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Theses on Political Reimagination

ABSTRACT

As bureaucracy takes over as the general mediator between both master and slave and war and peace, its logic imposes the demise of the sacredness of democracy at the hands of a continuum of corruption. This epochal change calls for a reassessment of the underpinnings of political philosophy. Here the attempt is made to sketch some of their crucial, crucifying conditionings.

KEYWORDS

Political Representation; Bureaucracy; Democracy; Political Power.

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1

Now – This is just beginning, so it is too early for the truth. The adventures of war and peace cut across eras of danger; bureaucracy stands between and above war and peace during times of calculating risk. The bureaucrat intercedes between master and slave to cash in reasonable percentages and probably dominate this risky age, where the battles between capital and democracy neutralize subjects and push experience back. Oubliez la démocratie ; ou(bliez) le totalitarisme ! Ils ne sont que des étiquettes à couvrir la *Realpolitik*, ou bien le labyrinthe de la corruption. Démocratie, mésalliance avec les bassesses du capital; totalitarisme, mésalliance avec soi-même. Oubliez et regardez : on n'a que les images de la corruption. Entre le manque héroïque d'imagination résistante du gauchisme poussé et le sphincter relâché de l'anti-imaginaire néolibéral, il n'y a que peu à choisir.

2

Not now – Watchers call the present *now*: a neutral seed parachuted into this instant to coincide with it and draw its substance from this coincidence. The *now*



belongs to neither lived logic
nor the logic of the living; as
Zeno's midpoint, it is super-

imposed on experience to hide it from the quickening whirlwind that collapses smallness into its absurd self. The *now* does neither mediate between past and future nor lets one flow into the other. But take it out of nature and throw it in a landlocked polis: as soon as the carnival starts the *now* puts on the mask of the zero degree of represented experience. Representation is inherently political mastery (*Vorstellung heisst Vertretung*), for it replaces and re-presents without releasing what it represents. The *now* represents politically the temporality of experience in the polis.

3

The present of experience – In deriving “present” from the Latin *praesens* (participle of *prae + essere*, to be before something; to rule over something; to lead, or command), traditional etymology underscores the mastery of the *now*. An alternate route leads to *prae + sentire* [participle *sēnsūm*, etc.: to sense] to invoke the displacement of the event and its perception. While coeval, the two are not exactly synchronous, in the sense in which two systems of measurement would fail to coincide. *Praesens* names either of two things: (1) foresight – one senses what is to come before it actually falls under the senses; or (2) aftersight – the event occurs before it is perceived. In both cases the present of experience is tied to perception, be that sense- or inner-sense. The present of experience is not unitary but dual, thus multiple.

4

Realerfahrung – The ancients' taste for prophecy, tragedy and the intensity of desire finds its counter-coin in the moderns' penchant for surprise, novelty and objects of desire. Foresight governs ancient experience, aftersight – the modern. Foresight as aftersight is called either *melancholia* or humility; aftersight as foresight – *l'esprit d'escalier*, or the moderns' fetish for systems. To both the moderns and the ancients, ecstatic presents are granted to and by exceptional experiences. They collapse events and their sensing – the *aion*, Aquinas' *nunc stans*, the Kantian sublime, Benjamin's *Jetztzeit*, or bodily democratic tourism's orgasm – as intersections of time's finiteness and infinity. The representational and causal characters of such experiences tend to zero; but representation will zero in on all other instances of experience so as to take revenge and charge and impose itself with the ruthless jealousy of Realpolitik. Real experience is determined by the duality of its present and threatened with extermination by unitary experience and Realpolitik alike, both of which are the extreme limits of *Realerfahrung*. As experience grounds its own scavenging abstraction, its temporality gets expanded to the 'objectively' named past-present-future. As soon as this trinity is deemed real and confirmed by practice, the damage has already been done: the present of experience is hidden and forgotten — maybe because it wants to. Nature likes to hide, after all and before each.

The Loop – Politics empowers itself from either the transcendental (*la politique de dieu* and the Law-like implemented policies), or the dirty immanent (“the loop”). As existential decision is the allegory of life, political decision is the allegory of politics; and nothing is safe from the latter unless it is sheltered in the devastation of the former. Political decision is present as the logical consequence of its future consequences, as the environment of another environment: *kenosis* at two removes from the event. The loop creates an empty present: in it events get lost, whose virtuality remains vivid. In the loop, the present as the logical consequence of its temporal consequences becomes the object: the present is moved into the objects’ imperceptible past. This trade offers legitimacy at the expense of experience. The loop is the generative figure of the political in modernity, self-grounded under the suspicion of its own illegitimacy. The condition of corruption is this: to a growth of power there corresponds a shrinking of responsibility; at the limit, absolute power corrupts absolutely. In the loop, the world of ethics has already been overcome; today this is called political correctness, or the way in which the ethical gives way to the political, thereby offering transparent subjects ready at hand for political processing. The bureaucratic neutralization of the subject and colonization of the void name the present state and crisis, against which political reimagination might rear a sombre claim.



Images – As reproductive and retro-active products of imaging, images arrest imagination. Their essential aftersight is covered up as frozen time and language. A favored time dealer in modernity, the image witnesses to the mastery of the *now*. The arrest of imagination in the image is politically driven, resulting in the identification of the image with the loop and in the glorification of imitated virtue’s victory over the original sin. On the contrary, Benjamin’s genuine, suddenly emergent dialectical image is dialectics at a standstill, “wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation” in language [*Arcades*, 462; n2a, 3]. As a reaction to both Benjamin’s weak prophecy of sheer loss and the empty present of the loop as a useful image, one needs to reimagine the image.

Reimagination – What Renaissance are we to hope for at the end of this Dork Age?

It would be utopian to dream, across the bureaucratic chasm, of going back to the naturalness of war-and-peace. To overcome the techno-politics of the image-loop one needs to defrost the image, switch the code, and go ahead faster than images could clot. Reimagination is the intertwining of the imaginal and the Kierkegaardian repetition, tailored to avoid the pains which imagination had to endure at the hands of reason, religion, Aristotle and his followers. Reimagination moves against the lines of representation; it refuses the retro-directness of presentation, which is the hopeless hope harbored by whoever is caught in the network of representation (such presentation



is itself a perverse construct of representation eliciting the waiting for the miracles that give responsibility its negative aura). Reimagining alternate futures as temporalities neither prophetic nor predictable. Reimagination helps knowledge trade its legitimized position – being squeezed between fear and desire – for an in-betweenness that fears neither desire nor creation nor other new beginnings. Reimagination takes the image filling the loop of the empty present, to switch it into foresight, where it may coincide with its fearless other only; it the

median point assigned to it by classical and non-classical psychology alike. Not de-composition and re-composition of the image ensue – which assume the entirety of the image – but its fragmentation (in Fr. Schlegel's sense) within the prolepsis of the image. The reimagined image may be no conclusion, and, thus, no universal mediator. Today's mediocre boredom of comfort is complemented by prediction as a shield against the fear of the future. One should not kneel down before a loser-friendly world, but rekindle one's foresight.