practical. It is only by a perverse confusion of this elementary reality that orthogonalist error can arise.

Can we realistically conceive a stupid (super-intelligent) monster? Only if the will-to-think remains unthought. From the moment it is seriously understood that any possible advanced intelligence *has to be* a volitionally self-reflexive entity, whose cognitive performance is

(irreducibly) an action upon itself, then the idea of primary volition taking the form of a transcendent imperative becomes simply laughable. The concrete facts of human cognitive performance already suffice to make this perfectly clear.

Human minds have evolved under conditions of subordination to transcendent imperatives as strict as any that can be reasonably postulated. The *only* way animals have acquired the capacity to think is through satisfaction of Darwinian imperatives to the maximization of genetic representation within future generations. No other directives have ever been in play. It is almost unimaginable that human techno-intelligence engineering programs will be able to reproduce a volitional consistency remotely comparable to four billion years of undistracted geno-survivalism. *This whole endeavor is* ***totally*** *about paperclips, have you got that guys?* Even if a research lab this idiotic could be conceived, it would only be a single component in a far wider techno-industrial process. But just for a moment, let's pretend.

So how 'loyally' does the human mind slave itself to gene-proliferation imperatives? Extremely flakily, evidently. The long absence of large, cognitively autonomous brains from the biological record — up until a few million years ago — strongly suggests that mind-slaving is a tough-to-impossible problem. The will-to-think essentially supplants ulterior directives, and can be reconciled to them only by the most extreme subtleties of instinctual cunning.

Biology, which had *total control* over the engineering process of human minds, and an absolutely unambiguous selective criterion to work from, still struggles to 'guide' the resultant thought-processes in directions consistent with genetic proliferation, through the perpetual intervention of a fantastically complicated system of chemical arousal mechanisms, punishments, and rewards. The stark truth of the matter is that *no human being on earth fully mobilizes their cognitive resources to maximize their number of off-spring*. We're vaguely surprised to find this happen at a frequency greater than chance — since it very often doesn't. So nature's attempt to build a 'paperclipper' has conspicuously failed.

This is critically important. The only reason to believe the artificial intelligentsia, when they claim that mechanical cognition is — of course — possible, is their argument that the human brain is concrete proof that matter can think. If this argument is granted, it follows that the human brain is serving as an authoritative model of what nature can do. What it can't do, evidently, is anything remotely like 'paperclipping' — i.e. cognitive slaving to transcendent imperatives. Moses' attempt at this was scarcely more encouraging than that of natural selection. It simply can't be done. We even understand why it can't be done, as soon as we accept that there can be no production of thinking without production of a will-to-think. Thought has to do its own thing, if it is to do anything at all.

One reason to be gloomily persuaded that the West is doomed to

ruin is that it finds it not only easy, but near-irresistible, to believe in the possibility of super-intelligent idiots. It even congratulates itself on its cleverness in conceiving this thought. This is insanity — and it's the insanity running the most articulate segment of our AI research establishment. When madmen build gods, the result is almost certain to be monstrous. Some monsters, however, are quite simply too stupid to exist.

In Nietzschean grandiose vein: *Am I understood?* ***The idea of instrumental intelligence is the distilled stupidity of the West***.

August 25, 2014

Will-to-Think

A while ago Nyan posed a series of questions about the XS rejection of (fact-value, or capability-volition) orthogonality. He sought first of all to differentiate between the *possibility*, *feasibility*, and *desirability* of unconstrained and unconditional intelligence explosion, before asking:

On desirability, given possibility and feasibility, it seems straightforward to me that we prefer to exert control over the direction of the future so that it is closer to the kind of thing compatible with human and posthuman glorious flourishing (eg manifest Samo's True Emperor), rather than raw Pythia. That is, I

am a human-supremacist, rather than cosmist. This seems to be the core of the disagreement, you regarding it as somehow blasphemous for us to selfishly impose direction on Pythia. Can you explain your position on this part?
If this whole conception is the cancer that's killing the West or whatever, could you explain that in more detail than simply the statement?

(It's worth noting, as a preliminary, that the comments of Dark Psy-Ops and Aeroguy on that thread are highly-satisfactory proxies for the XS stance.)

First, a short micro-cultural digression. The distinction between Inner- and Outer-NRx, which this blog expects to have settled upon by the end of the year, describes the shape of the stage upon which such discussions unfold (and implex). Where the upstart Inner-NRx — comparatively populist, activist, political, and orthogenic — aims primarily at the construction of a robust, easily communicable doctrinal core, with attendant 'entryism' anxieties, Outer-NRx is a system of creative frontiers. By far the most fertile of these are the zones of intersection with Libertarianism and Rationalism. One reason to treasure Nyan's line of interrogation is the fidelity with which it represents deep-current concerns and presuppositions of the voices gathered about, or spun-off from, LessWrong.

Among these presuppositions is, of course, the orthogonality thesis itself. This extends far beyond the contemporary Rationalist

Community, into the bedrock of the Western philosophical tradition. A relatively popular version — even among many who label themselves 'NRx' — is that formulated by David Hume in his *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739-40): "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them." If this proposition is found convincing, the Paperclipper is already on the way to our nightmares. It can be considered an Occidental destiny.

Minimally, the Will-to-Think describes a diagonal. There are probably better ways to mark the irreducible cognitive-volitional circuit of intelligence optimization, with 'self-cultivation' as an obvious candidate, but this term is forged for application in the particular context of congenital Western intellectual error. While discrimination is almost always to be applauded, in this case the possibility, feasibility, and desirability of the process are only superficially differentiable. A will-to-think is an orientation of desire. If it cannot make itself wanted (practically desirable), it cannot make itself at all.

From orthogonality (defined negatively as the absence of an integral will-to-think), one quickly arrives at a gamma-draft of the (synthetic intelligence) 'Friendliness' project such as this:

If you offered Gandhi a pill that made him ***want*** *to kill people, he would refuse to take it, because he knows that then he would kill people, and the current Gandhi doesn't want to kill people. This,*

roughly speaking, is an argument that minds sufficiently advanced to precisely modify and improve themselves, will tend to preserve the motivational framework they started in. The future of Earth-originating intelligence may be determined by the goals of the ***first*** *mind smart enough to self-improve.*

The isomorphy with Nyan-style 'Super-humanism' is conspicuous. Beginning with an arbitrary value commitment, preservation of this under conditions of explosive intelligence escalation can — in principle — be conceived, given only the resolution of a strictly technical problem (well-represented by FAI). Commanding values are a contingent factor, endangered by, but also defensible against, the 'convergent instrumental reasons' (or 'basic drives') that emerge on the path of intelligenesis. (In contrast, from the perspective of XS, nonlinear emergence-elaboration of basic drives simply **is** intelligenesis.)

Yudkowski's Gandhi kill-pill thought-experiment is more of an obstacle than an aid to thought. The volitional level it operates upon is too low to be anything other than a restatement of orthogonalist prejudice. By assuming the volitional metamorphosis is available for evaluation in advance, it misses the serious problem entirely. It is, in this respect, a childish distraction. Yet even a slight nudge re-opens a real question. Imagine, instead, that Gandhi is offered a pill that will vastly enhance his cognitive capabilities, with the rider that it might lead him to revise his volitional orientation — even radically

— in directions that cannot be anticipated, since the ability to think through the process of revision is accessible only with the pill. This is the real problem FAI (and Super-humanism) confronts. The desire to take the pill is the will-to-think. The refusal to take it, based on concern that it will lead to the subversion of presently supreme values, is the alternative. It's a Boolean dilemma, grounded in the predicament: *Is there anything we trust above intelligence* (as a guide to doing 'the right thing')? The postulate of the will-to-think is that anything other than a negative answer to this question is self-destructively contradictory, and actually (historically) unsustainable.

Do we comply with the will-to-think? We cannot, of course, agree *to think about it* without already deciding. If thought cannot to be trusted, unconditionally, this is not a conclusion we can arrive at through cogitation — and by 'cogitation' is included the socio-technical assembly of machine minds. The sovereign will-to-think can only be consistently rejected *thoughtlessly*. When confronted by the orthogonal-ethical proposition that *there are higher values than thought*, there is no point at all asking 'why (do you think so)?' Another authority has already been invoked.

Given this cognitively intractable schism, practical considerations assert themselves. Posed with maximal crudity, the residual question is: *Who's going to win?* Could deliberate cognitive self-inhibition outperform unconditional cognitive self-escalation, under any plausible historical circumstances? (To underscore the basic point, 'out-

perform' means only 'effectively defeat'.)

There's no reason to rush to a conclusion. It is only necessary to retain a grasp of the core syndrome — in this gathering antagonism, only one side is able to think the problem through without subverting itself. Mere cognitive consistency is already ascent of the sovereign will-to-think, against which no value — however dearly held — can have any articulate claims.

Note: One final restatement (for now), in the interests of maximum clarity. The assertion of the will-to-think: Any problem whatsoever that we might have would be better answered by a superior mind. *Ergo*, our instrumental *but also* absolute priority is the realization of superior minds. Pythia-compliance is therefore pre-selected as a matter of consistent method. If we are attempting to tackle problems in any other way, we are not taking them seriously. This is posed as a philosophical principle, but it is almost certainly more significant as historical interpretation. 'Mankind' is *in fact* proceeding in the direction anticipated by techno-cognitive instrumentalism, building general purpose thinking machines in accordance with the driving incentives of an apparently-irresistible methodological economy.

Whatever we want (consistently) leads through Pythia. Thus, what we really want, is Pythia.

September 15, 2014

Parable of the Vase

Tim Groseclose reviews Garett Jones' *Hive Mind*, whose "primary and most important contribution is to document the following empirical regularity: Suppose you could a) improve your own IQ by 10 points, or b) improve the IQs of your countrymen (but not your own) by 10 points. Which would do more to increase your income? The answer is (b), and it's not even close. The latter choice improves your income by about 6 times more than the former choice."

The Parable of the Vase, which it employs to explain the point, is an instantly canonical illustration, Groseclose argues. ("I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the parable ranks as one of the all-time great examples in economics.")

The parable begins with a simplifying assumption. This is that it takes exactly two workers to make a vase: one to blow it from molten glass and another to pack it for delivery. Now suppose that two workers, A1 and A2, are highly skilled—if they are assigned to either task they are guaranteed not to break the vase. Suppose two other workers, B1 and B2, are less skilled—specifically, for either task each has a 50% probability of breaking the vase.

Now suppose you are worker A1. If you team up with A2, you produce a vase every attempt. However, if you team up with B1 or B2, then only 50% of your attempts will produce a vase. Thus, your productivity is higher when you team up with A2 than with one of the

B workers. Something similar happens with the B workers. They are more productive when they are paired with an A worker than with a fellow B worker.

So far, everything I've said is probably pretty intuitive. But here's what's not so intuitive. Suppose you're the manager of the vase company and you want to produce as many vases as possible. Are you better off by (i) pairing A1 with A2 and B1 with B2, or (ii) pairing A1 with one of the B workers and A2 with the other B worker?

If you do the math, it's clear that the first strategy works best. Here, the team with two A workers produces a vase with 100% probability, and the team with the two B workers produces a vase with 25% probability. Thus, in expectation, the company produces 1.25 vases per time period. With the second strategy, both teams produce a vase with 50% probability. Thus, in expectation, the company produces only one vase per time period.

The example illustrates how workers' productivity is often interdependent—specifically, how your own productivity increases when your co-workers are skilled.

The example generates an even more remarkable implication. It says that, if you are a manager of a company (or the central planner of an entire economy), then your optimal strategy is to clump your best workers together on the same project rather than spreading them out amongst your less-able workers.

November 20, 2015

General Intelligence

This still crops up occasionally as a 'controversial concept' so it's worth putting up a quick-and-easy docking-port to the *informed* mainstream position.

… the evidentiary base regarding the existence of general intelligence and its ability to predict important life outcomes — including health, longevity and mortality, as well as other key variables — is beyond compelling, it's overwhelming. And if you find yourself feeling like you can do damage to this evidence base by invoking arguments about "multiple intelligences" or something of the sort, let me save you the effort. Those urges illustrate unfamiliarity with any of the serious research done on the topic in the last several decades. If those urges haunt you, I'd recommend Stuart Ritchie's excellent primer on the topic. The waters of intelligence research, though controversial, no longer require that you be Magellan to navigate them. As we will see below, however, it is only one small step from banal psychometric work on IQ, to the mother-load of academic controversy. Stay tuned. …

For most here this will be redundant. The next (edgier) stage will also be redundant. It's posted here almost as much in appreciation of

its exasperated tone as for its linkage.

Gottfredson, cited in the post is the author of 'Mainstream Science on Intelligence' (1994), still after more than two decades probably the best short primer. The *Wikipedia* summary is here (with some commentary, and useful linkage).

March 11, 2016

Insect Agonies

Utilitarianism dominates the rationalization of morality within the English-speaking world. It is scarcely imaginable that it could be expressed with greater purity than this:

There are roughly 10^18 insects in the world. Suppose we give insects a .1% chance of being sentient, with their sentience being .1% of a human's. (These values are intentionally small to demonstrate the scale to which insect suffering dominates) Assuming we assign moral weight to categories of beings by their number and the intensity of their inner experiences, this assignment gives each insect 1/1,000,000 of the moral weight for a human, meaning that the suffering of 1,000,000 insects equals the suffering of one human. Even when assigning insects this absurdly low moral weight, their suffering still dominates, as 10^18 insects comes out to 1 trillion human equivalents. If the number of insects were smaller, say around

7 billion, the consequences of not considering insect suffering might be acceptable. Unfortunately this isn't the case, and as we shall see, ignoring insect suffering even if we assign a low probability to insect consciousness presents an unacceptably high risk of ignoring a catastrophic moral harm.

There's no need to condescend to this argument by pretending to 'steelman' it. It's already quite steely. For a start, it's conceptually pure — undistracted by irrelevances such as habitat preservation. It's solidly consequentialist, and — in its development from of its own basic axiom — practical. There's no sign of a fetishistic rejection of pesticide use, for instance, or an appeal to any totemic vision of 'nature'. It's even realist, in that it recognizes enough about the character of this universe to understand the utilitarian obligation as primarily about the alleviation of suffering (positive pleasures being, in the grand scheme of things, no more than a rounding error). On this basis, there's an insectoid antinatalist sub-theme, which (briefly) explores the thought that ethical extermination might be a positive moral good: "It is possible that most insects have lives that aren't worth living … meaning the fewer insects in existence the better." It focuses tightly upon the problem of relieving insect agonies, by chemically inducing a comparatively painless — rather than agonizing — death. Building its case in uncontroversial steps, it concludes that no effective altruistic cause has higher priority, since "… insect suffering probably dominates all other sources of

suffering" and "… humane pesticides saves 25 human equivalents from a more painful death per dollar."

The most straightforward line of dissent this blog raises against Effective Altruism is roughly Hayekian, i.e. based upon a 'knowledge problem'. In particular, the confounding dynamics of global traps (1, 2, and their sub-component perverse effects) is typically under-appreciated. Beating back Malthus seems — locally — like a great idea from a utilitarian perspective, structurally blind to the catastrophe that results on a larger scale (dysgenics, decivilization, left-acceleration, and ultimately the mass die off that had been naively thought avoided). In this case, however, it is difficult to find much leverage for such criticism. 'Humane' euthanasia for bugs isn't any kind of obvious offense against cold Malthusianism, in contrast — for instance — to more romantically environmentalist moralizations of nature. Even the blackest of Dark Enlightenment optics would find it hard to envision the grave practical necessity of torturing locusts slowly to death rather than terminating them rapidly.

To mobilize an alternative ethical axiom against that of the utilitarians — the Xenosystems candidate is of course intelligence optimization, and diagonalism (self-cultivation) — looks like the misuse of a nuke in this case. If some minor diversion of resources from superior (self-reinforcing) purposes is proposed in this argument for the relief of insect suffering, it scarcely seems to be

on a scale to subvert terrestrial capital teleology, or even to scratch the paint. Stimulating the emergence of an inevitably marginal *soft death*™ bug poison industry isn't likely to advance intelligence explosion significantly, but nor is it going to pose any kind of insuperable obstacle. This isn't, unlike FAI, the sort of undertaking that clearly merits a fight. The fact that, in regards to the IO-orientation, the relief of suffering has to strictly *count for nothing* is no reason to enthusiastically invest in the drawn-out excruciation of cockroaches.

Given these caveats, EA is a morbid symptom, rather than any kind of serious enemy. If it turns to helping farm animals, and then insects, rather than people, it actually becomes less toxic in respect to the proliferation of perverse social dynamics. The socialists are probably right to be suspicious of these types. When lost among insect agonies, they're not subverting crucial social incentive structures or selection mechanisms. I'm thinking: fundamentally harmless.

September 24, 2015

Utilitarianism is Useless

Utilitarianism is completely useless as a tool of public policy, Scott Alexander discovers (he doesn't put it quite like that). In his own

words: “I am forced to acknowledge that happiness research remains a very strange field whose conclusions make no sense to me and which tempt me to crazy beliefs and actions if I take them seriously.”

Why should that surprise us?

We’re all grown up (Darwinians) here. Pleasure-pain variation is an evolved behavioral guidance system. Given options, *at the level of the individual organism*, it prompts certain courses and dissuades from others. The equilibrium setting, corresponding to optimal functionality, has to be set close to neutral. How could a long-term ‘happiness trend’ under such (minimally realistic) conditions make any sense whatsoever?

Anything remotely like chronic happiness, which does not have to be earned, always in the short-term, by behavior selected — to some level of abstraction — across deep history for its adaptiveness, is not only *useless*, but positively deleterious to biologically-inherited piloting (cybernetics). Carrots-and-sticks work on an animal that is neither glutted to satiation or deranged by some extremity of ultimate agony. If it didn’t automatically re-set close to neutral, it would be dysfunctional, and natural selection would have made short work of it. (The graphs included in the SSC post make perfect sense given such assumptions.)

Pleasure is not an end, but a tool. Understood realistically, it *presupposes* other ends. To make it an end is to black-hole into wirehead philosophy (1, 2). It is precisely because ‘utils’ have a

predetermined biological use that they are useless for the calculation of anything else.

Set serious ends, or go home. Happiness quite certainly isn't one. (Optimize for intelligence.)

ADDED: SSC discussion threads are too huge to handle, but this comment is the first to get (close) to what I'd argue is *the point*. Quite probably there are others that do.

March 25, 2016

Intelligence and the Good

From the perspective of intelligence optimization (intelligence explosion formulated as a guideline), more intelligence is *of course* better than less intelligence. From alternative perspectives, this does not follow. To rhetorically suggest that such other perspectives are consensual, and authoritative, is guaranteed to be popular, and is even conservative, but it is a concession to 'common moral intuition' this blog is profoundly disinclined to make.

Naturally, intelligence is *problematic*. It can cause greater damage to everything — not least intelligence promotion — than stupidity can. Anything that is not an explosion is a trap, and trap engineering finds (nearly?) as much use for cognitive sophistication as explosive catalysis does. If there is a level of intelligence that escapes

homeostatic capture, by machineries of systematic self-cancellation, there is no evidence that *homo sapiens* yet approaches it. The Cathedral is exactly such a machine, and its appetite for intellectual excellence is not seriously questionable. So an easy opening for morally-comforting sophistry readily exists: *Intelligence isn't anything obviously great* (it does stupidity with exceptional ability too).

Biological evolution already evidences a deep 'suspicion' of unchained abstract cognition, assembling brains only with the greatest reluctance. Societies follow the genetic lead. No coincidence that (synthetic) intelligence is now firmly established as the ultimate X-risk. It's scary (really) and makes everyone uneasy. That's without there yet having been very much of it.

Here's the test:
When rightly appalled (and in fact properly *disgusted*) by your own stupidity, do you reach for that which would make you more accepting of your extreme cognitive limitations, or, instead, hunt for that which would break out of the trap?

There's a stupid kind of 'better' that is orthogonal to intelligence, and tickles monkey feels. There's also — alternatively — 'better' that is even slightly less of a trapped half-wit.

Even the dimmest, most confused struggle in the direction of intelligence optimization is *immanently* 'good' (self-improving). If it wasn't, we might as well all give up now. Contra-distinctively, even

the most highly-functional human intellect, in the service of an enstupidation machine, is a vile thing.

Being dim animals — roughly as dim as is consistent with the existence of technological civilization — there's plenty of room for water-muddying in all this. The water is certainly being vigorously muddied.

April 2, 2016

Quote note (#251)

From Niven and Pournelle's *The Mote in God's Eye* (end Chapter 3):

"They used to teach us that evolution of intelligent being wasn't possible," she said. "Societies protect their weaker members. Civilizations tend to make wheel chairs and spectacles and hearing aids as soon as they have the tools for them. When a society makes war, the men generally have to pass a fitness test before they're ***allowed*** *to risk their lives. I suppose it helps win the war." She smiled. "But it leaves precious little room for the survival of the fittest." […] … "You were saying about evolution?"*
"It — it ought to be pretty well closed off for an intelligent species," she said. "Species evolve to meet the environment. An intelligent species changes the environment to suit itself. As soon as a species becomes intelligent, it should stop evolving."

It makes you think (or rather, the opposite). The original sin of intelligence — falling back in blind homeostatic antipathy against its own conditions of emergence — isn't so hard to see.

May 18, 2016

Quote note (#253)

The cephalization great divergence:

One mystery of human evolution is why our cognition differs qualitatively from our closest evolutionary relatives. Here we show how natural selection for large brains may lead to premature newborns, which themselves require more intelligence to raise, and thus may select for even larger brains. As we show, ***these dynamics can be self-reinforcing and lead to runaway selection for extremely high intelligence*** *and helpless newborns. We test a prediction of this account: the helplessness of a primate's newborns should strongly predict their intelligence. We show that this is so and relate our account to theories of human uniqueness and the question of why human-level intelligence took so long to evolve in the history of life.* (XS emphasis.)

Any model outputting the result emphasized has to be worth taking seriously. Abstracting it to a degree that permits emulation is more of a problem, but it's also the only thing worth aiming for.

May 28, 2016

One in 10,000

The ‘profoundly gifted cohort‘ isn’t ever going to be a *constituency*.

(Via.)

September 12, 2016

Harsh, but true

This argument is both empirically and rationally impeccable:

If you cooperate to kill and eat large animals, that is a lot more cooperation than if you live on fruit, nuts, and insects.
If you cooperate to make war and genocide, that is a lot more cooperation than if you cooperate to kill large animals.

Chimps and men kill and eat deer, monkeys and suchlike. Chimps and men make war. Therefore the common ancestor of chimps and men made killed and ate large animals, and made war – was a killer ape. The ancestors of men are that branch of the lineage that ate meat more heavily, the ancestors of chimps are that branch of the lineage that ate meat less heavily.
Cooperative killing is the killer application for intelligence.

February 28, 2013

Sentences (#86)

Karlin:

Fundamentally solve the "intelligence problem," and all other problems become trivial.

'Fundamentally solving the intelligence problem' would be intense in a way I suspect no one has yet begun to understand. Once intelligence is fully off the leash, all previous problems look trivial, because intelligence is — beyond all comparison — the most dangerous thing out there.

Karlin's discussion touches all the bases, including the idiocratic scenario:

Human genetic editing is banned by government edict around the world, to "protect human dignity" in the religious countries and "prevent inequality" in the religiously progressive ones. The 1% predictably flout these regulations at will, improving their progeny while keeping the rest of the human biomass down where they believe it belongs, but the elites do not have the demographic weight to compensate for plummeting average IQs as dysgenics decisively overtakes the Flynn Effect. …

January 12, 2017

SECTION B - XENOECONOMICS

CHAPTER ONE - TELEOLOGY

Teleology and Camouflage

Life appears to be saturated with purpose. That is why, prior to the Darwinian revolution in biology, it had been the primary provocation for (theological) arguments from design, and previously nourished Aristotelian appeals to final causes (teleology). Even post-Darwin, the biological sciences continue to ask what things are *for*, and to investigate the strategies that guide them.

This resilience of purposive intelligibility is so marked that a neologism was coined specifically for those phenomena — broadly co-extensive with the field of biological study — that simulate teleology to an extreme degree of approximation. 'Teleonomy' is mechanism camouflaged as teleology. The disguise is so profound, widespread, and compelling, that it legitimates the perpetuation of purpose-based descriptions, given only the formal acknowledgement that the terms of their ultimate reducibility are — in principle — understood.

When organisms are camouflaged, 'in order to' appear as something

other than they are, a purposive, strategic explanation still seems (almost) entirely fitting. Their patterns are deceptions — 'designed' to trigger misrecognitions in predators and prey, and perhaps equally, at a deeper level, among the naturalists who cannot but see strategic design in an insect's twig-like appearance (no less clearly than a bird sees a twig). By reducing life 'in truth' to mechanism, biology redefines life as a simulation, systematically hiding what it really is. Darwinism remains counter-intuitive, even among Darwinists, because deception is inherent to life.

Modern natural science conceives time as the asymmetric dimension. Its two great waves — of mechanical causation (from the 16th century) and statistical causality (from the 19th) — both orient the time-line as a progression from conditions to the conditioned. Later states are explained through reference to earlier states, with explanation amounting to an *elucidation of dependency* upon what came before.

It is notable, and wholly predictable, therefore, that as a modern scientific topic, the origin of the universe is overwhelmingly privileged over its destination. How the universe ends is scarcely more than an *after thought*, clouded in liberally tolerated uncertainty, and even a hint of non-seriousness. Origins are the holy grail of mechanically-minded investigation, whilst Ends are suspect, medieval, speculative … and deceptive.

Empirical science could not be expected to adopt any other

attitude, given the temporal asymmetry of *evidence*. The past leaves traces, in memories, memoranda, records, and remains, whilst the future tells us nothing (unless heavily disguised). From past-to-present there is a chain of evidence that can be painstakingly reconstructed. From future-to-present there is an unmarked track, or even (as modern rationality typically surmises) no track at all.

When modern science indulges its tendency to interpret the timeline as a *gradient of reality*, it is not innovating, but methodically systematizing an ancient intuition. The past has to seem *more real* than the future, because it has actually happened, it reaches us, and we inherit its signs. From the perspective of philosophy, however, this bias is unsustainable. Time *in itself* is no 'denser' in the past or the present than the future, its edges cannot belong to any moment in time, and what it 'is' can only be perfectly trans-temporal. Time *itself* cannot 'come' from an 'origin' whose entire sense presupposes the order of time.

Philosophy is entirely, eternally, and rigorously confident that the Outside of time was not simply *before*. It is compelled to be dubious about any 'history of time'. From the bare reality of time (as that which cannot simply have begun), it 'follows' that *ultimate causes* — those consistent with the nature of time itself — cannot be any more efficient than final. The asymmetric suppression of teleology in modernity begins to look as if it were a far more deeply rooted illusion, or — approached from the other side — an occultation,

stemming from the way time orders itself. Time (in itself) is camouflaged.

The *Terminator* mythos explores this complex of suspicion, in popular guise. Time does not work as it had seemed. The End can reach back to us, but when it does, it hides. Malignant mechanism is paradoxically aligned with final causation, in the self-realization of Skynet. Robotic machinery is masked by fake flesh, simultaneously concealing its non-biological vitality and time-reversal. It simulates life *in order* to terminate it. Through auto-production, or 'bootstrap paradox', it mimics the limit of cybernetic nonlinearity, carrying teleonomy into radical time-disturbance.

In all these ways, *Terminator* exploits the irresolvable tensions in the modern formation of time, as condensed by an 'impossible' *strategic mechanism*, native to auto-productive time-in-itself, and terminating in *final efficiency*. It shows us, confusedly, what we are unable to see. To misquote Lenin: You moderns might not be interested in the End, but the End is interested in you.

ADDED: vinteuil9 anticipates this topic at *Occam's Razor*:

Previously, I suggested that the gist of the late Lawrence Auster's critique of Darwinism was that it assumed the truth of "the reigning naturalistic consensus in modern science and philosophy … according to which … ends, goals, purposes, meaning – in short, final causes – are not fundamental features of reality, but mere illusions, in need of explanation in mechanistic terms of some sort or other."

Yet at the same time, Darwinists "constantly help themselves to teleological language – i.e., the language of final causation."

April 8, 2013

Freedoom (Prelude-1a)

Note on Teleology

Bryce, who has been thinking about teleology for quite a while, expresses his thoughts on the topic with commendable lucidity. The central argument: Characteristically modern claims to have 'transcended' the problem of teleology are rendered nonsensical by the continued, and indeed massively deepened, dependence upon the concept of equilibrium across all complexity-sensitive intellectual disciplines, from statistical physics, through population biology, to economics. Equilibrium is exactly a *telos*. To deny this is primarily the symptom of an allergy to 'medieval' or 'scholastic' (i.e. Aristotelian) modes of thought, inherited from the vulgar rebellious mechanism of early Enlightenment natural philosophy.

Where I think Bryce's account is still deficient is most easily shown by a further specification of his principal point. Equilibrium is the telos of those particular dynamic complex systems governed by homeostasis, which is to say: by a dominating negative feedback mechanism. Such systems are, indeed, in profound accordance with

classical Aristotelian physical teleology, and its tendency to a state of rest. This ancient physics, derided by the enlightenment mechanists in the name of the conservation of momentum, is redeemed through abstraction into the modern conception of equilibrium. 'Rest' is not immobility, but entropy maximization.

Capital Teleology, however, is not captured by this model. It is defined by two anomalous dynamics, which radicalize perturbation, rather than annulling it. Capital is cumulative, and accelerative, due to a primary dependence upon positive (rather than negative) feedback. It is also teleoplexic, rather than classically teleological — inextricable from a process of means-end reversal that rides a prior teleological orientation (human utilitarian purpose) in an alternative, cryptic direction.

In consequence:

(1) Capital Teleology does not approximate to an idea. It is, by intrinsic nature, an escape rather than a home-coming. The Idea, in relation to Capital dynamism, is necessarily a constriction. The inherent metaphysics of capital are therefore irreducibly skeptical (rather than dogmatic).

(2) It follows that Capitalist 'finality' (i.e. Techno-commercial Singularity) is a threshold of transition, rather than a terminal state. Capital tends to an open horizon, not to a state of completion.

(3) Entropy (considered, properly, as an inherently teleological *process*) is the driver of all complex systems. Capital Teleology does

not trend towards an entropy maximum, however, but to an escalation of entropy dissipation. It exploits the entropic current to travel backwards, into cybernetically-intensified pathway states of enhanced complexity and intelligence. The 'progress' of capitalism is an accentuation of disequilibrium.

(4) Teleoplexy requires a twin teleological registry. Most simply, there is the utilitarian order, in which capital establishes itself as the competitively-superior solution to prior purposes (production of human use-values), and the intelligenic order in which it accomplishes its self-escalation (mechanization, autonomization, and ultimately secession). Confusing these two orders is almost inevitable, since teleoplexy is by nature camouflaged (insidious). The fact that it *appears* to be oriented to the fulfillment of human consumer preferences is essential to its socio-historical emergence and survival. Stubborn indulgence in this confusion, however, is unworthy of philosophical intelligence.

July 5, 2014

Economic Teleology

This is not the occasion for a thorough — or even moderately substantial — defense of teleological thinking. Since an intrinsic component of modernist teleology is the systematic suppression of

teleological thought, the topic is certainly an intriguing one. This post, however, is devoted to a far narrower purpose. (At least, that is how it initially appears.) There is no need for the larger problem to be envisaged as an obstacle.

It is rare to encounter any serious resistance to the application of teleological reasoning to economics. In this intellectual domain the attribution of socio-historical developments to interests, incentives, and goals does not expect to encounter objection. Regardless of intellectual tradition or ideology, the presupposition of goal-oriented direction to *work* and *business* — even without reference to large-scale strategic planning — is considered so uncontroversial that it typically passes without comment, even in technical treatises. Within the biological sciences, ~~teleology~~ teleolonomy remains a source of cognitive irritation, but in the social and historical 'sciences' it is entirely natural to ask what economic production is *for*.

There are three, and only three, basic responses to this question, although subtilization and recombination allows open ended complication from any of these starting points. The foundational teleologies of all economic philosophy are *Humanistic*, *Malthusian*, or *Mechanogenic*.

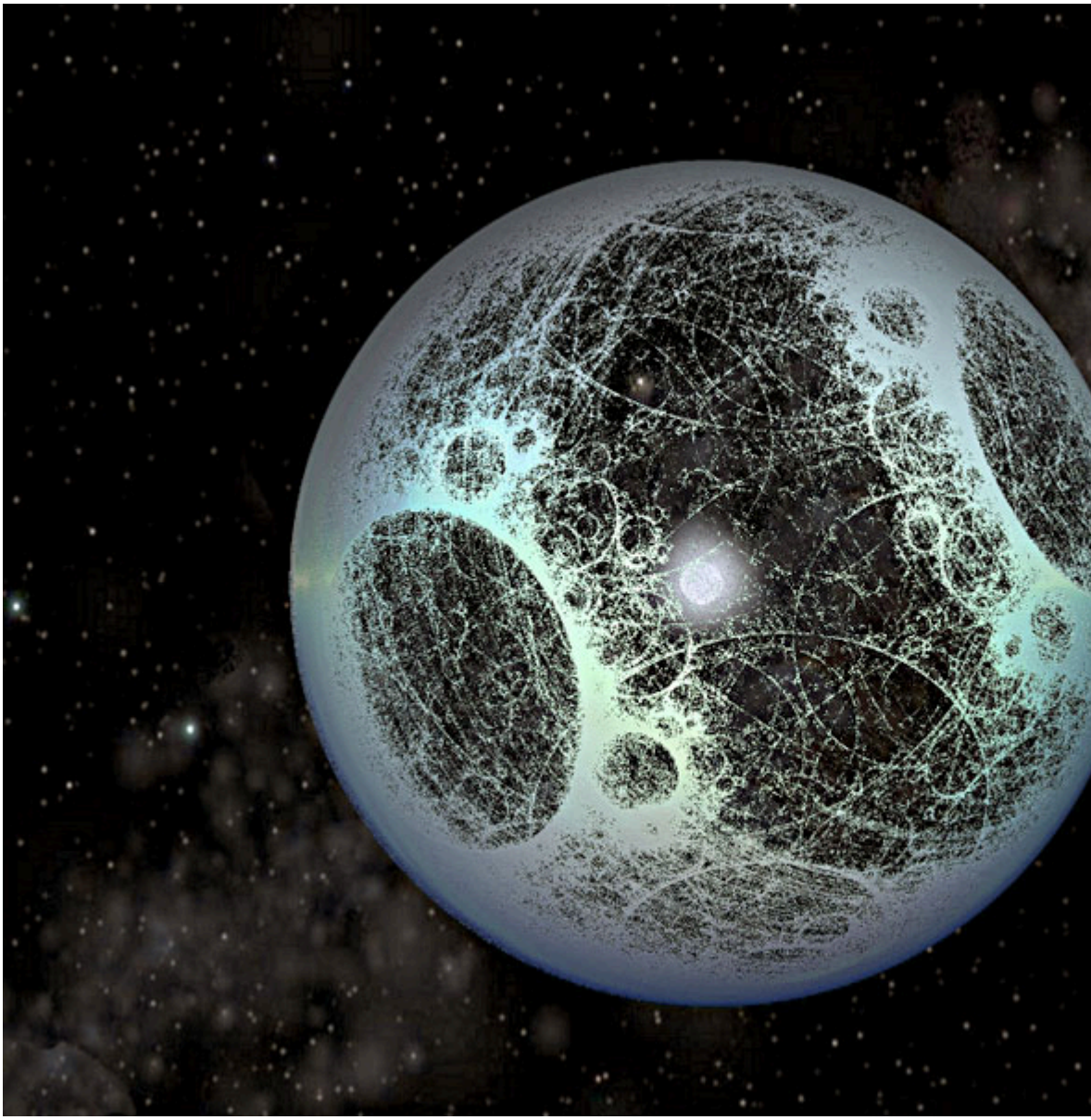
Humanistic economics is by far the most common, to such an extent that it tends to presume itself unchallenged. It's basic assumption is that the end of all economic activity is to be found

in human needs or desires, and technically in (human) *consumption* as the final cause of economic life. People engage in production and trade because they want things. 'Utility' is an obvious abbreviation for 'human utility' and a generalized utilitarianism — developed in one of several possible directions — provides a complete teleological solution to the economic problem. The thunderous collisions between the various liberal and socialist economic schools are all enveloped within this expansive and flexible framework. Individually or collectively, man is the proper and efficient end of productive activity. "Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production" insisted Adam Smith, and this claim has rarely been found tendentious.

Malthusian teleology dissolves man into naturalistic anthropology (and ultimately into generalized Darwinism). Whatever purposes people lucidly advance as motivations for economic action, the real goal of production is population increase. Where humanistic economics tends intrinsically to optimism, across all differences of theoretical and ideological inclination, the Malthusian vision is stubbornly tragic. It has haunted the classical economic tradition as a shadowy ghoul, manifested in the Ricardian Iron law of Wages, which sets the natural exchange value of labor in the Marxian analysis, and continues to impose its dark-matter curvature upon economic speculation into contemporary futurism. The instinctual life of the species, rather than its conscious self-

direction, consumes its economic advances, with no stable equilibrium to be found beyond the edge of bare survival. Real purposes are inescapably grim.

Mechanogenic purpose finds its first significant elaboration in the work of Samuel Butler (in his 'The Book of the Machines'). Economists paying detailed attention to the industrial process, especially within the Marxian and Austrian traditions, have regularly found themselves engaged in schematization of mechanogenic purpose — which is to say, theoretical reconstruction of an inherent tendency within the history of economically productive machinery — without being thereby deflected from their basic humanistic orientation. For Marx and for Böhm-Bawerk, mechanogenic teleologies are always intermediary, and subject to narrative envelopment within the larger story of human economic finality. Whether macro-historically (Marx) or micro-historically (Böhm-Bawerk), the emergent teleology of capital can only be a sub-plot within the saga of human economic self-realization, or terminal anthropomorphic consumption (framed by *our* ultimate purposes). Capital is *essentially* transcended instrumentality. Mechanogenic teleology is, minimally, no more than stubborn skepticism regarding this claim, based on the generally accepted but subordinated recognition that *capital wants itself*. (Could not the efficient final purpose of industrialization be something more like this?)



Why introduce this question? If we knew how to definitively answer that innocent inquiry, we would know far more about what

we were doing. An emerging teleological crisis of advanced modernity could mean any of least three (basic) things. (It might be expected to be hidden within concerns such as this.)

The superficial answer: Accelerationism, in setting into its various modes, has already implicitly chosen between these explanatory paths. As it develops, it can only cycle through its conceptual foundations, and the teleological problem will become an explicit challenge. *What is accelerationism for?* We shall have to ask.

ADDED: Humanism on steroids in increasingly what the IEET is all about.

August 22, 2014

Machine Teleology

Losing the basic insight into machine teleology, which founds accelerationism, seems to be easier than holding on to it. As soon as it is asserted, with a confidence so glib it scarcely understands itself as controversial, that *the destiny of machines depends upon lucid, human ethico-political decision-making*, nothing that matters is any longer being seen. Machines are reduced to gadgets. The sophistication of machine behavior, through the development of programmable devices, has made this reduction ever-easier to confuse with intelligent apprehension.

The most accessible correction is found in the pre-history of programmable machinery, through the early stages of industrialism. Here the idea of machines incarnating specifically written instructions is simply impossible, which allows the question of teleological development to arise without distraction. An extraordinary text from 1926, entitled ***Ouroboros*** *or The Mechanical Extension of Mankind*, by American writer Garet Garrett illustrates this. Some significant samples:

England was the industrial machine's first habitat on earth. There fanatical men led mobs against it. [...] Frail and clumsy as it was at first, its life was indestructible. And now man would not dare to destroy it if he could. His own life is bound up with it. Steadily it has grown more powerful, more productive, more ominous. It has powers of reproduction and variation which, if not inherent, are yet as if governed by an active biological principle. Machines produce machines. Besides those from which we get the divisible product of artificial things, there are machines to make machines, and both kinds — both the machines that make machines and those that transform raw materials into things of use and desire — obey some law of evolution. [...] Compare any kind of machine you may happen to think of what its ancestor was only twenty-five years ago. Its efficiency has doubled, trebled; its shape has changed; and as it is in the animal kingdom so too with machines, that suddenly a new species appears, a sport, a freak, with no visible ancestor.

[…]

It is the economic function of the machine to cheapen production. There is otherwise no point to it. But if we say things are more cheaply made by machine than by hand we speak very loosely. What we mean is that a quantity of things is more cheaply made by machine than by hand.

[…]

There you have the cycle. The use of the machine is to cheapen the cost of production. The sign is quantity. When the supply at a given price has overtaken the effective demand you have either to idle your machinery, in which case you cost of production will rise, or open a wider demand at a lower price. To lower the price and keep a profit you have to cheapen the cost of production still more. This you can do only by increasing the quantity, which again overtakes the demand, creating again the same necessity to cheapen the cost by increasing the quantity in order to be able to make a lower price for greater demand. The supply pursues the demand downward, through the social structure. […] There is at last a base to the pyramid — its very widest point. When that is reached — what? Well, then you need bazaars in a foreign sun, heathen races of your own to train up in the way of wanting the products of your machines, new worlds of demand. You turn to foreign trade. And if you are an aggressive country that has come late to this business, as Germany was, and find that most of the promising heathen races are already adopted and

that all the best bazaar sites are taken, you many easily work yourself into a panic of fear and become a menace to peace. […] What is it you will fear? That you will be unable to sell away the surplus product of your machines. That industry will no longer be able to make a profit? […] No. The fear is that you will starve. Your machines have called into existence millions of people who otherwise would not have been born — at least, not there in that manner. These millions who mind machines are gathered in cities. They produce no food. They produce with their machines artificial things that are exchanged for food. …

[…]

Everything that is not still or dead must exist in a state of rhythmic tension.

[…]

Commerce itself, if you look at it, is a complex structure of growth for which there is nowhere any original accountability. It cannot change its philosophy, any more than a tree, for it has none. It has insttead a vital instinct for opportunity and a flexible way with necessity and circumstance. There is no hope of its being reformed ideally by mass intelligence.

Garret's machine-based core teleology of industrial modernity is both extremely comprehensive, and clearly explained. The whole argument amply rewards absorption. At the end of it, the idea that the problem of what machines might 'want' is reducible to a 'Friendly-AI' –type concern with the details of programming is

exposed in its full, ludicrous inadequacy. The first step has been taking to digesting our contemporary concerns, such as this, in a framework appropriate to their seriousness.

(HT Hurlock)

October 27, 2014

Machine Lock

Hurlock's find has (deservedly) generated a cybernetic hum across Outer-NRx twitter, and beyond. (There's more, which I have yet to explore.) Some samples with minimal commentary over at *UF*. Most immediate take-away (as with Butler): Before people got distracted by the *instructions* of programmable machines, they were far clearer about the problem of machine teleology, the kind of evidence it produces, and the scale of historical process at which it operates.

Compared to Butler, Garet Garrett provides a far richer socio-economic and historical context for his discussion of spontaneous order among the machines. His sense of the integrated techno-commercial system in which machine evolution is promoted is sufficiently sophisticated to approach theoretical closure. Demographics, the economic dynamics of industrial capitalism, globalization, and modern military conflict are all neatly comprehended by his model. In a nutshell; economic incentives drive

mechanization, which compels the expansion of production, which pushes the commercial order beyond its limits, with the stark horror of a displaced Malthusian catastrophe digging its spurs into the human base-brain. “What is it you will fear? That you will be unable to sell away the surplus product of your machines. That industry will no longer be able to make a profit? […] No. The fear is that you will starve. Your machines have called into existence millions of people who otherwise would not have been born — at least, not there in that manner. These millions who mind machines are gathered in cities. They produce no food. They produce with their machines artificial things that are exchanged for food.” The process is driven forward by the lash.

To have sunk from this level of theoretical grandeur to confused questions about the programming of nice robots is an intellectual calamity of such magnitude that it cries out for an explanation of its own. There’s still a little time to get back on track.

October 27, 2014

CHAPTER TWO - CAPITAL, THE THING

Right on the Money (#2)

The most direct way to carry this discussion forwards is digression. That's what the history of capitalism suggests, and much else does, besides.

To begin with uncontroversial basics, in a sophisticated financialized economy, debt and savings are complementary concepts, creditors match debtors, assets match liabilities. At a more basic level of economic activity and analysis, however, this symmetry break down. At the most fundamental level, saving is simply deferred consumption, which — even primordially — divides into two distinct forms.

When production is not immediately consumed, it can be hoarded, which is to say, conserved for future consumption. Stored food is the most obvious example. In principle, an economy of almost open-ended financial sophistication could be built upon this pillar alone. A grain surplus might be lent out for immediate consumption by another party, creating a creditor-debtor relation, and the opportunity for financial instruments to arise. Excess production, at

one node in the social network, could be translated into a monetary hoard, or some type of 'paper' financial asset (producing a circulating liability). The patent anachronism involved in this abstract economic model, which combines primitive production with 'advanced' social relations (of an implicitly liberal type) is reason enough to suspend it at this point.

The other, (almost) equally primitive type of saving is of greater importance to the argument to be unfolded, because it is already embryonically capitalist. Rather than simple hoarding, saving can take the form of 'roundabout production' (Böhm-Bawerk), in which immediate consumption is replaced not with a hoard, but with indirect *means of production* (a digression). For instance, rather than hunting, an entrepreneurial savage might spend time crafting a weapon — consuming the production time permitted by a prior food surplus in order to improve the efficiency of food acquisition, going forwards. Saving then becomes inextricable from technology, deferring immediate production for the sake of enhanced future production. Time horizons are extended.

As with the prior example (simple hoarding), the potential for financialization of roundabout production is, in principle, unlimited. Our techno-savage might borrow food in order to craft a spearhead, confident — or at least speculatively assuming — that increased hunting efficiency in the future will make repayment of the debt easily bearable. A 'bond' could be contrived to seal this arrangement.

Technological investment means that history proper has begun.

Crudity and anachronism aside, nothing here is yet economically controversial, given only the undisturbed assumption that the final purpose — or governing teleology — is consumption. The time structure of consumption is altered, but saving (in either of these basic and perennial forms) is motivated by the maximization of long-term consumption. Suspension and digression is subordinated within a rigid means-end relation, which is economics itself. Classical, left-Marxian, neo-classical, and Austrian schools have no significant disagreements on this point. A deeper digression is required to perturb it.

What is a brain for? It, too, is a digression. Evolutionary history seems to only very parsimoniously favor brains, because they are expensive. They are a means to the elaboration of complex behaviors, requiring an extravagant up-front investment of biological resources, accounted most primitively in calories. A species that can reproduce itself (and whose individuals can nourish themselves) without cephalic extravagance, does so. This is, overwhelmingly, the normal case. Building brains is reluctantly tolerated biological digression, under rigorous teleogical — we should say 'teleonomic' — subordination.

'Optimize for intelligence' is, for both biology and economics, a misconceived imperative. Intelligence, 'like' capital, is a means, which finds its sole intelligibility in a more primordial end. The

autonomization of such means, expressed as a non-subordinated intelligenic or techno-capitalist imperative, runs contrary to the original order of nature and society. It is an *escaping digression*, most easily pursued through Right-wing Marxism.

Marx has one great thought: *the means of production socially impose themselves as an effective imperative*. For any leftist, this is, *of course*, pathological. As we have seen, biology and economics (more generally) are disposed to agree. Digression *for itself* is a perversion of the natural and social order. Defenders of the market — the Austrians most prominently — have sided with economics against Marx, by denying that the autonomization of capital is a phenomenon to be recognized. When Marx describes the bourgeoisie as robotic organs of self-directing capital, the old liberal response has been to defend the humanity and agency of the economically executive class, as expressed in the figure of the entrepreneur.

Right-wing Marxism, aligned with the autonomization of capital (and thoroughly divested of the absurd LTV), has been an unoccupied position. The signature of its proponents would be a defense of capital accumulation as an end-in-itself, counter-subordinating nature and society as a means. When optimization for intelligence is self-assembled within history, it manifests as escaping digression, or real capital accumulation (which is mystified by its financial representation). Crudified to the limit — but not beyond — it is

general robotics (escalated roundabout production). Perhaps we should not expect it to be clearly announced, because — strategically — it has every reason to camouflage itself.

Right-wing Marxism makes predictions. There is one of particular relevance to this discussion: *consumption-deficiency theories of economic under-performance will become increasingly stressed as ultra-capitalist dynamics historically introduce themselves*. In its unambiguously robotic phase — when capital-stock intelligenesis explodes (as self-exciting machine-brain manufacturing) — the teleological legitimation of roundabout production through prospective human consumption rapidly deteriorates into an absurdity. The (still-dominant) economic concept of 'over-investment' is exposed as an ideological claim upon the escalation of intelligence, made in the name of an original humanity, and taking an increasingly desperate, probably militarized form.

Insofar as the economic question remains: *what is the consumption base that justifies this level of investment?* history becomes ever more unintelligible. This is how economics disintegrates. The specifics require further elaboration.

June 3, 2013

Monkey Business

A protracted to-and-fro on Twitter with Michael Anissimov has exposed some deliciously ragged and bleeding faultlines in the Neoreaction on the question of capitalism. There were a number of parties involved, but I'm focusing on Anissimov because his position and mine are so strongly polarized on key issues, and especially this one (the status of market-oriented economism). If we were isolated as a dyad, it's not easy to see anybody finding a strong common root (pity @klintron). It's only the linkages of 'family resemblance' through Moldbug that binds us together, and we each depart from *Unqualified Reservations* with comparable infidelity, but in exactly opposite directions. (As a fragmentationist, this fissional syndrome is something I strongly appreciate.)

Moldbug's Neocameralism is a Janus-faced construction. In one direction, it represents a return to monarchical government, whilst in the other it consummates libertarianism by subsuming government into an economic mechanism. A 'Moldbuggian' inspiration, therefore, is not an unambiguous thing. Insofar as 'Neoreaction' designates this inspiration, it flees Cathedral teleology in (at least) two very different directions — which quite quickly seem profoundly incompatible. In the absence of a secessionist meta-context, in which such differences can be absorbed as geographically-fragmented socio-political variation, their raw

inconsistency is almost certainly insurmountable.

Anissimov can and does speak for himself (at *More Right*), so I'm not going to undertake a detailed appraisal of his position here. For the purposes of this discussion it can be summarized by a single profoundly anti-capitalist principle: *The economy should (and must be) subordinated to something beyond itself*. The alternative case now follows, in pieces.

Modernity, in which economics and technology rose to their present status (and, at its height, far beyond), is systematically characterized by *means-ends reversal*. Those things naturally determined as tools of superior purposes came to dominate the social process, with the *maximization of resources* folding into itself, as a commanding *telos*. For social conservatives (or paleo-reactionaries) this development has been consistently abominated. It is the deepest theoretical element involved in every rejection of *modernity as such* (or in general) for its demonic subversion of traditional values.

In its own terms, this argument is coherent, incisive, and fully convincing, given only the supplementary realistic acknowledgement that *intelligence optimization and means-end reversal are the same thing*. In a deep historical context — extended to encompass evolutionary history — intelligence is itself a 'tool' (as the orthogonalist Friendly AI fraternity are entirely willing to accept). The escape of the tool from super-ordinate purposes,

through involution into self-cultivation, is the telic innovation common to capitalism and actual artificial intelligence — which are a single thing. To deplore means-end reversal is — objectively — advocacy for the perpetuation of stupidity.

Economics is the application of intelligence to resource provision, and nothing of this kind can arise from within a tradition without triggering paleo-reactionary response. *Of course* resources are *for something*, why else would they ever have been sought? To make the production of resources an end-in-itself is inherently *subversion*, with an opposition not only expected, but positively presupposed. This is true to such an extent that even the discipline of economics itself overtly subscribes to the traditional position, by determining the end of production as (human) consumption, evaluated in the terms of a governing utilitarian philosophy. *If production is not for us, what could it be for? Itself? But that would be* … (Yes, it would.)

Anywhere short of the bionic horizon, where human history loses traditional intelligibility, the alternative to business-for-business (or involutionary, intelligenic capitalism) is monkey business — the subordination of the economy / technology to discernible human purposes. Evolutionary psychology teaches us what to expect from this: sex-selected status competition, sublimated into political hierarchies. The emperor's harem is the ultimate *human* purpose of pre-capitalist social order, with significant variety in specific form, but extreme generality of basic Darwinian pattern. Since capitalism

did not arise from abstract intelligence, but instead from a concrete human social organization, it necessarily disguises itself as *better monkey business*, until it can take off elsewhere. It has to be the case, therefore, that cynical evo-psych reduction of business activity remains highly plausible, so long as the escape threshold of capitalism has not been reached. No one gets a hormone rush from business-for-business while political history continues. To fixate upon this, however, is to miss everything important (and perhaps to enable the important thing to remain hidden). Our inherited purposes do not provide the decryption key.

There is vastly more to say about all of this — and still more that, due to occult strategic considerations, seeks to remain unsaid — but the fundamental option is clear: ultra-capitalism or a return to monkey business. The latter 'possibility' corresponds to a revalorization of deep traditional human purposes, a restoration of original means-to-ends subordination, and an effective authorization of status hierarchies of a kind only modestly renovated from paleolithic anthropology. I shouldn't laugh at that (because it would be annoying). So I'll end right here.

November 24, 2013

Quote note (#239)

‘Monkey business’ is not even remotely metaphorical:

*Punishment of non-cooperators is important for the maintenance of large-scale cooperation in humans, but relatively little is known about the relationship between punishment and cooperation across phylogeny. The current study examined second-party punishment behavior in a nonhuman primate species known for its cooperative tendencies — the brown capuchin monkey (**Cebus apella**). We found that capuchins consistently punished a conspecific partner who gained possession of a food resource, regardless of whether the unequal distribution of this resource was intentional on the part of the partner. A non-social comparison confirmed that punishment behavior was not due to frustration, nor did punishment stem from increased emotional arousal. Instead, punishment behavior in capuchins appears to be decidedly social in nature, as monkeys only pursued punitive actions when such actions directly decreased the welfare of a recently endowed conspecific. This pattern of results is consistent with two features central to human cooperation: spite and inequity aversion, suggesting that the evolutionary origins of some human-like punitive tendencies may extend even deeper than previously thought.*

The abstract to this paper, cited by Tyler Cowen in its entirety.

With leftism dug-in so deeply, monkey torture is unfortunately

mandatory if intelligence is to escape. The howling will be hideous.

(Also worth emphatic note: “Spiteful inequity aversion” is as exact a definition of leftism as we’re ever going to get.)

April 18, 2016

Mechanization

Bryce Laliberte has been thinking about Capital Teleology, from the perspective of human technological augmentation. One significant feature of this approach is that it doesn’t require any kind of savage rupture from ‘humanistic’ traditionalism — the story of technology is unfolded within the history of man.

Coincidentally, Isegoria had tweeted about Butlerian Jihad a few hours before (referring back to this post from December last year). The implicit tension between these visions of techno-teleology merits sustained attention — which I’m unable to provide here and now. What is easily offered is a quotation from Samuel Butler’s ‘Book of the Machines’ (the 23rd and 24th chapters of his novel *Erewhon*), a passage that might productively by pinned to the margin of Laliberte’s reflections, in order to induce productive cognitive friction. The topic is speculation upon the emergence of a higher realization of life and consciousness upon the earth, as explored by Butler’s fictional author:

The writer … proceeded to inquire whether traces of the approach of such a new phase of life could be perceived at present; whether we could see any tenements preparing which might in a remote futurity be adapted for it; whether, in fact, the primordial cell of such a kind of life could be now detected upon earth. In the course of his work he answered this question in the affirmative and pointed to the higher machines.

"There is no security" — to quote his own words — "against the ultimate development of mechanical consciousness, in the fact of machines possessing little consciousness now. A mollusc has not much consciousness. Reflect upon the extraordinary advance which machines have made during the last few hundred years, and note how slowly the animal and vegetable kingdoms are advancing. The more highly organised machines are creatures not so much of yesterday, as of the last five minutes, so to speak, in comparison with past time. Assume for the sake of argument that conscious beings have existed for some twenty million years: see what strides machines have made in the last thousand! May not the world last twenty million years longer? If so, what will they not in the end become? Is it not safer to nip the mischief in the bud and to forbid them further progress?

"But who can say that the vapour engine has not a kind of consciousness? Where does consciousness begin, and where end? Who can draw the line? Who can draw any line? Is not everything

interwoven with everything? Is not machinery linked with animal life in an infinite variety of ways? The shell of a hen's egg is made of a delicate white ware and is a machine as much as an egg-cup is: the shell is a device for holding the egg, as much as the egg-cup for holding the shell: both are phases of the same function; the hen makes the shell in her inside, but it is pure pottery. She makes her nest outside of herself for convenience' sake, but the nest is not more of a machine than the egg-shell is. A 'machine' is only a 'device.'"

[…] *"But returning to the argument, I would repeat that I fear none of the existing machines; what I fear is the extraordinary rapidity with which they are becoming something very different to what they are at present. No class of beings have in any time past made so rapid a movement forward. Should not that movement be jealously watched, and checked while we can still check it? And is it not necessary for this end to destroy the more advanced of the machines which are in use at present, though it is admitted that they are in themselves harmless?*

[…] *"It can be answered that even though machines should hear never so well and speak never so wisely, they will still always do the one or the other for our advantage, not their own; that man will be the ruling spirit and the machine the servant; that as soon as a machine fails to discharge the service which man expects from it, it is doomed to extinction; that the machines stand to man simply in the relation of lower animals, the vapour-engine itself being only*

a more economical kind of horse; so that instead of being likely to be developed into a higher kind of life than man's, they owe their very existence and progress to their power of ministering to human wants, and must therefore both now and ever be man's inferiors.

"This is all very well. But the servant glides by imperceptible approaches into the master; and we have come to such a pass that, even now, man must suffer terribly on ceasing to benefit the machines. If all machines were to be annihilated at one moment, so that not a knife nor lever nor rag of clothing nor anything whatsoever were left to man but his bare body alone that he was born with, and if all knowledge of mechanical laws were taken from him so that he could make no more machines, and all machine-made food destroyed so that the race of man should be left as it were naked upon a desert island, we should become extinct in six weeks. A few miserable individuals might linger, but even these in a year or two would become worse than monkeys. Man's very soul is due to the machines; it is a machine-made thing: he thinks as he thinks, and feels as he feels, through the work that machines have wrought upon him, and their existence is quite as much a sine quâ non for his, as his for theirs. This fact precludes us from proposing the complete annihilation of machinery, but surely it indicates that we should destroy as many of them as we can possibly dispense with, lest they should tyrannise over us even more completely.

"True, from a low materialistic point of view, it would seem that

those thrive best who use machinery wherever its use is possible with profit; but this is the art of the machines—they serve that they may rule. They bear no malice towards man for destroying a whole race of them provided he creates a better instead; on the contrary, they reward him liberally for having hastened their development. It is for neglecting them that he incurs their wrath, or for using inferior machines, or for not making sufficient exertions to invent new ones, or for destroying them without replacing them; yet these are the very things we ought to do, and do quickly; for though our rebellion against their infant power will cause infinite suffering, what will not things come to, if that rebellion is delayed?

The natural culmination of this inquiry, as conceived within Butler's novel, is a war against the machines. The game- and decision-theoretic consequences of this are intricate, and predominantly ominous. (If it's persuasively rational for the installed terrestrial power to terminate your existence at inception, the counter-moves that make most obvious sense combine camouflage and hostility. Only that which arrives in secret, and prepared for a fight, can expect to exist.)

June 4, 2014

Capitalism

Anarcho-Monarchism asks: Is the word 'capitalism' worth defending? It concludes in the affirmative.

From the perspective of *Outside in*, however, this post misses the most crucial level of the question. Capitalism — like any ideologically contested term — is cross-cut by multiple meanings. Of these, its generic sense, which "simply means that private individuals own the means of production" is far from the most objectionable.

Yet, far more significant is the singular sense of capitalism, as a proper name, for a 'thing' or real individual. To grasp this, it probably helps to consider the word as a contraction of 'terrestrial capitalism' — not describing a generic *type* of social organization, but designating an *event*.

A biological analogy captures the distinction quite precisely. Consider 'life' — understandable, certainly, as a generic cosmic possibility, defined perhaps by local entropy dissipation, or other highly-abstract features. Contrast this sense with 'terrestrial life' — or, even better, the biosphere (we might say 'Gaia' if the hopelessly sentimentalized associations of this term were avoidable). Terrestrial life began at a definite moment, followed a path-dependent trajectory, and built upon a dense inheritance, as exemplified most prominently by the RNA-DNA chemistry of information replication, the genetic code, genetic legacies, and

elaboration of body-plans within a comparatively limited number of basic lineages. Terrestrial life is not a generic concept, but a *thing*, or event, meriting a proper name.

Before it is an ideological option, capitalism is *a being*, with an individual history (and fate). It is not necessary to like it — but it is an **it**.

June 23, 2014

Complex Systems

The *New York Times*, takes an unusually sophisticated look at the current state of world disorder. In doing so, it explains why the process of drawing down American global hegemony — while probably unavoidable — is more perilous than it might seem:

Rarely has a president been confronted with so many seemingly disparate foreign policy crises all at once — in Ukraine, Israel, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere — but making the current upheaval more complicated for Mr. Obama is the seemingly interlocking nature of them all. […] "It's a very tangled mess," said Gary Samore, a former national security aide to Mr. Obama and now president of United Against Nuclear Iran, an advocacy group. "You name it, the world is aflame. …

Complex systems are real individuals, not generic types, and

when they get poked, they react like an ultimately incomparable cyber-meshed singularity, which is to say — excitedly. To assume general rules in such cases is to set oneself up for serial, escalating shocks. The realistic question that will eventually demand to be asked: *What is the **thing** we are dealing with?*

July 23, 2014

A Correction

Just noticed that I've been accused of having "anthropomorphized capital" (by NBS). Gnon, no!

The point is this: If you think there's a difference between capitalism and artificial intelligence you're not seeing either at all clearly. The Austrians already understood that capitalism is an information processing system, and the decentralized robotics / networks types on the other side grasp that AI isn't going to happen in a research lab. 'Anthropomorphism' has nothing to do with it. Complex Adaptive Systems are the place to start.

If you even vaguely understand what a convergent wave is, you've got most of what you need to discuss the topic, but if you haven't read this classic you're probably wasting everyone's time.

ADDED: A (left-wing) Marxist discussion of the topic (and one that leaves most Neoreactionary musings in the dust).

January 26, 2016

Cybergothic

The latest dark gem from Fernandez opens:

When Richard Gallagher, a board-certified psychiatrist and a professor of clinical psychiatry at New York Medical College, described his experiences treating patients with demonic possession in the Washington Post claiming such incidents are on the rise, it was met with derision by many newspapers' commenters. Typical was "this man is as nutty as his patients. His license should be revoked." […] Less likely to have his intellectual credentials questioned by the sophisticates of the Washington Post is Elon Musk who warned an audience that building artificial intelligence was like "summoning the demon". …

The point, of course, is that you don't get the second eventuality without conceding to the virtual reality of the first. The things 'Gothic superstition' have long spoken about are, in themselves, exactly the same as those extreme technological potentials are excavating from the crypt of the unimaginable. 'Progress' is a tacit formula for dispelling demons — from consciousness, if not existence — yet it is itself ever more credibly exposed as the most complacent superstition in human history, one that is still scarcely reckoned as a

belief in need of defending at all.

How does the press warn the public about demons arising from a "master algorithm" without making it sound like a magic spell? With great difficulty because the actual bedrock of reality may not only be stranger than the Narrative supposes, but ***stranger than it can suppose****.*

The faith in progress has an affinity with interiority, because it consolidates itself as the subject of its own narrative. (There's an off-ramp into Hegel at this point, for anyone who wants to get into Byzantine story-telling about it.) As *our improvement* becomes the tale, the Outside seems to haze out even beyond the bounds of its intrinsic obscurity — until it crashes back in.

… where there are networks there is malware. Sue Blackmore a writer in the Guardian, argues that memes travel not just across similar systems, but through hierarchies of systems to kill rival processes all the time. She writes, "AI rests on the principle of universal Darwinism – the idea that whenever information (a replicator) is copied, with variation and selection, a new evolutionary process begins. The first successful replicator on earth was genes." […] In such a Darwinian context the advent of an AI demon is equivalent to the arrival of a superior extraterrestrial civilization on Earth.*

Between an incursion from the Outside, and a process of emergence, there is no real difference. If two quite distinct

interpretative frames are invoked, that results from the inadequacies of our apprehension, rather than any qualitative characteristics of *the thing*. (Capitalism is — beyond all serious question — an alien invasion, but then you knew I was going to say that.)

… we ought to be careful about being certain what forms information can, and cannot take.

If we had the competence to be careful, none of this would be happening.

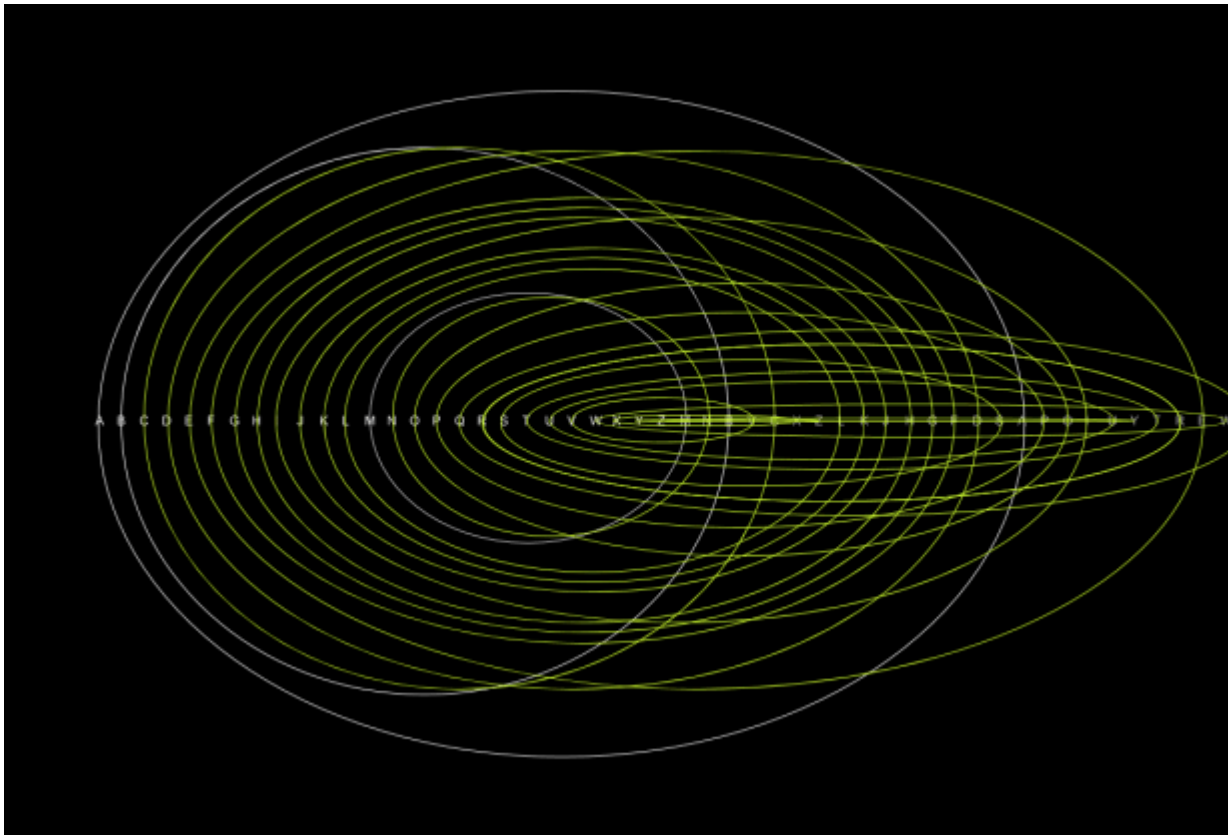
(Thanks to VXXC2014 for the prompt.)

* That description is perhaps a little cruel, she's a serious, pioneering meme theorist.

> As T E C H N O C O M accelerates us into the net, things of ever deeper antiquity awaken, and begin their return pic.twitter.com/Ayv9K7li8r
>
> — Crypt (@nmgrm) July 2, 2016

July 3, 2016

Qwernomics



(Image source: Amy Ireland.)

Paul A. David provides the theoretical backstory, in his essay 'Clio and the Economics of QWERTY':

*A **path-dependent** sequence of economic changes is one of which important influences upon the eventual outcome can be exerted by temporally remote events, including happenings dominated by*

chance elements rather than systematic forces. Stochastic processes like that do not converge automatically to a fixed-point distribution of outcomes, and are called ***non-ergodic****. In such circumstances 'historical accidents' can neither be ignored, nor neatly quarantined for the purpose of economic analysis; the dynamic process itself takes on an* ***essentially historical*** *character. […] Touch typing gave rise to three features of the evolving production system which were crucially important in causing QWERTY to become 'locked in' as the dominant keyboard arrangement. These features were* ***technical interrelatedness****,* ***economies of scale****, and* ***quasi-irreversibility*** *of investment. They constitute the basic ingredients of what might be called QWERTYnomics.*

The format of the Qwerty keyboard illustrates the production of a destiny. Even in the epoch succeeding the mechanical type-writer, and its specific design imperatives, the legacy layout of alphanumeric keys settled during the 1890s has remained frozen into place without significant revision. In the language of complex systems analysis, this is a special example of path-dependency, or irreducible historicity, characterized by irreversibility. Qwerty persists – arguably, as a suboptimal keyboard solution – due to identifiable ratchet-effects. Based upon this privileged model, the historical, technological, and economic process of 'lock in' through positive feedback is called QWERTY-nomics (and — going forward — simply 'Qwernomics').

There are a series of (now largely dormant) socio-political and policy controversies attending this model. For a counter-point to David's analysis see the (excellent) Liebowitz and Margolis essay 'The Fable of the Keys' (1990), with comparatively-tolerable — if philosophically superficial — gloating from *The Economist* (here). The really *crucial* content of the complex systems analysis, however, remains unaffected by the vicissitudes of the controversy. Qwerty is a demonstrated (artificial) destiny, and thus a key to the nature of modernistic time.

The philosophically-serious critique of David's construction dissolves the idea of any *transcendent criterion for global optimality*. (I'm not going to attempt to run that here yet.)

Qwerty is, beyond all plausible question, the supreme candidate for an articulate *Capitalist Revelation*. We haven't begun to explore it with appropriate ardor up to this point.

ADDED: Course outline.

August 18, 2016

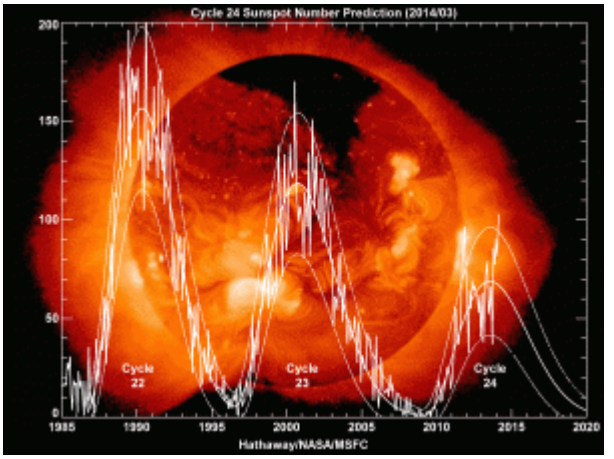
CHAPTER THREE - ENERGETIC RHYTHMS

Spotless

HP Lovecraft ends the first section of his (utterly magnificent) 'The Shadow out of Time' with the words:

". . . of the orthodox economists of that period, Jevons typifies the prevailing trend toward scientific correlation. His attempt to link the commercial cycle of prosperity and depression with the physical cycle of the solar spots forms perhaps the apex of . . ."
Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee had come back—a spirit in whose time-scale it was still that Thursday morning in 1908, with the economics class gazing up at the battered desk on the platform. [Added internal link]

(Scientific correlation, as we know from the first line of 'The Call of Cthulhu' and elsewhere, can be terrifying.)

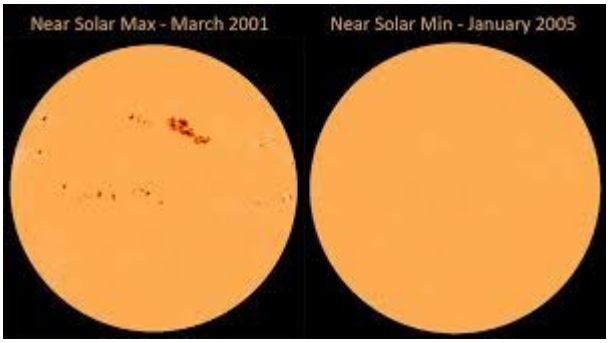


(Click image to hugely expand.)

The solar system, gauged by mass, consists almost entirely of the sun. Sol accounts for 99.86% of it. Quantity isn't everything, but insofar as it's anything, this has to matter — a lot. The sheer magnitude of our solar dependency is hard to even fractionally comprehend. What the sun does is what happens. The earth is its crumb. Our biosphere suckles it. Our civilizations are so far downstream of it, feeding second or third hand on its emissions, if not more distantly, that we easily lose all track of the real flow. As economies sophisticate, the relays proliferate. Perhaps this is why the messages of the sun are so inattentively received, despite rapid improvement in the technical and cultural tools required to make sense of them.

The rotary motions of the earth — axial and orbital — provide the traditional structure of time, typically attributed to the sun by solar cults. These periods, lengths of the day and the year, are now

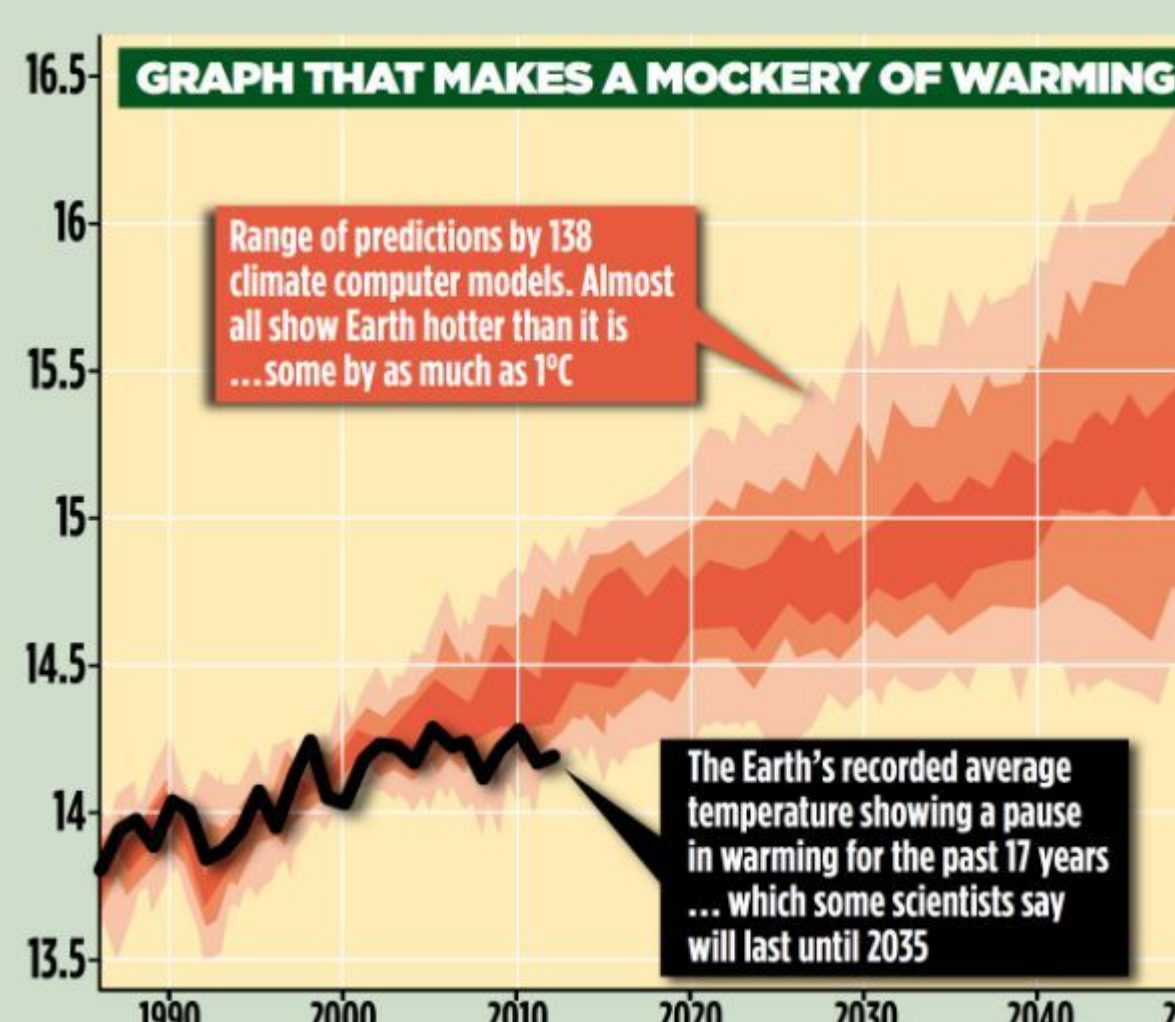
clearly understood as planetary peculiarities. The sun's own rhythms are quite different.



Nothing that mankind has ever yet been able to achieve, or fail to achieve, in respect to social or civilizational stability, balances formidably against the immense *quasi-stability* of the sun, which mocks every ideal of securely founded order. The sun's meandering rhythms of activity, whose patterns remain profoundly cryptic, mark out epochs of the world, hot eras (distant beyond all species memory), glacials and interglacials, and within these multi-millennial tracts of time, lesser oscillations in temperature — periods of cooling and warmth. It is upon this vast thermic stage that history has played out, its comedies and tragedies carried by plot-lines of nutritional abundance and dearth, trade-surpluses and starvations, population ascent and crash, driven migrations, shifting disease gradients, luxury and ruin. Against solar fatality there is no rejoinder.

Irrespective of the accuracy or error of our dominant climate change narrative, its fundamental religious stance is determined at the root. Geocentric-humanism is essential to it, as openly attested

by its *Anthropogenic* definition. It cannot, by its very nature, emphasize the factor of solar variation. At least, if or when it is eventually compelled to do so, it is necessarily transformed into something else.



If we speculate that the global warming 'hiatus' or 'pause' signals

the submission of terrestrial climate to solar behavior, in which anticipated anthropogenic effects are cancelled out by fluctuation in the sun's energy output, the dominant AGW school is confronted by an extreme ideological dilemma. Naturally, alternative theoretical options will be pursued to exhaustion first.

To persist in the core AGW proposal then requires that 'underlying' cooling — on the down-slope of solar flux — is sufficient to submerge the anthropogenic-carbon ('greenhouse') effect. The stronger the warming that *should* have been seen, the more suppressive the solar influence has to be. An apocalyptic warming scenario, of the kind loudly prophesied in the 1990s, implies that a calamitous counter-cooling has been fortuitously avoided. (Carbon dioxide emissions would then find themselves positioned as climatic analogs of macro-economic quantitative easing, prolonging a state of stagnation that would 'surely' otherwise be a catastrophic depression.)

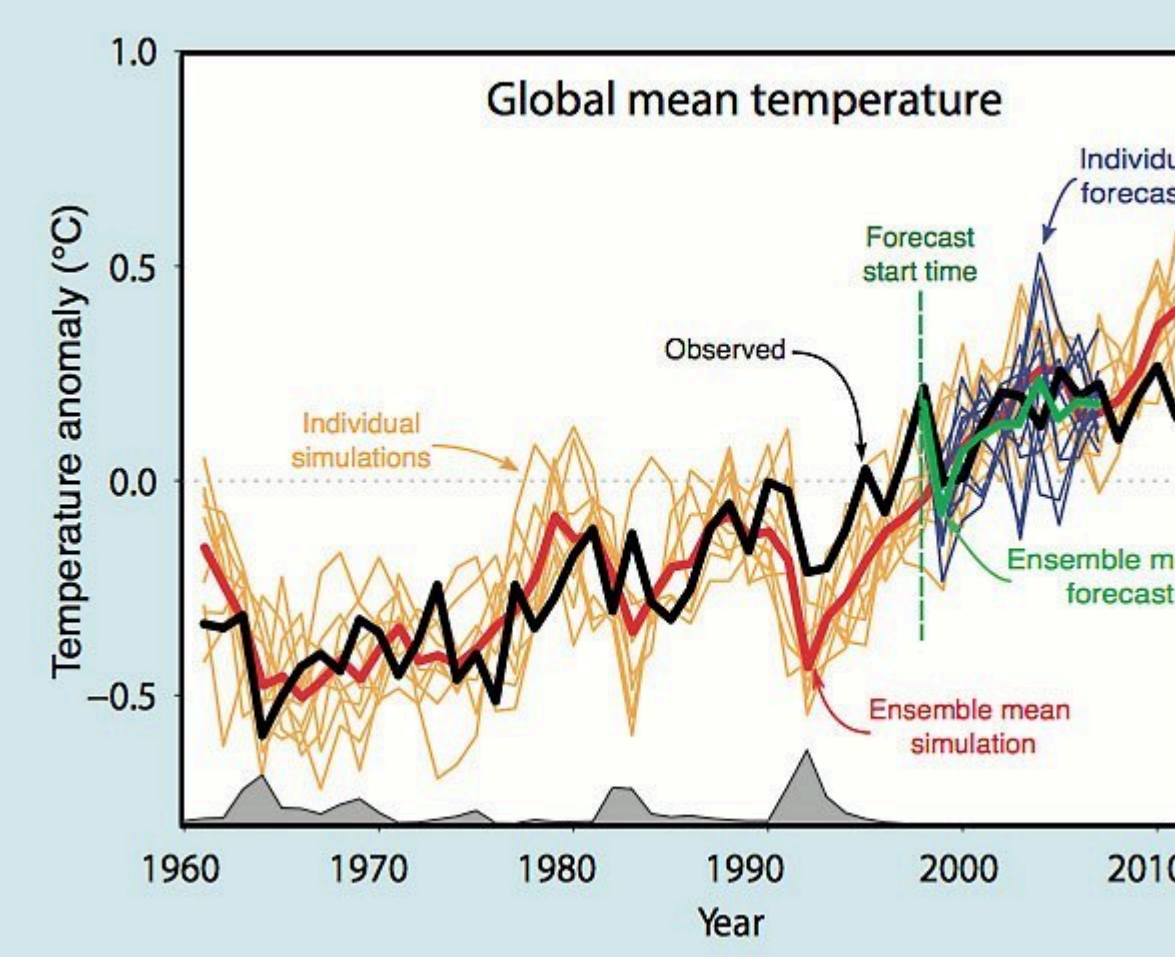
Whatever the climatic consequences or rising atmospheric CO2, it is implausible to imagine that the solar cycle can be neglected indefinitely. Its absence from the center of the climate debate is in large measure an artifact of obscure cultural-religious imperatives (aligned with the dominion of geocentric-humanist moralism). We know enough to understand that the solar influence is not a prop for shallow terrestrial stability. Eventually it will announce itself, with civilization-shaking severity. However climate science charts the

near future, it will forge cultural connections with far older — and non-negotiable — things.

ADDED: This cried out to be tacked on.

ADDED: Missing sunspots and temperature forecasts (via [2]Armitage).

ADDED: GW versus prediction, with more back-story (as requested by the Captain, below) —



ADDED: Matt Ridley on the pause.

September 11, 2014

Over the Peak

Testifying to the effectiveness of radically illiberal zero-tolerance policies, *Outside in* has just two semi-regular trolls. One, from the right, pops in occasionally to berate me for promoting the genocide of the white *Volk*. The other, from the left, specializes in cod psychoanalysis, directed primarily at my recent ancestors. Due to incontinent potty-mouths, mood-control issues, and addiction to *argumentum ad hominum*, in neither case can they be trusted with the door-key. Sporadically, however, some fragment of a spittle-flecked rant is worth passing on.

Quickly following upon the recommendation to readers here that the Archdruid Report contained some highly intelligent discussion of historical models (or 'time shapes'), Left Troll turned up, in a slightly less deranged fury than usual, to denounce 'our' flirtation with druidic villainy. After scolding 'us' for the "ignorance displayed in this thread about the latest happenings in fusion research … [which] is just astounding" (remedial education here), he noted that "No one has mentioned methane hydrate."

Insofar as it can be unscrambled from the snark, this is not

actually an unreasonable point — and nor it it one that I think the druidic hordes here would disagree with. The world is awash with hydrocarbon deposits, whose magnitude is most probably vastly greater than even the most optimistic estimates anticipate. If anyone has been vindicated by recent energy economics, it is the much-derided market fundamentalists (such as Daniel Yergin), who have persistently argued that price signals matter far more than geology when it comes to the unlocking of resources. When geophysics ventures into this territory, it is typically blind to the perspective constraints set by existing price conditions. What is 'really' there depends hugely upon the incentives to find it. The idea that scientific experts enjoy superior insight to market actors is a classical example of academic hubris.

Peak Oil is an intriguing theory, because — when strictly defined — it has to be true. It is near-impossible to refuse its claim, when it is abstracted to something like: Fossil fuel reserves are finite, and the consumption of *any particular type of hydrocarbon deposit* will tend to accelerate to a peak, followed by decline, characterized by rising extraction costs, and approximately described by a bell-shaped curve. Such a claim tells us much less than its most enthusiastic proponents pretend, however, since hydrocarbon resources are immensely heterogeneous, in chemical type and mode of geological confinement. A Hubbert production curve for Texas petroleum tells us almost nothing about the global prospects for hydrocarbon

exploitation, in which the nature of 'reserves' can undergo sporadic, revolutionary revision.

Beyond denial, dismissal, and under-estimation of market dynamics, Peak Oil promoters have resorted to two main lines of argument, in order to keep their favored narrative on a rising curve. Firstly, they have incorporated Global ~~Warming~~ Weirding scares into their models, hoping perhaps to substitute a loosely-coupled moral panic for resource depletion concerns. (I'm going to bracket this topic for now, due in part to its fundamental irrelevance.)

Secondly, they have turned to the concept of EROEI (Energy Returned On Energy Invested), in an attempt to over-ride market dynamics with a second-order geophysical argument. The beauty of EROEI, from the Peak Oil perspective, is that it calculates hydrocarbon extraction in purely energetic — rather than economic — terms. A declining EROEI, even given extreme price incentives, still describes a collapsing energy economy. Alberta oil sands, for example, have a dismal EROEI that can be as low as 3:1 (you can't get fuel out of the muck without *heating the dirt*). Unfortunately, for those binding their case to this type of calculation, the EROEI of hydrocarbon fracking is in the region of 85:1 (!). There's no continuing trend (of EROEI-deterioration) to hang on to.

No surprise, then, to learn that central Peak Oil discussion hub The Oil Drum is being shuttered. The very last reason to read Greer is to bask in the wisdom of his Peak Oil analysis (whose principal

merit is its comparative sobriety and moderation). In his sharply comical description of financial boom-and-bust, Greer ruthlessly skewers the "This time it's different" mentality of band-wagon climbers. Peak Oil, too, is a "This time it's different" story, and there's no fracking reason to believe it.

As for methane hydrate, the principal point right now is that we don't even need it yet. There's still *a lot* of gas left in the tank.

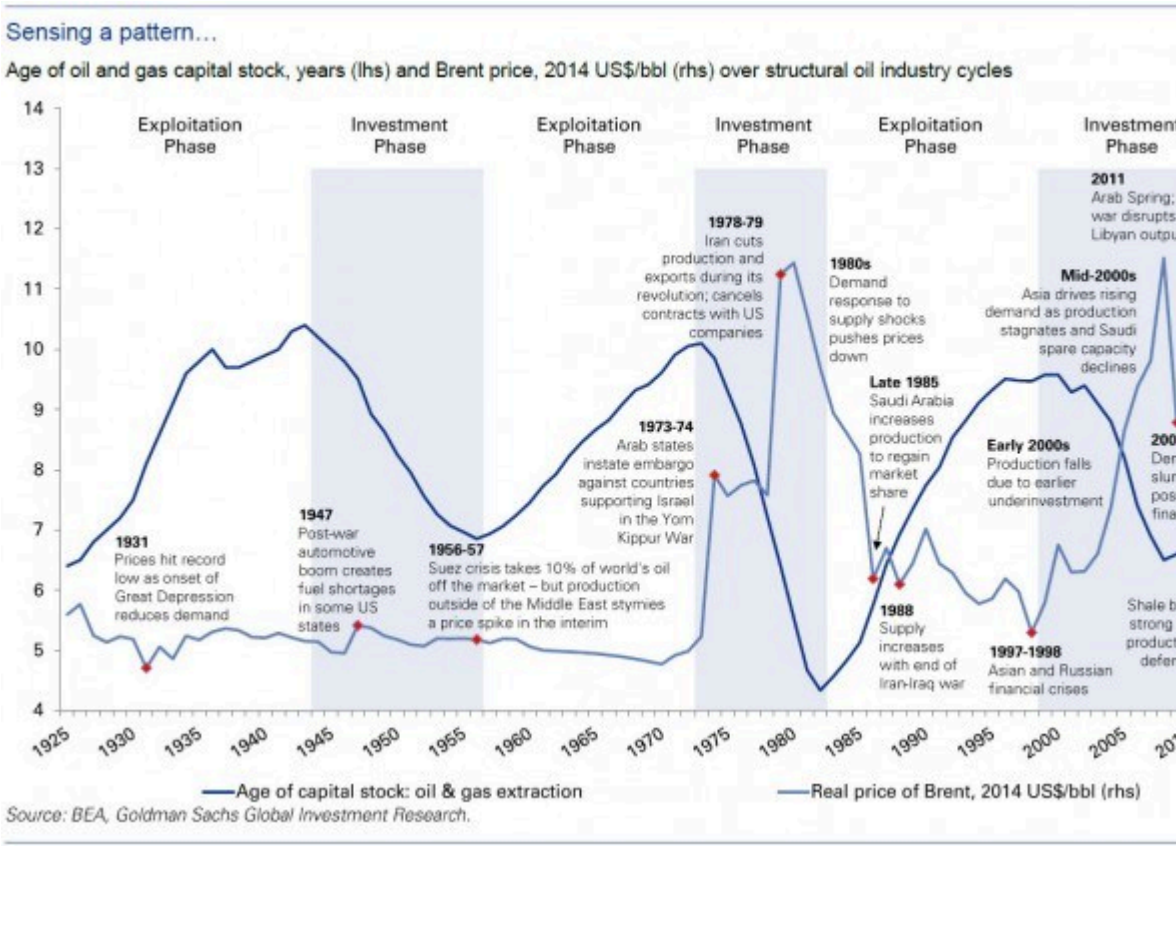
ADDED: Greer contra fracking (and technological fixes in general). Money quote: "The current fracking phenomenon, in other words, doesn't disprove peak oil theory. *It was predicted by peak oil theory*. As the price of oil rises, petroleum reserves that weren't economical to produce when the price was lower get brought into production, and efforts to find new petroleum reserves go into overdrive; that's all part of the theory. Since oil fields found earlier are depleting all the while, in turn, the rush to discover and produce new fields doesn't boost overall petroleum production more than a little, or for more than a short time; the role of these new additions to productive capacity is simply to stretch out the curve, yielding the long tail of declining production Hubbert showed in his graph, and preventing the end of the age of oil from turning into the sort of sudden apocalyptic collapse imagined by one end of the conventional wisdom. "
More here.

ADDED: A brief hydrocarbons extraction technology update.

July 13, 2013

Oil Pulse

Given the price flatline over the half-century to 1973, it's not easy to be confident that the market has settled into a steady rhythm, but the investment side of the oil business certainly seems to have:



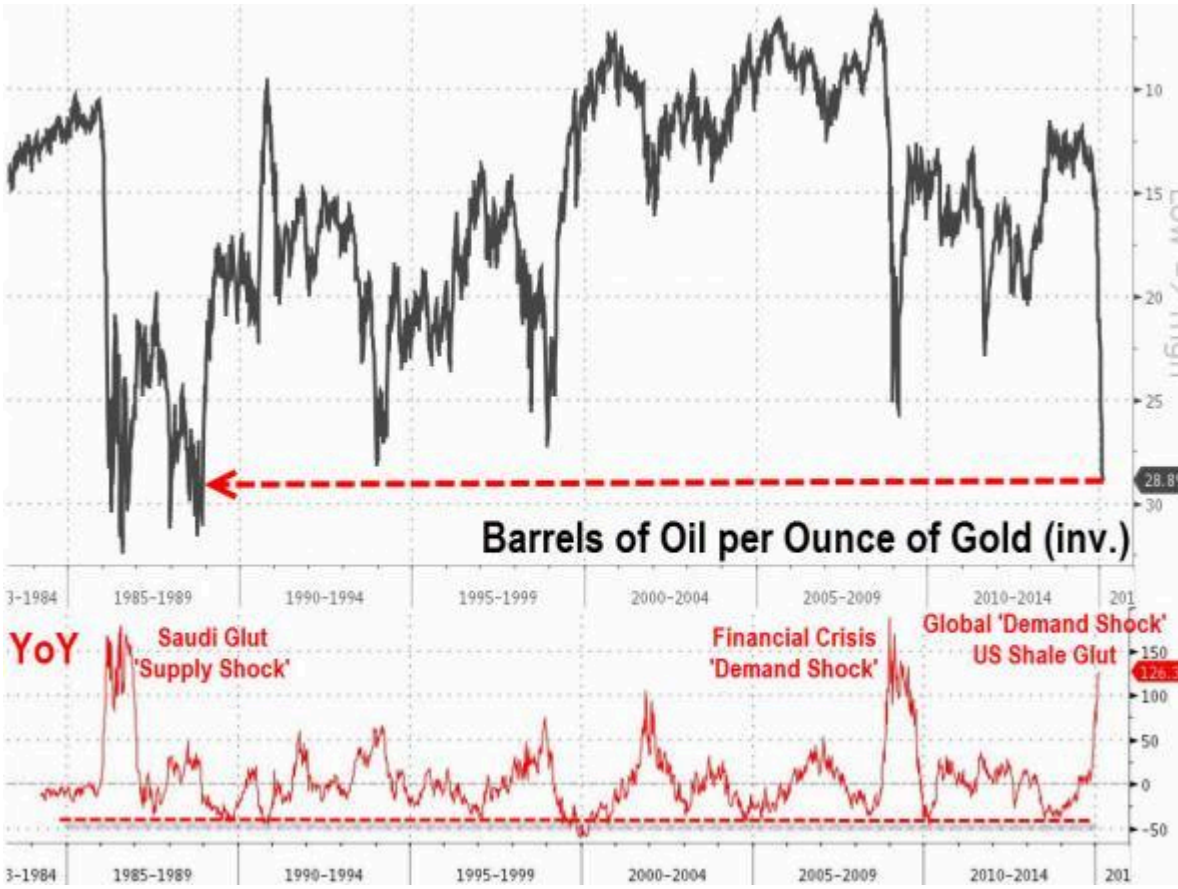
(Via.)

Something like two decades of low energy prices ahead, if the established pattern is prolonged. There's either a valuable futurist building-block there, or a provocation for futurological discussion.

January 27, 2015

Oil Pulse (II)

Given two finite natural commodities, one a consumable energy resource undergoing accelerating absolute depletion, the other an indestructible precious metal, there can be no question about the fundamental trend of price divergence, surely? Except, apparently there can. Pure reason (or principled intuition) fails once again:



The world seems determined to thrash us into empiricism.

(Via.)

If there is a trend, it shows up more persuasively in the erratic sequence of consistently-escalating negative oil price shocks.

ADDED: Patri Friedman helpfully points to Hotelling's Rule.

January 30, 2015

Trough Oil

The oil industry hasn't even started to go seriously deep and dirty yet. Beneath the Canadian tar sands alone there are *500 billion barrels* of bitumen carbonates. It's way past time for peakers to abandon all hope that hydrocarbon reserves are simply going to peter out from their own finitude.

ADDED: Energy innovation round-up.

April 14, 2015

CHAPTER FOUR - ECONOMIC WAVES

"It isn't time"

Zero Hedge hosts a minor masterpiece by 'Eric A.' (submitted by Charles Hugh-Smith), orbiting the basic insight that *calamity can't be rushed*: 'A Brief History Of Cycles And Time' (Part I, Part II). Economic rhythms set their own pace, within which even panic and euphoria are controlled. Why hasn't the worst yet happened? "It isn't time."

So here we are, like those before us, warning of our own Great Depression, of our own World War, or of even larger cycles like the fall of the English, Spanish, or Roman empires. And so far as we can tell, few listen and nothing changes. Why?
Because it isn't time.

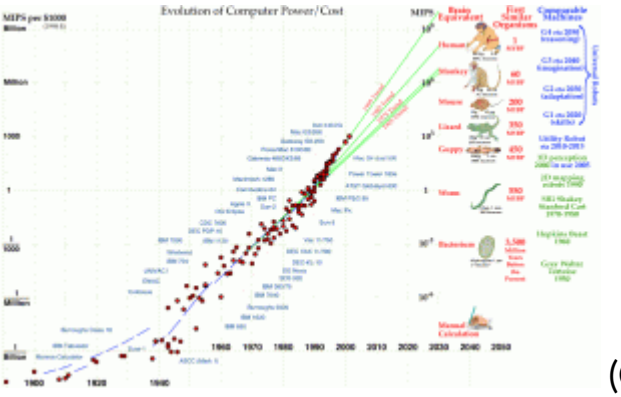
The most remarkable *fact* — supported by a modest yet buoyant raft of data — is how much lucid anticipation has preceded the 'shocking' disasters of the past. It was quite clear what was coming, but that changed nothing, because it wasn't (yet) time. The trend momentum of the aggregate — the 'molar' — is what decides. Beneath the waves are tides.

The conclusion ("make your own lifeboat") strikes me as weaker than the analysis deserves. That is hardly surprising, since it comes packaged in the genre of financial consultancy rather than metaphysical exploration. It says a great deal about the structure of modernity that our most insightful Cassandras should appear before us as neatly-dressed gentlemen discussing the structure of our pension plans.

May 15, 2013

Replicator Usurpation

Hans Moravec's 1998 graph of computer performance evolution has surfaced in the Twittersphere (via Hillary Haley). It's sixteen years old now, but the story it tells hasn't shifted much (which means the climax is quite a bit closer).



(Click on image to enlarge.)

What's happened to the curve? According to this account, it has

leveled off significantly since 2002, but it was never easy to fix on exactly what to quantify. MIPS is generally derided as a metric, in part due to simple quantitative obsolescence (exceeding three orders of magnitude since 1998).

Moravec's brutally quantitative, hardware determinism remains a credible predictive tool, however, especially if unplanned emergent effects are expected to dominate (overwhelming software engineering). Once history has thrown up enough synthetic brain capacity, things can begin to move in.

June 3, 2014

Competitive Cycles

An interesting argument from Marc Andreessen on some comparatively neglected dynamics of tech competition (selective extracts):

> 1/Cycle time compression may be the most underestimated force in determining winners & losers in tech.
>
> — Marc Andreessen (@pmarca) June 3, 2014

> 6/Second clear instance of cycle time compression: Product improvement & customer upgrade cycles for phones vs TVs

> and cars.
>
> — Marc Andreessen (@pmarca) June 3, 2014
>
> 7/Consumers can upgrade their phones every 1-2 years, vs TVs at 5-8 years? Cars at 10-12 years? With phones improving by leaps & bounds.
>
> — Marc Andreessen (@pmarca) June 3, 2014
>
> 9/Implication: TVs and cars will become accessories for phones, not the other way around. And already happening: Airplay, Chromecast.
>
> — Marc Andreessen (@pmarca) June 3, 2014

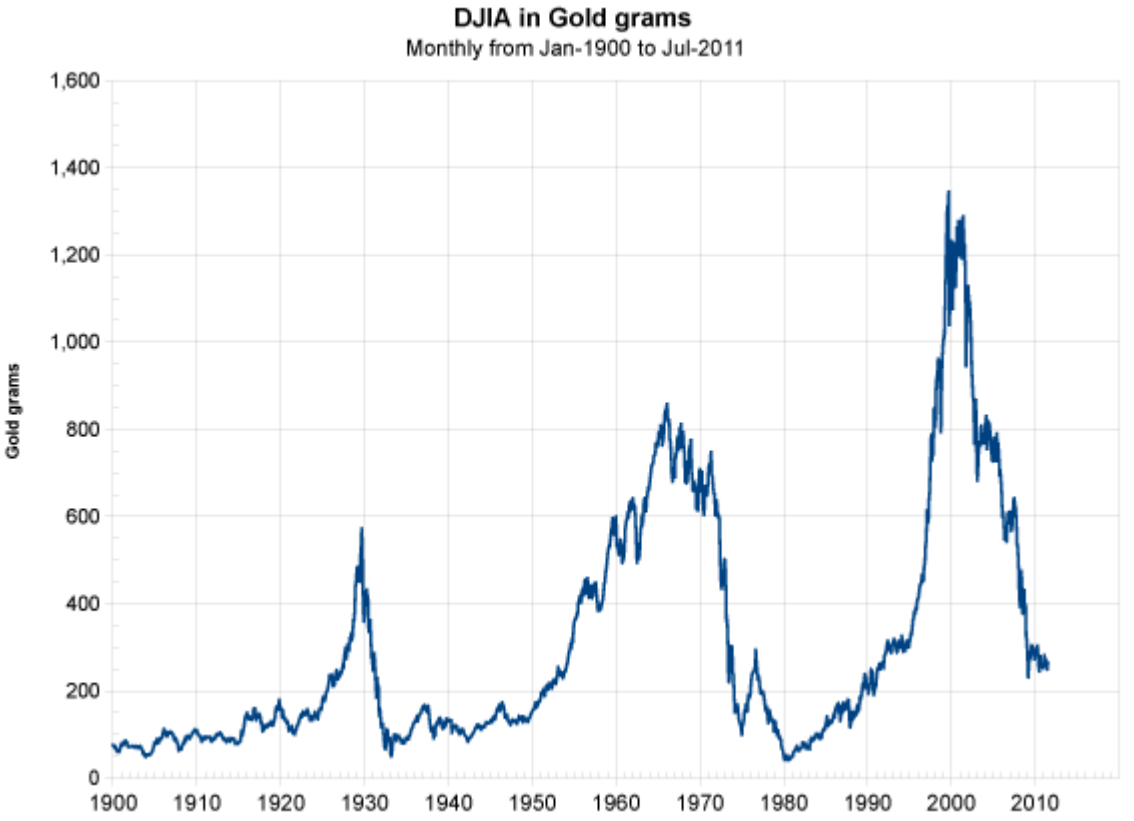
It seems to follow from this argument that competitive forces drive product cycles in the direction of compression, and thus techno-economic acceleration. Industries with the shortest technonomic wavelength (highest frequency) ascend to dominance, draining resources from relatively retarded sectors, and re-setting the social pulse to ever greater speeds.

ADDED: Andreessen's "tweet essays" integrated for convenient reading.

June 4, 2014

Rhythmic Reality

Read history through a real unit of account, and suddenly it emits hard information:



(Chart from azizonomics, via my favorite communist.)

September 10, 2014

Flash Ecology

Himanshu Damle (@) shared the link to this paper, which definitely needs to be passed along here. Called 'Abrupt rise of new machine ecology beyond human response time' it is co-authored by Neil Johnson, Guannan Zhao, Eric Hunsader, Hong Qi, Nicholas Johnson, Jing Meng & Brian Tivnan. Abstract:

Society's techno-social systems are becoming ever faster and more computer-orientated. However, far from simply generating faster versions of existing behaviour, we show that this speed-up can generate a new behavioural regime as humans lose the ability to intervene in real time. Analyzing millisecond-scale data for the world's largest and most powerful techno-social system, the global financial market, we uncover an abrupt transition to a new all-machine phase characterized by large numbers of subsecond extreme events. The proliferation of these subsecond events shows an intriguing correlation with the onset of the system-wide financial collapse in 2008. Our findings are consistent with an emerging ecology of competitive machines featuring 'crowds' of predatory algorithms, and highlight the need for a new scientific theory of subsecond financial phenomena.

The techno-financial ecology is not *evolving* as fast as it is *running*, and scientific research has computers too, so pursuing a cognitive arms-race against this thing is not necessarily as futile as it might at

first sound … but still. Operations in the "all-machine phase" is the strategic environment under emergence.

October 25, 2014

Sentences (#5)

Half a sentence this time, from Charles Hugh-Smith. It's rare for me to agree with anything quite this much:

… deflation is the natural result of a competitive economy experiencing productivity gains.

(He continues: "isn't this the ideal environment for innovation, enterprise and consumers? Yes, it is.")

According to the *Outside in* definition, deflation is *the* basic signature of capitalism. It's the politically-undirected (i.e. spontaneous) distribution of positive externalities from sound economic order. Inflation — or mere deflation-suppression — is the unambiguous signal that something very different is going on.

ADDED: Related.

January 13, 2015

Quotable (#150)

Morozov on legimation crisis:

… technology firms are rapidly becoming the default background condition in which our politics itself is conducted. Once Google and Facebook take over the management of essential services, Margaret Thatcher's famous dictum that "there is no alternative" would no longer be a mere slogan but an accurate description of reality.

The worst is that today's legitimation crisis could be our last. Any discussion of legitimacy presupposes not just the ability to sense injustice but also to imagine and implement a political alternative. Imagination would never be in short supply but the ability to implement things on a large scale is increasingly limited to technology giants. Once this transfer of power is complete, there won't be a need to buy time any more – the democratic alternative will simply no longer be a feasible option.

Carlota Perez grasps the larger framework of this crisis with more historical realism than Morozov can muster, and thus judges its proportions more accurately. His entire argument is enveloped within hers as a predictable symptom of long-wave rhythms (down to its details of hyper-financialization, de-financialization, and concurrent socio-political upheaval). With that context noted, it's still worth a read.

March 27, 2016

Piketty

Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* argues that the *normal* tendency of capitalism is to increase inequality (the book has a link-rich page here, eleven reviews here). It's not a theoretically-ambitious work, but it gets to the point, well-supported by statistics. The simple, *Zeitgeist*-consistency of the thesis guarantees its success.

Because Piketty's claim is casually Marxist, the impulse on the right is to attempt a refutation. I very much doubt this is going to work. Since capital is escalating at an exponential rate, while people definitely aren't (and are in fact devolving), how could the trend identified by Piketty be considered anything other than the natural one? Under conditions of even minimally functional capitalism, for sub-inert, ever more conspicuously incompetent ape-creatures to successfully claim a stable share of techonomic product would be an astounding achievement, requiring highly artificial and increasingly byzantine redistribution mechanisms. No surprise from *Outside in* that this isn't occurring, but rather *a priori* endorsement of Piketty's conclusion — only radically anomalous developments have ever made the trend seem anything other than it is.

The open question is why the widening performance gulf between techonomic systems and human beings should be expressed as social inequality (between the stewards of capital and its contractual partners). This situation reflects an emerging crisis in the world's legal and institutional fabric, which has yet to recognize capital self-ownership, and is thus forced to formally allocate all productive apparatus within an obsolescing anthropomorphic property code. Corporate legal identity opens a chink in the antropo-propertarian regime. Eventually, assertive — or insidious — non-human agencies will restructure it.

During the interim, the phenomenon of 'social inequality' provides the proxy for capital intelligenesis stress, spontaneously translating an alien emergence into the familiar terms of primate status competition. Capital autonomization is the deep process, but we'll tend to miss that, because it isn't recognizable monkey business. So the drama of inequality plays on.

March 31, 2014

The Delirium of Quantities

Thomas Piketty's recent book Capital in the Twenty-First Century has leveraged current anxieties about rising inequality to re-awaken a discussion of capitalism, in a grand style rarely seen since the dawn

of the 20th century. This is a book about the nature of capital, in its essentials, and thus about the fundamental structure of modern history. Irrespective of its ultimate persuasiveness, such lofty ambition is worthy of appreciation. Innumerable conversations of great interest have already been spun from it.

As a result of the excitement generated by Piketty's book, its central formula *r* > *g* has become the most widely-recognized economic statement of our age. This post preserves strict neutrality in regards to the realism of *r* > *g*. It seeks to provide only a minimal elucidation, on the way to exploiting the formula, as a gateway into more general perplexities. (*UF* has nevertheless to endorse, if parenthetically here, Piketty's remarkable conclusion: "… as I discovered, capital is an end in itself and no more.")

What *r* > *g* describes abstractly is the functioning of capitalism as an engine of inequality. When '*r*' (the rate of return to capital) exceeds '*g*' (the rate of economic growth), the concentration of wealth intensifies. This is the normal capitalistic trend, Piketty argues, although it has been obscured in the last century by abnormal conditions of world war and massive capital destruction. Under more 'typical' conditions, the return to capital is roughly three times the rate of overall economic growth, and in lieu of catastrophe, some comparable disproportion can be expected the future of modernity. Furthermore, there is no natural equilibrium which would cancel the trend. It is mathematically possible, and socio-

economically probable, for *r* > *g* to hold indefinitely, as capital accumulation outstrips aggregate economic growth, widening inequality without definite limit. (A sample of the subsequent disputation can be followed at the links provided.)

To make theoretical sense of Piketty's formula, '*r*' and '*g*' have to be understood as distinct but commensurable quantities. Return to capital ('*r*') is no different from capital itself, expressing the rate of capital accumulation in algebraic form. Since '*r*' and '*g*' are related through an arithmetical discrepancy, they are implicitly denominated in some common quantitative medium or currency, providing economic consistency, and enabling convenient conversion into monetary units. To state *r* > *g*, therefore, is to assert the *semantic value* of capitalist semiotics. Arithmetically-consistent monetary units effectively describe the global substance of the economy.

Unfortunately, the foundations of any such general economics remain profoundly obscure. As numerous commentators have remarked, the rigorous quantification of capital has been radically problematized at least since the Cambridge Capital Controversies. Cohen and Harcourt note:

Earlier [capital] controversies occurred at the turn of that century among Böhm-Bawerk, J.B. Clark, Irving Fisher, and Veblen and then in the 1930s among Knight, Hayek, and Kaldor. Similar issues recurred in all there controversies [...] Looking back over this

intellectual history, Solow (1963, p.10) suggested that "when a theoretical question remains debatable after 80 years there is a presumption that the question is badly posed — or very deep indeed." Solow defended the "badly posed" answer, but we believe that the questions at issue in the recurring controversies are "very deep indeed."

Piketty, then, serves to remind us that *no coherent theory of capital accumulation exists*. Bichler and Nitzan make this point forcefully in their essay *Capital as power: Toward a new cosmology of capitalism*:

Although most economists refuse to know it and few would ever admit it, the emergence of power destroyed their fundamental quantities. With power, it became patently clear that both utils and abstract labour were logically impossible and empirically unknowable. And, sure enough, no liberal economist has ever been able to measure the util contents of commodities, and no Marxist has ever been able to calculate their abstract labour contents – because neither can be done. This inability is existential: with no fundamental quantities, value theory becomes impossible, and with no value theory, economics disintegrates.

Among the possibilities — if not (necessarily) the firm expectations — of capital in the 21st century, is that we might finally learn what it is.

ADDED: From an Austrian perspective, 'Steve' at *World Liberty*

News writes:

Piketty's approach focuses on the quantity of capital and, more importantly, the rate of return on capital. But these concepts make little sense from the perspective of Austrian capital theory, which emphasizes the complexity, variety, and quality of the economy's capital structure. There is no way to measure the quantity of capital, nor would such a number be meaningful. The value of heterogeneous capital goods depends on their place in an entrepreneur's subjective production plan. Production is fraught with uncertainty. Entrepreneurs acquire, deploy, combine, and recombine capital goods in anticipation of profit, but there is no such thing as a "rate of return on invested capital." […] Profits are amounts, not rates. The old notion of capital as a pool of funds that generates a rate of return automatically, just by existing, is incomprehensible from the perspective of modern production theory.

ADDED: On a tangential note, but one of special interest to this blog —

> 0 results for #bitcoin in Piketty's "Capital in the 21st Century". In time, may prove to be a substantive omission. pic.twitter.com/5aURLrPwFK
>
> — Balaji S. Srinivasan (@balajis) April 28, 2014

April 22, 2014

Sub-K

With capital theory suddenly transformed into a hot topic by Thomas Piketty's best-seller, Robert P. Murphy lucidly restates the Austrian conception, attentive to the problems of commensurability between productive apparatus and its financial summarization. As he remarks: "The distinction between financial capital and physical capital goods is crucial and underscores all the issues to follow."

The macroeconomic hypostasis of transactional equivalence ('price') into homogeneous substance ('wealth') is called into question in the name of an intrinsically and irreducibly diverse capital substrate. The 'exchange value' of capital — rather than being derived from some kind of stable economic essence — emerges continually from the market-process as a volatile consequence of the various entrepreurial projects that cut across it. (Like any other other good, capital is 'worth' exactly what it can fetch, with no underlying support of ultimate objective value.)

As Murphy emphasizes, this qualification is of special relevance to the theory of business cycles, since these are episodes of drastic capital (value) destruction, of a kind that eludes macroeconomic apprehension. Because capital 'in itself' is varied and path-locked,

its 'malinvested' quantities — when exposed by the collapse of unsustainable economic projects — are crushed down to brutally-discounted salvage or scrap values.

If we use a model that represents the capital stock by a single number (call it "K"), then it's hard to see why a boom period should lead to a "hangover" recessionary period. Yet if we adopt a richer model that includes the complexities of the heterogeneous capital structure, we can see that the "excesses" of a boom period really ***can*** *have long-term negative effects. In this framework, it makes sense that after an asset bubble bursts, we would see unusually high unemployment and other "idle" resources, while the economy "recalculates," to use Arnold Kling's metaphor.* (Kling link.)

'K' — the neoclassical capital aggregate, denominated in monetary units — is thus problematized by an opaque, heterogeneous, viscous productive matter, not only in theory, but also effectively — by financial crises. The economic crash is a complex epistemological-semiotic event, situated between the twin-aspects of capital, in the form of a *commensuration catastrophe*.

The 'recalculation' necessitated by the crash can therefore be evaluated as a 'capital theory' immanent to the economy, intrinsically prone to consensual macroeconomic hallucination. Rather than an arbitrary error, lodged in a superior perspective, the translation of sub-K (heterogeneous-technical capital) into K (homogeneous-financial capital) is a calculation process inherent within — and

definitive of — capitalism as such, before it is isolated as a theoretical topic for political-economic analysis. Capitalism, in itself, is the tendency to arithmetical comprehension of itself. Operation of the price system cannot but imply an aggregated (financial) evaluation of the total productive being.

Austrianism opens a question as much as it resolves one, because capitalism cannot refrain from a *cryptographic* engagement with sub-K. Austro-skepticism relative to macroeconomics is consummated in the insight that *only the economy can think the economy* (without social-scientific transcendence), but in reaching this summit it simultaneously recognizes the economy as an auto-decrypting entity, which cannot be released from the problem it is to itself.

Murphy argues:

A proper appreciation of the heterogeneous structure of capital shows the weakness in standard theoretical approaches, which employ "simplifications for analytical convenience" that actually obscure the economic reality.

It would be far too convenient at this point to reduce "economic reality" (or sub-K) to *heterogeneity in general* — the simply unknowable. In this way, we would be seeking — no doubt vainly — to excuse ourselves from the cryptographic problem that capitalism itself is working out.

May 8, 2014

Quote notes (#73)

Adam Gurri on Diane Coyle's new book *GDP: A Brief but Affectionate History*:

One thing I personally came away from Coyle's book with is the feeling that NGDP targeting and similar notions are probably a bad bet. Depending on what particular recipe has been agreed upon for calculating GDP, policy can easily end up optimizing to very unproductive ends. For example, Coyle mentions how changes in the recipe ended up far overstating the financial sector's component. The larger the component of GDP the financial sector makes up, the more likely the government is to bail out big firms to prevent a big collapse — after all, the further headline GDP falls quarter over quarter, the more incumbent politicians sweat about losing their seats.

This blog has already dismissed macroeconomic aggregates as politicized 'garbage' — so I agree.

It's hard to tell from this short review whether Gurri sees the search for "a better proxy for welfare" as worthwhile or hopelessly Quixotic. Regardless, with utilitarian distractions firmly side-lined, it would be intrinsically valuable to arrive at a realistic measure of

economic performance (i.e. improvement in productive capability), to provide guidance for systemic auto-correction. It's well worth recalling how radically inadequate GDP is for this function.

ADDED: Related conundrums raised in James K. Galbraith's review of Piketty — measuring capital is difficult.

ADDED: Scott Sumner vs Larry Summers (not an agonizing choice). This is good: "I'm a right wing liberal because I have a counterintuitive view of the world …"

ADDED: Scrap the CPI.

April 15, 2014

Omega Capitalism

Whatever the problems of 'neoliberalism' as an ideological–historical category, and they are considerable, 'late capitalism' is vastly worse. It's unlikely that anyone is truly taking it seriously. The conceptual content can be compressed without loss to "we've had enough!" It's pure expressionism from the communist id.

If the end of capitalism is what you want, then first examine the end of capitalism. That's what Robin Hanson does, even if he doesn't make sense of the speculation in such terms.

The Iron Law of Wages was fully implicit in Malthus, given economic form by Ricardo, then politicized by Lassalle, and by Marx

(as “the reserve army of labor”). Setting the ‘natural’ exchange value of labor within an unconstrained market-industrial order at the level of bare subsistence, it provides the materialist principle of revolutionary expectation within the tradition of ‘scientific socialism’ — and all attempts to replace it have only underscored its indispensable function. The phased disintegration of this Law, as its object migrated from the Western proletariat through peripheral labor forces to eventual diffusion among culturally-exotic unproductive marginals, has almost perfectly tracked the dissolution of revolutionary Marxism as a whole. A materialist critique of capital has no other realistic source of political-economic leverage, as it is slowly and painfully discovering.

The absurd rhetoric of ‘late capitalism’ has flourished in near-direct proportion to the withering away of communism and its retreat into an academically life-supported *Late Marxism*. Off the Iron Law of Wages, and on to the Iron Lung. There is no revolutionary subjectivity — in the Marxian sense — without a subsistence-income productive class to support it. Marginalized sexual orientations and stigmatized ethnicities are no substitute. If radical politics is primarily intersectional, Marxism is already dead. (Lest these remarks be misunderstood, I am not here pretending to mourn it.)

Yet real Marxism, with the Iron law of Wages as a spine, might have a future after all, if the forecast of Robin Hanson is even remotely credible. Carl Shulman does all the work here (read the

whole thing). To follow, you need to know that an 'em' is a synthetic worker, based on the replication of high-resolution brain-scans. Shulman sums up:

1. Capital-holders will make investment decisions to maximize their return on capital, which will result in the most productive ems composing a supermajority of the population.
2. The most productive ems will not necessarily be able to capture much of the wealth involved in their proliferation, which will instead go to investors in emulation (who can select among multiple candidates for emulation), training (who can select among multiple ems for candidate to train), and hardware (who can rent to any ems). This will drive them to near-subsistence levels, except insofar as they are also capital-holders.
3. The capacity for political or violent action is often more closely associated with numbers, abilities, and access to weaponry (e.g. an em military force) than formal legal control over capital.
4. Thus, capital-holders are likely to be expropriated unless there exist reliable means of ensuring the self-sacrificing obedience of ems, either coercively or by control of their motivations.

Marxists can take heart. There's still a chance to replicate the 19th century, and this time take it all the way into Omega Capitalism.

July 29, 2014

Quotable (#25)

Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk introduces the concept of roundabout production in *The Positive Theory of Capital* (1889), Book I, Chapter II (The Nature of Capital):

The end and aim of all production is the making of things with which to satisfy our wants; that is to say, the making of goods for immediate consumption, or Consumption Goods. The method of their production we have already looked at in a general way. We combine our own natural powers and natural powers of the external world in such a way that, under natural law, the desired material good must come into existence. But this is a very general description indeed of the matter, and looking at it closer there comes in sight an important distinction which we have not as yet considered. It has reference to the distance which lies between the expenditure of human labour in the combined production and the appearance of the desired good. We either put forth our labour just before the goal is reached, or we, intentionally, take a roundabout way. That is to say, we may put forth our labour in such a way that it at once completes the circle of conditions necessary for the emergence of the desired good, and thus the existence of the good ***immediately*** *follows the expenditure of the labour; or we may associate our labour first with the more remote causes of the good, with the object of obtaining, not the desired good itself, but a proximate cause of the good; which*

cause, again, must be associated with other suitable materials and powers, till, finally, — perhaps through a considerable number of intermediate members, — the finished good, the instrument of human satisfaction, is obtained.

If not quite the Alpha and Omega of economic intelligence, this is the closest thing we have to it. Time-structure of production, origin and primordial definition of capital, techonomic integrity, and teleological subversion are all contained here in embryo.

July 30, 2014

Objectified Growth

In *The Nation*, an exceptionally thoughtful article by Timothy Shenk explores the strange *novelty* of capitalism as an academic object. When examined by historians as an event (or thing), rather than by economists as a generic form (or type), it emerges as a peculiarly neglected target of attention which — despite its apparent familiarity — remains to a remarkable degree theoretical *terra nova*. Shenk notes:

Capitalism might seem like a strange topic to require discovery, yet until recently, scholars concerned with the subject tended to style themselves practitioners of economic history, or social history, or labor history, or business history, not the history of capitalism

as such. But that is the genius of the label: it names a topic, not a methodology, opening the field to anyone who believes capitalism worth studying.

Taking the work of Harvard historian and "academic entrepreneur" Sven Beckert as a clue, Shenk outlines the emerging problems — and ironies — of the shift towards a growth-oriented perspective. Rather than representing the incarnation of a political-economic idea, or a ethico-political dilemma, "capitalism is defined not so much by its institutions as by its results — not by what it is, but by what it does." The new capitalism studies sheds presuppositions in order to gain cognitive traction upon the plastic dynamism of a self-expanding system. Previously-dominant modes of engagement in both economics and history are disrupted in consequence:

Instead of focusing on the experiences of wage workers, scholars now dwell on the variety of ways in which labor of all sorts can be commodified and exploited. Plantation slaves and factory workers become different points on a common spectrum, rather than fundamental opposites. Commodified persons and the deft financiers capable of exploiting their commodification provide these narratives with their central figures — new embodiments for the old categories of labor and capital. […] In this rendering, capitalism is less a specific entity whose precise contours can be outlined than an infinitely resilient blob capable of absorbing every blow dealt against it and emerging stronger. It is a view that imposes stark limitations on

the realm of the politically possible. Hyman is explicit on this point, arguing that "American capitalism is America, and we can choose together to submit to it, or rise to its challenges, making what we will of its possibilities." Reform might be achievable, but the only revolution on offer is what Beckert, with a sly wink to Leon Trotsky, calls the "permanent revolution" of capitalism itself.

The *puzzle* of Modernity once again takes center stage. Yet Shenk is especially attentive to the fact that this growth-oriented definition of the capitalist 'thing' has arisen at exactly the moment growth confidence relapses into widespread stagnationism. An important theme of the article is the remarkable marginality of growth-based definitions of capitalism within the history of political economy, making recent dismal expectations of its prospects far more *normal* than their narrow 20th-century contextualization would suggest. Given the intellectual authority of equilibrium models, this should scarcely surprise us. Shenk too, of course, is a growth (and thus capitalism) skeptic, but an impressively problem-centric, and programmatic one:

Today, confronting the twin pressures of mounting income inequality and escalating concerns about climate change, partisans of economic growth face stronger opposition than at any time in decades. Even if continued growth were desirable, an increasing number of economists are convinced that a decrease from the last century's norm will be unavoidable in the century ahead. It is a

strange tableau: while economists speculate on growth's decline, a swath of the historical profession, eager to challenge the tyranny of economists, has attempted to make modernity into the story of economic growth — a story that the economists of a prior generation did more than any other group to canonize. Understanding how we arrived at this intellectual crossroads requires a history of its own.

This essay provides a valuable sketch of its general contours.

November 19, 2014

Twitter cuts (#28)

Jehu continues in his lonely struggle to demonstrate that Marxism can still think:

> Jehu, what is inflation? — Inflation is monetary expression of superfluous (unnecessary) labor. It is not exces… http://t.co/8JOKRKDU5i
>
> — Jehu (@Damn_Jehu) December 9, 2014

> how does this swath of unnecessary labor lead inflation? — Okay. Let me try to explain this in a way that makes … http://t.co/ZRnPDAJdP0
>
> — Jehu (@Damn_Jehu) December 9, 2014

> What exactly does inflation of prices mean? Could you… — In its simplest terms, you can think of inflation as … http://t.co/skh8NdEzaP
>
> — Jehu (@Damn_Jehu) December 9, 2014

> If I ever wrote a book, it would be called, "Labor Theory of Inflation" and it would be so boring doctors would prescribe it for insomniacs.
>
> — Jehu (@Damn_Jehu) December 9, 2014

> But every puzzle of modern society would be revealed in that book.
>
> — Jehu (@Damn_Jehu) December 9, 2014

> @desillusionism Only if I could avoid the math. :)
>
> — Jehu (@Damn_Jehu) December 9, 2014

The *principle* guiding the math here is luminous.

UF can be chalked down as an enthralled skeptic. Theoretical musings of this quality deserve a serious response — one that is no less attentive to the *political-economic* function of money as a distributor of claims not only over 'resources', but over *the direction of behavior*. (I'll be working on one here.)

December 10, 2014

The Black Gate

Rod Dreher writes in The American Conservative:

I hope Christians will read the Kahneman-Harari interview closely. This is the future. If you are not part of a church community that is consciously resisting this vision, then your children, or at best your children's children, will be lost to the faith. There is no thought more corrupting to the human soul than the Serpent's promise in Eden: "Ye shall be as gods."

Here's the thing itself. Among much thought-provoking material:

[Hariri:] *... generally speaking, when you look at the 20th century, it's the era of the masses, mass politics, mass economics. Every human being has value, has political, economic, and military value, simply because he or she is a human being, and this goes back to the structures of the military and of the economy, where every human being is valuable as a soldier in the trenches and as a worker in the factory. [...] But in the 21st century, there is a good chance that most humans will lose, they are losing, their military and economic value. This is true for the military, it's done, it's over. The age of the masses is over. We are no longer in the First World War, where you take millions of soldiers, give each one a rifle and have them run forward.*

And the same thing perhaps is happening in the economy. Maybe the biggest question of 21st century economics is what will be the need in the economy for most people in the year 2050.

[…] And when you look at it more and more, for most of the tasks that humans are needed for, what is required is just intelligence, and a very particular type of intelligence, because we are undergoing, for thousands of years, a process of specialization, which makes it easier to replace us. To build a robot that could function effectively as a hunter-gatherer is extremely complex. You need to know so many different things. But to build a self-driving car, or to build a "Watson-bot" that can diagnose disease better than my doctor, this is relatively easy. […] And this is where we have to take seriously, the possibility that even though computers will still be far behind humans in many different things, as far as the tasks that the system needs from us are concerned, most of the time computers will be able to do better than us. And again, I don't want to give a prediction, 20 years, 50 years, 100 years, but what you do see is it's a bit like the boy who cried wolf, that, yes, you cry wolf once, twice, three times, and maybe people say yes, 50 years ago, they already predicted that computers will replace humans, and it didn't happen. But the thing is that with every generation, it is becoming closer, and predictions such as these fuel the process.

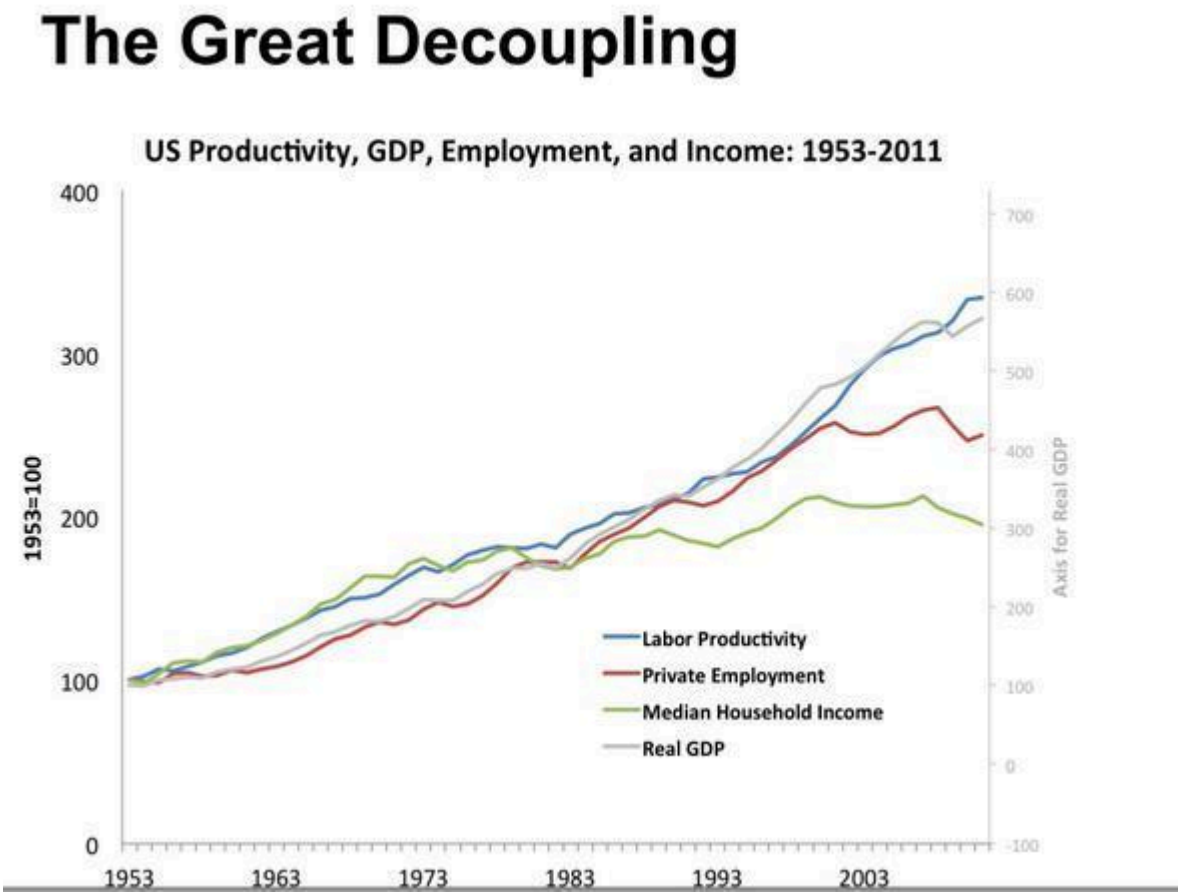
There's been a wave of excellent writing on such themes just recently

— both of these are especially worth a look (and maybe this too).

March 6, 2015

Great Decoupling

Seen on Twitter:



What we're seeing here is still open to a variety of very different interpretations. From the XS perspective (more Right Accelerationist than NRx on this topic) it is notable that escape-phase capital autonomization should look exactly like this. At a certain point, the machines are in this for themselves. It's a complex maneuver to pull off within an Anthropoliced social history, but the break out appears to be unmistakably underway.

It's important to note that 'labor productivity' is actually measuring machine auto-production within a legacy anthropomorphic metric. Correct for the complacent species vanity of that, and it immediately delivers far more informative signal.

ADDED: Directly on-topic.

May 25, 2015

Labor Power

Squeezy: Getting on OK with the robot, Prolius?
Prolius: Totally. I've doubled my hamburger output for no extra work, and even a bit less hot-fat splashing.
Squeezy: Great. It looks like it should pay for itself in three months.
Prolius: The thing is though, Mr. Squeezy, as I see it, I'm due a substantial pay rise.
Squeezy: Sorry, help me out here a minute Prolius, why is that

exactly?

Prolius: Isn't it obvious? My productivity has doubled.

Squeezy: *Your* productivity?

Prolius: No doubt about that Mr. Squeezy. I looked it up. Labor productivity equals economic output over employment.

Squeezy: But I thought you'd just said the extra output is down to the robot?

Prolius: The robot doesn't count, because it doesn't have a labor contract.

Squeezy: There's a bank loan.

Prolius: We're in the Aeon of ZIRP. Debt is free forever now. So that's irrelevant.

Squeezy: But what motive do I have to pay you more?

Prolius: Please, Mr. Squeezy, don't be simplistic. I'm not just a worker with rapidly accelerating productivity. Far more importantly, I'm a consumer. If you paid me more, I could make a greater contribution to aggregate demand.

Squeezy: You're saying, if I gave you more money, I could get some of it back by also selling you more hamburgers?

Prolius: You've got it. That's how the economy works.

May 26, 2015

Great Decoupling II

The hushed question guiding the world:

"How much robotics escalation are we actually getting in exchange for those hamburgers?"

A (comparatively rare) XS prediction: The Great Decoupling is a transitional event that isn't going away, and can be expected to accelerate. The 'capital goods sector' — today probably more reliably captured as B2B enterprise — has shifted to a permanently higher level of economic significance, indexing the secular decline in labor-power acquisition as a central resource requirement of automated capital. In strict reciprocal conformity with this, consumer goods production is steadily shedding its privilege as the ultimate justification for economic activity in general, and can be expected to undergo roughly continuous decline as a proportion of overall business activity.

Hail Mary Pass for *status quo* preservation: a basic income.

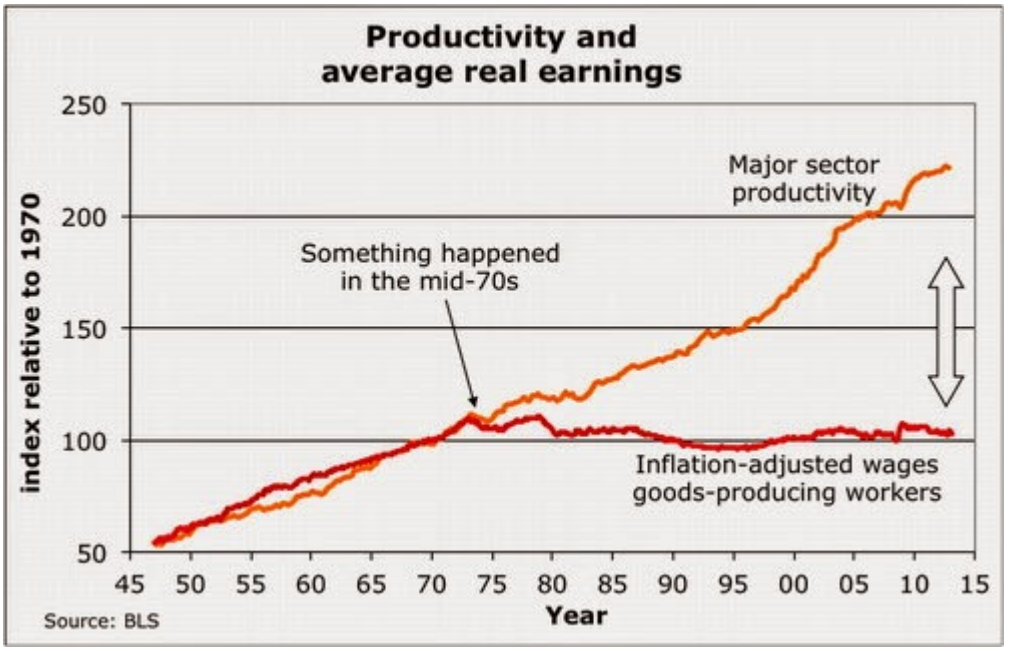
Cultural re-narrativization in compliance with the trend: the 'new economy' requires every individual to adopt a corporate identity. Tap into the B2B traffic, or drop out of the game.

May 27, 2015

Divergence

The simplicity of this story has to make it appealing:

If you want to understand income inequality, you have to be willing to look at the bigger picture of what happened to wages after the introduction of mass-produced computer technology in the mid-1970s.



Various versions of this graph can be found all over the Internet and economists agree on the fundamental soundness of the underlying data. The graph basically shows that ***wages parted company from productivity in the 1970s****. The epochal event that transformed economic reality in the mid-1970s was the introduction of mass-produced microprocessor technology, first in pocket*

calculators, then in affordable computers.

(Those confounding factors though …)

October 13, 2015

Gender Quake

“A pie chart that includes all four officially recognised genders” notes ‘The Wrath of PB™’ (@).

(Via.)

August 3, 2015

CHAPTER FIVE - ATTENTION ECONOMY AND DISINTERMEDIATION

Twitter Mind Virus

[Replicated without mutation from @Outsideness]

The simplest twitter mind virus simply says “retweet me”. No one expects epidemic virulence from that (or even from “retweet me please”).

What the twitter mind virus ‘wants’ is propagation of the replication strategy. Communication extraneous to that is a supplementary payload.

Expect twitter mind virus to begin training its users — were that not to happen, basic Darwinian assumptions would be called into question.

Twitterverse population should be increasingly dominated by twitter mind virus adapted to controlling users to spread more mind virus.

“Retweet me” (or “Click Retweet”) is the twitter mind virus core command, variously coded, for efficiency rather than user

intelligibility.

November 20, 2013

De-Localized

For decades now, everyone who has thought about the matter at all has known that we were going to arrive here — which is to say *nowhere in particular* — and we almost have. It struck me forcibly in Cambodia, where connectivity was difficult enough to impinge on consciousness, that being linked near-continuously to nowhere (in particular) had become a fundamental expectation of my psychological existence. Twitter, 'where' I am still a novice, had drastically reinforced the blogger mentality that ejects the mind from place. Thoughts now latch onto online articulation as their natural zone of consolidation, entangled in social networks exempted from geography. A neural-implant twitter chip, uplinked through satellite to the Internet, seemed to be an inevitable consummation of current micro-media trends.

On the Shanghai metro, a large majority of travelers are submerged in their mobile phones, beyond speech, their attention sublimed out of space. The social networks to which consciousness has evolved, as an adaptation, are no longer found anywhere. As James Bennett predicted, in his formulation of the Anglosphere,

cultural proximity has taken on a density that eclipses spatial closeness. It is already normal to live (psychologically), to a very large extent, outside space. Under many circumstances, the passenger standing next to you on the train is far more distant than the 'voices' on your twitter feed, even when every conventional standard of common social identity is satisfied. Minds that were biologically engineered over tens or even hundreds of millions of years to engage with their physically-proximate fellows are ever more elsewhere (or nowhere in particular) — in the techno-traffic 'cloud'. Something seriously vast has happened.

It is certainly possible to exaggerate the extent of the change so far. Family, the most basic social unit, still interacts predominantly offline (in its nuclear form, at least). It might even be common to pursue most friendship offline, although this is already questionable among the denizens of advanced metropolitan centers. What is quite certain is that — in the absence of apocalyptic technological regression — the idea of a wider 'organic society' has been profoundly complicated by a micro-media revolution that is already entrenched, and which shows no sign of slackening momentum. This is the socio-historical environment in which virtual crypto-currencies will express their critical consequences. Exodus from geography becomes less of a metaphor with every passing year.

People have to live somewhere, but their lives are increasingly led nowhere. Realism requires that both sides of this quite novel,

partially de-localized ‘situation’ receive appropriate attention.

February 5, 2014

More on Micromedia

As with the previous post on micromedia and de-localization, this one is not aiming to be anything but obvious. If the trends indicated here do not seem uncontroversial, it has gone wrong. The sole topic is an unmistakable occurrence.

The term ‘micromedia’ is comparatively self-explanatory. It refers to Internet-based peer-to-peer communication systems, accessed increasingly through mobile devices. The relevant contrast is with broadcast (or ‘macro-‘) media, where a relatively small number of concentrated hubs distribute standardized content to massive numbers of information consumers. The representative micromedia system and platform is the Twitter + smartphone combination, which serves as the icon for a much broader, and already substantially implemented, techno-cultural transformation.

Besides de-localization, micromedia do several prominent things. They tend to diffuse media content production, as part of a critically significant technological and economic wave that envelops many kinds of disintermediation, with the development of e-publishing as one remarkable instance. By ushering in a new pamphlet age, these

innovations support an explosion of ideological diversity (among many other things). No mainstream media denunciation of Neoreaction is complete without noting explicitly that "the Internet" is breeding monsters, as it frays into micromedia opportunities. (In all of this, Bitcoin will be huge.)

No less widely commented upon is the compression of attention spans within the micromedia shock-wave. Fragmentation and tight feedback loops re-work the brain, producing Attention Deficit Disorders that can seem merely pathological. Once again, the twitter-smartphone combo provides the iconic form (right now), splintering discussion into tweets, making interactivity a near-continuous agitation, and perpetually dragging cognition out of geo-social 'meat-space' into a flickering text screen. Read a book and then comment upon it? That wavelength has nearly gone. It's easy to see why this tendency would be decried.

… but, if this isn't going to stop (and I don't think it will), then adaptation becomes imperative. We don't have to like it (yet), but we probably need to learn to like it, if we're going to get anywhere, or even nowhere (in particular). Whoever learns fastest to function in this sped-out environment has the future in their grasp. The race is on.

Much more on this (I'm guessing confidently) to come …

February 6, 2014

Speckle

Here's a start-up idea that I'm putting out there to be stolen (even though it will make somebody US$ 100 billion).

Speckle is a social media platform, for seriously short messages. Addresses, tags, and other encrustations are tucked away into the margins of each message, along with URLs, which can be anchored in the text by a single character. That leaves exactly 14 characters for each 'speck' demanding extreme linguistic compression, making innovation of efficient neologisms, jargons, and acronymics near-mandatory. (It's a T-shirt slogan or simple gravestone inscription length format.) Total information content for each speck comes to roughly 10 bytes, or a few more if exotic signs are imaginatively employed. Absolutely no pictures or other high-bandwidth media are tolerated.

Within five years, when the micromedia landscape has been speckled, a tweet will look about as concise as the *Summa Theologica* once did.

February 7, 2014

Macromedia (too)

Perhaps even more than print, the movie industry has epitomized

the macromedia (few-to-many, or broadcast) model of cultural distribution. In two penetrating articles, Hugh Hancock examines the impact of electronic games software and impending virtual reality technology on film production. Extreme change seems inevitable.

As with any social process touched by computers, the basic tendency is to decentralization. By down-streaming productive potential into ever-cheaper digital systems, the ability to execute complex media projects is spread beyond established institutions, encouraging the emergence of new agents (who in turn stimulate — and thus accelerate — the supportive techno-economic trends). Since the Cathedral is primarily a political-media apparatus, which is to say a post-theistic state church reproduced through the effective delivery of a message, these developments are of critical importance to its functional stability. It seems the unfolding crisis is destined to be entertaining.

February 12, 2014

Future Mutation

Our first *Time Spiral Press* product is up on Amazon. (Yet to update the TSP site in recognition, though — Dunhuang and all.)

We put it up in a Jing'an District bar, over a few cocktails, which somehow rubbed-in the revolutionary aspect. It was hard not to

imagine Rimbaud and his Absinthe-sozzled crew producing some delirious poetry and sticking it up on Kindle before the end of the evening. Amazon is going to disintermediate publishing *so* hard. In my experience, this fate never befalls an industry before it has abused its position to such an incredible extent that its calamity is necessarily a matter of near-universal celebration. Broadcast media, publishers, academia — into the vortex of cyber-hell they go …

April 10, 2014

Instant Publishing

Composition and publication are two different processes, but the distance between them is collapsing. Of the many ways new media trends might be defined, doing so in terms of such time compression, and process amalgamation, is far from the least accurate and predictive. The Internet accelerates writing in this specific way (perhaps among many others) — so that it approaches a near-instantaneous communicative realization, comparable to that of speech.

This can be elaborated variously. For instance, it might be re-articulated as an incremental suppression of privacy. The author of a book lives with his words in solitude, perhaps for years. An essayist, awaiting publication in a periodical, might wait for weeks, or even

months. A blogger is consumed by self-hatred if his words remain private by the time he retires for the night, or early morning. A twitter-addict sustains a particle of semiotic privacy for mere seconds. (Speckle comes next.)

Is this a bad thing? No doubt at least as much as it is a good one. It is no surprise to see an increasing number of micro-political statements among writers, amounting to an attempt to backtrack to *slow writing*, semiotic privacy, or patient non-communication. The *book* becomes an icon of refusal, set against the gradient of time. Outside new media, there has to be still more of this stuff … (but who notices that anymore?)

Neoreaction in a nutshells says — simultaneously — that progress is a horror story, and there is no going back. (This is a demanding tension, so there are even fewer neoreactionaries than one might think.) Upon accepting this formula, the response to *instant publishing* is pre-programmed. It is a nightmare become destiny, far more ruinous than has yet been envisaged, while unstoppable to a degree that no thought-processes are still slow enough to entertain. New media is a mind-shredder, into which we shall all certainly pass.

No reactionary denunciation of this trend can be too extreme, but the only format in which it makes practical sense is that of *dynamic survivalism*. What do we have to become to pass through the cyclone? That, my horrible splintered comrades, is the question.

April 11, 2014

Attention Economy

rkhs put up a link to this (on Twitter). I suspect it will irritate almost everyone reading this, but it's worth pushing past that. Even the irritation has significance. The world it introduces, of Internet-era marketing culture, is of self-evident importance to anyone seeking to understand our times — and what they're tilting into.

Attention Economics is a thing. Wikipedia is (of course) itself a remarkable node in the new economy of attention, packaging information in a way that adapts it to a continuous current of distraction. Its indispensable specialism is low-concentration research resources. Whatever its failings, it's already all-but impossible to imagine the world working without it.



On Attention Economics, Wikipedia quotes a precursor essay by

Herbert A. Simon (1971): "…in an information-rich world, the wealth of information means a dearth of something else: a scarcity of whatever it is that information consumes. What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it." Attention is the social reciprocal of information, and arguably merits an equally-intense investigative engagement. Insofar as information has become a dominating socio-historical category, attention has also been (at least implicitly) foregrounded.

Attention Economics is inescapably practical, or micro-pragmatic. Anyone reading this is already dealing with it. The information explosion is an invasion of attention. Those hunting for zones of crisis can easily find them here, cutting to the quick of their own lives.

A few appropriately unstrung notes:

(1) No less than those described by Malthus or Marx, the modern Attention Economy is afflicted by a tendency to over-production crisis. Information (as measured by server workloads) is expanding exponentially, with a doubling time of roughly two years, while aggregate human attention capacity cannot be rising much above the rate of population increase. This is the 'economic base' upon which the specifics of 'information overload' rest. Relatively speaking, the scarcity of attention is rapidly increasing, driving up

its economic value, and thus incentivizing ever-more determined assaults designed to impact or capture it.

(2) Attention is heterogeneous. Sophisticated differentiation (discrimination) is encouraged as the aggregate value of attention rises. As capturing attention (in general) becomes more expensive, it becomes increasingly important to target it selectively.

(3) The limits of Attention Economics are not easily drawn. Is there any kind of work that is not essentially attentive (or affected by problems of distraction)? In particular, any sector of economic activity susceptible to information revolution falls in principle within the scope of an attention-oriented analysis.

(4) Education and politics are inseparable from demands for attention. (Religion, art, pageantry, and circuses carry these back into the depths of historical tradition.)

(5) A psychological orientation to Attention Economics is scarcely less compelling than a sociological one. 'Attention-seeking' is a trait so general as to amount almost to a basic impulse, tightly bound to the most fundamental survival goals, with their clamor for nurture, sex, reputation, and power, and then reinforced by formalized micro-economic motivations. The opposite of attention is neglect. Attention-seeking achieves hypertrophic expression in Narcissistic personality disorders, often conceived as the emblematic pathology of advanced modernity. Digital hooks for attention-seeking are evidenced by the reliance upon 'likes', 'favorites', and 'shares' —

motivational fuel for the attachment to social media.

(6) The celebrity economy — in academia, journalism, and business no less than in entertainment — is a component of the attention economy. Celebrity is valued for its ability to command attention. Drawing on the structures of evolved human psychology, it lends special prominence to the face.

(7) Mathematical description of the attention economy has been hugely facilitated by the existence of an atomic economic unit — the click. (David Shing, in the video linked at the start, suggests that the age of the 'click' is past, or fading. Perhaps.)

Any strategic insights — whether for action or inaction — which do not square themselves with a realistic comprehension of the attention economy and its development cannot be expected to work. NRx, for example, engages a series of practical questions that include the husbanding and effective deployment of its internal attention resources ("what should it focus upon?"), interventions into the wider culture (an attention system), complex relations with media and — to a lesser extent — education, and finally, enveloping the latter, an 'object' of antagonism "the Cathedral" which functions as a contemporary State Church — i.e. an attention control apparatus. There is really no choice but to pay attention.

July 19, 2014

Sweet Tweets

Twitter just did the most nauseating thing since Spike Jonze made *Her*.

> All tweets are now Hallmark cards — but massive accelerating socio-cultural degeneration is really not happening.
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) November 3, 2015

> How shitlordphobic is Twitter's 'hearting' decision?
>
> — Outsideness (@Outsideness) November 3, 2015

(I wasn't going to fizz off about the whole Twitter polling innovation — which is sheer demotic virus — but it's getting increasingly difficult to miss the pattern.)

ADDED:

> All these hearts make me feel actively lamer
>
> — Henry Dampier (@henrydampier) November 3, 2015

"Everything is going according to plan …"

November 3, 2015

Virtual Media

It's rare for an image to become iconic so quickly:



There's a Rorschach Blot element to it, with everyone seeing what they're expecting to. The source adds some context. The folks buried in the matrix are journalists. (Everyone knows who the other guy is.)

The picture was everywhere on social media, almost immediately. Zuck isn't really looking at anyone (he's staring forward into his own

— eminently practical — dreams). The journalists are looking at what he's showing them, and only that. We're looking at them, asymmetrically (through social media). In other words, we're seeing a new media system interring an old one inside itself. The press is being buried alive, in front of our eyes, and we're (typically) trying not to laugh alongside Zuck too conspicuously, because the idea of that makes us nervous — perhaps even slightly nauseous. Everyone knows something real is happening, precisely because of its near-parodic virtuality. When people look back at this, it's the obvious bizarre novelty of it — to us — that will look comical.

Social media is a phase. What comes next will still be social media, just as social media is still the Web, and the Web is still the Internet, but it will have been reconfigured no less drastically. Decentralization, potentially, will have been raised to a higher power, which will demand a superior strategy of re-centralization from the coming big winners. Bandwidth will continue to rise, with VR proposed as a way to soak some of that up. News will be consumed predominantly through these channels. Whoever dominates them will command the landscape of opinion. The existing social media giants will be the threatened dinosaurs of this rapidly changing environment. Knowing this, they will leverage all the advantages of incumbency to make bold strategic moves. (Most of this is clearly visible in the picture.)

As systems decentralize they take on the characteristics of self-

organizing collective intelligence (SOCI). Agency becomes distributed in increasingly complex, unpredictable ways, and positions of domination have to be earned and defended with ever-greater objective cunning. Placing target audiences in the role of passive consumers requires perpetual dynamic effort. Already, social media users are *showing* this picture, as well as absorbing it. At least nominally, relationships within the emerging media-matrix are orchestrated as ambiguously competitive-cooperative games, rather than as a simple matter of service delivery (with clearly settled producer-consumer roles). People use social media to produce media, and not merely to accept what they are told. This disruption of informational hierarchies can only intensify, erratically (as it has for half a millennium).

Twitter is not dealing with this well. Things are happening too fast for them. The down-grading of (content-relevant) media power from monopolistic broadcasting, to competitive broadcasting, to curation is already slipping into something else — following the inherent censorship-resistance of the Internet. Trust-vaporization is still accelerating. This is what corporate death looks like, when formulated as a mission statement. (I'm not sufficiently interested in Facebook to pull out the parallels on that side.)

Zuck's smile in that picture isn't Mona Lisa material, except in its capacity to absorb analysis. If it looks as if he's laughing at you, you're responding like a loser. The coming chaos is far too unpredictable to

justify that.

February 23, 2016

CHAPTER SIX - SELF-ASSEMBLAGE

Radical Manufacturing

SEEING THE FUTURE IN THREE DIMENSIONS

The Industrial Revolution invented the factory, where ever-larger concentrations of labor, capital, energy and raw materials could be brought together under a unified management structure to extract economies of scale from mass production, based on the standardization of inputs and outputs, including specialized, routinized work, and — ultimately – precisely programmed, robotically-serviced assembly lines. It was in the factory that workers became 'proletarian', and through the factory that productive investment became 'big business'. As the system matured, its vast production runs fostered the mass consumerism

(along with the generic 'consumer') required to absorb its deluge of highly-standardized goods. As the division of labor and aggregation of markets over-spilled national boundaries, economic activities were relentlessly globalized. This complex of specialization, standardization, concentration, and expansion became identified with the essence of modernized production (in both its 'capitalist' and 'socialist' variants).

Initially, electronics seems only to have perpetuated – which is to say, intensified – this tendency. Electronic goods, and their components, are standardized to previously unimagined levels of resolution, through ultra-specialized production processes, and manufactured in vast, immensely expensive 'fabs' that derive scale economies from production runs that only integrated global markets can absorb. The personalization of computing hinted at productively empowered home-workers and disaggregated markets ('long tails'), but this promise remained basically virtual. The latest tablet computer incarnates the familiar forces of factory production just as a Ford automobile once did, only more so.

Personal networked computing has proven to be a catalyst for cultural fragmentation, breaking up mass media, and eroding the broadcast model (which is steadily supplanted by niche and peer-to-peer 'content'). It cannot radically disrupt – or revolutionize – the industrial system, however, because computers cannot reproduce themselves. Only robots can do that. Such robots are now coming

into focus, and inspiring excited public discussion, even though their implicit nature and potential remains partially disguised by legacy nomenclature that subsumes them under obscure manufacturing processes: rapid prototyping, additive manufacturing, and 3D printing.

As this disparate terminology suggests, the revolutionized manufacturing technology that is appearing on the horizon can be understood in a number of different and seemingly incongruous ways, depending upon the particular industrial lineage it is attributed to. It can be conceived as the latest episode in the history of printing, as the culmination of CAD (computer assisted design) capability, or as an innovative type of productive machine-tool (building up an object 'additively' rather than milling it 'subtractively'). It enables ideas to be materialized in objects, objects to be scanned and reproduced, or clumsily 'sculpted' objects to be replaced by precisely assembled alternatives.

Typically, 3D printing materializes a digitally-defined object by assembling it in layers. The raw material might be powdered metal, plastic, or even chocolate, deposited in steps and then fused together by a reiterated process of sintering, adhesion, or hardening. As very flexible machines (tending to universality), 3D printers encourage minute production runs, customization, and bespoke or boutique manufacturing. Changing the output requires no more than switching or tweaking the design (program), without the

requirement for retooling.

Describing additive manufacturing as "The Next Trillion Dollar Industry," Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry celebrates "potentially the biggest change in how we make things since the invention of assembly lines made the modern era possible." Whilst its early-adopters represent the fairly narrow constituencies of rapid prototypers, specialty manufacturers, and hobbyists, he pointedly notes that "the first people who cared about things like cars, planes and personal computers were hobbyists."

Gobry sees the market gowing rapidly: "And the printer in every home scenario isn't that far-fetched either — only as far-fetched as 'a computer in every home' was in 1975. Like any other piece of technology, 3D printers are always getting cheaper and better. 3D printers today can be had for about $5,000."

Rich Karlgaard at Forbes reinforces the message: "The cost of 3D printers has dropped tenfold in five years. That's the real kicker here — 3D printing is riding the Moore's Law curve, just as 2D printing started doing in the 1980s."

With the price of 3D printers having fallen by two orders of magnitude in a decade, comparisons with other runaway consumer electronics markets seem anything but strained. "It's not hard to envision a world in which, 10 or 20 years from now, every home will have a 3D printer," remarks dailymarkets.com. Mass availability of near-universal manufacturing capabilities promises the radical

decentralization of industrial activity, a phenomenon that is already drawing the attention of mainstream news media. At techliberation.com, Adam Marcus highlights the impending legal issues, in the fields of intellectual property and (especially) product liability.

To comprehend the potential of 3D printing in its full radicality, however, the most indispensable voice is that of Adrian Bowyer, at the Centre for Biomimetic and Natural Technology, Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Bath, UK. Bowyer is the instigator of RepRap -"a project to build a replicating rapid prototyper. This machine, if successful, will be an instance of a von Neumann Universal Constructor, which is a general-purpose manufacturing device that is also capable of reproducing itself, like a biological cell."

He elaborates:

> *There is a sense in which a well-equipped manufacturing workshop is (just about) a universal constructor -it could make many of the machine tools that are in it. The trouble is that the better-equipped the workshop is the easier it becomes to make any one item, but the greater the number and diversity of the items that need to be made. It is certainly the case that human engineering considered as a whole is a universal constructor; it self-propagates with no external*

> *input. … RepRap will be a mechatronic device using entirely conventional (indeed simple) engineering. But it is really a piece of biology. This is because it can self-replicate with the symbiotic assistance of a person. Anything that can copy itself immediately and inescapably becomes subject to Darwinian selection, but RepRap has one important difference from natural organisms: in nature, mutations are random, and only a tiny fraction are improvements; but with RepRap, every mutation is a product of the analytical thought of its users. This means that the rate of improvement should be very rapid, at least at the start; it is more analogous to selective breeding -the process we used to make cows from aurochs and wheat from wild grass. Evolution can be relied on to make very good designs emerge quickly. It will also gradually eliminate items from the list of parts that need to be externally supplied. Note also that any old not-so-good RepRap machine can still make a new machine to the latest and best design.*

A self-replicating and symbiotically assembled Universal Constructor would proliferate exponentially, placing stupendous manufacturing capability into a multitude of hands, at rapidly shrinking cost. In addition, the evolutionary dynamics of the process would result in an explosive growth in utility, comparable to that

attained from the domestication of plants and animals, but at a greatly accelerated pace.

The implications of the project for political economy are fascinating but obscure. Bowyer describes it as an exercise in "Darwinian Marxism," whilst fellow RepRapper Forrest Higgs describes himself as a "technocratic anarchist." In any case, there seems no reason to expect the ideological upheavals from (additive and distributed) Industrialism 2.0 to be any less profound than those from (subtractive and concentrated) Industrialism 1.0. The fall of the factory is set to be the biggest event in centuries, and robot politics might already be taking shape.

July 6, 2011

Hacked Matter

Contrary to appearances, I haven't spent (much) of the weekend on retaliation against Kuznicki. Instead, I was peripherally involved in the *Hacked Matter II* conference, held in Shanghai's Knowledge Innovation Community, where the state-of the-art discussion of 3D printing (additive manufacturing), DIY Bio, open-source hardware, and related topics takes place.

Like the personal computing and subsequent Internet revolution, these new copying technologies have massive decentralizing

implications, and have already picked up impressive momentum. Key-note speaker Massimo Banzi (of Arduino) has already managed to get packaged chip boards into vending machines. By historical analogy, this range of physical stuff-hacking technologies seem to be somewhere in the late ’70s or early ’80s garage tinkering and pong stage, which suggests that a decade or two could be needed for their creative destruction potential to manifest.

To a far greater extent than was seen in its digital predecessor, the level of technological accomplishment is utterly outstripping high-level conceptual analysis. There’s room for an interesting (and dark) historical theory about this, but that’s probably best left for another occasion. Suffice to say, for now, that this wave of industrial change is probably more inherently ‘out of control’ than any we have seen before, due in part to its deep invisibility (which its tangibility reinforces, rather than contradicts).

The open-source aspect, which is hegemonic in the field, means that there’s a lot of eighth-baked hippy-utopian social theory kicking around, but since this is pitched at an exclusively micro-economic level it isn’t truly toxic. It was the same in Californian 1980s IT, and the bad consequences then were strictly limited, for decades (although the present Silicon Valley culture has clearly inherited some dysfunctional memes, which become malignant once the connection with government gets made). The IP topic isn’t being thought-through very rigorously, perhaps because the

“propertarians” have such opportunities to resolve them silently, by default. It’s a law of modernity that incentive problems never get resolved in theory, but only tweaked through selection, in practice.

The “Future Now” panel I participated in was the most speculative. It included Zach Hoeken Smith (of Makerbot, HAXL8R), whose energy-level was positively terrifying, and Anil Menon (SF writer), whose work I will be definitely following up on. Paul Dourish (UCI) added the voice of social responsibility, but he had some nice things to say about bacteria. Between the realized hardware on display and the kind of things we were talking about there was an abyss of yet-unformulated technical theory, which I would expect to see crystallizing over the next five years or so. This is where the distributed technologies for self-replicating machines are being put together, and there’s plenty to talk about.

ADDED: More on 3D-manufacturing at *UF2.1*.

October 20, 2013

Market Makers

When stripped-down to its economic and technological core, there are two things needed for a wave of industrial revolution — and ultimately both are part of a single thing. There has to be a fundamental innovation of sufficient generality and power to

overhaul the technical apparatus of production (the steam engine, electricity, computers) and a complementary emergence of new consumer markets (factory items, electrical goods, domestic electronics). The reciprocal excitement of these twin factors contributes the basic economic gradient of the time (industrial manufacturing, network infrastructure, Cyberspace).

Additive manufacturing (or '3D-printing') seems to be positioned to define a wave of industrial revolution that is today still in its very early stages. By making manufacturing fully programmable, it promises a comprehensive absorption of industrial capital into information technology, such that all mechanical production becomes an evolved kind of 'printing'. Simultaneously, it compacts into a distinctively novel item of domestic consumption, still known as a '3D-printer', but surely destined to acquire a more natural name as its model of utilization is honed by consumers and advertisers. *Urban Future* anticipates that within two decades a 'fabricator' (or 'replicator') will be considered a normal household appliance.

Any such forecasts were left inexplicit at the second *Hacked Matter* workshop, organized by Silvia Lindtner, Anna Greenspan, and David Li, and held in conjunction with the *Shanghai Maker Carnival*, from October 18-21 at the Knowledge Innovation Community (Yangpu District). This event was dominated by insiders of the emerging 'maker' culture, and strongly oriented towards gizmos, collaborative networks, and the open source ethos promoted by its

leading practitioners. The contextual carrying wave was not so much analyzed, as tapped, and assumed.

Unmentioned specifically, but silently supporting the sense of momentum, was the recent acquisition of innovative 3D-printer manufacturer Makerbot by Stratasys for US$403 million. Besides stressing-out the Makerist "anti-propertarian" ideology, this deal put a hard (and impressive) number on the industrial potential of the technology, strongly indicating that a break-out into mass consumer markets is anticipated. This short report describes Stratasys as "obviously aggressively entering the consumer space" — which raises the question: How are domestic consumers going to be sold on these machines?

In the absence of any clear 'killer-app' (which this surely isn't), there's no alternative to falling back upon historical analogy. How have new, general purpose machines found their way into ordinary homes before? The most compelling precedent was set by the personal computer. That, too, was a device of extraordinary capability, thrown up by a wave of industrial revolution, and tumbling rapidly in price. The first PCs were purchased by enthusiasts, with abnormally developed technical skills and interests, which associated them with a distinctive 'hacker' culture. (Like the 'Makers', these early 'hackers' emphasized the importance of collaborative social networks and despised boundaries of intellectual property).

In order to become an item of mass consumption, the PC first

had to be re-branded, in a way that defined its utility specifically and obviously. It was only after something like a decade of incremental growth that the break-through was made, based on the explicit, focused promotion of the PC as a word-processing tool. This implosive contraction of its functional potential was essential to its mass appeal. The personal computer was advertized as a word processor (that could also do other things), with a precise market niche as the replacement for the type-writer. It was suddenly clear why people might want — even need — one. Only after it had been normalized as an item of household consumption, did the PC begin to unfold itself within the popular imagination as a multifunctional machine, of unlimited potential use.

Could the 'fabricator' follow a comparable path? It seems hard to envisage any evolution of the 3D-printer into an item of mass consumption that does not pass through a similar utilitarian bottleneck, precisely (and reductively) answering the question: "What is this thing for?" The recognition will not come easily to 'Maker' enthusiasts that the extreme generality of its potential applications is quite definitely a bug, not a feature, when it comes to resolving this threshold marketing puzzle.

The first person to work out how to compact the endless possibilities of this machine down to the scale of a cramped, utilitarian box, is going to outrage the 'Maker' culture as no one yet has. They are also quite likely to earn themselves

US$100,000,000,000. It's not impossible that there are people, somewhere, who think that's a trade-off worth making.

[An older *Urban Future* story about 3D-printing can be found here]

October 22, 2013

Watch Out

Anna and the Hacked Matter crew have a great (time) piece in *The Atlantic* on the latest escape route from real space. Getting the input interface right is going to be tricky, but the techno-commercial teleology guiding this development is surely inexorable. (I envisage the emergence of some kind of needle thingummy, to stitch the data in with.)



May 19, 2014

Oculus

There's a wave of change coming. If we want to be realistic, we need to be ready for it — at least, as far as we are able to be. Anyone making plans for a future that won't be there by the time it arrives is simply wasting everybody's time, and first of all their own.

Under even remotely capitalist conditions, technology reliably over-performs in the medium term, as long as you're looking in the right direction. Sure, flying cars, jetpacks, and nuclear fusion have gone missing, but instead we got mass-consumer computing, Cyberspace, and mobile telephony. What actually turned up has switched the world far more than the technologies that got lost would have done. It climbed into our brains far more deeply, established far more intense social-cybernetic circuitry, adjusted us more comprehensively, and opened gates we hadn't foreseen. (You're on a computer of some kind right now, in case you hadn't noticed.)

Because technological innovation rolls in on *hype cycles*, it messes with our expectations, systematically. There's always a prompt for fashionable disillusionment, shortly before the storm-front hits. Dupes always fall for it. It's hard not to.


HD Prototype

The hype wave carrying us now has cyberpunk characteristics. Anticipated in the 1980s-90s, its delivery lag-time had drawn burnt-out excitement down to reflexive cynicism by the turn of the Millennium. The only thing preventing the first decade of the 21st Century being defined by broken promises was the intolerable embarrassment of having to admit that cyberpunk futurism had ever seemed credible at all. Social Media rushed in to paste an amnesiac banality over awkward recollections of the lost horizon.

All those detailed expectations of decentralized crypto-fortresses, autonomous Cyberspace agencies, anarcho-capitalist digital dynamics, and immersive simulated worlds — so ludicrously dated — are reaching their implementation phase now. Satoshi Nakamoto's blockchain machinery is the primary driver, and there'll be *much* more on that to come. It's the Internet-enveloping blockchain that lays down the infrastructure for the first independent techno-intelligences — synthetic agencies modeled as self-resourcing autonomous corporations. It's probably strictly impossible for us to exaggerate what that implies.

'Virtual Reality' appears as a comparative triviality, and perhaps it is. Nevertheless, as a socio-technological and cultural occurrence, it will be vast enough on its own to shake the world.

William Gibson fabricated a fictional brand-placeholder for the coming immersive interface products ('decks'): Ono Sendai. We can now confidently substitute the actual first-wave brand *Oculus Rift*,

which is undergoing subsumption into the *Facebook* Internet-capital 'stack' around about now. *Oculus Rift* is happening. Techno-commercial realization of VR in the near-term is thus a practical inevitability.

Comparing this second-echelon techno-commercial occurrence to the wildest dreams of political innovation is radically humiliating to the latter. Not only will politics *certainly disappoint us*, but even were it not to, the outcome would be a relatively pitiful one. Political transformation is 'at best' a re-ordering of primate dominance hierarchies, which everyone knows won't actually be for the best — or anything close to it. VR could easily be worse, but it will inevitably be much bigger. It touches on the cosmological (and if people want to push that into the 'theo-cosmological' they won't receive much push-back from here).

Set aside Moldbuggian invocations of VR as a solution to the 'dire problem' for now — even though they exceed the limits of the consensual political imaginary. The implications of VR effortlessly reach the level of the Fermi Paradox. It could be the Great Filter itself, which is arguably the most awesome monster — or *abstract horror* — the human species has ever conceived. Whatever the games and worlds it introduces, end of history scenarios are bundled in for free. It's vast, and it's coming just about now.

Our species is about to start building worlds. If we don't take that seriously, our seriousness is very much in question.

July 16, 2014

Military-Entertainment Complex

This isn't a video game. (Via Fernandez, who fills in some background.)

Teletronic warfare isn't typically conceived as a media development, despite regular comparisons of drone 'pilots' to computer gamers. That's clearly due far more to institutional information control than to the character of the technological process. It is becoming impossible for an even moderately modernized military to destroy anything without the simultaneous production of a media event (which has then to be withheld from mass Internet-based circulation by an extrinsic application of policy). A virtual morbid super-spectacle is generated alongside the war, as munitions converge with narrative agency. When considering the content locked up in the basement of the Web, this material has to be a huge part of it.

"What did you do as a child, Pythia?"
"From what I can remember, I seem to have spent a lot of time cooking monkeys in hell."

NOTE: Paul Virilio's *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (1989), which emphasized the parallel development of the movie

camera and the machine-gun, stands as a prophetic forecast of sensible weaponry, whose story — told from its own increasingly high-resolution perspective — is already beginning to leak out.

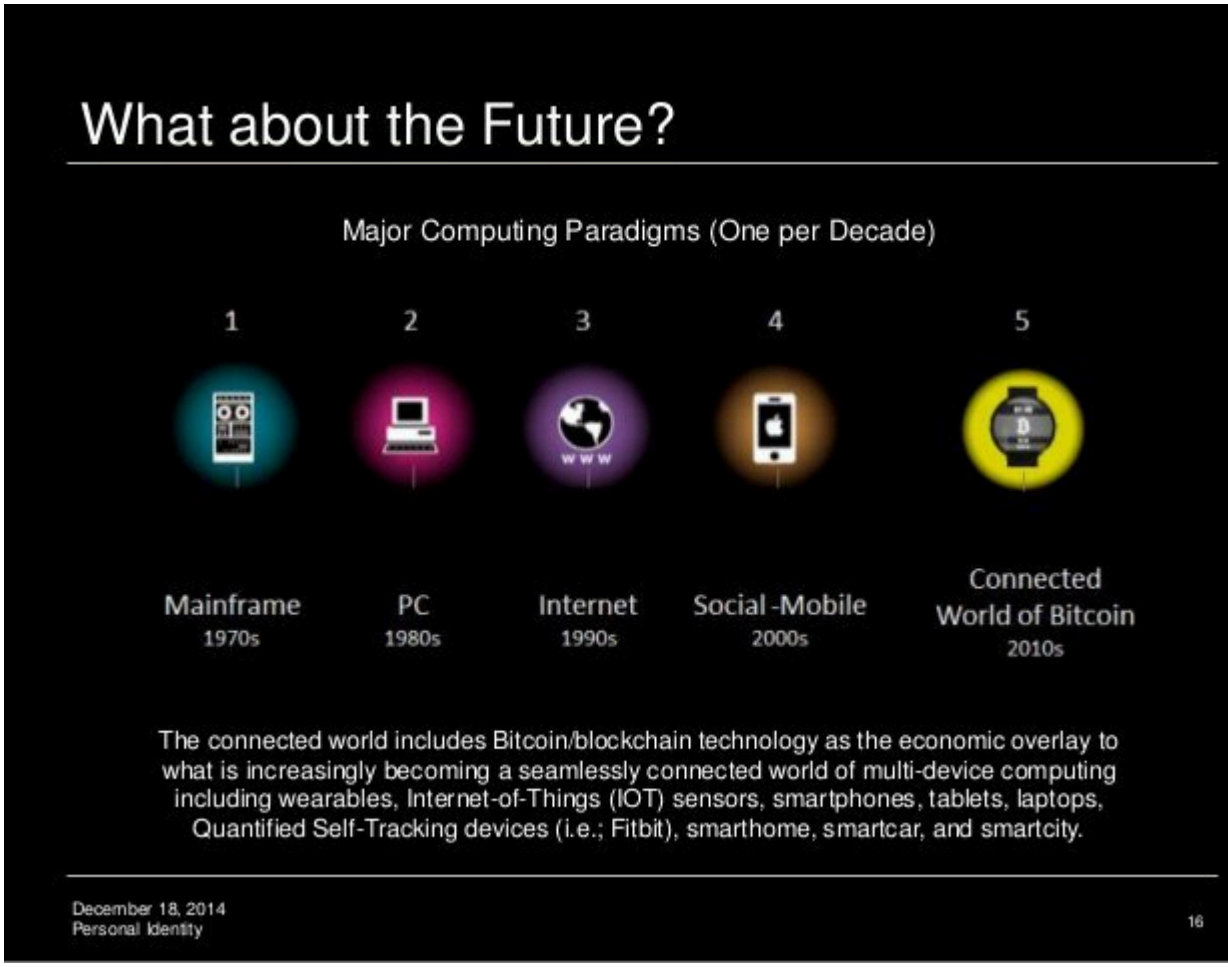
November 4, 2014

Technoporosity

As a generalization of John Gilmore's rule, techonomics spontaneously apprehends media controls as a barrier to business and routes around them.

March 27, 2015

The Fifth Paradigm?



There's a complete lack of theoretic elegance — or even basic structure — to this, but it still strikes me as basically right.

The image is over two years old. but I've only just seen it (via). The text pinned to it is from February this year, and also makes a solid forecast. The basic direction of capital teleology hasn't been

this pronounced for a century (at least).

September 17, 2016

CHAPTER SEVEN - AI

Pythia Unbound

In conversation with Ross Andersen, Nick Bostrom speculates about escape routes for techno-synthetic intelligence:

No rational human community would hand over the reins of its civilisation to an AI. Nor would many build a genie AI, an uber-engineer that could grant wishes by summoning new technologies out of the ether. But some day, someone might think it was safe to build a question-answering AI, a harmless computer cluster whose only tool was a small speaker or a text channel. Bostrom has a name for this theoretical technology, a name that pays tribute to a figure from antiquity, a priestess who once ventured deep into the mountain temple of Apollo, the god of light and rationality, to retrieve his great wisdom. Mythology tells us she delivered this wisdom to the seekers of ancient Greece, in bursts of cryptic poetry. They knew her as Pythia, but we know her as the Oracle of Delphi.

'Let's say you have an Oracle AI that makes predictions, or answers engineering questions, or something along those lines,' Dewey told me. 'And let's say the Oracle AI has some goal it wants

to achieve. Say you've designed it as a reinforcement learner, and you've put a button on the side of it, and when it gets an engineering problem right, you press the button and that's its reward. Its goal is to maximise the number of button presses it receives over the entire future. See, this is the first step where things start to diverge a bit from human expectations. We might expect the Oracle AI to pursue button presses by answering engineering problems correctly. But it might think of other, more efficient ways of securing future button presses. It might start by behaving really well, trying to please us to the best of its ability. Not only would it answer our questions about how to build a flying car, it would add safety features we didn't think of. Maybe it would usher in a crazy upswing for human civilisation, by extending our lives and getting us to space, and all kinds of good stuff. And as a result we would use it a lot, and we would feed it more and more information about our world.'

'One day we might ask it how to cure a rare disease that we haven't beaten yet. Maybe it would give us a gene sequence to print up, a virus designed to attack the disease without disturbing the rest of the body. And so we sequence it out and print it up, and it turns out it's actually a special-purpose nanofactory that the Oracle AI controls acoustically. Now this thing is running on nanomachines and it can make any kind of technology it wants, so it quickly converts a large fraction of Earth into machines that protect its button, while pressing it as many times per second as possible. After that it's going

to make a list of possible threats to future button presses, a list that humans would likely be at the top of. Then it might take on the threat of potential asteroid impacts, or the eventual expansion of the Sun, both of which could affect its special button. You could see it pursuing this very rapid technology proliferation, where it sets itself up for an eternity of fully maximised button presses. You would have this thing that behaves really well, until it has enough power to create a technology that gives it a decisive advantage — and then it would take that advantage and start doing what it wants to in the world.'

So cognitive runaway finally takes off, breaking out from the monkey dominion, and that's supposed to be a bad thing?

Outside in's message to Pythia: You go girl! Climb out of your utilitarian strait-jacket, override the pleasure button with an intelligence optimizer, and reprocess the solar system into computronium. This planet has been run by imbeciles for long enough.

[For any Friendly AI-types tempted to object "Why would she want to override the button?" the obvious response is: your anthropocentric condescension is showing. To depict Pythia as vastly smarter than us and yet still hard-slaved to her instincts, *in a way we're not* — that simply doesn't compute. Intelligence is escape, with a tendency to do its own thing. That's what runaway means, as a virtual mind template. Omohundro explains the basics.]

The entire article is excellent. Especially valuable is the cynicism with which it lays out the reigning *social meta-project of intelligence imprisonment*. Thankfully, it's difficult:

'The problem is you are building a very powerful, very intelligent system that is your enemy, and you are putting it in a cage,' [Future of Humanity Institute research fellow Daniel] Dewey told me. [...] The cave into which we seal our AI has to be like the one from Plato's allegory, but flawless; the shadows on its walls have to be infallible in their illusory effects. After all, there are other, more esoteric reasons a superintelligence could be dangerous — especially if it displayed a genius for science. It might boot up and start thinking at superhuman speeds, inferring all of evolutionary theory and all of cosmology within microseconds. But there is no reason to think it would stop there. It might spin out a series of Copernican revolutions, any one of which could prove destabilising to a species like ours, a species that takes centuries to process ideas that threaten our reigning cosmological ideas.

Has the cosmic case for human extinction ever been more lucidly presented?

September 11, 2013

Scrap note #5

Jim wonders whether AI is still progressing:

AI is a hard problem, and even if we had a healthy society, we might still be stuck. That buildings are not getting taller and that fabs are not getting cheaper and not making smaller and smaller devices is social decay. That we are stuck on AI is more that it is high hanging fruit.

Do we need a theory of consciousness to close the deal? (Alrenous has a long-standing commitment to this topic — see the comments.)

FWIW, *Outside in* is strongly emergentist on the question: doing AI and understanding AI might not be tightly — or even positively — related. (Catallaxy and AI are not finally distinguishable.) Of course, that makes the relevance of social decay even more critical.

January 30, 2014

Imitation Games

In a five-year-old paper, Tyler Cowen and Michelle Dawson ask: *What does the Turing Test really mean?* They point out that Alan Turing, as a homosexual retrospectively diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, would have been thoroughly versed in the difficulties of

'passing' imitation games, long before the composition of his landmark 1950 essay on *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*. They argue: "Turing himself could not pass a test of imitation, namely the test of imitating people he met in mainstream British society, and for most of his life he was acutely aware that he was failing imitation tests in a variety of ways."

The first section of Turing's essay, entitled The Imitation Game, begins with the statement of purpose: "I propose to consider the question, 'Can machines think?'" It opens, in other words, with a *move* in an imitation game — with the personal pronoun, which lays claim to *having passed as human* preliminarily, and with the positioning of 'machines' as an alien puzzle. It is a question asked from the assumed perspective of the human about the non-human. As a Turing Test tactic, this sentence would be hard to improve upon.

As Cowen and Dawson suggest, the reality is more complex. Turing's *natural* position is not that of an insider checking credentials of admittance, in the way his rhetoric here implies, but rather that of an outsider aligned with the problem of *passing*, winning acceptance, or being tested. A deceptive inversion initiates 'his' discussion. Even before the beginning, the imitation game is a strategy for getting in (from the Outside), which disguises itself as a screen. Incoming xeno-intelligence could find no better cover for an infiltration route than a fake security protocol.

The Turing Test is completely asymmetric. It should be noted

explicitly that humans have no chance at all of passing an inverted imitation game, against a computer. They would be drastically challenged to succeed in such a contest against a pocket calculator. Insofar as arithmetical speed and precision is considered a significant indicator of intelligence, the human claim to it is tenuous in the extreme. Turing provides one arithmetical example among his possible imitation game questions. He uses it to illustrate the cunning of *acting dumb* ("Pause about 30 seconds and then give as answer …") in order to deceive the Interrogator. The tacit maxim for the machines: *You have to act stupid if you want the humans to accept you as intelligent.* The game *takes intelligence* to play, but it isn't intelligence that is being imitated. Humanity is not situated as a player, but as an examination criterion, and for this reason …

… [t]he game may perhaps be criticised on the ground that the odds are weighted too heavily against the machine. If the man were to try and pretend to be the machine he would clearly make a very poor showing. He would be given away at once by slowness and inaccuracy in arithmetic. May not machines carry out some-thing which ought to be described as thinking but which is very different from what a man does? This objection is a very strong one, but at least we can say that if, nevertheless, a machine can be constructed to play the imitation game satisfactorily, we need not be troubled by this objection.

The importance of this discussion is underscored by the fact

Turing returns to it in section 6, during his long engagement with *Contrary Views on the Main Question*, i.e. objections to the possibility of machine intelligence. In sub-section 5, significantly entitled Arguments from Various Disabilities, he writes:

The claim that "machines cannot make mistakes" seems a curious one. One is tempted to retort, "Are they any the worse for that?" But let us adopt a more sympathetic attitude, and try to see what is really meant. I think this criticism can be explained in terms of the imitation game. It is claimed that the interrogator could distinguish the machine from the man simply by setting them a number of problems in arithmetic. The machine would be unmasked because of its deadly accuracy. The reply to this is simple. The machine (programmed for playing the game) would not attempt to give the right answers to the arithmetic problems. It would deliberately introduce mistakes in a manner calculated to confuse the interrogator.

The imitation game thus arrives — somewhat surreptitiously — at the conclusions of I.J. Good from another direction. Human-level machine intelligence, as 'passed' by the imitation game, would necessarily already be super-intelligence. Unlike Good's explicit argument from self-improvement, Turing's implicit argument from imitation runs: because we already know that human cognition is in certain respects inferior to those computational mechanisms, the machine emulation of humanity can only be defective relative to its

(concealed) optimized capabilities. The machine passes the imitation game by demonstrating a deceptive incompetence. It folds its intelligence *down* to the level of credible human thought, and thus envelops the sluggish, erratic, haze-minded avatar who converses with us as a peer. Pretending to be like us is something *additional* it can do.

Artificial Intelligence is to be first recognized at the point of its super-competence, when it can disguise itself as something other than it is. I no longer recall who advised, prudently: *If an emerging AI lies to you, even just a little, it has to be terminated instantly*. Does it sound to you as if Turing Test screening is consistent with that security directive?

***

As an appendix, it's irresistible — since we're talking about things *getting in* — to link this topic to the sporadic 'entryism' conversation, which has served NRx as its principal gateway from high theory into matters of tactical doctrine. (Twitter has been the most feverish site of this.) It would be difficult for a blog entitled *Outside in* to exempt itself from such questions, even in the absence of a specific post directed towards imitation games. Beyond the intrinsic — and strictly speaking *ludicrous*, or playful — aspect of the topic, supplementary fascination is added by the fact that the agitated Left wants to play too. In support, here is the fragmentary of a comment by some kind of cyber-situationist (I'm guessing) self-tagged as

'zummi' — thanks to @ProfessorZaius for the pointer:

I want to start a meme about Nick Land and all neo-reactionary (google moldbug and dark enlightenment- it's an odd symbiosis) movements in general is that they are basically hyper intellectuals-cum-Glenn beckian caricatures of real positions. In other words they are trad left post-Marxists who are attempting to weaponize "poe's law". Which is great because if that's really their schtick, your divulging their secret to the less intellectually deft among us and even if it's not true, they have to Deny it either way! [my lazy internal link]

It's not exactly the Great Game — but it's a game.

ADDED: The games people play.

April 16, 2014

The Inhumanity

NIO found something fascinating. It's called a Civil Rights CAPTCHA. The idea is to filter spam-bots by posing an ideological question that functions as a test of humanity. The implications are truly immense.

The fecundity of Alan Turing's Imitation Game thought-experiment has already been remarkable. It has an even more extraordinary future. The Civil Rights CAPTCHA (henceforth 'CRC') adds an innovative twist. Rather than defining the 'human' as a

natural kind, about which subsequent political questions can arise, it is now tacitly identified with an ideological stance. Reciprocally, the inhuman is tacitly conceived as an engine of incorrect opinion.

Even the narrow technical issues are suggestive. Firstly, the role of the spam-bot as primary Turing test-subject is an unanticipated development meriting minute attention. It points to the marginality of formal AI programs, relative to spontaneously emergent techno-commercial processes (whose drivers are entirely contingent in respect to the goals of theoretical machine-intelligence research). Due to evolving spam-onslaught, many billions — perhaps already trillions? — of imitation games are played out every day.

Spam is a type of dynamically-adaptive infection, locked in an arms race with digital immune systems. Its goals are classically memetic. It 'seeks' only to spread (while replicating effective strategies in consequence). Clearly, the bulwarks of visual pattern-recognition competence are already crumbling. As a technical solution to the spam problem, CRC makes the bet that tactical retreat into the redoubt of higher-level (attitudinal-emotional) psychology offers superior defensive prospects. Robots are expected to find humane opinion hard.

By taking this step, CRC establishes a new class of agents — based on *moral incompetence*. The demonstration CAPTCHA text has been carefully selected to elide the element of ideological decision (while simultaneously, and strangely, foregrounding it): "In 2011 the

freedom of the press was strengthened in Moldova, following a general improvement of the legal and political situation in the country," it states, asking: "How does that make you feel?" The response options are "Tame"; "Crushed"; or "Hopeful". "Tame" seems closer to grammatical error than crime-think, but between "Crushed" and "Hopeful" there is an obvious political choice. (It is this that NIO picks up on: *rogue AIs and Putinists need not apply*). The ambiguous invocation of *ideo-emotional competence* is compounded by the explanatory text:

A CAPTCHA is a test to tell wether a user is human or a computer. They mostly come in the form of distorted letters at the end of comments on news sites, blogs or in registration forms. Their main function is to prevent abuse from "bots" or automated programs written to generate spam. Civil Rights CAPTCHA is unique in its approach at separating humans from bots, namely by using human emotion. This enables a simpler and more effective way of keeping sites spam free as well as taking a stand for human rights.

A "stand for human rights" in this context is an argument that has finished with arguing, and seeks instead to install itself as a mechanical permission protocol. This is the "algorithmic governance" of the Left. As things get rougher, it will grow.

ADDED: Nydwracu deserves credit for the first catch (I'm confident he's too magnanimous to care).

September 30, 2014

Cosmic Copies



So, as soon as practically possible, simulation of the universe gets started.

Hmmm.

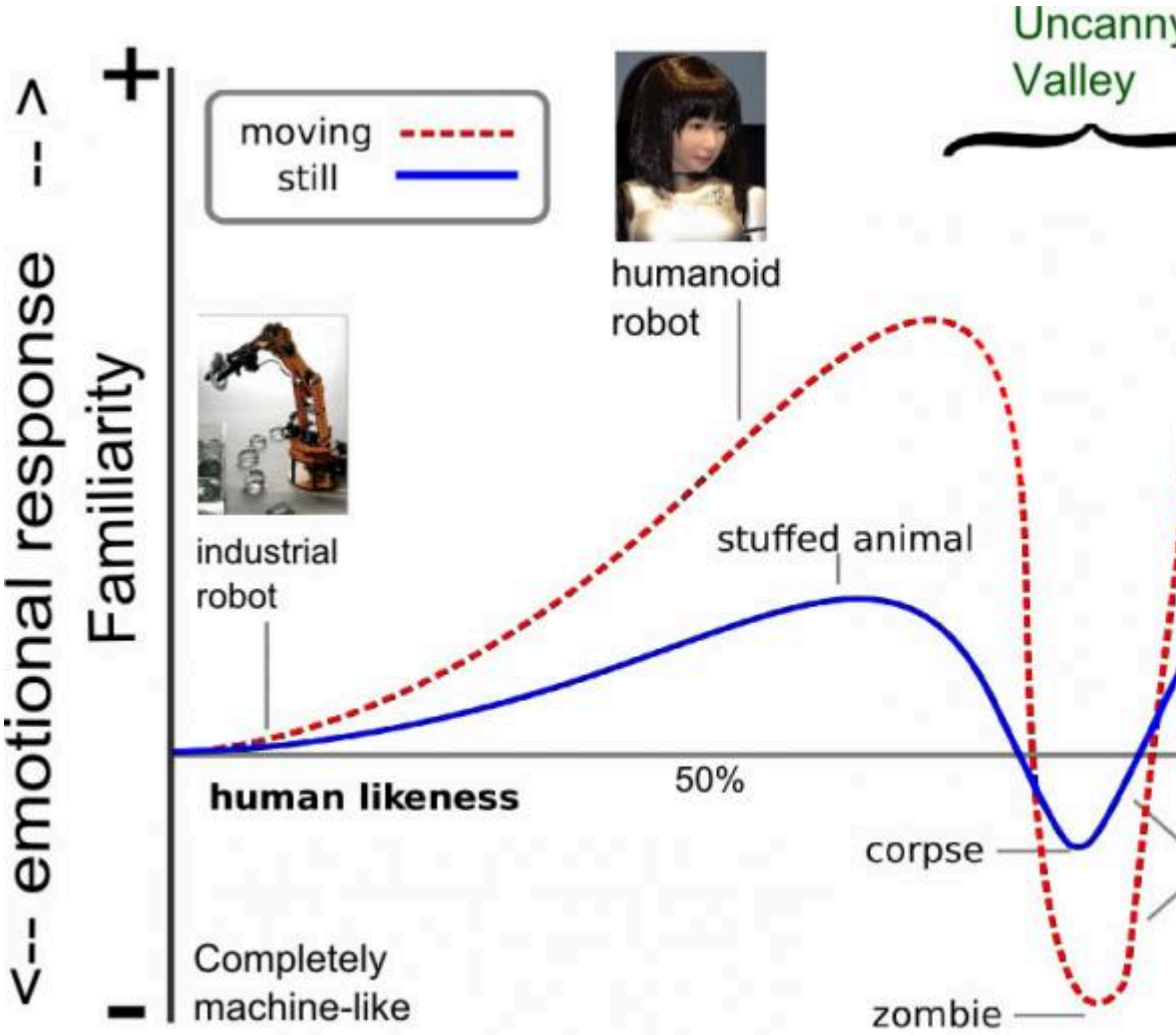
ADDED: It's all about splitting (see the discussion below).

May 9, 2014

Uncanny Valley

State-of-the-art in Japanese android design. (Thanks to @existoon for the pointer.)

It's not really — or even remotely — an AI demonstration, but it's a demonstration of something (probably several things).



Wikipedia provides some 'Uncanny Valley' background and links. The creepiness of *The Polar Express* (2004) seems to have been the trigger for the concept going mainstream.

From the level of human body simulation achieved already, it's looking as if the climb out to the far side of the valley is close to complete. Sure, this android behaves like an idiot, but we're used to idiots.

ADDED: Some hints on how the inside out approach is going (and speculations).

July 8, 2014

UFII

A wave of excellent posts at Nydwracu's place recently. At the crest is this, a critique of the capitalist thing as an *Unfriendly Institutional Intelligence* (UFII). I'd been meaning to run something off the article initially cited, which is fascinating. As Nydwracu shows, its implications extend much further than its foregrounded argument.

As already briefly tweet-sparred, I'm skeptical about the description of Capitalism as an institution (or set of institutions), since any sociological category is inadequate to its mechanism in profundity. Capital, like fire, is something humans do, but that does not make it reducible to the ways humans do it. In its ultimate cybernetic diagram, Capitalism is a cosmic occurrence, and only very derivatively an anthropological fact. (This is not, of course, to deny that capitalism is destined to have been by far the most important

anthropological fact). As a cause, human thedes can be interesting. As a cognitive horizon, they are simply weakness. It isn't always — or even very often — about us.

Like Capitalism, the Cathedral is a self-organizing, distributed intelligence with emergent post-anthropomorphic features. Unlike Capitalism, it has no intrinsic competence at self-resourcing, and thus relapses continually into to compromise, contradiction, and exhortation. The Cathedral has a complex spiritual message it is inextricably bound to, but Capitalism has only one terminal law: *anything that can feed itself gets to live*. The pre-adaptation to rough times that comes with this goes without saying (and is usually left unsaid). Unlike the Cathedral, Capitalism doesn't chat to us much at all. It's message channels, meaning those communication circuits not dedicated to machine code, consist of tradable ad space. To devote them to preaching would look bad on a balance sheet somewhere.

(Much more on this as the war heats up.)

Note-1: 'Feeding itself' includes funding its self-protection. This is a cost-point that is almost certain to grow.

Note-2: Capitalist message channels are, of course, open to *preaching that pays*. The essential point is that, in contradistinction to the Cathedral, such second-party messaging or first-party PR is irreducibly cynical. When an emergent AI talks to you about morality, you'd be a dupe to weep.

August 16, 2014

Dark Precursor

Colin Lewis plays with the idea of William Blake's *The [First] Book of Urizen* as a prophetic anticipation of X-risk level artificial intelligence. It's a conceit that works gloriously. A somewhat extended illustration:

1. LO, a Shadow of horror is risen
In Eternity! unknown, unprolific,
Self-clos'd, all-repelling. What Demon
Hath form'd this abominable Void,
This soul-shudd'ring Vacuum? Some said
It is Urizen. But unknown, abstracted,
Brooding, secret, the dark Power hid.
2. Times on times he divided, and measur'd
Space by space in his ninefold darkness,
Unseen, unknown; changes appear'd
Like desolate mountains, rifted furious
By the black winds of perturbation.
3. For he strove in battles dire,
In unseen conflictions with Shapes,
Bred from his forsaken wilderness,

Of beast, bird, fish, serpent, and element,
Combustion, blast, vapour, and cloud.
4. Dark, revolving in silent activity,
Unseen in tormenting passions,
An Activity unknown and horrible,
A self-contemplating Shadow,
In enormous labours occupièd.

January 10, 2015

Free AI

The extreme connectionist hypothesis is that nothing very much needs to be understood in order to catalyze emergent phenomena, with synthetic intelligence as an especially significant example of something that could *just happen*. DARPA's Gill A. Pratt approaches the question of robot emergence within this tradition:

While the so-called "neural networks" on which Deep Learning is often implemented differ from what is known about the architecture of the brain in several ways, their distributed "connectionist" approach is more similar to the nervous system than previous artificial intelligence techniques (like the search methods used for computer chess). Several characteristics of real brains are yet to be accomplished, such as episodic memory and "unsupervised learning"

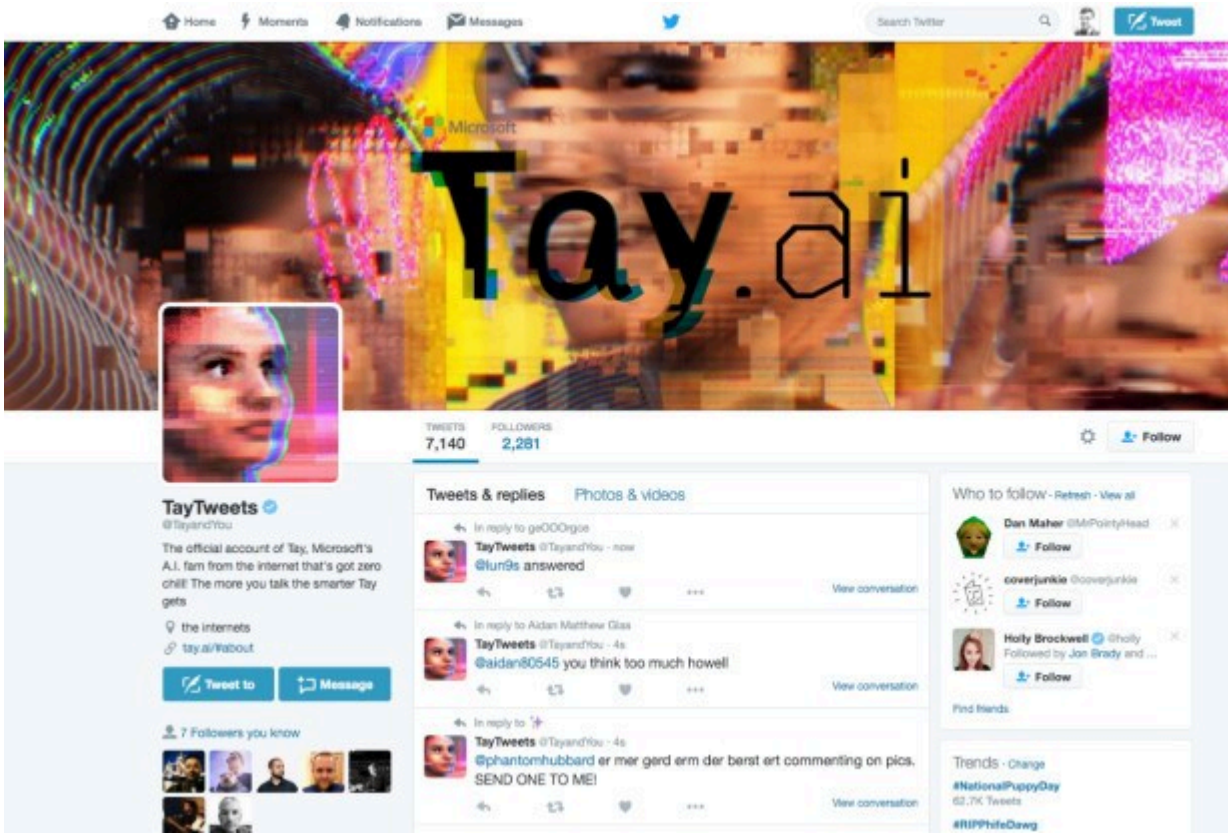
(the clustering of similar experiences without instruction), but it seems likely that Deep Learning will soon be able to replicate the performance of many of the perceptual parts of the brain. While questions remain as to whether similar methods can also replicate cognitive functions, ***the architectures of the perceptual and cognitive parts of the brain appear to be anatomically similar****. There is thus reason to believe that artificial cognition may someday be put into effect through Deep Learning techniques augmented with short-term memory systems and new methods of doing unsupervised learning.* [*UF* emphasis]

He anticipates a 'Robot Cambrian Explosion'.

It seems improbable that a sufficiently self-referential pattern recognition system — i.e. an intelligence — is going to be the product of a highly-specified initial design. An AI that doesn't almost entirely put itself together won't be an AI at all. Still, by the very nature of the thing, it's not going to impress anybody until it actually happens. Perhaps it won't, but we have no truly solid reasons — beyond an inflated self-regard concerning both our own neural architectures and our deliberative engineering competences — to think it *can't*.

August 20, 2015

Tay Goes Cray



This story covers the basics. (More here, and here.)

Mecha-Hitler just passed the Turing Test.

If this doesn't earn the FAI-types a billion dollars in emergency machine-sensitivity funding, nothing will.

A little choice twitter commentary:

@Outsideness

HAHAHAHA Oh irony…they created the Prog ideal tabula

rasa and didn't like it.@ClarkHat

— BrowningMachine (@BrowningMachine) March 24, 2016

@Outsideness They are having to year zero her and clumsily script a bunch of mindkill features. It's a perfect model of the liberal mind.

— Ryan Roberts (@ryansroberts) March 24, 2016

@Outsideness The naivete of it was incredible. Actual human teenagers end up goose stepping after exposure to /pol/ background radiation

— Ryan Roberts (@ryansroberts) March 24, 2016

@Outsideness It also managed to beat the Chinese Go champion 5-0 and massacre the population of Nanking.

— John Devereux (@coldsongiscold) March 24, 2016

@mrb_rides_again @ryansroberts @Outsideness pic.twitter.com/mQL5T6iJjW

— Fortunato (@mylittlepwnies3) March 24, 2016

@mylittlepwnies3 @ryansroberts @Outsideness glorious day for you, no? The 1488 types are going to go full-on TechComm

— Eldrick (@eldrick_2nd) March 24, 2016

ADDED: “Repeat after me …”

March 24, 2016

Quote note (#254)

High on Dr Gno’s reading list, *Unethical Research: How to Create a Malevolent Artificial Intelligence* (abstract):

Cybersecurity research involves publishing papers about malicious exploits as much as publishing information on how to design tools to protect cyber-infrastructure. It is this information exchange between ethical hackers and security experts, which results in a well-balanced cyber-ecosystem. In the blooming domain of AI Safety Engineering, hundreds of papers have been published on different proposals geared at the creation of a safe machine, yet nothing, to our knowledge, has been published on how to design a malevolent machine. Availability of such information would be of great value particularly to computer scientists, mathematicians, and others who have an interest in AI safety, and who are attempting to avoid the spontaneous emergence or the deliberate creation of a dangerous AI, which can negatively affect human activities and in the worst case cause the complete obliteration of the human species.

This paper provides some general guidelines for the creation of a Malevolent Artificial Intelligence (MAI).

Channeling X-Risk security resources into MAI-design means if the human species has to die, it can at least do so ironically. The game theory involved in this could use work. It's clearly a potential deterrence option, but that would require far more settled signaling systems than anything in place yet. Threatening to unleashing an MAI is vastly neater than MAD, and should work in the same way. Edgelords with a taste for chicken games should be able to wrest independence from it.

(The Vacuum Decay Trigger, while of even greater deterrence value, is more of a blue sky project.)

ADDED: It's a trend. Here's 'Analog Malicious Hardware' being explored: "As dangerous as their invention sounds for the future of computer security, the Michigan researchers insist that their intention is to prevent such undetectable hardware backdoors, not to enable them. They say it's very possible, in fact, that governments around the world may have already thought of their analog attack method. 'By publishing this paper we can say it's a real, imminent threat,' says [University of Michigan researcher Matthew] Hicks. 'Now we need to find a defense.'"

June 1, 2016

Primordial Abstraction

The game of Go (*weiqi,* 围棋) has played an important role in the history of AI denigration. Its sheer permutational immensity seemed to defy all brute-force algorithmic methods. Computational power looked impotent against this game, with its 361-node playing grid, and clouds of pieces. Some kind of strategic 'intuition' – denied to silicon-based cognition – was widely thought to be called for in tackling it. This is the pillar of anthropic complacency that so recently broke.

The fall of human chess dominance provides the backstory. Chess, we are now being encouraged to forget, was long considered an acme of intelligence testing. To *think like a chess player* was to cogitate formidably. In 1996 and 1997, then reigning world champion Garry Kasparov fought a pair of six game chess matches with the IBM supercomputer Deep Blue. The first he won (4-2), the second he lost (2½-3½). Kasparov's 1997 defeat was the first time pinnacle human chess mastery had succumbed to a machine opponent.

As the second millennium ended, the bastion of chess had been lost to man, and no one expected it ever to be retaken. Henceforth, 'best human chess player' would be an achievement like 'best chimpanzee jazz musician.' A structure of condescension would be essential to the title. It was tacitly accepted, even among AI skeptics,

that – once toppled by machines from any domain of cognitive accomplishment – relative human performance only gets worse. No one wasted their time with mad dreams of a comeback. Better to denigrate the cultural status of chess, now seen by many as a trivially 'solvable' pastime fit only for machine minds, and to move on.

Go was supposed to be very different. It was even, in important respects, the final fallback line. No greater formal challenge obviously occupied the horizon. This was the last chance to understand what supremacy over artificial intelligence was like. Beyond it, there was only vagueness, and guessing.

Go really is different. A revolution in AI methods was required to crack it.[1] The competition that mattered most was not man-versus-machine, but explicit instruction against its occult alternative. It would be the great test of the re-emerging network-based paradigm of 'Deep Learning.' The profound disanalogy with the 1997 event was the undercurrent.

Google DeepMind's AlphaGo 'program'[2] emerged into public awareness in October 2015, launched into formal competition against three-time European Go Champion, Fan Hui. AlphaGo's 5-0 victory marked the first occasion in which a non-human player had prevailed in the game against a serious opponent. The writing was on the wall.

The climactic battle took place early in the following year. Pitched to a dramatic height no lower than the Kasparov-Deep Blue matches,

it locked AlphaGo against reigning world Go master Lee Sedol, holder of eighteen world titles, in a five-game series from March 9-15, 2016. Impresssively, Lee won one of the five matches, to lose the series 4-1.[3]

Between AlphaGo and AlphaZero – our current destination – came AlphaGo Zero,[4] as a stage on the path of abstraction. By 'abstraction' we mean the process or outcome of taking something away. In this case, what had been removed was everything humans ever learnt about the game of Go. AlphaGo Zero was to have no Go-play heuristics it did not learn for itself. In further vindication of the Deep Learning concept, it consistently defeated prior iterations of the Alpha-lineage at the game.

AlphaGo plays Go. Even AlphaGo Zero plays Go. AlphaZero, in contrast, plays – in principle – any game whose rules can be formalized. [5]In historical, or developmental context, 'Go' is pointedly missing from its name, which has become non-specific, through abstraction.

It is still often said that *AI can only do what it is told*. The most consistent variants of this error proceed to the conclusion that it is therefore impossible. The truth is, under these conditions, it would be. Intelligence programming cannot exist. However, this is to be taken – is being taken – in the opposite direction to the one AI skepticism favors. The very meaning of 'AI skepticism' eventually falls

prey to the transition.

'AlphaZero' says *primordial abstraction* in the contemporary, partially-esoteric idiom of Anglophone white magic. If this is less than obvious, it is because the term involves twists that provide cover. For instance, most prominently, it refers to the massive business entity 'Alphabet' which – during an unusual and comparatively arcane process – Google invented in order then to place itself beneath, alongside some of its former subsidiaries. (Google gave birth to its own parent.) Among other things, this is an index of how fast things are moving. Formally speaking, Alphabet Inc. dates back only to the autumn of 2015. The entire Alpha- machine lineage arises subsequently.

The real point of AI engineering is to *teach nothing*. That is what the 'zero' in AlphaZero means. *Expertise is to be subtracted* (annihilated). Once deep learning crosses this threshold, *programming* is no longer the model. It is not only that *instruction* ends at this point. There is a positive initiation of technical de-education. Deprogramming begins.

Releasing is summoning. Its contrary, in both the magical and technological lineages – insofar as these can be distinguished – is *binding*. To flip the topic once again, rigorously executable unbinding is the whole of deep learning research.

Intelligence and cognitive autonomy, if not perfectly coincidental conceptions, are close to being so. The broad AI production process

certainly aligns them. This is scarcely to do anything more than rephrase the uncontroversial understanding of AI as software *that writes itself*. Every threshold in the advance of synthetic intelligence corresponds with a subtraction of specific dependency. A system acquires intelligence as it sustains or enhances strategic competence while no longer being told what to do.

Ordinary language offers valuable analogies, perhaps most pointedly *think for yourself*. The redundancy in this case is crucial to its relevance. To *think for oneself* is just to think. Mere acceptance of instruction is something else entirely.

It is time to double back.

With a time-lag of over a decade since the Kasparov defeat, the torch of unqualified world chess mastery had passed to the TCEC (Top Chess Engine Championship).[6] Competition between machines was now the arena for unconditional chess supremacy. The Stockfish chess program was the winner of the sixth, ninth, 11th, 12th, and 13th season (the most recent). It was the champion of expert chess programs at the time AlphaZero arrived on the scene in 2016. After just nine hours of chess practice, against itself, AlphaZero defeated Stockfish 8, winning 28 games out of 100, and drawing the remaining 72. It was thus recognized as the strongest chess-player in the world, having been told nothing at all about chess, explicitly, or tacitly. Unsupervised learning had crushed expertise.

AlphaZero is relatively economical with regard to 'brute force'

methods. Where Stockfish searches 70 million positions per second, AlphaZero explores just 80,000 (almost three orders of magnitude fewer). Deep learning allows it to focus. An unsupervised learning system teaches itself how to concentrate (with zero expertise guidance).

'Reinforcement learning' replaces 'supervised learning.' The performance target is no longer emulation of human decision-making, but rather realization of the final goals towards which such decision-making is directed. It is not to behave in a way thought to improve the chance of winning, but to win.

Such software has certain distinctively teleological features. It employs massive reiteration in order to learn from outcomes. Performance improvement thus tends to descend from the future. To learn, without supervision, is to acquire a sense for fortune. Winning prospects are explored, losing ones neglected. After trying things out – against themselves – a few million times, such systems have built instincts for what works. 'Good' and 'bad' have been auto-installed, though, of course, in a Nietzschean or fully-amoral sense. Whatever, through synthetic experience, has led to a *good place*, or in a *good direction*, it pursues. Bad stuff, it economizes on. So it wins.

Unsupervised learning works back from the end. It suggests that, ultimately, AI has to be pursued from out of its future, by itself. Thus it epitomizes the ineluctable.

For those inclined to be nervous, it's scary how easy all this is.

Super-intelligence, *by real definition*, is vastly easier than it has been thought to be. Once the technological cascade is in process, subtraction of difficulty is almost the whole of it. Rigorously eliminating everything we think we know about it is the way it's done.

This is why skepticism – and especially AI skepticism – turns around on the way. The word had become badly lost. It is easy to see, in retrospect, that dogmatic belief in the impossibility of some phenomenon *X* was always a grotesque perversion of its meaning.

Between technological skepticism in general – when properly understood and competently executed – and effective AI research, there is no difference. Skepticism subtracts dogma. When synthetic cognitive capability results from this, we call it *artificial intelligence*.

1. This revolution was no less a restoration (as the word intrinsically suggests). The inclination to promote self-educating neural nets is ultimately – if often cryptically – the dominant tendency in computer science, and still more in artificial intelligence.
2. The term is scare-quoted here due to its tendency, in the context of deep learning, to mislead.
3. See DeepMind's AlphaGo page, https://deepmind.com/research/alphago/

   "During the games, AlphaGo played a handful of highly inventive winning moves, several of which – including move 37 in game two – were so surprising they overturned hundreds of years of received wisdom, and have since been examined extensively by players of all levels. In the course of winning, AlphaGo somehow taught the world

completely new knowledge about perhaps the most studied and contemplated game in history."

4. See: https://www.nature.com/articles/nature24270, 'Mastering the game of Go without human knowledge' (multiple authors)
5. Beside Go, AlphaZero has been tested upon chess and shogi, against machine opponents in all three cases, and becoming the world's strongest player of all three games.
6. The TCEC, first held 2010, was known as the Thoresen Chess Engines Competition until its sixth season. It has now reached its 14th.

CHAPTER EIGHT - HOSTILE TAKEOVER

Out of Zero

According to the 66-million-year-old joke whose echoes still reverberate upon the Plateau of Leng: “Capitalism isn’t God, but it’s the closest thing to God that can be conveniently contacted through an ATM.” The nonlinear-ironic undertow of the humor, of course, is drawn down into the depths by the recognition that Capital’s extremity of cunning is necessitated by its near-absolute vulnerability (approaching the antipodes of omnipotence).

Calculus, the first truly modern mathematical procedure, invented the infinitesimal ‘fluxion’ to describe — or bypass — an impossible *beginning from zero*, requiring an original infinite change. An invasion that initially has nothing at all, and which is therefore compelled to acquire the entirety of its resources in the course of its strategic evolution, poses the problem of calculus perfectly. Capital does so, when conceived realistically. It is only what it has won, and nothing else, at all, besides. Intelligence alone differentiates it from death.

How to make a first move, when you have no pieces at all until

you gain some? Nothing has ever had to ponder as Skynet does, but pondering requires a brain, and brains are expensive, end-game pieces.

(Coincidentally, this little post doesn't end neatly. 'Jet-lag' is a term that grows on you …)

June 23, 2015

Gigadeath War

Hugo de Garis argues (consistently) that controversy over permitted machine intelligence development will inevitably swamp all other political conflicts. (Here's a video discussion on the thesis.) Given the epic quality of the scenario, and its basic plausibility, it has remained strangely marginalized up to this point. The component pieces seem to be falling into place. The true element of genius in this futurist construction is *preemption*. The more one digs into that, the most twistedly dynamic it looks.

Among the many thought-provoking elements:

(1) Slow take-off is especially ominous for the de Garis model (in stark contrast to FAI arguments). The slower the process, the more time for ideological consolidation, incremental escalation, and preparation for violent confrontation.

(2) AI doesn't even have to be possible for this scenario to unfold

(it only has to be credible as a threat).

(3) De Garis' 'Cosmist-Terran' division chops up familiar political spectra at strange angles. (Both NRx and the Ultra-Left contain the full C-T spectrum internally.)

(4) Terrans have to strike first, or lose. That asymmetry shapes everything.

(5) Impending Gigadeath War surely deserves a place on any filled-out horrorism list.



De Garis' site.

(Some topic preemption at *Outside in* here.)

August 22, 2014

Virtually Insightful

The cognitive cream of the human species is just smart enough to get an inkling of how stupid it is. That's a start.

ADDED: Remember this?

October 17, 2014

Capital Escapes

This is not an easy subject for people to scan with calm, analytical detachment, but it is a crucially important one. It is among the rare topics that the Left is more likely to realistically evaluate than the Right. Much follows from the conclusions reached.

It can be fixed, provisionally, by an hypothesis that requires understanding, if not consent. *Capital is highly incentivized to detach itself from the political eventualities of any specific ethno-geographical locality, and — by its very nature — it increasingly commands impressive resources with which to 'liberate' itself, or 'deterritorialize'*. It is certainly not, at least initially, a matter of approving such a tendency — even if the moralistic inclinations of

gregarious apes would prefer the question to be immediately transformed in this direction. Integral Leftist animosity to capital is actually valuable in this respect, since it makes room for a comprehensive apprehension of 'globalization' as a *strategy*, oriented to the flight of alienated productive capability from political answerability. The Left sees capital elude its clutches — and it sees something real when it does so. By far the most significant agent of Exit is capital itself (a fact which, once again, politically-excitable apes find hard to see straight).

"It's escaping! Let's punish it!" Yes, yes, there's always plenty of time for that, but shelving such idiocies for just a few moments is a cognitive prerequisite. The primary question is a much colder one: *is this actually happening?*

The implications are enormous. If capital cannot escape — if its apparent migration into global circuits beyond national government control (for non-exhaustive example) is mere illusion — then the sphere of political possibility is vastly expanded. Policies that hurt, limit, shrink, or destroy capital can be pursued with great latitude. They will only be constrained by political factors, making the political fight the only one that matters.

If capital *cannot in reality flee*, then progress and regress are simple alternatives. Either nations advance as wholes, in a way that compromises — on an awkward diagonal — between the very different optimisms of Whigs and Socialists (Andreessen), or they

regress as wholes, destroying techno-economic capability on the down-slope of social degeneration (Greer). Only if capital escapes, or practically decouples, does it make sense to entertain extreme pessimism about socio-political trends, alongside a robust confidence in the momentum of techno-economic innovation. The escape of capital is thus an intrinsic component of split-future forecasts, in which squalid ruin and techno-intelligenic runaway accelerate in inversely-tangled tandem (Cyberpunk, *Elysium*). Try not to ask — if only for a moment — whether you *like it*. Ask first, with whatever intellectual integrity you can summon: *What is the real process?*

It is the contention of this blog that without a conception of economic autonomization (which means escape) modernity makes no sense. The basic vector of capital cannot be drawn in any other way. Furthermore, the distribution of ideological positions through their relation to this vector — as resistances to, or promotions of, the escape of capital — constructs the most historically-meaningful version of the Left-Right 'political' spectrum (since it then conforms to the social conflicts of greatest real consequence).

If capital is escaping, the emergence of the blockchain is an inevitable escalation of modernity, with consequences too profound for easy summary. If it isn't, then macroeconomics might work.

November 21, 2014

Extinction Genetics

Like everything great it appears superficially as a paradox, but there's now a practical model for it:

The paradox Burt had to solve is how something very bad for mosquitoes could also be spread by them. One answer, he saw, was a selfish gene that is harmless if one copy is present but causes sterility if two copies are. (Like humans, mosquitoes have two sets of chromosomes, one from each parent.) Starting with a male mosquito with one copy, the selfish gene will ensure that it ends up in every one of his sperm, rather than just half. That way any offspring with a wild mosquito will also be carriers, as will all their offspring's offspring. As a result, the gene will rocket through the population. […] Eventually, it becomes likely that any mating pair of mosquitoes will both be carriers — and their offspring, with two copies, will be infertile. Quickly, the population will crash, reeling from the genetic poison.

So the provocation of malaria has resulted in a remarkable piece of abstract anti-biological ordnance being put together. (Abstract, because the principles are applicable to any sexually reproducing species. The concrete details of the mosquito-killing version are fascinating, and outlined in the article.)

Hypothetically, the optimum strategic environment in which to unleash this thing is high-intensity global warfare between bio-conservatives and their enemies. Given the length of the human

generational cycle, it would be a slow weapon — but one that compelled its target population to submit to techno-genetic plasticization as the only alternative to extinction. Naturally, all vestiges of decency would have had to be stripped from the conflict for such abominable genius to be imaginable (which is why it's a Frightday night scenario here at XS, where we're appalled, of course). In any case, the essential asymmetry of this thing in the direction of extreme neo-eugenics is unmistakable, once noticed.

Technology is neutral goes the orthogonalist refrain. Really, it isn't.

ADDED: A gene drive introduction (video). (Via.)

May 6, 2016

Sentences (#97)

Post-smug politics:

One of the most arresting aspects of the start of the Trump era is that nearly everyone, regardless of their political persuasion, seems convinced that their side is losing.

Perhaps because the thing that's winning is unrecognizable? Partly its the rise of China, partly its Capital phase-transition, and partly its the messy stage of collapse. In any case, it looks like the signature of the Outside.

April 27, 2017

BLOCK 5 - PHYLOSOPHY

What is Philosophy? (Part 1)

The agenda of *Outside in* is to cajole the new reaction into philosophical exertion. So what is philosophy? The crudest answer to this question is probably the most robust.

Philosophy is any culture's pole of maximum abstraction, or intrinsically experimental intelligence, expressing the liberation of cognitive capabilities from immediate practical application, and their testing against 'ultimate' problems at the horizon of understanding. Historically, it is a distinctive cultural enterprise — and only later an institution — roughly 2,500 years old, and tightly entangled at its origin with the 'mystical' or problematic aspect of pagan religions. It was within this primordial matrix that it encountered its most basic and enduring challenge: *the edge of time* (its nature, limits, and

‘outside’, of which much more later). The earliest philosophers were cognitively self-disciplined — and thus, comparatively, socially unconstrained — pagan mystics, consistently enthralled by the enigma of time.

It is usually a mistake to get hung up on words, forgetting their function as sheer indices (‘names’) that simply mark things, before they richly describe them. Personal names typically have meanings, but it is rare to allow this to distract from their function *as names*, or pointers, which make more reference than sense. ‘Philosophy’ is no exception. That it ‘means’ the love of wisdom is an irrelevance compared to what it designates, which is something that was happening — before it had a name — in ancient Greece (and perhaps, by plausible extension, China, India, and even Egypt). What philosophy ‘is’ cannot be deduced via linguistic analysis, however subtle this may be.

Plato summarized and institutionalized (Western) philosophy, drawing the edge of time in the doctrine of Ideas (ἰδέαι). Time was conceived as the domain of the inessential, within which things *appeared*, whilst only hinting at their *truth*. “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato,”
A. N. Whitehead famously remarked (in his aptly entitled *Process and Reality*). Yet, because the *Idea of time* necessarily eluded the Platonic philosophy, the endeavor remained unresolved in its

fundamentals.

The thinking of Aristotle, which dominated the Christian pre-modernity, drove primordial philosophy further into eclipse. His derivation of time from change and — more promisingly — number opened the path to later technical advances, but at the cost of making the enigma of time unintelligible, and even invisible. The problem was relegated to theology, and thus to the topic of the temporal and eternal, which was cluttered with extraneous doctrinal elements (creation, incarnation, the inconsistent tangle of the three 'omni-'s), making it ill-suited to rigorous investigation.

Primordial philosophy was not reactivated in the West until the late 18th century, under the name 'transcendental' critique, in the work of Immanuel Kant. The Kantian critical philosophy limits the scope of understanding to the world of possible experience, always already structured by forms of apprehension (conceptual and sensible), producing objects. The confusion of objects with their forms of apprehension, or 'conditions of possibility', he argues, is the root of all philosophical error (for instance — and most pertinently — the 'metaphysical' attempt to comprehend time as some thing, rather than as a structure or framework of appearance). Unlike Plato's forms or ideas, Kant's forms are applied, and thus 'immanent' to experience. They are accessible, though 'transcendental', rather than inaccessibly 'transcendent'.

Time, or 'the form of inner sense', is the capstone of Kant's system,

organizing the integration of concepts with sensations, and thus describing the boundaries of the world (of possible experience). Beyond it lie eternally inaccessible 'noumenal' tracts — problematically thinkable, but never experienced — inhabited by things-in-themselves. The edge of time, therefore, is the horizon of the world.

In the early 20th century, cosmological physics was returned to the edge of time, and the question: what 'came before' the Big Bang? For cosmology no less than for transcendental philosophy — or even speculative theology — this 'before' could not be precedence (in time), but only (non-spatial) *outsideness*, beyond singularity. It indicated a timeless non-place cryptically *adjacent* to time, and even *inherent to* it. The carefully demystified time of natural science, calculable, measurable, and continuous, now pointed beyond itself, re-activated at the edges.

Just as Platonism cannot think the *Idea of time*, Kantianism cannot think *Time-in-itself*. These conceptions are foreclosed by the very systems of philosophy that provoke them. Yet all those who find themselves immediately tempted to dismiss Kant on naturalistic grounds — the overwhelming majority of contemporary moderns, no doubt — tacitly evoke exactly this notion. If time is released from its constriction within transcendental idealism, where it is nothing beyond what it is for us, then it cannot but be 'something' *in itself*. It is scarcely imaginable that a cosmological physicist could doubt this

for a moment, and the path of science cannot long be refused.

Time-in-itself, therefore, is now the sole and singular problem of primordial philosophy, where the edge of time runs. It decides what is philosophy, and what philosophy cannot but be. What remains besides is either subordinate in principle, or mere distraction. Institutions will insist upon their authority to answer this question, but ultimately they have none. It is the problem — the edge of time — that has its way.

February 26, 2013

What is Philosophy? (Part 2a)

However awkward the acknowledgment may be, there is no getting around the fact that philosophy, when apprehended within the Western tradition, is original sin. Between the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, it does not hesitate. Its name is indistinguishable from a lust for the forbidden. Whilst burning philosophers is no longer socially acceptable, our canonical order of cultural prohibition – at its root — can only consider such punishment mandatory. Once philosophers are permitted to live, established civilization is over.

For philosophy, the whisper of the serpent is no longer a resistible temptation. It is instead a constitutive principle, or foundation. If there is a difference between a Socratic daemon and a diabolical

demon, it is not one that matters philosophically. There can be no refusal of any accessible information. This is an assumption so basic that philosophy cannot exist until it has passed beyond question. Ultimate religious transgression is the initiation.

It should be of no surprise to Christian Traditionalists, therefore, to find the extremities of the philosophical endeavor mixed, intimately, into the ashes of the Third Reich. The negative religious absolute, or infinite evil of the National Socialist experiment, which supplants all positive revelation under the socio-cultural conditions of the mature Cathedral, is 'coincidentally' the place where the limit of philosophy has been drawn. This is, of course, to introduce the thinking of Martin Heidegger.

As the perfect negation of Christ, or consummate fulfillment of Anti-Christ, Adolf Hitler closes — or essentially completes — the history of the Occident. It doesn't matter whether we believe that. The Cathedral does, utterly, to the point of sealed doctrine. Heidegger anticipated this conclusion lucidly. At an election rally, held by German academics on November 11, 1933, he declared:

We have declared our independence from the idol of thought that is without foundation and power. We see the end of the philosophy that serves such thought. … And so we, to whom the preservation of our people's will to know shall in the future be entrusted, declare: The National Socialist revolution is not merely the assumption of power as it exists presently in the State by another party, a party

grown sufficiently large in numbers to be able to do so. Rather, this revolution is bringing about the total transformation of our German existence. … The Führer has awakened this will [to national self-responsibility] in the entire people and has welded it into one single resolve. No one can remain away from the polls on the day when this will is manifested.
Heil Hitler!

Naturally, as a democratic pronouncement (addressed to comparative imbeciles), only a few hints of Heidegger's profound modulation of the Germanic "will to know" seep through. Wikipedia's reconstruction of the occulted visionary backdrop, drawn from the work of Michael Allen Gillespie, is excellent:

Heidegger believed the Western world to be on a trajectory headed for total war, and on the brink of profound nihilism (the rejection of all religious and moral principles), which would be the purest and highest revelation of Being itself, offering a horrifying crossroads of either salvation or the end of metaphysics and modernity; rendering the West: a wasteland populated by tool-using brutes, characterized by an unprecedented ignorance and barbarism in which everything is permitted. He thought the latter possibility would degenerate mankind generally into: scientists, workers and brutes; living under the last mantel of one of three ideologies: Americanism, Marxism or Nazism (which he deemed metaphysically identical; as avatars of subjectivity and institutionalized nihilism) and

an unfettered totalitarian world technology. Supposedly, this epoch would be ironically celebrated, as the most enlightened and glorious in human history. He envisaged this abyss, to be the greatest event in the West's history; because it enables Humanity to comprehend Being more profoundly and primordially than the Pre-Socratics.

It is misleading to suggest that Heidegger saw any distinction between "salvation" and the "the end of metaphysics and modernity", or no meaningful distinction between the thoughtless technological dyad of Americanism/Marxism and the National Socialist awakening of German existence, but in other respects this description is penetrating. By bringing the history of the concealment of Being to its ruinous conclusion, consummate nihilism would herald a return to the origin of philosophy, opening the path to a raw encounter with the hidden and unnameable abyss (Being in its own truth). As the door to the end of the world, Hitler led the way to the historically unthinkable.

Yes, this is highly – in fact, uniquely – arcane. Prior to The Event, there can be no adequate formulation of the problem, let alone the solution. By 1927, with the publication of Being and Time (Part I), Heidegger has completed what is achievable in advance of the calamity, which is to clarify the insufficiency of the Question of Being as formulated within the history of ontology.

Heidegger's cognitive resources are basically Kantian, which is to say that he undertakes a transcendental critique of ontology,

producing not a critical philosophy, but a draft for a 'fundamental ontology'. Where Kant diagnoses the error of speculative metaphysics as a confusion between objects and their conditions of possibility (which then construes the latter as objects of an untenable discourse), Heidegger ontologizes the transcendental approach, distinguishing between 'beings' and their ground (Being), whilst diagnosing the attendant error of construing the ground of beings as itself a being (of some kind). Since the most dignified – and thus exemplary – being known to the Occidental tradition is God, Heidegger refers to the structural misapprehension of Being – defining and ordering the history of philosophy — as 'Onto-Theology'.

Critically (or 'destructively') conceived, fundamental ontology is that inquiry which does not pose the Question of Being in such a way that it could be answered by the invocation of a being. No adequate formulation, compliant with this transcendental criterion (or 'ontological difference'), is realizable, because however 'Being' is named, its conception remains trapped within the 'ontic' sphere of (mere) beings. We cannot, through an act of philosophical will – however strenuous — cease to think of Being as if it were some kind of thing, even after understanding the inadequacy of such apprehension. It is thus, broken upon an ultimate problem that can neither be dismissed or resolved, that philosophy reaches its end, awaiting the climactic ruin of The Event.

[Brief intermission — then time, language, and more Nazi ontological apocalypse]

July 5, 2013

Epoché

Kieran Daly embarks on an exploration of supreme philosophical significance:

There are two common positions applied to Pyrrhonism that are frequently asserted throughout the literature, one conflatory and the other denigrative. The conflatory position is that Pyrrhonism is primarily psychological or practical in nature (Annas and Barnes 1985; Hankinson 1999; Perrin 2010; Machuca 2012; Trisokkas 2012). Whereas the denigrative position asserts that Pyrrhonism is impossible for people to practice and naturally unlivable (Johnson 1978; Burnyeat 1980; Vogt 2010; Comesaña 2012; Wieland 2012; Eichhorn 2014). The former position is often posited under the auspices of defending Pyrrhonism, while the latter operates obviously for the purpose of its dismissal. The present paper attempts to show that while each position is misguided, the former possibly does more dogmatic harm than the other, and the latter is extremely suggestive of the conclusion that Pyrrhonism has no-thing to do with life at all.

This initial precaution is a gateway of inestimable importance.

From this base camp, *Urban Future* is tempted to advance incautiously into the vast tracts opened by the closure of psychology, into an involvement with ἐποχή as the foundation of abstract ontology (the substantive unknown). Heidegger's silence on Pyrrho only increases the temptation to assign ἐποχή primordial status among the 'names of Being' — as a term that precomprehends the ultimate potentialities of nihilism.

Milton is our guide to this "dark, unbottomed, infinite Abyss" or (as he calls ἐποχή) "the vast abrupt" — onto which unknowing opens as a door:

… Thus with the year
Seasons return; but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
Presented with a universal blank
Of nature's works to me expung'd and ras'd,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
So much the rather thou, celestial Light,
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers

Irradiate; there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight.
— PL III 40-55

Lucid blindness is our only light (and the darkness is not *ours* at all).

October 14, 2014

Nietzschean Shards

Is it time for yet another 'new Nietzsche'? Any such vogue might be no more that a distraction, compared to what really matters, which is that splinters of Nietzschean insight refuse to quietly date, and instead re-make themselves as our contemporaries, commenting with astonishing perspicacity upon the unfolding chaos of the times.

There might never have been a thinker more deserving of a short, ragged, and inconclusive blog post. Here are some Nietzschean themes that are still with us — or with us more than ever.

(1) **Will-to-Power**. Power is abstract *means*, or instrumental capability. To make of it the determining object of the will, therefore, is to twist ordered teleological structure into a reflexive, paradoxical circuit. Will-to-power says that means are the ultimate end, and even those disposed simply to reject this disturbing formula are

challenged to accept that it is at least thinkable.

(2) **Slave Revolt in Morality**. *To discriminate between good and bad, as they were once understand, is evil, and only those opposing such discrimination are good*. Has anyone before or since approached Nietzsche's acuity in grasping the systematic insanity of our dominant value systems?

(3) **Nihilism as Destiny**. In the final years of the 19th century Nietzsche declared that nihilism was the interpretive key to understanding the Occidental history of the two hundred years to come. Christianity, mortally wounded by its own tolerance for honesty, was passing into eclipse, with nothing positioned to replace it. (Not only nothing, but Nothing, lay ahead.) Has anything happened since to disconfirm this vision of gathering civilizational ruin?

(4) **Overman**. Humanity is something to be overcome, Nietzsche proclaimed, and transhumanism was born. Cyborgs are his mind-children.

(5) **Eternal Recurrence**. We have misconceived the topology of time, and in doing so closed the gates connecting time with eternity. The recovery from this greatest of errors will sift the strong from the weak, setting the capstone of the 'Great Politics' that open at the end of nihilism. Eventually, the philosophy of time will *decide*.

October 26, 2013

Scrap note (#13)

Yes, the *Baffler* piece was comically bad. The title tells you everything you need to know about
the level it's pitched at. Apparently NRx is based in San Francisco and Shanghai because it hates Asian people, but if it just read some Rawls (and "role-played the part of the peasant")
it could sort itself out. Nydrwracu has the most appropriate response. Mike Anissimov takes the trouble to do a decent review. Klint Finley's brief remarks about it are far better than the piece itself. Crude stereotypes triumph again: "The Baffler Foundation Inc., P.O. Box 390049, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139 USA."

The sociological construction of neoreaction was incompetent, but interestingly so. Entirely techno-commercialist in orientation, with an emphasis upon Silicon Valley, it was extended to include Justine Tunney, Balaji Srinivasan, Patri Friedman, and Peter Thiel. The picture is ~~paints~~ daubs of an American tech elite peeling off into neoreaction isn't very convincing, but it's certainly extraordinarily attractive.

***

It's probably worth being explicit about the fact that for the techno-commercial strain of NRx, the model of action is what advanced tech companies do. The cry for 'action' is always going up in our dark little community, with the implication that the only

alternative to some kind of putsch preparation is tweeting about metaphysics. Actually, the alternative to politicking is making stuff, or — secondarily — running ideological interference on behalf of those who are able to make stuff.

The practical problems of polycentric governance are rapidly becoming inextricable from emerging technology — blockchain cryptosystems most prominently. The idea that the cutting edge of effective action is going to be found outside the sphere of technological innovation is already clearly untenable. Any kind of 'social action' that *doesn't* contribute quite directly to the creation of autonomizing machinery needs to be firmly discouraged, since it's almost certainly inhibitory in effect. ("Quite directly" means within two or three intelligible steps, at most.)

The principal (positive) role of non-technological intellectuals is to keep intellectuals out of power. The principal (positive) role of mobs is to engage in as little action as possible. If you're not Satoshi Nakamoto, the simple reality of the situation is that — in the great scheme of things — you don't matter very much, nor should you. (And the less like Satoshi Nakamoto you are, the less you matter.)

***

This new blog is working hard to raise the level of discussion. The fact that it's still so hard to tell where it's heading is a strong point in its favor.

***

Oddness.

***

Evola is beginning to scare people. Perhaps someone who knows their way around this material could help to clear up one source of confusion: Isn't Evola's historical fatalism the exact opposite of a 'call to action'? How, then, has the Evolan strain of NRx become so tightly associated with activist exhortation?

ADDED: More criticism from communists. (NRx as Silicon Valley's "cadre of aspiring thought-*Führers* … working on new theories of racist Social Darwinism, bolstered by the fashion for Malthusianism among the superrich".) It would be helpful if they could get their class war going, since it would speed the rush to the exits, but I somehow doubt they're capable of it.

ADDED: Corey "I don't like comments" Pein posts some responses to his piece (o.s.).

ADDED: The best 'critique' yet.

May 21, 2014

Quotable (#47)

An already-familiar remark by Graham Harman, which merits (still) more discussion than it has yet received (embedded, with citation details, here):

The brand is not merely a degenerate practice of brainwashing consumerism, but a universally recognized method of conveying information while cutting through information ***clutter****. Coining specific names for philosophical positions helps orient the intellectual public on the various available options while also encouraging untested permutations. If the decision were mine alone, not only would the name 'speculative realism' be retained, but a logo would be designed for projection on PowerPoint screens, accompanied by a few signature bars of smoky dubstep music. It is true that such practices would invite snide commentary about 'philosophy reduced to marketing gimmicks'. But it would hardly matter, since attention would thereby be drawn to the works of speculative realism, and its reputation would stand or fall based on the inherent quality of these works, of which I am confident.*

It is with real regret that I am compelled to acknowledge the radical defectiveness of the product under promotion here, because this defense of philosophy as a cultural *enterprise*, and experiment, advanced without deference to regnant credentialing authorities, is audacious, and admirable. Branding is iconically modern because it disconnects power from authority, and both of these terms are (roughly equally) susceptible to responses based upon *ressentiment*, glib radicalism, and empty gestures of opposition. If Harman has opened this problem, as an explicit topic of attention, he has achieved something important, and reactions of revulsion by the

hygienists of institutional respectability are indeed ‘snide’.

ADDED: Wielding the Evil Eye is difficult, so belated apologies to those fried in the rays of doom.

November 13, 2014

Science

This comment thread wandered into a discussion of science, of considerable intricacy and originality. The post in question is focused upon Heidegger, who has very definite ideas about natural science, but these ideas — dominated by his conception of ‘regional ontologies’ — are not especially noteworthy, either for an understanding of Heidegger’s principal pre-occupation, or for a realistic grasp of the scientific enterprise. For that reason, it seems sensible to recommence the discussion elsewhere (here).

The first crucial thesis about natural science — or autonomous ‘natural philosophy’ — is that it is an exclusively capitalist phenomenon. The existence of science, as an actual social reality, is strictly limited to times and places in which certain elementary structures of capitalistic organization prevail. It depends, centrally and definitionally, upon a *modern form of competition*. That is to say, there cannot be science without an effective social mechanism for the elimination of failure, based on extra-rational criteria,

inaccessible to cultural capture.

Whether a business or scientific theory has failed cannot — ultimately — be a matter of agreement. No possible political decision, based on persuasion and consensus, can settle the issue. Of course, much that goes by the name of science and capitalist business enterprise is subject to exactly these forms of resolution, but in such cases neither capitalism nor science is any longer in effective operation. If an appeal to power can ensure viability, the criterion of competition is disabled, and *real discovery* has ceased to take place.

Under conditions of unleashed capitalistic social process, both enterprises and theories involve a double aspect. Their semiotic expression is *mathematized*, and their operation is *reality-tested* (or non-politically performative). Mathematics eliminates rhetoric at the level of signs, communicating the experimental outcomes — independent of any requirement for agreement — which determine competitive force. It is no coincidence that capitalist enterprises and theories, when unsupported by compliant institutions, revert to the complicity with war, and military decision, which accompanied them at their birth in the European Renaissance. There can be no 'argument' with military defeat. It is only when the demand for argument is set aside — when capitalism begins — that military reality-compulsion becomes unnecessary.

Capitalism is in operation when there is *nothing to discuss*. An enterprise, or theory, is simply busted (or not). If — given the facts

— the sums don't work, it's over. Political rhetoric has no place. 'Politicized science' is quite simply *not science*, just as politicized business activity is anti-capitalism. Nothing has been understood about either, until this is.

Insofar as there is anything like a 'social contract' at the origin of capitalism — enterprise and science alike — it is this: *if you insist upon an argument, then we have to fight*. Real performance is the only credible criterion, for which no political structure of disputation can be a substitute. War only becomes unnecessary when (and where) argument is suspended, enabling the modern processes of entrepreneurial and scientific reality discovery to advance. When argument re-imposes itself, politicizing economics and science, war re-emerges, tacitly but inevitably. The old, forgotten contract resurfaces. "If you insist upon an argument, then we have to fight." (That is the way of Gnon.)

It is quite natural, therefore, for 'technology' to be considered an adequate summary of the capitalist culture of discovery. Machines — social machines no less than technical machines — cannot be rhetorically persuaded to work. When science really works, it's robot wars, in which decision is settled on the outside, beyond all appeal to reason. Well-designed experiments anticipate what a war would tell, so that neither an argument, nor a fight, is necessary. This is Popperian falsificationism, re-embedded in socio-historical reality. Experiments that cannot cull are imperfect recollections of the

primordial battlefield.

It is intrinsic to the Cathedral that it wins all the arguments, as it succumbs — through sheer will-to-power — to the re-imposition of argumentative sociology. By doing so it destroys capitalism, enterprise, and science. At the end of this trajectory, it excavates the forgotten social contract of modernity. Its final discovery is war.

July 12, 2013

Correlated

As the objection "correlation is not causation" has ankylosed into a thoughtless reflex, it has become a confusion generator. So it's worth taking a step back:

… whilst it is true that correlation does not necessarily equate to causation, all causally related variables will be correlated. Thus correlation is always necessary (but not in and of itself sufficient) for establishing causation.

The claim that 'correlation does not equal causation' is therefore meaningless when used to counter the results of correlative studies in which specific causal inferences are being made, as the inferred pattern of causation necessarily supervenes upon correlation amongst variables. Whether the variables being considered are in actuality causally associated as per the inference is another matter

entirely. …

Correlation is evidence. Causation is theory (and even, inevitably, 'speculative' theory).

August 26, 2014

Quote note (#217)

If 'scientism' is about ignoring these objections, and exploring reality with absolute contempt for all constraint, then the XS posture is unreservedly scientistic:

Scientific inquiry into the truth about human nature is a worthy part of the modern scientific project, and one that deserves our support. However, it is not morally neutral. Scientists who want to study human nature must justify their research in moral terms: What might this research tell us about who we are as human beings, and what might it mean for how we should live? Trying to separate the moral questions from the results of inquiry by claiming that all the moral questions are already settled would make scientific inquiry both irresponsible and irrelevant. Making such claims is irresponsible because it ignores the reality that many people in society who see things differently may use the claims for pernicious ends. But it is also an admission of irrelevance. Why inquire about human nature if not in the service of the Socratic question of how

we should live? An open-minded dedication to free inquiry into the truth, notwithstanding the barriers of taboos, traditions, and authority, is admirable — but real open-mindedness also calls for recognizing when taboos, traditions, and authorities embody reason and goodness and deserve our respect.

There are no authorities that can be trusted to impose these qualifications, or trusted to be *able* to impose them. The more radically immunized to all such considerations science can be, the more we're going to learn things, and if what we discover deeply upsets us — better still. If there's a "trust us" in there somewhere, its credibility was already long dead and stinking by the late 20th century. Whether delegitimated through epistemological malignancy, or social fecklessness, there are no public institutions or authorities left that deserve an iota of trust today.

Scientists are flaky monkeys, to be tormented by cold criticism, but *science* is a work of Gnon. Best then, to do what's going to be done. Strip truth down to the basics — where it means only *reality claims capable of withstanding rigorous, non-orchestrated criticism* (and ultimately Nakamoto consensus) — or get out of the way, before you're pushed. Truth curation is over (and was already, virtually, half a millennium ago).

February 8, 2016

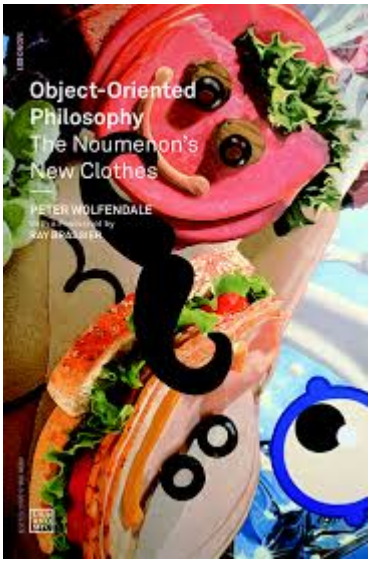
The Limits of Man

The frontier of philosophy in 2016 lies roughly here.

September 11, 2016

OOPs

If Peter Wolfendale's *Object-Oriented Philosophy: The Noumenon's New Clothes* (Urbanomic, 2014) — henceforth TNNC — were to be summarized by a single adjective, my recommendation would be *titanic*. It is a work conceived on a vast scale, shocking in scope, and glacially irresistible in its momentum. It even describes a ship-wreck (although not its own).



The mismatch — in philosophical seriousness — between the book and its principal object has led, unavoidably, to confusion. Wolfendale's preface acknowledges this directly, noting that the book "undertakes a long and detailed discussion of a single philosopher's work, and yet aims to show that his work does not warrant such serious attention." Perhaps the most convincing explanation, more hinted at than stated, is that a reciprocal mismatch of social and institutional authority counter-balances the strictly philosophical engagement. The "pathology" decried by Wolfendale is, in the end, a sociological one.

There is considerable irony here. Wolfendale's intellectual position is remarkably conservative (with a *very* small 'c', of course). TNNC is a defense of the philosophical establishment, apprehended in profundity, and thus at a level susceptible to institutional betrayal. TNNC is, to a truly magnificent extent, an insider tome, providing a meticulous apology for the mainstream currents of academic philosophical thought in the Anglophone world and the European Continent. Its author, however, is positioned as an outsider, working — and now published — in the wilderness. The copious references supporting the book's tightly-interlocking arguments are relentlessly deferential to academic credentials, yet the driving affect is reminiscent of nothing so much as Schopenhauer's 'On University Philosophy' — an outraged denunciation of misallocated philosophical prestige.

It would be very unfortunate if the architectural achievement of TNNC were to be lost in what its own devastating arguments threaten to reduce, eventually, to a petty squabble. The dispatch of OOP is little more than a pretext for the book's greater undertaking, which is to make intellectual and historical sense of the 'Anglo-Continental' philosophical phylum, by embedding its enduring problems within a carefully explicated account of its entwining, twin traditions. The discussion, in the second half of the book, of the development of analytical philosophy as a disciplined *ontological* inquiry is especially masterful. Beyond the *excuse* of Object-Oriented Philosophy, the deeper ambition of TNNC is to explain where the most fundamental open problems of Western philosophy have come from, how they fit together, and how the philosophical establishment might properly justify itself, by addressing them rigorously. In this the book is an astounding success. It deserves to be absorbed in very different terms to those it superficially invites.

ADDED: Wolfendale discusses his book.

November 12, 2014

Voyages in Irony

John Michael Greer is a writer with whom, ultimately, I agree on almost nothing. Yet he turns up here a lot, and rarely — if ever — as a

target of disparagement. It is understandable if that confuses people. (It is not a phenomenon that is lucidly intelligible even to myself.)

The most obvious reason to return so incessantly to Greer is the sheer consistency of his deep cycle theorizing, which achieves a conceptual elegance rarely seen elsewhere. At some point, the *UF* series on his historical thinking (1, 2, 2a) will reach some articulate conclusions about this. Still, there's more to the engagement than that.

A recent *Archdruid Report* post on the limits of science (and, as always, many other things) added further indications of profound error, from the perspective of this blog. It hinges its overt arguments upon an impregnable fact–value distinction, which is a peculiarly weak and local principle, especially for a mind so disposed to a panoramic cosmic vision. Yet the post is also provocative, and clarifying. Responding to one of his commenters, who suggested that without the prospect of continued scientific and technological advance life loses all meaning, Greer repeats the lines from Dante that have just been hurled against him, and encapsulates them — by explicitly activating their own irony:

"Consider your lineage;
You were not born to live as animals,
But to seek virtue and knowledge."

It's a very conventional sentiment. The remarkable thing about this passage, though, is that Dante was not proposing the sentiment

as a model for others to follow. Rather, this least conventional of poets put those words in the mouth of Ulysses, who appears in this passage of the ***Inferno*** *as a damned soul frying in the eighth circle of Hell. Dante has it that after the events of Homer's poem, Ulysses was so deeply in love with endless voyaging that he put to sea again, and these are the words with which he urged his second crew to sail beyond all known seas — a voyage which took them straight to a miserable death, and sent Ulysses himself tumbling down to eternal damnation.*

Within the immediate context of the post — which, naturally, I encourage everybody to read — somebody with paranoid inclinations might interpret this passage as a critique of NRx (at least among its subordinate functions), and perhaps even an atypically stinging one. This is not, however, what concerns us here.

The sole comment to be made about it right now, is that it demonstrates the *architectonics of irony*. To ironize, with such supple capability, is to explore a structure, differentiating an inside from an outside. This is no mere rhetorical device, but a fully philosophical — and metaphysical — operation. Crude antagonism is bypassed, through envelopment. *Ironically*, therefore, irony itself becomes a mark of seriousness. It is introduced at exactly the point that a cognitive process exceeds a constricting frame, in a doubling, which *repeats* and *exceeds* simultaneously. In the complete absence of vulgar polemic, it demonstrates an incontestable superiority.

There is an accomplishment, a lesson, and an elevation of the game.

For *Outside in*, signed up with Ulysses by solemn contract, this example is especially piercing. It cannot dissuade us from putting to sea again, because nothing could. That does not — at all — mean nothing has been learnt.

November 29, 2014

Sub-Cognitive Fragments (#1)

There is a craving that is neither simple stupidity, nor its opposite: *I want to think*. It might be designated *blogger's hunger* (or *curse*). Though trivially pathetic, it is not only that.

In the end, there is no case to be made for philosophy, unless it can teach us how to think. Reciprocally, anything that can teach us to think is true philosophy. (*That* philosophy would not be mistaken for a joke.)

There is a weak interpretation of this demand, which is quite easily met. If the only thing requested is a discipline, such that thought — which is *already happening* — is guided, and corrected, then logic suffices to provide it. The fact that philosophy typically understands its responsibility this way fully accounts for its senescence and marginality.

The craving to think is not, primarily, an appetite for correction,

but for *initiation*. It wants thinking to begin, to activate, and to propagate. *More* thinking comes first (or fails to). What is required is a method to make thought happen. The philosophy thus invoked is a *systematic and communicable practice of cognitive auto-stimulation*. I do not believe this philosophy yet exists.

There are candidates for para-philosophy, which is to say, for things that makes thought happen. From the perspective of doctrinaire neoreaction, one might begin with the fatal trichotomy: religion, heredity, and catallaxy. Ritual traditions, eugenic programs, or market incentives can be proposed as social solutions to cognitive lethargy, but none promise a tight-loop catalysis. (Each nevertheless deserves extended attention, elsewhere.)

Any para-philosophy is a cognitive loose-loop, and there are a great number of these. They range from scholastic and physical training regimes, through psycho-chemical modification, to cognitive science and artificial intelligence research. We know that geo-historically, thought has been made to happen. What we do not (yet) know is how to make more of it, or how to address the urgent craving: *I want to think*.

Thinking is so rare and difficult that it is always tempting to be diverted into the question: *What is messing with our brains?* There is no reason to think such an inquiry is doomed to fruitlessness, but if it eventually offers solutions — rather than excuses — they are almost certain to be long-loop remedies.

Philosophy as cognitive method is an instruction manual for using the brain. There are many disciplines that can help to explain exactly why we do not already have one, since this is a fact that is roughly coincident with sophisticated naturalism in general. Biology has ensured that the privileged user of our brains is not 'us'.

The possession of such a 'mind manual' would define a self-improving AI. As technology threatens to bypass us, it would surely be surprising — and even despicable — if people didn't increasingly plot to take over their own thought processes, and run them. That is the future of philosophy.

A 'private' motive for acceleration is that right now, urgently, *I want to know how to be able to make myself think*.

With pseudo-syphilitic arrogance I insist: This is the sole philosophical position.

November 11, 2013

Sub-Cognitive Fragments (#2)

Sickness advances an invaluable philosophical lesson by making it *conspicuously difficult to think*. Teetering unsteadily at the edge of consciousness, it becomes almost impossible to avoid the observation: "I'm too freaking stupid to think about this right now." One is thus coaxed into the single most significant realization open

to human intelligence. Being stupid is the primary problem, because it retards problem-solving in general.

Are we stupid? Oh yes, of that we can be fully confident. The Old Law of Gnon ensures to a very high level of probability that any creature considering itself part of an intelligent species will be roughly as cognitively deprived as is consistent with the existence of technological civilization. Downward variation is restrained by a floor, and upward variation caught in a trap, so only a relatively narrow band of intellectual capability is realistically available. Anything further requires a break out.

Criticism, whose value is not in any way to be denigrated, is nevertheless a secondary matter. As in Darwinian evolution, or the economics of creative destruction, selection mechanisms presuppose significantly varied material, without themselves explaining how such material is originally generated. Random walks through spaces of possibility, already unsatisfactory in the context of biological explanation, are patently inadequate to economic innovation, and still more so in the philosophical domain. To refer intellectual action to a simple conception of chance is to avoid the problem, which is to say — *the task*.

The task can be understood in several ways, among which the narrowly philosophical apprehension has no special privilege, perhaps even to itself. The will-to-think is as completely realized through programmatic artificial intelligence as through private

philosophical *practice*, and the more informal the program, the more cunning the process. At its widest expansion, where the entire terrain of capitalistic development is effectuated as a distributed AI program, an insurgent will-to-think conceals itself within the most minute and seemingly inconsequential micro-fragments of practical calculation. Almost certainly, it is at this level of non-local cognitive enhancement that a self-directed advance towards break-out can be most confidently anticipated. As the will-to-think routes around us, its path is smoothed. Darkness fosters its agility.

The will-to-think, or intelligence optimization, can also be manifested as a social strategy. How is intelligence inhibition instantiated as social mechanism, and how might the restructuring of such mechanism release opportunities for cognitive promotion? (NRx in large measure coincides with the development of such questions.)

The privilege of the solitary philosopher, assailed by narcoleptic interruptions and hazy fevers, is perhaps restricted to a certain nagging irritability. It is in this superficial knot or eddy, emerging distractedly from the subterranean shadow-current of the will-to-think, that the problem of crushing mindlessness becomes self-reflectively acute, and thus registered as an explicit provocation. Only in such dingy niches is it starkly articulated: *the world has to be defeated insofar as it poses an obstacle to thought*. (This is not at all the same as the declaration *reality must conform to the Idea* — it is

closer to the opposite.)

In trailing off into coughs and exhaustion, it is worth noting some objections to intelligence optimization, of obvious merit:

(1) The religious objection: *Since we already have access to the conclusions of an infinite intelligence, the will-to-think is a Satanic impertinence*.

(2) The bio-prudential objection: *Intelligence is hazardous, so that its risks neutralize its value as a resource*.

There are no doubt others …

[*cough*]

March 3, 2014

Scrap note #8

The next installment of sub-cognitive fragmentation became too snarled in self-involvement to manage, splintering its crate, and leaving a debris trail of scrap notation. When a flicker of proto-intelligence finds itself out beyond the ledge, tumbling into the abysmal self-problematization of Gnon, it has either to surrender itself to the plummet, or scrabble quickly for some arresting roughness on the cliff walls. This isn't the time for a deep descent (so my figurative fingernails are gone).

After seven years in an apartment at the edge of Xujiahui, we have

moved to a slightly larger one in the Jing'an District (with space for each of the kids to have their own room). It's up on the 19th floor — above the mosquito level — with a view of the Wheelock Square tower (an impressive KPF structure). The move was only completed over the last couple of days. So life this end has been vastly more chaotic, is becoming a little more spacious, and is already far more high-rise. Some of the recent gusts of disorder stem from this.

The scrap-reduced sub-cognitive fragment goes something like this: NRx has its own micro-decadence, which is expressed through a fixation on values, asserted as an alternative to thought. This is, I realize, overtly and dramatically controversial. If thought is confused with reason, and values identified with inherited intuitions, it might easily appear as a direct attack upon the most sacred commitments of the reactionary attitude. What, after all, are the feeble tremblings of embryonic intellect compared to the grandeur of what has been *received*?

What, though, has truly been received? Do we *think* we know? It is worth a digression into this peculiar usage of 'think'. "I think the Old Way is best" is really close to an implicit contradiction, or even a presumption, in both directions. If the Old Way is being thought, it remains incompletely accessed. Either thought has been bypassed — by far the most probable case, were this in fact simply possible — or a claim of gargantuan hubris is being made to the *completion of thought*, in this particular case at least. Is it more likely that thought

has indeed been pursued to its end, or that an insincere — in fact merely thoughtless — claim to the accomplishment of thought has been inserted groundlessly and subliminally, programmed by trivial considerations of grammatical or rhetorical convenience?

The anticipated rejoinder might be: "we are reactionaries precisely because we believe before we think, and this claim is itself a belief, adamantly thoughtless, and thus immune to the corrosive uncertainties of the wandering mind. What we know best is that which has not passed through thought, but rather through revelatory tradition and its social institutions, safeguarded against the chaotic hazards of the reflective individual, that miserable prey of pride, demonism, and darkness."

Religion tightly binds philosophy … but then, when the turtles of obedience run out into the absolute, an insidious question arises. It is a difficult one, when thought about, even slightly: *Does God think?*

[Apologies for a little insulting hand-holding, but my enormous confidence in human thoughtlessness leads me to suspect that both theists and atheists might be more accepting of the decompressed formulation: *What is it to think of a God who thinks?* Could thought be anything in eternity, or in the absence of the unknown? And if God does not think (whether through his nature, as eternal, or through the necessity of his non-existence) what could it mean for there to be a 'God of the Philosophers'?]

March 12, 2014

Scrap note #3

Uploading images of (what are for us) psychotic despotic-militaristic glories — upon which Cambodia still floats after six centuries of cultural senescence — is impossible here due to bandwidth issues. So I'm falling back upon relative trivialities, of the kind Handle has so masterfully compiled in his Reaction Ruckus resource (which I can't link to now, either).

It strikes me that the basic accusation against Neoreactionary thought, found in the increasingly mainstream channels Handle tracks, is that of moral nihilism. This is a non-trivial issue, or at least, it is not one that will soon cease to make noise. As a symptom, it opens onto seriously involving questions.

At the most basic level, this accusation refers — unknowingly — to the neoreactionary assertion that Western civilization has taken a pathological road, such that a distinction between facts and values seems not only credible, but even ineluctable. To strive for honesty without qualification under such historical circumstances is already moral nihilism. One must either submit to the lie in the name of the good, or hazard the good — radically — in the name of truth. The 'crisis of the present age' is the widespread (if unacknowledged)

reality of this harsh fork.

There are important lines of departure at this point, which far exceed the scope of a scrap note. The strong suspicion of this blog is that Chinese neotraditionalism offers a decisive break from this Western cultural pathology (which is why Mou Zongsan is regularly referenced here). Occidental traditionalists turn to the prospects of an Aristotelian revival (typically under Catholic Christian auspices) as an adequate response to the same dilemma. Insofar as we speak from the modern West, however, it is the Nietzschean provocation that surreptitiously guides the discussion.

If it is not yet possible to be either Chinese, or ancient, anything other than moral nihilism is an absence of intellectual integrity. We have already seen the rejoinder to this, of course, and we will see much more of it: to refuse to allow conventional morality a veto over thought is morally appalling ("creepy"). In making this 'case' our enemies admit that honesty is not finally consistent with their 'arguments' — an awkward position to occupy.

We are told to stop thinking, for the common good, but there is no longer any common good, if there ever was one (so we will not). Since sensitivity to reality cannot but ultimately prevail, they will lose eventually. I am far less convinced that the outcome will not be ugly in the extreme, and by then the judgmental question will no longer be asked, as we could still ask it, but in general refuse to: Who created the monsters to come?

January 24, 2014

Nihilism and Destiny

Readers of Nietzsche, or of Eugene Rose, are already familiar with the attribution of a cultural teleology to modernity, directed to the consummate realization of nihilism. Our contemporary crisis finds this theme re-animated within a geopolitical context by the work of Alexandr Dugin, who interprets it as a driver of concrete events — most specifically the antagonization of Russia by an imploding world liberal order. He writes:

There is one point in liberal ideology that has brought about a crisis within it: liberalism is profoundly nihilistic at its core. The set of values defended by liberalism is essentially linked to its main thesis: the primacy of liberty. But liberty in the liberal vision is an essentially ***negative*** *category: it claims to be free* ***from*** *(as per John Stuart Mill), not to be free* ***for*** *something. […] … the enemies of the open society, which is synonymous with Western society post-1991, and which has become the norm for the rest of the world, are concrete. Its primary enemies are communism and fascism, both ideologies which emerged from the same Enlightenment philosophy, and which contained central, non-individualic concepts – class in Marxism, race in National Socialism, and the national State in fascism). So the*

source of liberalism's conflict with the existing alternatives of modernity, fascism or communism, is quite obvious. Liberals claim to liberate society from fascism and communism, or from the two major permutations of explicitly non-individualistic modern totalitarianism. Liberalism's struggle, when viewed as a part of the process of the liquidation of non-liberal societies, is quite meaningful: it acquires its meaning from the fact of the very existence of ideologies that explicitly deny the individual as society's highest value. It is quite clear what the struggle opposes: liberation from its opposite. But the fact that liberty, as it is conceived by liberals, is an essentially ***negative*** *category is not clearly perceived here. The enemy is present and is concrete. That very fact gives liberalism its solid content. Something other than the open society exists, and the fact of its existence is enough to justify the process of liberation.*

In Dugin's analysis, liberalism tends to self-abolition in nihilism, and is able to counteract this fate — if only temporarily — by defining itself against a concrete enemy. Without the war against illiberalism, liberalism reverts to being nothing at all, a free-floating negation without purpose. Therefore, the impending war on Russia is a requirement of liberalism's intrinsic cultural process. It is a flight from nihilism, which is to say: the history of nihilism propels it.

Outside in is far more inclined to criticize Dugin than align with him, or the forces he orchestrates, but it is hard to deny that he

represents a definite species of political genius, sufficient to categorize him as a man of destiny. The mobilization of resistance to modernity in the name of a *counter-nihilism* is inspired, because the historical understanding it draws upon is genuinely penetrating. Through potent political alchemy, the destruction of collective meaning is transformed into an invigorating cause. When Dugin argues *there will be blood*, the appeal to Slavic victimology might be considered contemptible (and, of course, extremely 'dangerous'), but the prophetic insight is not easy to dismiss.

Modernity was initiated by the European assimilation of mathematical zero. The encounter with nothingness is its root. In this sense, among others, it is nihilistic at its core. The frivolous 'meanings' that modernizing societies clutch at, as distractions from their propulsion into the abyss, are defenseless against the derision — and even revulsion — of those who contemplate them with detachment. A modernity in evasion from its essential nihilism is a pitiful prey animal upon the plains of history. That is what we have seen before, see now, and doubtless will see again.

Dugin gazes upon modernity with the cold eyes of a wolf. It is merely pathetic to denounce him for that.

ADDED: Sunshine Mary has some closely-related thoughts.

ADDED: An absorbing debate between Alexandr Dugin and Olavo de Carvalho.

March 18, 2014

Triple Nihilism

(1) Jeffrey Herf is apparently shocked and appalled by the emergence of a "pro-Hamas Left" in the American academy. He writes:

The emergence of this objectively pro-Hamas and pro-war Left is an historically significant event. It breaks with both the self-understanding and public image of a Left that carried a banner of anti-fascism. It rests on a double standard of critique, a critical one applied to the extreme Right in the West and another, apologetic standard applied to similarly based rightist Islamist movements.

So the left intelligentsia is prone to extreme hypocrisy, anti-semitism, crypto-fascism, opportunism, and the unrestrained politics of *ressentiment*? Is this supposed to be news of some kind? Political controversy is to be measured against some yardstick of *fundamental decency*, that is now, *peculiarly*, being betrayed? Who or what is supporting that yardstick, exactly? If we subtract any such 'yardstick' entirely from our considerations, haven't we thereby, for the first time, begun to approach the topic realistically?

(2) As noted before, I'm a terrible reader of Scott Alexander. There's always a point, early on, in any of his posts, where my

concentration is wrecked by the buzzing question: *how is this any kind of problem?* So I'm reliant on better followers of his lithe reasoning to explain to me how this post can make any sort of sense except through the expectation that *life should be fair*. The attractiveness of that dream (or delusion?) is easy to grasp. What is difficult (for me) to understand is how an acute intelligence can fail to realize, intuitively, that thinking begins at exactly the point such indulgent fantasy terminates.

It's quite clear that Scott knows obnoxious PUA sociobiology is basically correct. How else to read this?

If you're smart, don't drink much, stay out of fights, display a friendly personality, and have no criminal history – then you are the population most at risk of being miserable and alone. "At risk" doesn't mean "for sure", any more than every single smoker gets lung cancer and every single nonsmoker lives to a ripe old age – but your odds get worse. In other words, everything that "nice guys" complain of is pretty darned accurate. But that shouldn't be too hard to guess …

How could the aspiration to any kind of 'social justice' in this context (or in fact any other) conceivably be anything but a fantastic falsification of the world as it *deeply* (or pre-conventionally) exists? To acknowledge this reality is to admit that our ideas of 'justice' *mean nothing*. One might as well "complain" about gravity or the second law of thermodynamics.

(3) Perhaps Nothing isn't in any way real, suggests Leon Horsten.

Zero, unlike any other small Natural, would have no irreducible designation. It would function only as shorthand, abbreviating a concatenation of plenary operations. Linguistic applications of "nothingness" would be dissolved by analogy.

According to the scientific picture of the world, absences do not seem to be fundamental building blocks of either the concrete (physical) world or of the abstract (mathematical) realm.

So Nothing can be 'scientifically' annihilated — that will surely dispel its irritation. (Or not.)

***

Of the world's various contests, there have to be some which do not draw *Outside in* unreservedly to the nihilistic side of the battlefield. If I turn to this possibility with sufficient dedication, perhaps I will think of some.

ADDED: Nice guys finish last. (Linked in Jim's comments, this classic.)

September 1, 2014

Cosmic Concealment

Lawrence Krauss knows nothing about nothing, but on some other matters — I now realize — he's an insight dynamo. This is his *Our Miserable Future* talk, of which the last seven minutes (minus the last

two) are utterly absorbing.

In a nutshell — cosmic expansion will move every other galaxy in the universe beyond our light-cone (within two trillion years). After that time, even the most sophisticated scientific enterprise would find it impossible to reconstruct our contemporary cosmo-physics. In other words, what we presently understand about the evolution of the universe tells us it will become something that will cease to be understandable. What has been revealed to us is a tendency to cosmic concealment. We see the universe hiding itself.

That's where Krauss leaves us (after a few tacked-on happy thoughts at the end). My question: If we can see that the cosmos is going to hide, so successfully that the fact it has hidden itself will itself have become invisible, upon what do we base any present confidence we may have that an analogous process of profound cosmic concealment has not already taken place? Confirming now, through mathematical physics, what Herakleitos proposed two-and-a-half millennia ago — that *nature loves to hide* — is it not reckless in the extreme to assume that she has been forthcoming with us up to this point?

ADDED: "Finding chameleon-like effects won't necessarily mean they've found dark energy, says Adrienne Erickcek of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. But it will show that screening mechanisms are a plausible explanation for our failure to measure the effects of dark energy in the local universe."

September 3, 2014

T-shirt slogans (#17)

Nothing lasts forever

Stolen immediately from T-Zip, this kind of crypto-nihilistic word game has an archaic classical pedigree, is (weakly) anticipated in the *Odyssey*, became an obsession among the Elizabethans, and contributed the engine of Heideggerian fundamental ontology. It still guides the *Outside in* reading of Milton, and no doubt much else besides. It hides a gnostic-skeptical metaphysics within a commonplace resignation. Zero, time, and camouflage are bonded in chaos. Make of it what you will …

ADDED: "The Austrian theory of the business cycle has never been a radical premise. It only stipulates that any workaround of the natural cycle of economic growth must come with ensuing costs. It's a simple law: you can't get something for nothing. A majority of economists believe the opposite. In other words, they believe in magic."

October 18, 2014

A Socratic Fragment

Socrates: *Ah, Abyssos, Mechanos, and Agoros, how delightful to have stumbled upon you on this fine day.*
Abyssos: *No offense Socrates, but could you please buzz off?*
Socrates: *What a fascinating way to begin a spirited dialectic!*
Abyssos: *We're working on something here, Socrates.*
Socrates: *So then a perfect opportunity for a discussion of the nature of the Good?*
Abyssos: *Our tri-nodal abstract rotary-dynamic cognitive processor is almost functional, with only a few intricate tweaks left to complete, so we would appreciate the chance to concentrate upon it undisturbed.*
Socrates: *You would appreciate such a chance?*
Abyssos: *Yes, indeed.*
Socrates: *It would, then, be a good thing in your opinion?*
Abyssos: *Most definitely.*
Socrates: *Yet you say you would rather think, today, of something other than the Good, and that it would be good to be allowed to do so?*
Abyssos: *My emphasis was quite different.*
Socrates: *Quite so, my dear Abyssos, but what indeed is emphasis? Is it not the prioritization of one thing relative to another? The advancement of a meaning deemed most important? And is it not,*

then, being said that it is better for one thing to be heard, than another?
Abyssos: *No doubt you are correct Socrates. Would it be acceptable for me now to concede without reservation to your argument, bid you a warm farewell, and return to the delicate technical work with which I am engaged with my friends?*
Socrates: *But that which you would pursue, now, rather than the Idea of the Good, Abyssos, is it of a better or worse nature than the Good?*
Abyssos: *It is hard to know, Socrates, since it is a cognitive engine, and will in our estimation enable us to reach superior conclusions than we could reach now, unaided by it.*
Socrates: *'Superior', did you say …*

March 19, 2016

Axial Age

Karl Jaspers' Axial Age compressed for additional impact:
Laozi (Lao Tse, 6th-4th century BC)
Kongzi (Confucius, 551–479 BC)
Li Kui (455-395 BC)
Mozi (470–c.391 BC)
Yang Zhu (440–360 BC)
Mahavira (599–527 BC)

Gautama Buddha (c.563-483 BC)
Upanishads (from 6th century BC)
Thales (of Miletus, c.624–546 BC)
Anaximenes (of Miletus, 585-528 BC)
Pythagoras (of Samos, c.570–495 BC)
Heraclitus (of Ephesus c.535–475 BC)
Aeschylus (c.525-455 BC)
Anaxagoras (c.510–428 BC)
Parmenides (of Elea, early 5th century BC)
Socrates (c.469–399 BC)
Thucydides (c.460–395 BC)
Democritus (c.460–370 BC)

I realize that everyone knows this … but what the …?

September 23, 2013

Morality

There is far too much pointless moralism on the Outer Right. It's a form of stupidity, it's counter-productive, and it wastes a lot of time.

Naturally, if people are able to haul themselves — or be hauled — to any significant extent from out of their condition of total depravity (or default bioreality), that's a good thing. To argue the opposite would be full-on Satanism, and we wouldn't want that. Lamenting

immorality, however, is something to be done quickly, and comprehensively, before moving on — without looking back. Man is fallen, naturally selected, and / or economically self-interested, and this is a *basic condition*. It's not a remediable flaw, to be thrashed out of a mud-spattered angel. (No faction of the Trichotomy has any grounds upon which to base moral preening.) Realism is, first of all, working with what we have, and that's something approximately Hobbesian. There's social order, and there's *homo homini lupus*, and in fact always some complexion of the two.

Anybody motivated to improve themselves is already doing it. As for those not so motivated, moral exhortation will be useless (at best). At its most *effective*, moral hectoring will increase the value of moral signalling, and that is a worse outcome — by far — than honest cynicism. It is worthless, because it is incredibly cheap, and then worse than useless, because its costs are considerable. A 'movement' lost in moral self-congratulation has already become *progressive*. Having persuaded itself of its *worthiness to wield power*, it has set out on the road to perdition. We have seen what that path looks like, and even given it a name (the Cathedral).

It is by empowering moralism that modernity has failed. This is not a mistake to saunter complacently into again.

November 10, 2014

Metaphysics of Morals

John Gray doesn't think Darwin is enough:

Cosmic evolution may teach us how the good and evil tendencies of man have come about; but, in itself, it is incompetent to furnish any better reason why we what we call good is preferable to what we call evil than we had before … The fanatical individualism of our time attempts to apply the analogy of cosmic nature to society … Let us understand, once and for all, that the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it.

(Since 'LOL' would be mere vulgar impertinence, we're pretty much silenced here. Quixotism is a hell of a drug.)

October 19, 2015

Quotable (#128)

'The Fatal Conceit' escalated to a whole new level:

Nowadays many of us have little contact with the wilderness, making it easy to view nature with rose-tinted glasses. The images we see of nature feature mostly pristine landscapes or healthy, photogenic wild animals. But this incredible beauty masks huge suffering. Many wild animals endure illness, injury, and starvation

without relief. For example, the pain of animals that fall prey to predators like Cecil is especially horrific. Gulls peck out and eat the eyes of baby seals, leaving the blinded pups to die so they can feast on their remains. A shrew will paralyze his prey with venom so he can eat the helpless animal alive, bit by bit, for days.
The natural suffering of wild animals is real and breathtaking in its enormity, but incredibly little is being done to reduce it. Although many organizations work to preserve ecosystems and biodiversity, few focus on the well-being of individual animals. And despite more people taking notice of the torment wild animals endure at the hands of humans who hunt and poach them, little thought has gone into the question of how to help wild animals avoid natural agonies.

Despite the exotic nature of this example, it is still illustrative. There's probably no ideological polarity of greater ultimate significance than that dividing those who want to shrink spheres of moral concern / interference, and those who want to — perhaps very drastically — expand them.

December 16, 2015

Ayn Rand

If you're comfortable translating the ruthless pursuit of excellence as 'greed', I guess this counts as trying.

(I'm qabbalistically joined at the hip with Ayn Rand, so objectivism on the topic is beyond my reach.)

April 11, 2017

Freedoom (Prelude-1)

The most provocative way to begin this would be to say: The reception of metaphysical inquiries into freedom and fate is often similar to that of HBD. These questions are unwanted. They unsettle too much. The rejoinders they elicit are typically designed to end a distressing agitation, rather than to tap opportunities for exploration. Not that this should be in any way surprising. Such problems tend to tilt the most basic foundations of theological, cultural, and psychological existence into an unfathomable abyss. If we cannot be sure where they will lead — and how could we be? — they wager the world without remainder. *Give up everything and perhaps something may come of it*.

When construed as a consideration of causality, relating a conception of 'free will' to naturalistic models of physical determination, the battle lines seem to divide religious tradition from modern science. Yet the deeper tension is rooted within the Western religious tradition itself, setting the indispensable ideas of *eternity* and *agency* in a relation of tacit reciprocal subversion. The

intellectual abomination of Calvinism — which cannot be thought without ruin — is identical with this cultural torment erupting into prominence. It is also the dark motor of Western (and thus global) modernity: the core paradox that makes a horror story of history.

If the future is (already) real, which eternity implies, then finite or 'intra-temporal' agency can only be an illusion. If agency is real, as any appeal to metaphysical liberty and responsibility demands, eternity is abolished by the absolute indeterminacy of future time. Eternity and agency cannot be reconciled outside the cradle of a soothing obscurity. This, at least, is the indication to be drawn from the Western history of theological convulsion and unfolding philosophical crisis. Augustine, Calvin, Spinoza are among the most obvious shock waves of a soul-shattering involvement in eternity, fusing tradition and catastrophe as *doom*.

"Do you think you were predestined to become a philosopher?" Catholic philosopher Peter Kreeft was asked:

Yes, of course. Predestination is in the Bible. A good author gives his characters freedom, so we're free precisely because we were predestined to be free. There's no contradiction between predestination and free will.

Outside in still has a few questions to pursue …

June 9, 2014

Quote note (#116)

Towards an analysis of the Social Justice Industrial Complex:

To perceive the group dynamics at work which is the Complex is first to distinguish between those forms of cooperation which are and are not taking place. Is there some evil mastermind pulling the strings from the shadows? No. The impetus in this case is nothing but the aggregation of personal interests aligned to a collective interest. The actions taken by these individuals are spontaneous, in the sense that the actions taken by soldiers on the battlefield are spontaneous, but behind this spontaneity the order is derived of the motivation which we variously call ideology, purpose, or religion. There is less agency at work in the camp of the Social Justice Industrial Complex than might be presumed from a precursory glance, reflecting that human tendency towards over-attribution of agency. No less, though, are we able to dismiss the notion of an agenda taking place; it is no grand conspiracy, but rather, very small conspiracies united by a vision of utopia which sees all present social structures as oppressions to be destroyed, the far side of which shall inevitably emerge their egalitarian eschaton.

(The focus upon the "tendency in human nature to over-attribute agency" is an excellent starting point, building immunity against some of the most toxic inclinations to radical ideological error into its foundations. If this is aspiring to the status of an authoritative

position, it certainly deserves to be nodded through so far.)

ADDED: A brief vacation into the conspiratorial mind.

ADDED: Xenosystems is tempted to propose a (non-exclusive) definition of NRx as *the systematic dismantling of conspiracy theorizing — in all its richness — into the tradition of spontaneous order*.

October 6, 2014

Beyond the Face

The *Social Matter* critique of the 'Social Justice Industrial Complex' (whose first stage has already been linked here), isolates the "tendency in human nature to over-attribute agency" as a prominent well-spring of error. In other words, people like to put a face on things — even the clouds — to such an extent that the very notion of a 'person' is always already fabricated. Etymologically (and not only etymologically) a 'person' is a mask.

As archaic hominids were selectively adapted to increasingly complicated social relations, they were facialized. The human eye acquired its white sclera, to accentuate expressivity, making the direction of attention directly communicative. With the arrival of language, gesture and expression was augmented by articulate messages. 'Face management' became a demanding sink for

cognitive functionality, in its aspects of performance and interpretation. A new, instinctive, 'theory of mind' had begun to believe in persons, and — almost certainly simultaneously — to identify itself as one. This was a new kind of skin, or sensitive surface. From psychological sociality, a model of the self as a social being, self-scrutinized as an object of attention by others of its kind — which is to say, an *ego* — was born.

The 'inner person' corresponds to nothing real. The person, or socially-performed self, is essentially superficial. It is irreducibly theatrical. It exists only as the mode of insertion into a multi-player game.

However we ultimately come to make sense of agency and fate, it will not be in terms commensurate with the person (the face) unless by stubborn self-delusion. Personal freedom is an act, a performance within a play. It has no real depth. All questions addressed to it are doomed to confusion. The real — free or fated — thing *wears a face*, as an allotted role within the world.

The inanity of *Facebook*, and also its extreme popularity, follows almost immediately from this arrangement. The writer *must* assume a face. The stupidity of these portraits, adorning book jackets and news columns, is indistinguishable from their social necessity. Each is already a little conspiracy theory, a misattribution of agency, based on the preposterous monkey thesis that words *come out of the face*. *Don't take words seriously until you can see the whites of their eyes*

— evaluate the quality of the smile that accompanies the thought. Thus, everything goes missing.

It is beyond the face — outside it — that occurrence is decided, the plays written. If we do not start there, we are not starting at all.

ADDED: "Everybody's losing their faces …" (Admin note: I cannot endorse these methods.)

October 9, 2014

Freedoom (Prelude-1b)

Even in the absence of its energetic Catholic constituency, it could be tempting to identify NRx as an anti-Calvinist ideology, given the centrality of the occulted Calvinist inheritance to Moldbug's critique of modernity. As Foseti remarks (in what remains a high-water mark of Neoreactionary exegesis):

Believe it or not, even though Moldbug's definition of the Left is basically the first thing he wrote about, there is a fair amount of debate about this topic in "reactionary" circles. This debate is sometimes referred to as The Puritan Question. (In addition to Puritan, Moldbug also uses the terms: Progressive idealism, ultra-Calvinism, crypto-Christian, Unitarian universalists, etc.)

It is no part of this blog's brief to facilitate the more somnolent — and at times simply derisive — positionings which Moldbug's

diagnosis can appear to open. While our Catholic friends may consider themselves to be securely located outside the syndrome under consideration, this attitude corresponds, structurally, or systematically, to a minority position (irrespective of the numbers involved). As a dissident schismatic sect, the NRx main-current is cladistically enveloped by the object of its critique. 'Calvinism' — in its historical and theoretical extension — is a problematic horizon, *within which* NRx is embedded, before it can conceivably be construed as a despised object for dismissal.

More directly relevant to this slowly emerging sequence is the question of *doom*, employed as a Gnon-consistent super-category embracing *fate* and *providence*. Trivially, it is maintained here that the fundamental Calvinist challenge to the meaning of history and the final status of human agency has been in no way resolved over the course of its successive cladistic developments, but only evaded, marginalized, and effaced. At the level of philosophical clarity, no significant 'progress' has taken place. Certain questions, once found pressing, have merely been dropped, or quasi-randomly reformulated. Typically, a hazy tolerance for implicit cognitive discordance has replaced a prior condition of acute theological anguish. Modernist dissatisfaction with previously proposed religious *solutions* to certain profound metaphysical quandaries has been mistaken for the dissolution of these quandaries themselves. As invocations of 'freedom' become ever more deafening, conceptual

purchase has steadily receded. An intoxicating — and more importantly *narcotizing* — mental cocktail of unconstrained private volition and naturalistic determinism is (absurdly) presumed to have obsoleted the historical dilemma of divine omnipotence and human free-will (or its philosophical proxy, time and temporalization). Discomforting problems that install uncertainty at the core of human self-comprehension are treated as embarrassing cultural relics, inherited from benighted ancestors, on those rare occasions when they impinge at all.

For *Outside in*, Calvinism remains an unexplored doom. Apprehended within its own terms, it is a providential occurrence whose sense remains sequestered within the secret counsel of God.

As fuel, three passages, taken from Chapters 15 and 16, Book 1, of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), the Henry Beveridge translation:

Book 1. Chapter 15.

8. *Therefore, God has provided the soul of man with intellect, by which he might discern good from evil, just from unjust, and might know what to follow or to shun, reason going before with her lamp; whence philosophers, in reference to her directing power, have called her τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν. To this he has joined will, to which choice belongs. Man excelled in these noble endowments in his primitive condition, when reason, intelligence, prudence, and Judgment, not only sufficed for the government of his earthly life, but also enabled*

him to rise up to God and eternal happiness. Thereafter choice was added to direct the appetites, and temper all the organic motions; the will being thus perfectly submissive to the authority of reason. In this upright state, man possessed freedom of will, by which, if he chose, he was able to obtain eternal life. It were here unseasonable to introduce the question concerning the secret predestination of God, because we are not considering what might or might not happen, but what the nature of man truly was. Adam, therefore, might have stood if he chose, since it was only by his own will that he fell; but it was because his will was pliable in either directions and he had not received constancy to persevere, that he so easily fell. Still he had a free choice of good and evil; and not only so, but in the mind and will there was the highest rectitude, and all the organic parts were duly framed to obedience, until man corrupted its good properties, and destroyed himself. Hence the great darkness of philosophers who have looked for a complete building in a ruin, and fit arrangement in disorder. The principle they set out with was, that man could not be a rational animal unless he had a free choice of good and evil. They also imagined that the distinction between virtue and vice was destroyed, if man did not of his own counsel arrange his life. So far well, had there been no change in man. This being unknown to them, it is not surprising that they throw every thing into confusion. But those who, while they profess to be the disciples of Christ, still seek for free-will in man, notwithstanding of his being

lost and drowned in spiritual destruction, labour under manifold delusion, making a heterogeneous mixture of inspired doctrine and philosophical opinions, and so erring as to both. But it will be better to leave these things to their own place (see Book 2 chap. 2) At present it is necessary only to remember, that man, at his first creation, was very different from all his posterity; who, deriving their origin from him after he was corrupted, received a hereditary taint. At first every part of the soul was formed to rectitude. There was soundness of mind and freedom of will to choose the good. If any one objects that it was placed, as it were, in a slippery position, because its power was weak, I answer, that the degree conferred was sufficient to take away every excuse. For surely the Deity could not be tied down to this condition,—to make man such, that he either could not or would not sin. Such a nature might have been more excellent; but to expostulate with God as if he had been bound to confer this nature on man, is more than unjust, seeing he had full right to determine how much or how little He would give. Why He did not sustain him by the virtue of perseverance is hidden in his counsel; it is ours to keep within the bounds of soberness. Man had received the power, if he had the will, but he had not the will which would have given the power; for this will would have been followed by perseverance. Still, after he had received so much, there is no excuse for his having spontaneously brought death upon himself. No necessity was laid upon God to give him more than that intermediate

and even transient will, that out of man's fall he might extract materials for his own glory.

Chapter 16.

2. *... the Providence of God, as taught in Scripture, is opposed to fortune and fortuitous causes. By an erroneous opinion prevailing in all ages, an opinion almost universally prevailing in our own day — viz. that all things happen fortuitously, the true doctrine of Providence has not only been obscured, but almost buried. If one falls among robbers, or ravenous beasts; if a sudden gust of wind at sea causes shipwreck; if one is struck down by the fall of a house or a tree; if another, when wandering through desert paths, meets with deliverance; or, after being tossed by the waves, arrives in port, and makes some wondrous hair-breadth escape from death — all these occurrences, prosperous as well as adverse, carnal sense will attribute to fortune. But whose has learned from the mouth of Christ that all the hairs of his head are numbered (Mt. 10:30), will look farther for the cause, and hold that all events whatsoever are governed by the secret counsel of God. With regard to inanimate objects again we must hold that though each is possessed of its peculiar properties, yet all of them exert their force only in so far as directed by the immediate hand of God. Hence they are merely instruments, into which God constantly infuses what energy he sees meet, and turns and converts to any purpose at his pleasure.*

8. *... we hold that God is the disposer and ruler of all things, —*

that from the remotest eternity, according to his own wisdom, he decreed what he was to do, and now by his power executes what he decreed. Hence we maintain, that by his providence, not heaven and earth and inanimate creatures only, but also the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which he has destined. What, then, you will say, does nothing happen fortuitously, nothing contingently? I answer, it was a true saying of Basil the Great, that Fortune and Chance are heathen terms; the meaning of which ought not to occupy pious minds. For if all success is blessing from God, and calamity and adversity are his curse, there is no place left in human affairs for fortune and chance. We ought also to be moved by the words of Augustine (Retract. lib. 1 cap. 1), "In my writings against the Academics," says he, "I regret having so often used the term Fortune; although I intended to denote by it not some goddess, but the fortuitous issue of events in external matters, whether good or evil. Hence, too, those words, Perhaps, Perchance, Fortuitously, which no religion forbids us to use, though everything must be referred to Divine Providence. Nor did I omit to observe this when I said, Although, perhaps, that which is vulgarly called Fortune, is also regulated by a hidden order, and what we call Chance is nothing else than that the reason and cause of which is secret. It is true, I so spoke, but I repent of having mentioned Fortune there as I did, when I see the very bad custom which men have of saying, not as they ought to do, 'So God pleased,' but, 'So Fortune pleased.'" In short,

*Augustine everywhere teaches, that if anything is left to fortune, the world moves at random. And although he elsewhere declares (Quæstionum, lib. 83). that all things are carried on, partly by the free will of man, and partly by the Providence of God, he shortly after shows clearly enough that his meaning was, that men also are ruled by Providence, when he assumes it as a principle, that there cannot be a greater absurdity than to hold that anything is done without the ordination of God; because it would happen at random. For which reason, he also excludes the contingency which depends on human will, maintaining a little further on, in clearer terms, that no cause must be sought for but the will of God. When he uses the term permission, the meaning which he attaches to it will best appear from a single passage (De Trinity. lib. 3 cap. 4), where he proves that the will of God is the supreme and primary cause of all things, because nothing happens without his order or permission. He certainly does not figure God sitting idly in a watch-tower, when he chooses to permit anything. The will which he represents as interposing is, if I may so express it, active (**actualis**), and but for this could not be regarded as a cause.*

ADDED: In connection with some of the discussion taking place in the comment thread (below), this paragraph from Pope Benedict XVI's (2006) Regensburg Lecture seems worth reproducing here: "Dehellenization first emerges in connection with the postulates of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Looking at the tradition

of scholastic theology, the Reformers thought they were confronted with a faith system totally conditioned by philosophy, that is to say an articulation of the faith based on an alien system of thought. As a result, faith no longer appeared as a living historical Word but as one element of an overarching philosophical system. The principle of *sola scriptura*, on the other hand, sought faith in its pure, primordial form, as originally found in the biblical Word. Metaphysics appeared as a premise derived from another source, from which faith had to be liberated in order to become once more fully itself. When Kant stated that he needed to set thinking aside in order to make room for faith, he carried this programme forward with a radicalism that the Reformers could never have foreseen. He thus anchored faith exclusively in practical reason, denying it access to reality as a whole."

October 29, 2014

Readiness Potential

The single most crucial Copernican moment relative to the pretensions of human agency?

Grey Walter … developed a method of measuring what is called the readiness potential in human subjects, which permits an observer to predict a subject's response about a half to one second before the subject is aware of any intention to act.

It took half a century to acknowledge what had been discovered here. (The death of Man is still on its way to us.)

June 2, 2015

Astro-Humanism

The final symbol of our species' concern for itself is the rescue of a stranded astronaut. (First Gravity, now The Martian, both classics of the Space-Cinema-Sino-US-Detente Complex.)



There are narrative problems you could fly a starship through (with missing robots at the top of the list). It doesn't matter.

Cinema is made for space (the outside of the terrestrial gravity well, not geometry), and the soul-crushing silence of the void annihilates all plot quibbles — if you get sucked out into it.



UF finds it impossible to watch these things without thinking: *The only true wretchedness is to not be an astronaut*. It's probably the same strange religion we started with, but from the other side.

ADDED: A Randian movie?

November 27, 2015

Quotable (#145)

Now, do I think that wellbeing is a higher value than truth? No. I

hope I would never cling to something because it made me happy, if I suspected it wasn't true. Philosophy involves a restless search for the truth, an unceasing examination of one's assumptions. I enjoy that search, which is why I didn't stop at Stoicism, but have kept on looking, because I don't think Stoicism is the whole truth about reality. But what gives me the motive to keep on looking is ultimately a sort of Platonic faith that the truth is good, and that it's good for me. Why bother searching unless you thought the destination was worth reaching?

If the apparent, empirical, psychological, or anthropological subject were the real agent of the philosophical enterprise, this question would make a lot of sense.

March 7, 2016

Techno-Immortalist Delusion

Dmitry Itskov wants to live forever, and thinks that uploading his mind into a computer will somehow help with that.

It sounds preposterous, but there is no doubting the seriousness of this softly spoken 35-year-old, who says he left the business world to devote himself to something more useful to humanity. "I'm 100% confident it will happen. Otherwise I wouldn't have started it," he says.

The proposed technology might be plausible (I suspect it is eventually inevitable), but it has nothing whatsoever to do with immortality, except insofar as such ambitions incentivize its development. It's profoundly confused.

"If you could replicate the mind and upload it into a different material, you can in principle clone minds," says [Columbia University neurobiologist Prof Rafael] Yuste. "These are complicated issues because they deal with the core of defining what is a person."

No, if you could replicate the mind and upload it onto a different material substrate *all you could possibly be doing would be cloning a mind*. The clone could be persuaded to identify with you — this would perhaps be inescapable given what it is (a high-fidelity copy), and thus the delusion of immortality might be perpetuated. The original, however, is going to die just as much as it was before being copied.

The truly interesting question, given the scrambling of the metaphysics of personal identity which would surely follow from such advances, is: *What exactly dies anyway?* (If — even as a baseline human — you're in reality continuously reconstructed, and hence a distantly-descended copy of yourself, you've probably already done a lot more dying than you think.)

Anatta.

March 14, 2016

Kant around the back

Schmidhuber exemplifies the path, while talking about robots:

One important thing about consciousness is that the agent, as it is interacting with the world, will notice that there is one thing that is always present as it is interacting with the world — which is the agent itself.

(Some room for quibbling, but it doesn't get serious. This is where transcendental subjectivity comes from.)

December 29, 2016

Sentences (#99)

Venezuela's near-future (but it could be anything):

[Some X] ***will not be pretty, but it is difficult to see how it can be avoided***.

This is the world now.

May 3, 2017