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Apocalypse Now

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Every theology, as with archaic societies, has its own eschatology. Endings precipitate new beginnings, and beginnings recapitulate the original cosmogonic acts of endings that preceded it, the Chaos before Creation. Ending conditions Beginning. Openings come from Closings. A new state emerges from death as a rising phoenix. Restoration, regeneration, and rebirth are new creations that imply a return to paradise – an Eden – the original state of man. Fall and return from the order of being is an oscillating narrative spread throughout human history, only the contexts and details vary. In eschatological prophecies, recovering the lost perfection of beginnings is an unconscious motivation in the destruction and abolition of the world, symbolic or otherwise, for the pining to return to a so-called state of ecstasy as recapitulation of the perfection of origin as lost paradise fuels the human fantasy of pure bliss. There is no such thing and there never was or will be. But this fantasy is far from dead. In more sophisticated cosmogonies, the restoration as renewal of the cosmos is achieved symbolically by summoning the original bliss of beginning as recovered in its absolute reality: what was lost in its original perfection is now returned. What was lost is recovered anew, reinstated in all its glory *in illo tempore*.

Mircea Eliade, in various works, elaborates on the phenomenology of eschatology in a variety of cultures. The notion of the perfection at the beginning is absorbed into cosmogonic celebrations, such as the observance of cosmic cycles or the circularity of the new year that brings about renewal and reinstatements of origins. A closely associated idea that developed alongside cosmogonic observance was the notion that in order for something truly new to begin, all elements and remnants of the old cycle must be completely destroyed. As Eliade puts it:

to obtain an *absolute* beginning, the end of a World must be total.

Eschatology is only the prefiguration of a cosmogony to come. But every eschatology insists on this fact: the New Creation cannot take place before this world is abolished once and for all. There is no question of regenerating what has degenerated; nothing will serve but to destroy the old world so that it can be re-created *in toto*. The obsession with the bliss of the beginnings demands the destruction of all that has existed – and

hence has degenerated – since the beginning of the World; there is no other way to restore the initial perfection.¹

Myths of the End of the World have suffused the social fabrics and historical developments of human civilization. These particularly play a central role in the three Abrahamic monotheistic religions in their various conceptions of the apocalypse, cataclysm, or Armageddon. The fixation of the believer is on the recapitulation of the primordial past *ab origine* fulfilled through the deliverance of a divine future, a World to Come that brings about an ecstatic reunion with God. This merger fantasy of achieving divine perfection and elation with the godhead fuels cosmogonies of the future, as we may observe in all the major world religions, not just the Abrahamic ones.

From a psychoanalytic point of view, obsessional fixation with ἔσχατος – the End, the Last, Finality – belies an unconscious anxiety about death. Mortality, finitude, and death are so emotionally difficult to existentially embrace that psychic defenses of the masses over the eons have ingeniously invented escape hatches in our sublimated forms of religious doctrine. In the Abrahamic traditions, in Christianity we have a happy ending fairy-tale drama come true through the destruction of evil and the profane for a better world of purity and rapture. The fate of the soul and humankind is at stake, subject to divine judgment and violent world events that bring about salvation, hence a return to perfection and the loving embrace of The Maker, who has a place for you in his beatific family in the kingdom of heaven if you are a good boy or girl. Although versions (Christian and otherwise) of this absurd and “patently infantile” fantasy of an afterlife is cherished by most of the world population,² we may nevertheless observe how far the desirous intellect of social collectives will go to ensure its ultimate wish-fulfillment.

Given that myths of global cataclysm are universally widespread, it speaks to a collective psyche ensconced in anxiety about death, redemption, release from suffering, and in most eschatologies, an afterlife. It further speaks to a global fantasy of what could be termed ‘biblical proportions’ in the triumph of good by vanquishing evil, where a new world is recreated and restored to its original significance and purity, sin is eradicated, the human race obliterated as we know it, and renewal and regeneration achieved through the emergence of a new humanity. Here eschatology, cosmogony, and divine will converge in a fantasy of an end to come that is rife with apocalyptic prophecies, visions, and religious discourse spanning across almost all cultures. In monotheistic traditions, the End of Days is accompanied by the culmination and triumph of sacred history, total destruction of mankind, resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment, the restoration of Paradise, and the final fate of humanity following deific destiny. Regardless of cultural myth, catastrophe is universal. Despite cultural variations on how the godhead is conceived, world extinction is inescapable.

On Sin

The total destruction of the world by divine providence is predicated on humanity’s sin. Otherwise, why would an all good and loving Father kill his children? After all, transgression, folly, weakness of will, and wickedness deserve no forgiveness from a gentle Master. But setting aside for a moment the fantasy of a supreme supernatural psychopath cleansing the earth of its degenerated offspring, the term “sin” (ME *sinne* < OE *synn*) has other, less biblical, meanings. The word does not seem to come from Indo-European roots, but rather derived from *āken* (ache) in Low German and “blood guilt”

(ἄγος) in Hellenic.³ In Greek ἀμαρτάνω is to err. And from the Latin *sōns*, guilty, and *morbis sōnticus*, a disease or critical illness, but also, distress; that is, the word solely resides in the negative.

The problem of sin for Luther was quite simple: any veering away from (let alone negation of) God was blasphemy. But there is an even more base nefariousness to sin than this.⁴ In Heidegger's lectures on Luther (1924), with regards to the "Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam" [Disputation against Scholastic Theology] of 1517, he summarizes Thesis 17: "man wants to be God. And this is precisely the essence of sin."⁵ But for Luther, in fact, there is a two-fold instantiation of primordial sin: wanting to be God via negating God as God is the true essence of sin.⁶ In the mode of sin, man bears himself open, which is disclosed yet *in itself* remains occulted within one's nature. In other words, sin remains hidden within us even when externally absent. As Heidegger puts it, sin is a movement "as a mode of the being of man bears in itself."⁷ Wanting God not to be God and wanting to be God instead is not only the atheistic hubris of an omnipotent oedipal victory, it also means that God is not allowed to sin.⁸ This privilege is reserved for man in the mode of *wanting-to-be* God.⁹ For example, the radical instigation of murder by assuming terrorist actions on behalf of God and his divine law, let us say, is a grandiose exhibitionism of wanting to be God (or his emissary). Negation of the deity while wanting to be supreme, however, is the more original sin. Here it is only on the condition that one is acting as though they are divine or under God's will of moral deliverance that sin is occluded, for God *cannot* sin, a rather convenient exculpation.

But "the real sin" for Luther is "unbelief," the turning away from God [*aversio deī*] and his Word.¹⁰ Listening to another voice, another word, with another ear, is to be stirred up *against* the Almighty, and in doing so one loses their original being before God. By falling away in disbelief, withdrawal, and disobedience, heaping sin onto more sin, this perpetual negation and flight leads to eternal ruin. Adam even has the nerve to accuse God in order to excuse himself of his passions. But of course, the woman is ultimately to blame: Eve is the originator of sin [*auctor peccati*] for accusing God of creating the serpent of temptation – of desire, and for transferring guilt and contempt onto the Creator, the crescendo of projection.

How moral health became religionized surely has its roots in antiquity. Sin is a problem of ethics, moral failing, lack of virtue. Once originally attributed to the corruption of what was originally good, sin is now criminalized but not necessarily confined to the penal or mental institution. Sin may be relegated to moral judgment alone, internalized, interiorized, or impugned. Punishment may be public or private, reserved for a secret sacredness nonetheless. Justice is considered an act of moral righteousness, as fair *or* partial as that may be, one instituted into law, whether secular or holy. Society cannot function without law, above all the moral imperative: Thou shall not murder. Originally justice applied to failure to uphold divine law, the moral code of ordained values, where guilt was due to the noetic effects of sin (*privatio boni*).

Today the prevalence of sin among the masses may be seen as the result of social malaise, the sickness of universal spirit, a cultural neurosis where judgment, punishment, guilt, and shame are unconsciously mediated by a sick soul. Sin is displacement as a form of psychological suffering converted into symptomatology: the symptom becomes the punishment for failure to achieve a moral ideal. Neurotic guilt, anxiety, depression, reactionary trauma, and religious fanaticism (hysteria) become the

new conversion disorders of our day. But rather than see how suffering is due to the rigid application of moral appraisals and shadow projections onto human desire and action, where punishment fantasies populate conscious and unconscious life, our imperfect ways of being are amplified by cultural belief in divine judgment. even if agnosticized into the karmic universe of the populist new age. Here sin is not merely personal shortcoming, peccadillo, or turpitude; it is an offense to God.

The symptom of sin is based on a cruel conscience as the introjection of a harsh superego (*Über-Ich*). This cruel moral faculty becomes the ground and origin of law and hammer, decree and penalty. But this deific superego is not only unforgiving, it converts sin into crime against God, the ultimate taboo. In messianic or apocalyptic thinking, divine superego judgement applies to social disobedience against divinity, which is tantamount to collective collusion with nihilism as ethical irresponsibility in need of deracination and total destruction. And any enjoyment of sin – the pleasure of *jouissance*, is a capital offense. Sin is the symptom of a false morality interpassively superimposed on society as failure to live up to illusory values, such as purity and ideality. This ensures that no one is without sin or guilt. But guilty before whom? The Macroanthropos? And who is to blame for a suffering humanity, one that needs wiped out? Is this not God's sin?¹¹ And here we have the problem of theodicy, the vindication of God.

Apocalypse, Millennialism, and *Eschaton*

Consider this: Extraterrestrials, or ancient cosmic astronauts, are believed to have colonized earth, exploited its resources, genetically engineered and enslaved its inhabitants, and entered into nuclear war with rival factions that destroyed competing family clans and their planet circa 2100 BCE, destined to come again through the recapitulation of a predetermined cyclical Celestial Time four thousand years later: namely, Armageddon and the prophecy of Return, a messianic Second Coming, the End of Days predicted to occur before the end of our current age of Pisces.¹² What sounds like science fiction is touted to be the revelations of the *eschaton*, namely, that the past will repeat itself in a future world to come, that is, a world to end. The eternal return is a repetition of what has already occurred and will reoccur as humanity's preordained fate.

It is hard not to entertain that this type of thinking would abound among the ultra-religious, superstitious, paranoids, survivalists, fringe groups, and conspiracy theorists preparing for the cataclysm, such as what we observed at the turn of the new millennium – like the Y2K scare professing that computers would crash or debilitate mass information-communication technologies, thus leading to widespread power outages, food and fuel insecurities, and pandemonium to the point that billions were spent by governments and private industry alike to subvert the disaster. This so-called techno-apocalypse was further whipped up by Christian evangelists profiting on fear mongering while preaching the final days, and gladly passing around the collection plate to their congregations to enrich their ministries. This was further observed by the 2012 hysteria surrounding the forlorn prediction that the world would be destroyed on December 21 at the culmination of the Mayan calendar when the sun's magnetism and the earth's magnetic field would completely reverse, thereby producing pole shifts, sun storms, solar flares, nuclear engulfment, widespread earthquakes, tidal waves, ice lands, runaway poisonous gases, radioactive fallout, and the re-enactment of the biblical flood

where the earth's iron core implodes and nearly all of the planet's population perishes in apocalyptic horror. These claims were made by Patrick Geryl, author of an international bestseller called *The Orion Prophecy*, where he predicted world catastrophe via so-called "mathematical proof" based on Atlantean, Egyptian, and Mayan astronomical calculations and "secret codes" he deciphered, even going so far as to warn humanity in 2001 to prepare for survival:

Food supplies will be destroyed, medical care non-existent, rescue workers themselves will have perished. In short, without careful planning we won't make it. Therefore we must urgently form groups to start working on this enormous task. "Noah's Arks" will have to be built to get us through the tidal wave. Food and energy supplies will have to be built up. An endless number of things have to be done, and we only have a few years left before the fatal date.¹³

Of course, Geryl was deemed a nut and his prophecy a hoax.

Various cults and fundamentalists of all types gravitate toward apocalyptic thinking not simply for eschatological reasons, but due to social conditioning, familial and cultural trauma, economic disenfranchisement, reactionary defense, and psychological disturbance of many kinds, even if benign or based in fear and ignorance due to lack of knowledge, as we may witness in many developing "third-world" countries where illiteracy and a lack of education are the norm. A prime example of this is in the Congo where tribal customs and religious beliefs alike are quick to attribute increased climate crisis, ecological decline, disease, poverty, and war as signs of an imminent End. More radical religious cult outliers, like The Brotherhood of Light, are typified by delusional pronouncements attributing Armageddon to a cosmic filtering process or divine "housecleaning." Rather than conceiving of the apocalypse as the whole world being blow up, where people are strewn in pieces throughout some asteroid belt, or when true believers who have pure souls are transported in great rapture through a porthole to Heaven,

Our view of the Armageddon differs considerably from current thought in that we see it more as a filtering process – separating the tares from the wheat, the light from darkness – in every pore, level, and sector of human society, for the true objective of the Armageddon is a general, comprehensive housecleaning designed to rid the earth plane of all negative influences, those of Dark Forces, so that the conditions necessary for the flowering of a new golden age, the Age of Aquarius, can prevail. . . .The final battle between light and darkness is the project of the Master Sanctus Germanus. This great Master of the Great Brotherhood of Light has taken his place as the Hierarch of the New Age, the Age of Aquarius. He leads the battle. Those souls who are for Him stand on the right, while those who oppose him shall be banished from the earth plane.¹⁴

Notice how the Master Holy Brother becomes the surrogate for Jesus the flock is implored to follow, the new contemporary Messiah who will deliver the faithful from sin and evil. And who is this Master Sanctus Germanus? Why, he is a Deity, an "Ascended Being" who, in his past lives, and who had countless incarnations in his mission of soul liberation before his Ascension,¹⁵ is one of many "representative spirits" that "played a major role in the evolution of earth's affairs."¹⁶ This is according to Dr. Michael P. Mau, a

practitioner of Telepathic Healing and The Amanuensis of the Holy Brother, who is a Medium for the Great Brotherhood of Light and apparently writes down whatever the deity communicates to him. Before his mediumship, he claims to have earned a doctorate in International Relations from the University of Pennsylvania, was a Fulbright scholar, and worked as a consultant for the United Nations. Obviously, thought disorder does not discriminate based on education.

Common themes among millennialist apocalyptic mentality and eschatology is that the past determines the future, the future is a repetition of re-enacted past events, cosmogony is governed by supernatural forces according to Divine Will, and astrological patterns are causally fixed in space and time, which are written in the stars. When “cosmic law has determined that their cycle is up – finished,”¹⁷ this signals the End Times. Of course, this assumes a totally *predetermined* universe where there are fixed causal laws, no element of freedom or chance, human or otherwise, and that everything necessarily unfolds according to divine plan. Why a supreme being would contend itself with creating a predetermined cosmos where sin, evil, and world destruction is preprogrammed into the very fabric of spacetime itself is as logically contradictory as it is delusional. Incapable of critical thinking or self-reflection, like sheep in the meadow, the flock merely listens to what the preacher says. And sadly, many fundamentalists and vulnerable sectors of society have already drunk the Kool-Aid.¹⁸

The (un)Holy Land

The Middle East is a very scary place. It is the least holy of all lands, for the spectre of divine doom sets the stage for a hovering anxiety the region is compelled to bring about. Armageddon is delusional in the sense that it is believed to be preordained by God when it is entirely orchestrated by men of social power. Despite the shared faith in His Holy Presence, each religion (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) claims legitimacy to the archaic ground of belief *ab origine* and property rights to sacred space granted by God’s grace *in illo tempore*.

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts, the Holy Land has become the epicenter of terror, war, and international instability. Religious extremism, the pollution of sacred soil, and control over the Temple Mount (Al-Aqsa) has led to millennial visions motivating the need to ignite the world in order to make it whole. Gershom Gorenberg chronicles how the explosion of violence between Israelis and Palestinians is linked to control over the Temple Mount, which has stood at the root of the Jewish-Arab conflict since the beginning, hence leading to the Al-Aqsa Intifada and bin Laden’s need to avenge the presence of American troops in the holy places where the symbols of Islam (e.g., Medina, Mecca, the Al-Aqua Mosque) have been vitiated.¹⁹ Black Tuesday (9/11) was such an outcome. Israeli control over Jerusalem with American support only foments hatred of Jews and the United States that are seen as infidels. Since 9/11, extremist organizations have grown like weeds: al-Qaeda, Taliban, Jihadists, Islamic State, Boko Haram, Hezbollah, Hamas – are just a fraction of the fundamentalist groups driving much of global terrorism, the goal of such groups is to establish a series of pan-Islamic Caliphates throughout the globe. Inciting Muslims to kill Jews and reclaim original territory under prophetic visions to bring about an End of Days fortifies the delusion of final redemption and holy war. The Mount symbolizes the place

where the end times are destined to come about, and Jewish rule only marks its desecration.

Phil Torres highlights how “applied eschatology”²⁰ involves dispensational convictions about the future state of the apocalypse that determines how agents intentionally act toward achieving that goal, whether that be militant individuals, groups, leaders, or governments. The hotbed is the Middle East, but it can be anywhere, as terror shows no bounds; yet it is prophesized to transpire in the *Promised Land*, namely, contemporary Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, including parts of Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Egypt. Dispensationalism, that is, psychologically compelling narratives about the end times, also traverses many religious belief systems including Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam, all resulting in variations on resurrection, the Rapture, and the Return where the soul, after having been separated from the body and convalescing in the bosom of the Lord, returns from paradise into its gloriously perfected, resurrected corpse, only then to return at some unspecified future time to the Kingdom of Heaven. While eschatological stories vary in scope and context, such as undergoing a Tribulation, as well as divine judgment or condemnation, hence cast into purgatory or perdition, such discourse stimulates profound psychological motivations governing End Times prophecy, preparation, and enactments.

Depending upon what end time narrative is promulgated and adopted, revelations and signs of the *eschaton* are abundant, from wars, plagues, famine, droughts, beasts, earthquakes, and other natural disasters, where “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Mark 13: 7-8); when God finishes judging mankind for its sin. In Islamic fatalism, “The Last Hour will not come until the Muslims fight against the Jews and kill them. And when a Jew will hide behind a wall or a tree, the wall or tree will cry out: ‘O Muslim! O servant of Allah! There is a Jew behind me.’ And will come to kill him.”²¹ It does not help matters that the Qur’ān places “enmity” on the “Jews” (Sūra V. 67, 85) and orders the Muslim to “fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them” (Sūra IX. 5). And when everything revolves around the existence of a Jewish state in Palestine, dispensational convictions see fermenting terror and war as the fulfilment of prophecy. Not only do extremists want to impede peace and justice in the Middle East, they want to accelerate the terminus of history by sparking a nuclear Armageddon. This is our current world climate, and Iran is in the spotlight.

Suffice it to say that these eschatologies under the influence of fundamentalist apocalyptic dogma are delusional and dangerous precisely because they are constructing an End scenario of how things *ought* to be, based on a collective psychosis, extremists are apt to try to bring about with strategic vision, such as weaponize a bubonic plague. When extremists such as ISIS revel in creating a state of terror in order to advance their prophecy by bringing about a glorious preordained End in the name of God’s Will, then the stakes don’t get any higher than this.

Religious violence is thought to be a sacred duty sustaining the globalization of terror under the influence of holy orders tasked with the eradication of the profane. For the extremist, it is seen as a “moral necessity.”²² Of course this invites pathological actions when alterity equals blasphemy under the twisted logic of redemption and duty even when serving the same God. This distorted thinking obeys a principle of divine sanctioned anarchy that informs the political ethos of violence directed toward the dehumanized Other who personifies evil. The religious intolerance of radical Islam and

Zionism, particularly Judaic and Christian, may both be accused of enacting a rigid splitting where history, cultural difference, and opposing beliefs fortify a vicious impasse based on malice where the paranoid-schizoid position becomes an entrenched fixture in the middle-eastern psyche. In the end, violating the human rights, respect, and dignity of others in the name of religious authority offers no hiding place or reprieve from social criticism and moral denunciation regardless of religious difference or who originally perpetrated cultural injustice. Yet historical memory, transgenerational transmission of indignation, and the need for revenge leave a primitive remainder. We call it resentment. From the enslaved to the persecutor, political revolt to suppression, the colonized to the elite, national memory becomes a way of preserving the reciprocity of resentment.²³ Islam's revival of resentment against American and Jewish devils while valorizing its own identity and past is an example of how suffering, humiliation, and bitterness justify ideologies of violence.

It can be said that the entire history of civilization is based upon traumatization. History metabolizes trauma, memorializes it, politicizes it, and sometimes rewrites the collective suffering and cultural complexes that lie in its wake as a way of bathing in Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, or as covering over, hence exploiting truth and historicity.²⁴ But whether concealed or subjugated, the catastrophic effects of history are inter-generationally transferred: cultural trauma persists in the collective unconscious of humanity.

Apocalyptic Discourse in Post-Millennial Culture

The new apocalypse is not based on the Fall of man and the divine will of God, but on how human beings have ruined the planet through ecocide, war, and systemic institutional corruptions governed by oppressive power differentials such as totalitarian and fascist regimes, tyranny, late capitalist greed, climate emergencies, geopolitics, cultural disenfranchisement, egregious disparities in wealth and poverty, bioterror, technological error, religious fanaticism, genocide, migration crises and diasporas, the threat of nuclear holocaust, over-population, food and water insecurity, energy and resource scarcity, plagues, mass murder, civil disobedience, and anarchy. Post-millennial visions of the future center around a new dystopia, namely, the earth as a miserable place to live. For billions of people in developing countries, it already is. While the millennial doomsday scenario is typically touted as "no one survives" except the pious, the secular *eschaton* is that only a fraction of humanity survive – but inherit a post-apocalyptic world of dearth and hardship. Here the focus is not so much on an absolute end, but rather what will life be like living in the aftershock of the cataclysm.

From Hiroshima and the Cold War to our contemporary geopolitical climate of aggression and rhetoric of the threat to act, the nuclear age has ushered in a grand End Day scenario that continues to grip world attention, especially given that the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Science and Security Board has recently set the Doomsday Clock to 100 seconds to midnight, closer to the apocalypse than ever before.²⁵ The existential threats of nuclear war, the climate crisis, and techno nihilism, such as the use of cyber-enabled information warfare, technology-driven propaganda, and disinformation campaigns designed to promote distrust and paranoia in social institutions, kindle conspiracy theories about the deep state, manipulate governmental elections, and erode goodwill between nations, continue to stoke cultural anxieties and fear over mass

extinction. When the Event happens, how will our societies fare? Although we cannot predict the future, we can anticipate a state of global affairs where the world is changed forever, with literally every corner of the planet affected, much like living after COVID, except far more austere and catastrophic. Here Armageddon becomes survival in the posttraumatic aftermath of the post-apocalyptic world.

Whereas anticipating the *eschaton* focuses on the immanent and imminent, dystopian discourse focuses on After the End. In anticipating an imminent (looming) end, whether real, symbolic, or imaginary, and our immanent (inherent) tendencies to bring that about, this feeds off of a fantasy of control, what Foucault calls “biopower”²⁶ over the “finitude” or “disappearance” of man,²⁷ or what Lee Quinby refers to as “apocalyptic security”²⁸ that “relies on a continuous state of anxiety and uncertainty, which, as a result, legitimizes inaction.”²⁹ Paralyzed by fear, or living in denial, disavowal, or dissociation from these anxieties, uncertainty prolongs doubt and collective procrastination leery of change, a reticence of vulnerability tarrying on the cusp of present and future. And when all efforts at attaining security by necessity create insecurity, our being toward death arouses trepidation over the inevitable, the certainty of finitude as paralysis. But as Derrida points out, eschatology is intimately tied to teleology, the *two* ends of man: the end as finitude, as unity in death, and as culmination, the completion of its *telos*.³⁰ Here finality is bequeathed the status of infinity: *we* all stand in relation to our infinite end, both as prescription and equivocality.

After the End skips to the chase and assumes a forgone conclusion, whether prophetic or inductive, where social (value) consciousness concentrates on mitigating environmental damage, restoring human wellbeing, establishing peacebuilding between factions and nations, and is oriented toward improving the onto-structural conditions of futurity in its posttraumatic recovery from disaster. Here, if we can't control the apocalypse from coming, we can certainly anticipate our need for a measured response to ecological, political, and economic collapse when denialism eventually breaks down. Preparing for survival allows for the illusion of ontological security over nearing or evading the end, when this interpellation is merely another form of coercion over the attitudes of social collectives trying to subvert calamity.

Futuristic Fantasies

Futuurologist Freeman Dyson speculates that within a few hundred years human beings will colonize other galaxies, mutate into posthuman forms of subspecies, and adapt to space and extraterrestrial environments beyond Earth. He envisions a “green universe” where biotechnology will enable us to breed new living creatures and entire ecologies including new animal life and “warm-blooded plants” that are designed to adapt to vastly different habitats that are not dependent upon planetary means to sustain their survival. He calls this thought experiment a “Noah’s Ark culture,” which is essentially a fleet of spacecraft “the size and weight of an ostrich egg” that spawns their own ecosystems by implanting “living seeds with the genetic instructions for growing millions of species of microbes and plants and animals, including males and females of sexual species, adapted to live together and support one another in an alien environment.”³¹ After these Arks are placed in suitable places in space, they “will grow into a living world of creatures, as diverse as the creatures of Earth but different,” which may then further populate and spread throughout the universe, self-replicating their own microcosms

until, ultimately, leading to the expansion of life. Dyson proclaims that we as humanity will become “the midwives who bring life to birth on millions of worlds,” and concludes that we are the “stewards of life on a grander scale, and our destiny is to be creators of a living universe.”³²

Not only is this vision of the future of humanity “grand,” it is grandiose, which further belies a wish to play God. In other words, when we destroy this world, we can create others “where we will live together and support one another” as equal brothers and sisters in utopian bliss, as if we would somehow be able to do that in a future world where everyone is One, what the futurist Vernor Vinge called an apocalyptic “singularity” of consciousness, despite the fact that we are demolishing ourselves as we speak and are only remotely capable of showing any conciliatory success to live harmoniously or in accord with shared values that promote cooperation and peace over egocentric caprice and self-destructive denial. The obsession with space travel, the so-called colonization of galaxies, and the scientifically engineered mutation of our species that will supposedly surpass our current predicament of self-induced annihilation are all transcendental illusions based upon escape fantasies. The thought that we will have a safe haven to retreat to when Earth is uninhabitable is as infantile as the notion of God itself.³³ We can no more control the future as we can control the present – we can only *influence* it. The thought that we can govern, manipulate, and design a future world fashioned to our liking presumes that we live in a fixed universe where everything is causally determined in a linear, prefixed (non-negotiable) fashion devoid of inflections of autonomy, when this would mean the death of freedom (often inversely called chance or randomness) as an indeterminate force in the cosmos. Nothing is fixed or laid in stone in such a hard determinist fashion. We neither have the prowess nor the means to accomplish such a grandiloquent task. The call to procreate millions of new worlds as humanity’s “destiny” merely speaks to an unconscious collective anxiety and reactionary narcissistic hubris where the need to conquer our fears as a quasi-triumph over death via reaction formation justifies obscene economic and environmental waste that currently contributes to our planetary crisis.

Billions of dollars are thrown away into space exploration and developing technologies from Big and Little Space culture alike, leading to space wars with other nations over power-grabs to see who wins out over space travel, satellite augmentation and domination, and procuring advanced knowledge via technological innovations over our solar system and beyond, which is an economically and politically driven enterprise borne of ideology. The underlying omnipotent illusion is: We are going to do the impossible! – hence create a new and better world. Given we have failed to accomplish this task here on Earth, something which is, by definition, unattainable, it is more than ostentatious and pompous to proclaim otherwise. Despite the massive amounts of resources squandered, excess waste produced, and increased industrial pollution generated by such activity that intensifies our current ecological emergency, international governments, NASA, and private industry, for instance, hold out for the hope in overcoming problems with engineering setbacks so that humans can someday develop settlements on other planets or moons and escape from catastrophic climate change, which will one day potentially kill the Earth. Rather than put such systemic efforts and funds into developing methods of ameliorating our current situation by resuscitating Gaia, the focus is on securing a future escape hatch, which, even if possible, would only save

the wealthy and powerful elites while forsaking the rest of us poor slobs. Imagine the destitute, downtrodden, disenfranchised, displaced masses, or ordinary citizens from African countries – or any other disqualified country – on those space shuttles to paradise! Not a prayer's chance in hell. They would be the first to become fertilizer in any doomsday scenario. Why not save the planet we have, rather than pursue the fantasy that we can find better ones or create new space environments in a post-apocalyptic world? Our priorities seem to be under the sway of delusion. There is no futuristic Eden elsewhere, no carrot dangled in faraway space, but only what we know now, namely, the fact that we have a planetary plight that needs drastic attention before it is too late to even plan an escape route.

Disparities

The world revolves around money. It symbolizes the real, namely, barter and exchange for all goods and services, needs and desires – the semiotic of value. In psychological terms, it can be said that nothing is more real than money – the rest is transference, projection, fantasy. But it is more than that: money is the placeholder of *objective* value. It therefore institutes and maintains the power of validity. Money becomes a transcendental category of value and utility that governs socialization. As a result, the means, procurement, and possession of money breed disparities. Without money, one cannot have. And if one cannot have, then one cannot live.

Societies revolve around economics. Even in cashless societies, economies of exchange govern social relations. No economy, no society. In global capitalism,³⁴ economies revolve around markets, what people are willing to invest in and speculate on in order to make money. We rely on markets in order to maintain the order of things. When markets collapse, so do order. With stipulations, such as outliers and atypical instances that do not apply to the general masses, the reality is that markets mainly empower the rich, corporate elite, and powerful institutions such as the financial sectors that economically dominate and domesticate societies under pragmatic dictates that leave the average citizen disadvantaged. The financialization of global capitalism that infiltrates both public and private industry determines the way culture functions often based on factors outside of our control, such as governmental stability, stock exchange flux, socioeconomic disadvantage, lack of knowledge, opportunity and education, superimposed restrictions and compensations foisted by hegemonic (often neoliberal) politics that promulgate legal policies that benefit the rich, and so forth.

It includes such basic matters as the growth in size and scope of finance and financial activity in the economy (the size of the industry as a percentage of the GDP has more than doubled in the last forty years); the rise of debt-fueled speculation instead of productive lending; the ascendancy of shareholder value as the sole model for corporate governance; the proliferation of risky, selfish thinking in both the private and public sectors; the increasing political power of financiers and the CEOs they enrich; and the way in which a “markets know best” ideology remains the status quo in many academic and policy circles.³⁵

When laws are designed to protect the wealthy, along with tax shelters, legal loopholes, and golden parachutes, those who have little money or live paycheck to paycheck become enslaved by their actual economic conditions. No wonder why the Occupy movement (Wall Street, etc.) became a civilized form of capitalist protest.

Disparities in wealth and poverty are spreading like viruses; and with continued deregulation and lack of oversight, corporate conglomerates and the affluent privileged will continue to rake in fortunes on the backs of working-class masses. The poor have even fewer options hoping to survive. If public consciousness reaches a tipping-point where ethics overrides profit motives, we could conceivably witness a reformed capitalist movement where inequalities are challenged and changed law by law. But when home ownership, healthcare, and retirement remain tied to the stock market in the face of the uncertain financial health of national social insurance programs, where millions rely upon such income in old age, the future state of financial securities remain unpredictable at best, if not untenable and cause for alarm. The ultimate existential apocalypse is when economies collapse.

The New After

Whether in politics, business, or neighborly relations, advances in culture are due to the process of negotiation and mutual recognition, which leads to the mutual desire to understand, communicate value preferences, and support each other cooperatively despite vast differences that define our identities and desire. The need for mutual recognition, validation, and affirmation of cultural values and worth leads to understanding; and in turn, understanding leads to empathy and care. Despite the continuing tumultuous peace negotiations and the tenuous settlements that define our communal world where rigid identifications and insular self-interest insure irreconcilable divisions, this persevering process signals the human willingness to seek viable solutions in the name of peace and healing, which is itself a productive dialectical movement toward concord and repose. Whether we advance in peaceful resolution through mutual negotiation and cooperation remains a possibility only the future can command. But given the current state of climate crisis, religious fanaticism, terrorism, nuclear anxieties, health pandemics, economic disparities, and military conflict throughout the globe, where social chaos, lawlessness, mass trauma, diasporas, civilian revolt, and religious fundamentalism including messianic fanaticism fueled by systemic hatred for the Other, where the End of Days is preceded by a prophetic apocalypse, it becomes a logical prediction that World War III is just around the corner portending a bleak dystopian future, the new After.

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Notes

¹ Eliade (1963), pp. 51-52.

² Freud's (1930) contempt for religious ideologies is well known and exemplified in the following passage: "What the common man understands by his religion – with the system of doctrines and promises which on the one hand explains to him the riddles of this world with enviable completeness, and, on the other, assures him that a careful Providence will watch over his life and will compensate him in a future existence for any frustrations that he suffers here. The common man cannot imagine this Providence otherwise than in the figure of an enormously exalted father . . . The whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life" (p. 74).

³ Indo-European Lexicon. Linguistics Research Center, University of Texas at Austin. <https://lrc.la.utexas.edu/lex/master/0018>.

⁴ *Nefās* is offense against divine or moral law (*ne-* negative prefix + *fās*, law, right).

⁵ Heidegger (1924), *The Problem of Sin in Luther*, *Supplements*, p. 106.

⁶ Cf. Luther (1517): "*velle se esse deum et deum non esse deum*" [he himself wants to be God and God not to be God], p. 225, 1. 1f.

⁷ Heidegger (1924), p. 108.

⁸ Yet it is this 'cry of abandonment' which occurs in the claim of the incarnation and the cross.

⁹ Whereas in the incarnation, God is wanting to be man.

¹⁰ Heidegger (1924), pp. 108-110.

¹¹ Eliade interviewed C.G. Jung at the 1952 Eranos conference on his "Answer to Job" where Jung (1952) states: "This book has always been on my mind, but I waited forty years to write it. I was terribly shocked when, still a child, I read the Book of Job for the first time. I discovered that Yahweh is unjust, that he is even an evildoer" (pp. 225-226).

¹² Being portrayed as "nonfiction," Zecharia Sitchin (2007) makes these predictions in a bestselling series of works called, *The Earth Chronicles*, which has sold millions of copies worldwide and been translated into over 25 languages, despite being deemed pseudoscience, pseudohistory, mythopoesis, and quackery by his critics.

¹³ Geryl & Ratinckx (2001), p. 10. Also see Geryl (2005), Joseph (2007), and Sounds True (2007) for extensive discussions on apocalyptic discourse.

¹⁴ See Mau (2003), pp. 120-122.

¹⁵ The Great Brotherhood of Light, <http://www.sanctusgermanus.net/english/Sanctus%20Germanus.html#1>.

¹⁶ Mau (2003), p. 22.

¹⁷ Mau (2003), p. 122.

¹⁸ Since the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), a most recent example is how Iranians and Eastern Orthodox Russians continued to go to mosque and church and even licked religious insignia in their places of worship to show their devotion and belief in God's protection during the midst of the outbreak of the pandemic, hence infecting themselves and spreading the virus resulting in incalculable deaths.

¹⁹ See Gorenberg (2000) for a detailed account of the religious tensions giving rise to the Al-Qaqa Intifada and the al-Qaeda attacks on September 11, 2001.

²⁰ Torres (2016), p. 160.

²¹ Jean-Pierre Filiu (2011), *Apocalypse in Islam*, p. 17. Compare to Osama bin Laden's 1998 interview in preaching this particular *hadith*: "We are sure of Allah's victory and our victory against the Americans and the Jews, as promised by the Prophet, peace be upon him: 'Judgment Day shall not come until the Muslims fight the Jews, where the Jews will hide behind trees and stones, and the tree and the stone will speak and say, 'Muslim, behind me is a Jew. Come and kill him'" (cited in Gorenberg's 2001 Preface, pp. v-vi).

²² See Richard Miller (2010), p. 10.

²³ Refer to Marc Ferro's (2010) work on resentment in history.

²⁴ Here I am reminded of the Armenian genocide carried out by the Turkish government under Ottoman Empire rule, the continued Japanese silence of their predatory role and collusion with the Nazis in World War II, and the more recent Russian government denial of any responsibility for shooting down a Malaysia Airlines plane in 2014, four people of whom were recently prosecuted in absentia in The Hague.

²⁵ Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2020 Doomsday Clock Statement, <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/current-time/>

²⁶ In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, Foucault tells us that power relations profess what they seek to control – the population, bodies, the economy, sovereignty, “ultimately life itself” culminating “in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it” (p. 136).

²⁷ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, pp. 340-347, 373.

²⁸ See Quinby (2014).

²⁹ Monica Germanà & Aris Mousoutzanis, *Apocalyptic Discourse in Contemporary Culture*, p. 6

³⁰ Derrida, *The Ends of Man*. In *Margins of Philosophy*, pp. 121-123, 134.

³¹ Dyson (2016), p.6.

³² Ibid.

³³ See Mills (2017) for an extensive discussion.

³⁴ Žižek (2010) alerts us that the two principle dangers confronting our world today is unbridled capitalism and fundamentalist religious extremism (p. 131), which he believes is leading to an “apocalyptic zero-point.” But the real culprit he focuses on is the global capitalist system itself: “[The] ‘four riders of the apocalypse’ are comprised of by the ecological crisis, the consequences of the biogenetic revolution, imbalances within the system itself (problems with intellectual property; forthcoming struggles over raw materials, food and water), and the explosive growth of social divisions and exclusions” (p. x).

³⁵ Rana Foroohar (2016), p. 29.