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CAPITALOCENE, CORONISATION, SURVEILLANCE SOCIETY: THREE HYPOTHESES
ABOUT TRUE VS. FALSE NAMES
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1. A Mention of Two Hypotheses and Names

1.0. A precondition for understanding any situation or practice is to *name it* in a way that situates it within a web of most probable *causation*. Names, terms, and concepts establish publicly accessible standards and models of understanding in order to usefully intervene into practice. I have for our mega-situation three names, that encapsulate also hypotheses. A longer discussion of what follows with more data is to be found in my earlier publications (see Suvin “How”).

For this reading of 15 minutes, time precludes explaining Capitalocene and Coronisation except for the brief remarks which follow here.

1.1. The *Capitalocene* notion is substituted for Anthropocene because it pinpoints more accurately the causal guilt for eco-destruction: the circulation of commodities by profit-driven dirty technologies plus the power structures created by capitalism to bomb into the Stone Age any alternative.

A blinding example of capitalocene functioning is the coming about of the Covid-19 pandemic. As Rob Wallace’s book *Big Farms Make Big Flu* explains, agribusiness’s ceaseless expanding into pristine forest increased the spillover of new pathogens, including the Covid ones. When these come into contact with numerous hosts of the same species, increased virulence becomes an evolutionary advantage. The central institutions to blame here are the multinational companies, their financiers, and their political and military protectors: “You couldn’t design a better system to breed deadly diseases” (quote from Wallace). The politico-ideological problem hindering an effective prevention against successive pandemics is to treat every new outbreak in isolation from these structural causes.

1.2. I propose to call the sociopolitical use of this pandemic *coronisation*. The term “Covid-19” may be usable for hospitals and laboratories, but its causes, spread, and impact are all mystified by suggesting it is simply biology.

The best estimate of its dead by *The Economist* (London) now is over *14 million people*, triple the official estimates. The death rate was in 2020 5 to 7 times larger among “pre-threatened” population groups such as US Blacks and very many of the poor and undernourished of the Earth. With no coordination between rich and poor countries, *an infection of almost three billion people is probable*, 40% of people on Earth (see Christakis). This coincides with the number of super-exploited people in neocapitalism’s class warfare from above, plus many middle-class elders and some unfortunates. In sum, coronisation is a process of huge suffering comparable to the two World Wars of imperialism. At least around ¾ of the deaths, or about 11 million, were preventable; actually, almost nobody needs to have died had there been specific medicines available for coronaviruses at the outset, but specialists who clamoured for research in 2008 after the last Corona pandemic were

denied funds by Big Pharma. Statistics based on income, systematically excluded by most media, would reveal a *naked class warfare* tilted toward letting the poor die.

Further, coronisation results in economic destruction, favouring both concentration of capital and keeping the workers in straits, even though most of the dead were ostensibly sacrificed to prevent it. It is extremely dubious that the world economy could return to pre-crisis levels within the next three-four years.

Thus the use of this pandemy has little to do with any virus as such but rather with which societal groups and classes will bear the cost in lives and the cost in expenses or profit from it, *cui bono*? The specialised and opaque term “Covid-19” forecloses many directions of action. It enlists the authority of natural science to silence the overwhelming plebeian majority. My term coronisation may not be perfect, as all new terms it needs further explanation, but it suggests at least three meanings: first, that it is not simply a medical, affair; second, that it is somebody’s activity; and third, that it is the crown of some foregoing state or stance.

2. Third Hypothesis: The Surveillance Society

We have now lived for 30 years in *a global ruling-class counter-project* to the post-1917 Welfare-and-Warfare State. This new phase of capitalism is centrally developing through a violent depth *attack on life*. Beside warfare, the pulsating heart of capitalism was always the unequal exchange of life (people’s time and labour-power) for money. A strategic link here is private property on knowledge that exploded with the right to patent living matter – from genes to species – as of 1980. The owners of life today are, besides the armed forces, the pharmaceutical companies, agrochemical monsters, and information profiteers, all connected through international mega-banks.

Why is supertechnological capitalocene using coronisation as a murderous practice suppressing freedom in what amounts to martial law? Because the system has for decades been in a deep crisis of capital accumulation stemming from the insane impoverishment imposed upon billions of working people that disrupts the circulation of goods.

Impoverishment: the proportion of people living in slums was in the world as a whole ca. 1/3 and in the 50+ poorest countries in Africa and Asia approaching 2/3 (see *World*). In the USA, 40% of households cannot deal with unexpected expenses of around \$400 and 74% live from paycheck to paycheck; in the European Union, 33% of households cannot bear similar expenses. Further ecocide leads to global mass immiseration, obvious in the present coronisation.

Crisis of accumulation: the financial core of capitalism is in bad disarray or secular stagnation, as you well know. Finding at hand an erupting pandemy that might infect 3 billion people, with tens of millions of possible deaths (Christakis), the new totalising antiutopia can wash its hands of the outworn neo-liberal past and patch up a different imaginary, accelerating the deviation of public funds into huge enrichment of capitalists. We are seeing strong signs of mutation into a more maleficent sociopolitical formation that would employ both the State and intolerant nationalism up to racism to save the profits and bamboozle the outraged people.

Let us realise that the present mass disease could be at any moment, because of climate disruption, followed by other, similarly but differently severe pandemics or indeed recombined with another pandemy. Further, ahead loom the huge climate deterioration going from bad to worse -- at the moment best visible in water wars, well-known from Amazonia and Palestine/Israel and now

acute for the Nile -- as well as mass dying from a combination of ill health and undernourishment, easily resulting in wars. All are caused by capitalist interventions into the biome: first directly into our bodies, in reckless exploitation of living labour plus reckless indoctrination by the mass media; and second, by way of reckless devastation of nature. The central opposition is one between all human lives (plus its necessary habitat of animals, plants, and minerals) and the idolatry of violent and deadly profit.

What about the role of the States, both of their intervention into and overall channelling of the national and international economies and of their endangering central personal freedoms? Countries with strong State powers have handled the pandemic much more efficiently. The gigantic failure of “austerity” healthcare, leading to shoddy or no care for the mass of the people versus excellent private medicine for the rich, is now clearly visible. The case that privatisation and mass immiseration are more efficient than State regulation, and where necessary its extraordinary intervention, has been definitively refuted by mass history: a system of multiple institutions for well-being of all people, underwritten by the whole national and international community is indispensable.

Yet life without the liberty of creative choice is only a repetitive cycle that soon turns inhuman. Back to zoology: Man is Wolf to Man. At a time of great calamities to our bodies, such as a world war or the present pandemy, we can clearly see how Social Darwinism, that stupid and lying materialism of the rulers, leads straight to collective death. Capitalism is mass unnatural death, freedom is the life worth living. One excludes the other.

The huge perils of State intervention can be seen in the present discourse pivoting on – and limited by – scientism in its medical variant that progresses from the virus enemy to the triumphant salvation by vaccine, and in between recurs to military discourse since it must necessarily (and for a while usefully) confine people. Such intervention is manipulated by the ruling classes and their States, often with the aid of well-financed Right-wing shock troops, into a state of siege for billions of people but not for the major sources of profit. It issues into melding both beneficent and maleficent State intervention with *hypersurveillance*. As in the wars, so in the Police State: mass deaths are certain and the success for one’s nation uncertain; no matter, if the capitalocene’s relations of production can be salvaged in a new regime of accumulation, even at the price of a near-fascism.

Therefore, successes of State centralisation, such as keeping a pandemy in bounds, should not lead to a plea for power either to monopoly capitalism or to the State. On the contrary, repressive States centered on brute force and false belief have to be constantly guarded against. Today most existing political systems are oligarchic – a small class block on the top rules. Not all systems are so overtly anti-democratic as the ruling classes of the EU and China. But in all cases, there is a huge absence of representing working people’s interests, a veritable dictatorship of capitalist interest blocks (banks, mega-corporations, armed forces, bureaucracies). Here, only a critical Left can serve as orientation: “Key to the politics of such demands as we must make of the State is never trusting the State of which we make them” (Salvage 32). In brief, the State apparati are to be used but strictly monitored, and where necessary opposed (see much more in Suvin “How” and “Antiutopia”).

If we do not do this efficiently, at a minimum the state of on and off siege will persist for years, and the political fallout of the resulting economic collapse for millions will be some form of Fascism 2.0. At a maximum, the rotting supermonopoly and surveillance capitalism, updated with the newest AI, nanophysical surveillance, and killing devices, will upgrade the whip of hunger and misery for the “free contract” workers to overt shackles and bodily lesions – electronic, of course – plus racist ideology against them. Eventually, such a rule over a tottering blend of oligopoly markets, feudal rent, and outright slavery must collapse for bio-ecological reasons. However, the price would be many

times lower if this happened through revolts by working people. We shall either organise or be ground down into a new slavery plus eco-catastrophe.

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