

# Aphorisms Toward A Cultural Philosophy For The Present Time

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## 1. Introduction: Autonomism at the Gates

In the following series of aphorisms, I develop a concise anti-Statist, individualist critique of the modern State, its inner nature, and the way in which it branches out into all modes of (post)modern life. Expect no linear argument. In the time of memetics, the aphorism is a potent thinking tool. As a potent tool for thinking, it has a certain conciseness and sharpness, and therefore possesses therefore a clear and effective expressive force.

Aphorisms can be used to explore a variety of loosely-structured thoughts, working out the many relationships that connect them. The advantage of this way of working is that the depth of an initial thought can be gradually explored and adumbrated in various directions. On the one hand, the disadvantage is that the clarity so characteristic of a linear argument is largely lacking. But on the other hand, is this a problem at all? Clarity may come about by following the single line of an argument but can equally thought of as a process of cognitive sedimentation, in which the contents of one's thinking gradually settle into a cognitive picture that has an internal, *thought-shaping* logic of its own (Hanna and Paans, 2021).

To my mind, the philosophical doctrine of anarchism always has had trouble in conceiving alternatives to the current philosophical and political *status quo*. Why is this?

First, the various versions of anarchism that emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century are inadequate as models for thinking about the new forms of organization that a 21<sup>st</sup>-century society has to assume. This is simply because the very term “anarchism,” coined by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in 1840 in “What is Property?,” is a purely negative one: it is the presence of any (State-organized) hierarchy that is being rejected. The difficulties ensue when one attempts to imbue this initially negative term with some positive content. To conceive a world without centralized coercive authoritarianism requires some ideals that cannot be derived from (philosophical) anarchism as a critique of State coercive authority. In short, we require a positive foundation instead of a negative one. I will come back to this point later on.

A second reason why the anarchisms of the (recent) past cannot cope with current political and societal circumstances is that the nature of the State has changed substantially, due to the global interlocking of State power, corporate capital, military-driven firepower, the rise of political authoritarianism, and the influence of what we could call “Big Tech” on the one hand, together with the influence of the “spirituality-industrial complex” (Hanna, 2023) on the other. To criticize a type of State power that does not exist any longer is to engage in a strawman argument. Worse still, it appears as serious political philosophy, while it is overtaken by reality from the left and the right alike. The comfortable illusion that one is performing some “subversive” act is by itself a bourgeois trope that one must discard as soon as possible.

The older versions of anarchism have dealt extensively with the problematic character of coercion and its institutional entrenchment, but have had comparatively little to say about what seems to me the core of Statism. I will call this the Will-to-Dominate or State-impulse. Like Schopenhauer’s ceaseless Will-to-Live, the Will-to-Dominate is a sociopolitical impulse that is comparable to the Will-to-Live, or to the Freudian Death-drive, i.e., the volition towards total annihilation and destruction. The main reasons for the existence and manifestations of this drive are best located in our survival-stricken evolutionary history. Yet, this cannot be the entire explanation. As Peter Kropotkin has pointed out in *Mutual Aid*, our capacity for mutualism is at least as basic as our capacity for strife and competition. Any society that wishes to survive requires to negotiate between both. So, the goal of these aphorisms is not to argue against competition or even rivalry. These are very real forces in a finite world where resources are scarce. Instead, it should make us self-critical when thinking about the institutionalization of this drive. As the survivalist traits of our species become institutionally entrenched and codified, they tend by their very (competitive) nature to obliterate or weaken all alternative conceptions of what it means to form a society. Yet, these survivalist impulses cannot survive on their own, and even if they give rise

to a society of some sort, it will turn out to be a very unpleasant society indeed if they are carried through to the end.

Once communities grow above a certain scale, the State-impulse will occur at some point, and the foundation of contemporary State-power is born. Yet, we have now advanced so far that even the State is not the same any longer. Due to its scale and its highly networked, ubiquitous structure, it has developed into the Hyperstate: that is, the global network of political, corporate, and military organizations that have converging self-interests (Paans, 2021). It is an organizational pattern intended to deploy authoritarian coercion via nudging, more overt forms of control like police or military force, monitoring or surveying, and ideology and other forms of mechanical, constrictive thought-shaping, in order to amass ever more power and ever more wealth, and to exert ever more control.

I have dealt with some of its characteristics elsewhere, so I will not repeat that discussion here. Suffice to say, if we develop a critique of coercive authoritarian power, we must direct it against that form of the State that is current, and not against a strawman conception.

By way of concluding this Introduction, this series of aphorisms is *anti-Hyperstatist* and not merely anarchist or anti-Statist, although many of the ideas discussed here will be smoothly compatible with that particular philosophico-political outlook. So, the point of departure is that the Hyperstate in its current form should be replaced by a radically different form of sociopolitical organization; that the State-impulse is a recurrent phenomenon; that there are certain strategies of authoritarian coercion that will always emerge, although in various contexts; and that the Hyperstate is the noumenal, and barely perceivable, yet constantly and immensely present form of the State as we encounter it in our daily lives today.

Do I criticize only the Hyperstate and the State here? Certainly not. Many of the aphorisms deal with thought-experiments, observations, and speculations about the role, status and agency of the individual. In short, I advocate an *autonomism* for individuals and groups alike. That is, one ought to *emancipate or liberate oneself* as much as possible from authoritarian coercion, no matter how this authoritarian coercion is presented. Correspondingly, one also ought to develop the *skills and mindset* to act as a *mature individual, or a morally responsible agent*. There is certainly much more to say about this doctrine; but for now, I'll just introduce this concise definition: if anarchism as *anti-Statism* is the negative doctrine, then autonomism as *post-Statism* is the positive doctrine that has guided my thinking here.

## 2. Social Dictatorship

**1. Ideology.** By allowing our intellectuals only to quote others who—no doubt—a are also intellectuals, we create an echo-culture, a circular quotation circus. Only the ideas accepted by the well-learned, or ideas that promise an acceptable deviation are taken up in the canon. Subversion, resistance, daring: these are the names for ideas that feel comfortably dangerous, fashionably critical, and well-educated in a bourgeois way. Don't be misled—to be cultured nowadays is a deeply egoistic, narcissistic endeavor. It means being able to lecture others on what counts as the good side of history and judging them, because one is after all a member of the intellectual elite. All this is because in the echo-culture only coercive moralist, orthodox ideas are accepted.

**2. The tyranny of the game-players.** Any truly non-coercive-moralist, unorthodox ideas are *not* accepted because, paradoxically, precisely because the authors of those ideas, by *refusing* to play by the rules of the game, are profoundly threatening to those who always play by the rules of the game. This is why we can have debates about nearly everything as long as it is acceptably fashionable, and not too dangerous. To do real philosophy is to ask the dangerous questions or defend the uncomfortable position: to challenge the rules themselves and the authority of those who police the rules. Distrust any thinker who is too popular. Chances are that he is also shallow. The power of truly dangerous ideas lies not in their ability to “subvert,” “undermine,” or “radicalize.” That is just a leftist-Marxist-bourgeois concept waved around like a flag by those who like to play around with ideas that seem merely mildly provoking or amusingly daring. They need these ideas to convince themselves that they are on the good side of history, without doing too much for the sake of it. Ideas for them are like accessories, and a “subversive” idea is just as much an identitarian, virtue-signalling element as a vividly colored shawl.

**3. Lashing out against one's neighbor.** The cultural bourgeoisie needs those popular “ideas for a better world” in order to hide their deepest fears, and also to lash out in an act of “horizontal violence” (Paulo Freire's term) to those who are trapped in the same predicament as they are: their neighbors are their victims. There is something even worse thing than hating your neighbors, and that is policing them. Any citizen in the Western world is subject of a neoliberal democratic nation-State, that tyrannical advanced capitalist parasite that grows on his back and feeds off his labor. The bourgeoisie know full well that even with their middle-class lifestyles, and their appropriately censored opinions, they are not safe from the whims of the budding dictatorship they are forced to uphold in the name of neoliberal democracy. This pre-conscious realization makes them insecure, so they attempt to repress their lack of control by always obeying the rules of the game and by controlling and policing others. Show the State that you are a good, useful citizen! Their pretext is that they claim to improve the world by means of mandating “social justice,” so they claim not

only the moral right but also the moral obligation to push other people around in the aura-soaked name of Social Justice.

**4. Tactics as projections.** Any political vision should be judged by the means it utilizes to bring its realization about. More often than not, the tactics employed to deride, browbeat, and manipulate others are a good indication of how the “new world” will look like. Any tactic is a projection of the world-to-come.

**5. Pluralism.** Contemporary identitarian multicultural “diversity, equality and inclusion” is curiously elitist, exclusionary, nauseatingly conformist, and ultimately homogenizing. It is the refined ideological toolkit of the social dictatorship of the professionally offended. Nothing is more pitiful than to witness the gatherings of the bourgeoisie-cultured who all agree with one another, and who create their well-defended ideological castles against the despicable world outside! Their politically-correct consensus is mindless groupthink, and only thinly veils how deeply they despise those who do not think like them, all the while pretending that they in fact do. It is the mark of an anxious culture that fears open conflict, and that instead prefers to call out, ignore, manipulate, or simply shout down those who do not agree with their moralistic credo.

**6. On prohibiting others to think.** “Freedom is dangerous for anyone who does not think like me.” This is the implicit assumption of our cultural and political elites. So, life must be segmented, cut up, regulated, and subjected to as much social pressure as possible. Separate your trash, wear a mask, get vaccinated, be tolerant, be open, be diverse, be inclusive, etc., etc.: even when these *are* rationally and morally justified principles of choice and action, they turn into coercive moralist authoritarian commands that are shoved down our throats by social force. And once one questions this socio-political pressure, the counterquestion is immediately: Don’t you agree with what we tell you? Don’t you just want to be one of us? Don’t you want to be a good person? The answer? No! — not on *your* terms.

**7. On cynicism.** What is seen nowadays as cynicism is not cynicism in the usual sense. It is not cynicism when one says about an unlawful action by the government: “But that is what they always do. Everyone knows!” This is not cynicism and it is not indifference. Instead, those are the lives of quiet desperation masking themselves by seeming to be indifferent. It is a reflection of the realization that you are owned by the political power already, and that you know that once your turn comes to be forced to play the game, you are powerless to stop them.

**8. Screen-projection.** Therefore, this kind of indifference is a quietly desperate attempt to ward off and purposively not see the inescapable truth of your political predicament: you are a slave, but your masters prefer to call themselves your Big Brother, Big Sister, or Big Non-Binary Human Resources Facilitator. In your present

State, you cannot be allowed to admit that you're a slave. It is the reverse of a Freudian screen memory: in order not to see the awful truth that is really in front of you, you replace it with something essentially more agreeable and benign: a screen-projection of a lovely pseudo-reality in which you have "freedom of choice" and "rights", even if you can be stripped of them at any moment.

**9. Projection-distraction.** Every society that regularly celebrates its freedom, cheers about its own tolerance, and emphasizes its current enlightened predicament as opposed to its horrendous past, is neither free, nor tolerant, and has not left its horrific historical practices truly behind. These utterances are merely projections, just as someone who has a serious drinking problem will declare that he has no trouble whatsoever leaving the bottle alone and overemphasizing his degree of control. Every march, memorial, and obligatory respect "for the fallen" has the function of distracting us with views of the past in order to screen off the horrors of the present, and even more to screen off what awaits us in the future.

**10. Bread-and-circuses.** Every nation-State and every State-like institution regularly hosts and stages festivals and memorials in order to create an artificial unity among its citizens or inmates. Memorials are staged as spectacles to keep the wound of collective trauma open, so that true reconciliation, acceptance, and forgiveness is replaced by group-think, the collective definition of identity-markers, and the constant reminder that "the danger is always out there," hence the only "safe space" is belonging to the herd. Bread-and-circuses, self-indulgent violent emotions, and gruesome spectacles, those are the political instruments of collective control, of which the neoliberal democratic nation-State is the fundamental fiction.

**11. The false assumption of historical control.** Because this is the false assumption: if we remember the past obsessively, it will never repeat itself. But in fact, precisely when you *do* obsessively remember it, and use it as a rigid and uniformizing educational mold to thought-shape docile subjects whom all think alike, will you create the conditions that repeat the past.

### **3. State Power**

**12. How State power works.** First, give people some goods (say, money, property, social status, adult toys, etc.) and let them grow attached to them. Second, demonstrate that you can take away their prized possessions at will. Third, prescribe more and more restrictive rules that must be followed in order for the people to be able to acquire and hold onto their goodies. Carry out this process gradually and see how people will do *anything* to retain their possessions. This is what happens *en masse* in the West nowadays.

**13. Learned helplessness.** Gradually make the rules more and more restrictive, so that all individual initiative is progressively undermined. Make people turn to you for even the most banal of tasks and/or ideas. Make them request permits for which they have to put in an effort; never clarify the rules completely, but instead create the appearance that everything is transparent and organized. When you refuse them, you will hear only this pathetic response: “But I did what you asked me to do!” This is learned helplessness in action.

**14. Prolonged passivity.** If people act helpless long enough, they will believe that they in fact are helpless. They do not conceptualize any other options or future pathways of action. They know, deep down, non-conceptually, that it isn’t true, but the material circumstances prove them wrong time and again, so that what’s non-conceptually known deep down never surfaces into explicit self-consciousness, and never takes shape as a “live option” or real-life possibility. In the best-case scenario, free and reasoned choice—let’s call that “initiative”—remains a mere dream, a phantasy projected on the screen of despair, like the billboards advertising the mythical paradise of Brazil in Terry Gilliam’s brilliantly caustic same-named film. The oppressor knows this too well and prolongs and refines the net of initiative-killers. It weeds out individuality in favor of the herd; it enlists personal capability in the goal of the greater good of the many; it posits historical necessity and sacrifices; and above all, it depicts those not playing by the rules as Enemies of The People.

**15. Service.** This can be summarized in one word: service. You must be of service *to* your country, community, and fellow citizens; On the other hand, the oppressors *provide* services you cannot do without; neither are you allowed to do without them. The civil servant represents this iron neutrality, the terrifying smiling mask of good-willed malevolence. “We will give you this permit only if you...”; “we will grant you this opportunity only if you....” And everything is logged, registered, kept, surveilled, as a permanent digitally-encoded memory and record of all your thoughts, actions, initiatives. In short: it is a digital archive of your serviceability to the neoliberal democratic nation-State.

**16. The phenomenal State and the noumenal Hyperstate.** The phenomenal State is the organizational apparatus that runs countries and continents. It consists of politicians, civil servants, rules, property, procedures and services, all maintained by tax money. It is the appearance (phenomenon) of the State-in-Itself, the noumenal State. The noumenal State is the Hyperstate. It is an organizational pattern that is bent on amassing power it does not intend to give back. As such, it is a malignant and institutionalized form of Schopenhauer’s Will-to-Live. The Hyperstate is the *Will-to-Dominate*, effected by means of public displays of power (gallows erected at every crossroads) and authoritarian coercion (corpses hanging on every gallows). Whatever the State commands is right, just because (i) the State tells you it’s right—this is by virtue of its self-asserted “political authority”—and (ii) the State possesses and

controls the coercive means to compel you to heed and obey! It does not do so for any other reason than such domination itself. It is not even a mechanism to survive. It is its entire being, its very mode of being in the world. Consequently, the world is what is being dominated, a impressionable substrate that is being used and exploited. Life itself is exploited by the Hyperstate.

**17. Self-doubt.** When the mind works according to patterns that are ever more restricted and outside its control, self-doubt sets in. And that is how all dictatorships start: with a massive infliction of self-doubt in their citizens. Rumors, half-truths and whispered histories. “Do you know that if you don’t follow rule Y, then we’ll do X to you?”

**18. Guilt.** “What did I do wrong?,” is the question that a seemingly self-conscious citizen asks when “caught” violating the rules of the game. It is the cry of despair by someone who feels intensely insecure in the face of looming persecution. In some cases, it is merely a deceptive ploy; in dictatorships, it is the last attempt at so-called negotiation: at bringing the guilty people “to their senses,” and “to reason.” In this context, “being sensible” and “being reasonable” mean *being compliant and obedient no matter how onerous and oppressive the demands that are imposed on you*. –But the Hyperstate is, by its very nature, unreason itself!

**19. The unreason of oppression.** To negotiate “in good faith” is to attempt to deal with insensible, unreasonable oppressors as if they were truly sensible and truly reasonable. But they’re *not*: if they were, they wouldn’t be able to sustain their domination. Every dictatorship revolves around a core of unfeeling unreason that is loudly activated at a whim or covertly built into the Hyperstate and State-service apparatus that dictatorship creates. The dictator or dictatorial regime keeps its citizens in a state of perpetual guilt, imbalance, and unease: let’s call this *collective anxiety*. This way, they cannot find their footing, they forget their dignity, they’re pushed back onto their heels, and they cannot recover their footing to strike back.

**20. Imbalance.** Oppressors know that they must keep the collective anxiety of their victims forever in place. The victim must not discover any rhyme or reason. Only “good” (that is: compliant, obedient, fashionably bourgeois) actions are rewarded; but sometimes even *they* are punished. The trick is to make everyone feel they can become a victim arbitrarily and at any moment.

**21. States as dictatorships and large-scale protection rackets.** A neoliberal democratic nation-State is just a dictatorship combined with a large-scale protection racket, but papered over with polite manners. It extorts money from you, while assuring you that the money will be well-spent, and you are contributing to the good case, of course! And in some cases, it actually is well-spent, and such projects are used to convince you that the Hyperstate has good intentions after all. But this does not justify the



coercion and authoritarianism with which it was acquired. If we follow this line of logic, it is right to kill someone arbitrarily in order to harvest his organs in order to save five others, if and only if you ask politely first and explain the public benefits. This very mechanism of extraction is inherent in all State-service structures. They force people to work for them, threaten them punishment if they refuse, and then “justify” this by claiming that the Hyperstate benevolently protects them from criminals, foreign invaders, etc., etc. “It’s for your own good!” Actually, it’s the *ultimate* protection racket and the *ultimate* instance of Stockholm syndrome: you must be “protected” *only by those who enslave you!*

**22. Corporations as dictatorships.** The same logic applies to multinational corporations. They own enormous assets; they dictate laws for their employees, as binding as any nation-State law, and they reward psychopathic behavior to such a degree that they cannot but become psychopathic social institutions themselves. That is, they knowingly act with blatant disregard for any moral, social, or material consequences apart from short-term gain and endless market-exploitation, new markets, and even greater profits. Now that the Earth is falling apart because we’ve exploited it to death, let’s escape into outer space and find new markets and even bigger profits!

**23. Obsessive subjects.** The collective anxiety of citizens leads to increasingly frantic attempts to fulfill all the rules at all times, no matter how minute, detailed, or absurd. “If we give in this time, maybe they leave us alone!” This is the voice of despair. This is also the birth and development of the *obsessive subject*: frantically turning in ever-smaller and quicker circles, epicycles of existential despair, mental suffering, and vicious self-centeredness. The oppressors know that living according to the rules is an impossibility—indeed, they design the system in such a way to make *sure* that it is: then they will conduct surprise raids and checks. Not even the most terrified citizen can fulfill the obligations put on them. By singling out individuals who have “transgressed”—this week’s Enemy of The People will be publicly humiliated and then publicly executed by means of a very special mixture of digital toxins: death by 45.7M Tweets/re-Tweets and Facebook posts/re-posts, for your online viewing pleasure. Thus, the oppressor shows that it “can happen to anyone,” and that no one can exist outside coercive authoritarian Hyperstate-space.

**24. Survival.** And so, acting freely and in accordance with one’s dignity is reduced to merely surviving. If only I can stay within the rules this time! If I give in a little more, then they may be well-disposed towards me! The everyday, immediate confrontation between the oppressed and oppressors characterizes our mode of life itself, in which everything is drawn into the vortex of the great conflict between those who are coercing and those who are issuing authoritarian commands; between those who are denying freedom to others, and those who are yearning for it. If every so-called free act is geared towards mere survival, this isn’t genuine freedom, it’s just *triage*. It comes

down to staying alive just a little longer, not because our actual lives are really worth it, but only because the idea of our own death is unbearable to us.

#### 4. Guilt and Exculpation

**25. Guilt and destabilization.** The staging of a conflict that the Hyperstate will always win reinforces feelings of guilt and insecurity, and will be purposely used by any oppressor to induce collective anxiety in the victims, to make them ashamed, make them feel like perpetrators, above all to make them actually and wholeheartedly believe they deserve punishment and have relinquished their rights by transgressing. Once you stop asking whether the way you're being treated is actually just, the basic goal of a dictatorship has already been achieved.

**26. Despair—again.** This is why cynicism is quiet desperation: it is the accomplishment of a fundamental subjective shift in the oppressed. The oppressed start to feel that no matter what happens, their rights can be or are already relinquished. In short: their choices and actions will make no difference whatsoever and cannot serve as a justifiable plea to be “let off the hook.”

**27. Subjective deformation.** Once people have the constant feeling that they have to be “let off the hook” and must beg for mercy from their oppressors, or convince them of their innocence, the fundamental subjective shift has deformed their very mode of being in the world. One starts to see oneself as trespassing by simply existing. Every little bump against the rules is perceived as a moral shortcoming, a moral flaw, a moral sin, and it reinforces the dominant position of the oppressor. But this is only because one lacks the courage to dare to think for oneself and ask whether the rules and laws themselves are right; whom they serve; how they came to be; and what influence actual citizens had on them.

**28. The great fiction:** And if one comes to the conclusion that there are no courts of appeal; that influence on law-giving is void; that one's voice is meaningless in the face of the unreason of oppression: then at that very moment, one must see through the fiction of *being a citizen of a nation-State and by extension of the Hyperstate*. This is the narrative of all nation-States and State-like social institutions. You are one of us; or, better, you are owned by us, and you had better live up to it, and accept our benevolent protection. Like all protection rackets, this threat is usually not made explicitly, but instead it's chafed into one's very existential texture.

**29. Citizen.** This word is an abstraction, a monstrosity, a mask, and a lie. It is a bill of rights that can be revoked at any moment; it's a bill of obligations one did not ask for, and did not explicitly or even implicitly consent to (The Social Contract That Never Was); and above all it serves the existing powers of domination, and is indeed the very

resource that keeps them functioning. Of course, those in power are not giving up their easily-won resources. They simply call them “citizens” (you lucky citizens!, be grateful for your citizenship!, and always remember that we can revoke it!) and tell them they have to behave as “productive members of society.” The citizen is that tragic creature who truly believes he is “free” only because others have told him so. This Is The Land O’ Liberty! You Have Civil Rights™! Dignity Is Just Around The Corner! If someone tells me that I’m free, either he is saying something irrelevant, because I know it already, or else he’s the jailor who can lock me up at any moment, but simply hides it behind his smiley face and polite manners for the time being.

**30. Control.** Because we know this non-conceptually and affectively, because it is ingrained in us non-self-consciously in a myriad of ways, we now demand interpassivity. Do not stand too close. Do not express an opinion that upsets me. Do not question the demands I pose on you. Do not deviate from the pre-set norms. Everything you think or express must be well within the framework of postmodern nihilism and coercive moralist identitarian multiculturalism. State-imposed demands take control away in one area of life, so people claim them back in other areas. We are not a society anymore, but merely a collection of anxious individuals. We closed our minds in a cycle of perpetual obsessive-compulsive behavior. In the endless here and now, we revolve like points in a virtual space around our own empty cores that we are obliged to endlessly define and re-define according to a logic of endless ultra-capitalist production.

**31. Self-absorption.** This is the ultimate distraction. It lets people retreat into a fantasy world that they can inhabit and project onto the real world. The theme park and social media are two developments in a continuous spectrum of the projection of self-absorbed fantasies. In a theme park, one imagines oneself, for the time being, to be in a fairytale world; with virtual reality, this world is digitally created and far more immersive. It does not have to do with the cumbersome constraints of creating a physical and therefore corruptible, decaying environment. It is directly wired into our dopamine production, and it’s available every hour of the day and night. With such tools, people cannot become anything but self-absorbed, suffering from digital myopia and digital tunnel-vision. And all the rest that cannot be seen, is projected from within the safe, myopic, tunneled zone. The demand for “safe space” arises because the intimate spaces in which people used to feel safe have been projected outwards into the public space. So, people demand that the place where they hide from the pressures of the world is mirrored in public space. This is a dangerous fantasy, because public spaces necessarily involve interactions with other people.

**32. Obsessive coercive moralism as social self-distraction.** The need to lash out and control others is just a self-distraction from the pre-conscious knowledge that one is owned and can be punished and socially obliterated at any moment. It is both the ultimate ego-booster and the much-needed distraction from a much-too-harsh reality.

On one hand, it gives people a sense of control and autonomy that they can control, browbeat, “call out,” and generally police others in a display of horizontal violence; and on the other hand, it self-distracts them from paying too much attention to their own predicament of being wage-slaves and victims of the coercive authoritarian neoliberal democratic nation-State.

**33. Class consciousness of the present time.** What Marx called “class consciousness” is the breakthrough moment when oppressed people suddenly realize that they are in the same predicament as many others who share the same social-institutional status and the same oppression. However, Marx mistakenly assumed that this would lead by default to camaraderie, solidarity, a shared identity, and a subsequent collective effort towards emancipation and self-realization. Needless to say, sharply on the contrary, it instead led to a multiplicity of competing, colliding, warring identitarian factions, all of whom claimed to uphold “really existing Marxist socialism” (the GDR term), but were ultimately every bit as much divided as before, while at the same time believing and claiming that everyone wanted Marxist socialism to be realized—by coercive authoritarian means, of course. Now, substitute “neoliberalism” for “Marxism” and “democracy” for “socialism.” In this substitutional sense, everyone who is living in a contemporary coercive authoritarian neoliberal democratic nation-State, and is *not* a member of the power elite, is in effect a desperately unhappy child of the failed marriage of “Mr. Neoliberalism” and “Mrs. Democracy.” They fuck you up, your political Mum and Dad. So, to re-iterate Marx’s not altogether irrelevant question: *what is to be done?*

**34. Self-justification.** There is nothing people won’t do once they imagine they are on the good side of history. This unshakeable certainty underlies all groupthink, whether of the cultural, religious, moral, or sociopolitical kind. In their rituals of excommunication, those deemed the *outgroup* are attacked and expelled by the collective *ingroup*. The excommunicated outsider represents, as it were, “The People’s Enemy,” “the nomad,” or “the untouchable.” More precisely, The People’s Enemy/nomad/untouchable represents all the taboos in defense of which the ingroup’s moral cathedrals and ivory bunkers have been erected. But, by simply *existing* outside the moral and sociopolitical framework of the ingroup, one creates, among the members of the ingroup, a deep, gnawing insecurity about the eternality, imperviousness, and permanence of their dogmas. And so, they lash out yet again, with desperate vehemence, against the outsider.

**35. Moral superiority.** To believe in one’s own moral superiority, only one claim is necessary: *that one fights on the good side*. From that point on, everything is permitted. This is the fatal flaw of all violent revolutions and revolutionary leaders: once they set themselves up with an appropriate justification, there is no end to the atrocities. In so doing, they self-consciously or unself-consciously implement classical “the sufficiently valuable end always justifies the means” type of instrumental reasoning.

**36. Identification of the subject with its dogma.** Groupthink requires that members fully identify with the dogmas of the group; or, more properly speaking, that they become the incarnation of the dogmas themselves. “I am The Truth in Human Form” is the explicit or implicit slogan of every zealot. By internal negation, “You are *not* The Truth in Human Form” is the defiant motto of every outsider who is not prepared to comply with, heed, or obey hegemonic group ideology and norms. Hence the members of the ingroup must play *the great mirror game*. Charles Manson, for example, made the acolytes of his cult regularly play “mirror games” with him, whereby whatever Manson said or shouted was instantly said or shouted back at him by his cultic acolytes. This is a proven strategy for speeding up the process of identitarian mutual identification between two individuals, or between an individual and the rest of the group. “God Bless America!”; “We are One Nation, under God, with Liberty and Justice for all!”; “We are the Marines!”; “Allahu akbar!”; “We are MAGA!” Social media in general, and Twitter in particular, are highly effective online mechanisms for speeding up identitarian mutual identification, whether on the left or right side of the political spectrum. They are all just so many ways of expediting the manacling and enslavement of people’s minds. The problem is not merely the identitarian mutual identification process itself, but above all the crucial (and profoundly false) presupposition that in order to belong to a group, one must sacrifice their individuality and their ability to think, feel, and act for themselves. This presupposition is a crime against humanity as such.

**37. On heroism and self-sacrifice.** *Outside* the context of identitarian groupthink, heroism and sacrifice in fact mean that they are exceptional acts that ought to be treated with the highest respect, insofar as they are expressions of altruistic, dignitarian, and wholehearted individual commitment. But to twist the meaning of such actions for the purposes of cementing and priming identitarian groupthink is grotesque, reprehensible, and utterly disrespectful to those who have sacrificed themselves on moral and sociopolitical grounds that are wholly different from what identitarian demagogues cynically, speciously, and self-servingly attribute to them.

**38. On identitarian demagogues.** Therefore, treat the incantations and utterances and of all identitarian demagogues who capitalize on others’ sincere self-sacrifice, with a grain of salt; or if necessary, push back in self-defense: treat their rhetoric as utter nonsense. Identitarian demagogues strategically twist rationally justified and morally right motives solely for political gain, and there is almost no greater vice than that. So identitarian demagogues are inherently unfit to lead or represent any collective whatsoever. Anyone who is prepared to resort to such moral contortions will *never* put the interest of those he supposedly democratically represents, first.

## 5. Confusion and Control

**39. The State as the false prophet.** The Hyperstate is nothing but an ordered collection of coercive authoritarian institutions, that attempts to convince free people that they should voluntarily and willingly identify themselves with the dogmas it has presented to them, in exchange for a bleak, etiolated, and false chimera of freedom. We do *not* need the Hyperstate in order to be free agents: on the contrary, the Hyperstate is the ultimate undermining force for free agency. The Hyperstate is fundamentally interested in the production of “citizens,” through State-services i.e., people who believe without question that God’s gift to them is the massive protection racket according to which the Hyperstate will protect them from each other and from all external enemies, provided that they not only obey the Hyperstate in all things, but also worship the Hyperstate –or else the Hyperstate will crush them. That is, the Hyperstate is fundamentally interested in producing individuals with an essentially deformed subjectivity, who suffer from lifelong Stockholm Syndrome induced by uninterrupted Hyperstate propaganda through State-services and State-like institutions. Be a responsible citizen; spy on your neighbors; install CCTV cameras; patrol the neighborhood and report all suspicious activity and all dodgy-looking outsiders; Little Brother, Little Sister, and Little Non-Binary Sibling Are Watching You. Even community-based practices are usurped by the Hyperstate and embedded within a power structure of command, control, divide, and conquer. The Hyperstate is that false prophet from The Book of Revelation: it is the vehicle of moral and sociopolitical corruption and rot. Whatever the Hyperstate touches become tainted, soiled, and impure. Even the noblest motives become vulgar desires when touched by the false prophet – even personal sacrifice becomes something an identitarian demagogue uses to bolsters his political vision. Community-spirit turns into collaboration; social bonds turn into group pressure; social orderliness turns into being coerced and controlled. The corruption of the Hyperstate resides in the fact that it turns all humane and naturally sociable social relationships into instruments of command and control, eroding our subjective agency and debilitating all fully natural capacities for authenticity.

**40. Confused and controlled values.** In that sense, the Hyperstate is perfectly epitomized by the nauseating words of Mao Tse-Tsung: we give the masses back what we received from them in a confused form. In other words: The Hyperstate capitalizes on practices that it sees as “confused,” because they are rooted in communal, naturally sociable values. But communal and naturally sociable values—that is—anti-instrumental, anti-legalistic, and unforced social ideals and norms—are exactly what is beyond Hyperstate control; and therefore, they are seen as a dangerous threat. So, in order to further the Hyperstate’s interests, these values must, from the Hyperstate’s domineering point of view, be brought under a regime of authoritarianism, coercion, and control. In so doing, the Hyperstate transforms and corrupts communal, naturally

sociable values them into something unrecognizable, via a form of instrumental reason that, by using the same name as original values, pays lip service to the goals that communal and naturally sociable values strive for. The primary means of this corrupting transformation are the marketing strategies of advanced hyper-capitalism. Hence, for example, actual friendship turns into “business associates,” “co-workers,” “professional colleagues,” “clients,” or—perhaps most insidious of all, because it’s so cynically exploitative—“friending” people on Facebook.

**41. Exception and rule.** What makes Mao’s words so dangerous is the fact that they are sometimes true. Every good lie contains a grain of truth. A group of individuals may have confused wishes, and someone with expertise and insight might translate their wishes back to them, in a manner that is much more realistic and useful than they could formulate it before. But this, the ideal of facilitation, is an exception and also requires slowly unfolding, careful, unforced, open *dialogue* and *principled negotiation* in order to see whether everyone still agrees with and supports what is being proposed for collective agreement and action. But, notoriously, Mao used the notion of “translation of the wishes of the masses” as an operating principle of government for placing dictatorial control in the hands of a power elite that presented themselves as Those Who Know Best: the Leninist “party vanguard.” In such cases, you can be sure that the “translation of the wishes of the masses” is not a translation at all, but only an abstract, baseless, and tyrannical set of dogmas at best. This is the characteristic sin of classical Communism. Mao turned what is originally something organic, sociable, and good—faithful and reliable translation from one language into another—into a machine for coercive authoritarian top-down domination.

**42. Fashionable resistance.** The attitude of fashionable resistance—what used to be called “radical chic”—has been harnessed by corporations, States, and identitarian ideological collectives. Once one’s “resistance” is of the fashionable, marketable, palatable, and daringly-agreeable kind, it is accepted and taken up within the mainstream. Everything else is vilified. Feminism in its contemporary forms, political correctness, and boundless “activism” on behalf of whatever fashionable cause, fall into this category. They are wielded as ideological weapons to browbeat, shame, and coerce others into thinking they are morally inferior, or that they adhere to an outdated and bad moral code.

**43. Self-inflicted harm.** The deformed subjectivity of citizenship is aimed at self-inflicted harm. The ideal subject of citizenship thinks of themselves not as autonomous agent, but as a (disposable) instrument in the hands of a State; or—in the more subtle form—as a member of an identitarian minority community, the values of which have been violated by the State or by corporate influence. At the same time, these very values of “identity,” “diversity,” and “inclusion” are put forward as altruistic, necessary, moral, humane, and above all, as stemming from one’s own free choice. What a lie! We are continuously shaped and formed by multiple influences,

but many or even most of these influences are directly or indirectly traceable to State power, corporate capitalist power, and/or various vested and ideological self-interests. We are not *strictly determined* by Statist and/or capitalist social institutions, but we are indeed *destructively deformed* by them.

**44. Institutional victory.** The greatest victory of such social-institutional destructive deformation lies in the fact that its victims quietly accept their own oppressive predicament of lack, poverty, and suffering as either *inevitable* or *their own fault*. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Thoreau said that most people live lives of quiet despair—and he was right. But nowadays it is even worse than that: our social institutions are engineered precisely so as to convince us that pushing back against them is either possible but pointless (“why bang my head against the wall?”) or simply humanly impossible (“I’m nothing but another brick in the wall”).

**45. Benevolent paternalism.** Our social institutions are there for you, the citizens! Yes, we pay for them, that much is true. And on occasion, they also serve us. This service often goes by the name of “securing our civil rights.” But in reality, such social institutions exert an influence that extends well beyond what we actually pay for. They are *life-shapers*, just as the founding myths on which the nation-State and the Hyperstate rest are *thought-shapers*. In return, these institutions demand our compliance, obedience—or, even more edgily formulated—an unquestioning acceptance of, and passive resignation in the face of, our own domination, mental slavery, and wage slavery. We are required to accept the services accorded by the State, to work under advanced capitalism, and then also to pay taxes for realizing and sustaining our own unfreedom.

**46. Thought-shapers, life-shapers and the “critique of institutions and power.”** *Thought-shapers* are cognitive patterns and structures that partially cause, form, and normatively guide our thoughts, of all kinds, in a mostly pre-reflective and uncritical way. *Life-shapers* are social-institutional patterns and structures that partially cause, form, and normatively guide our everyday lives as members of or participants in social institutions, of all kinds, again in a mostly pre-reflective and uncritical way. Because language is a social institution and because all human thinking is mediated by language, then all thought-shapers are therefore *also* life-shapers. Above all, in both cases, the shaping can be either for the better or for the worse. And in a world of States and advanced capitalism, it is mostly for the worse. Pointing out these truths is *not* a plea to revert to a broadly Foucauldian and/or postmodern “critique of institutions and power,” an enterprise that is altogether stale, flat, and increasingly irrelevant in a world in which Foucauldians and/or postmodernists (for example, “critical race theorists”) have consistently and fully sold out to the State and advanced capitalism alike, by becoming card-carrying, tenured or untenured house-slaves of the professional academy – the institution tasked with the uniformization of the academic mind.. When “the struggle” of the 1960s and 70s, and the “postmodern irony” of the



1980s, moved indoors together and became twice-monthly department meetings of the tenure-track faculty and endless “collegial” mutual enmity and infighting, the game was up – or rather, its true character shone through.

**47. Rise and Fall.** The rise of social media has coincided with a loss of true communality and sociability. Nowadays, we do not know what “community” and “sociability” are outside the technologies that enable it. In turn, this leads to a basic loss of the social skills and values required to build and maintain social bonds that last beyond reading or responding to the latest passing digital message or image. Every acquisition of a new technology leads to new skills, but simultaneously also to new ways of forgetting the natural sociality that it replaces and/or undermines. New technology presents the past as a less-developed and old-fashioned yesterday, but also as a blank slate, and above all as an endless blacktop asphalt highway that stretches back into the vast, dark, nether regions of pre-technological ignorance.

**48. Mass-induced amnesia.** The ideal subject of modernity is perilously perched between the continuous falling away of the past and the onrushing future, clinging to a virtual point that keeps accelerating forward. New developments come at us at increasing speed, like so many trains bearing down upon us and then away from us—the “swipe” on the screen—while we’re trapped on the platform and can never actually board the train, nor are we expected to, anyway. Simultaneously, the past falls way behind us with an increasing speed, like a cathedral crumbling into the dust. The subject caught between these two developments is necessarily amnesiac. The gap left by the obliterated past is continuously filled with the new, but at such a speed that critically interpreting and understanding it becomes cognitively impossible. The past as such exists only as an image, a piece of idealized forgotten history that turns again into a virtual fragment in the virtual economy of imagery that is endlessly circulated by digital means. But perpetual amnesia means perpetual uprooting and rootlessness: it is a forced exile from one’s own cognitive heritage.

**49. Traditionalism.** Everything traditional is vilified nowadays: on the one hand, it is negatively associated with the fascists doctrine of “*Blut und Boden*”; but on the other hand, it is also closely associated with a stubborn remnant of an authentic communal, sociable form of life that falls outside the forces of progress that are nowadays always broadly neoliberal capitalist-driven and State-sponsored. A stubborn adherence to a genuinely communal, sociable tradition in the face of all that adverse pressure, proves the point that no version of modernity can wholly obliterate the fact that people desperately need roots and a shared, organic collective memory.

**50. The Power of Remembering.** And that is exactly what a nation-State cannot abide in its citizens: the autonomous memory of a sociable human community that exists outside the borders and perimeters of Hyperstate surveillance, which in turn could be the very antidote to the learned helplessness that is projected on society at large from

all sides. Only the rootless are inwardly exiled, and as such, they are an amorphous mass of lonely people, disorganized, and disenfranchised: the wretched of the earth. But those who remember the communal, sociable moral roots of humanity can conceptualize a different order of things, in which the Hyperstate is not only not needed but even an unwelcome guest, or at worst a vile sickness, to get rid of.

**51. Weaponized memory.** In turn, that is also why the Hyperstate – through the State institutions – weaponizes the very notion of memory, replacing tradition with a faux-traditional narrative that glorifies coercive State power, the flag, narrow nationalism focused on border protection, and a generous helping of cheap, faux heroism. The selection of collective memories serves the same function as the propagandist evening news or newspaper. It selects fragments of history and cobbles a makeshift past together. This is a pseudo-past in which an artificial unity (and above all a narrow form of idealized communal life under benevolent State paternalism) is projected on society as such, and in which only citizens (i.e., the good people) and the marauding nomads and savages (i.e., the bad people, who either are or should be in prison or mental health institutions, etc.) are allowed to participate.

**52. Authorized sources.** In academic contexts, the weaponized memory is the sum total of insights one is supposed to cite and quote; in a spirit of reverence or at the most ultra-mild critique. Anything, as long as it is not relevant. Argue as much as you like and about whatever you like, but obey! There is a reason why, when crisis looms, all research on actual or possible weapons is immediately claimed for military purposes and turned into classified information, but philosophy books never are—it says something about how relevant they are.

## 6. The Myth of Order

**53. Appearance of eternity.** The Hyperstate must appear as the natural order of things. It must appear as if it had been there from all eternity and is unchanging. Or else, it must appear as the ultimate victory of the natural order of things over the antediluvian forces of chaos. Every mythology starts with a state of chaos and void for this reason: it is the metaphysical foundation of (nation)-State power. This is why the State insists on “Law and Order.” Those are the symbols of its power, its reach, its Will-to-Dominate, but above all its birthright as a Force for Good. To appear as a necessity flowing from original chaos and the void—the awful and horrific State of Nature—is a necessary tool of the State. It is a rhetorical device required to stamp out all dissenting voices, opposed opinions, proposals to think about alternative world-schemes. The Hyperstate’s appearing as inevitable and a necessity—the cosmogony of Statist power—can be accomplished in two different ways: (i) either the State claims a distant, historical origin or significant event as moment of conception, emergence, and triumph (for instance, the founding of Rome, or the American Revolution), or (ii)

it presents itself as the outcome of a deterministic historical process that necessarily leads to its conception, emergence, and triumph. The first cosmogony is an inbuilt feature of the USA; the second of Nazi Germany and the USSR.

**54. Shirking of responsibility.** The tactic of representing the Hyperstate as a metaphysical or historical necessity removes all responsibility of rationally and morally justifying it, from those who are actually running the (nation)-State. If they engage in ethnic cleansing, blackmail, torture, occupation, or other profoundly immoral policies, they simply claim that they have a privileged insight into the process of historical necessity; or they claim that they are performing “painful [i.e., for others, not for the leaders], but unfortunately necessary” actions in order to guarantee the continuation of the Hyperstate and the controlling infrastructure of the State. In both cases, they claim that they are simply instruments or servants of the mythical “People”. As such, they bear no moral responsibility for their actions; or at best, they bear a merely political responsibility, as functionaries of the State, which is sharply divorced from any moral responsibility.

**55. Accountability.** A society that does not hold its politicians morally accountable for their actions plays with fire, to say the least. It amounts to handing the power to decide over life and death, to an essentially irresponsible, arbitrarily-acting person. Routinely, political systems attempt to avoid or evade any moral accountability. This can be done by setting up lengthy procedures of investigations, with decades-long commissions staffed by other politicians, and by conducting all investigations behind closed doors; by editing, redacting, and fully re-phrasing the proceedings in reports that are thousands of pages long, that no one can ever read; and by conducting formal hearings in which the person being questioned actually does not have to answer any relevant questions at all.

**56. Class consciousness – again.** This is, simultaneously, Marx’s most original and yet most derivative idea. Anyone has class consciousness, whenever you identify your own interests with those of a certain social group as a whole: there is no need for a Marxist analysis of whatever kind there. When you’re not rich, you know it already. When you’re rich, you know it already. But the diagnosis that this consciousness could be the basis of social organization is not new either. Mobs throughout history have known it. What is original, is that Marx realized that society is fundamentally organized along the fault lines formed by *economic* classes. This in turn, led to class resentment as the driving force beneath much Marxist thought: we are oppressed, and they are the oppressors, so let’s get rid of them. But this picture is utterly simplistic, and to no small degree responsible for the rise of identitarian coercive liberalism. It is a reverse image of what Marx himself actually professed. In modern states, class consciousness is the realization that the individual has identified their own interest with group-interests as a whole. In and of itself, this is not the same as being actively oppressed, but rather simply giving up attempting to control important events in

one's life. One might even enjoy comparably many freedoms—shall I buy this product or that product?—while State-backed corporate capitalist power makes all the fundamental decisions about one's life.

**57. Formal freedom and slow violence.** Marx's idea about "real" and "formal" freedoms is much more useful than his ideas about class consciousness. If the Hyperstate – through State services – provides (!) mere formal freedoms, then real freedom has already left the building. There is no difference in kind between the slow violence of a multinational oil corporation contaminating the waters of a river delta, thereby gradually harming an entire population, and the slow violence of the State that erodes real freedom until all that is left is a meaningless set of standardized routines that lay claim to the term "freedom, but that actually do not allow any real choice. In both cases, the violence is inflicted over time, and as such, it can continue unnoticed for a very long time. But that makes it not less violent, nor less morally reprehensible.

**58. Conspiracy theories.** No conspiracy theories are necessary to show this. Indeed, the very idea of a conspiracy theory itself is already weaponized, just as in the USSR dissidents were routinely diagnosed as "mentally unstable." Now we say: they have "mental health issues." Hyperstates use algorithms to discuss and predict behavior, and act accordingly; they make decisions behind closed doors, and they communicate only a few of them, often after the fact; they conduct hearings and meetings outside the public eye; they can unilaterally change rules; they can declare and withdraw martial law or the state of exception at will; they determine whether an individual is a threat to State security, which is always defined in the broadest possible terms; they can conduct private meetings with industry to "ensure the availability of well-paying jobs." But all these State-actions are well beyond the mandate that is given democratically to them. Even if the State *seems* to play by the rules (i.e., its own, formalized rules), the consequences of its actions can still violate those rules – if not in letter, then in spirit. But no one seems interested in that. Everything was conducted, after all, "by the book."

**59. Appearances of fairness and the metaphysical order.** Show trials of Enemies of the People are necessary, because they protect all who are engaged in the maintenance of corrupt political systems. The appearance of fairness must be held up. This is, on one hand, a purely instrumental decision, designed to show "the masses" that the mythical checks-and-balances of democracy are really functioning, so as to prevent uprisings, protests, and accusations that the State is immoral. On the other hand, we should not be misled by the purely instrumental character of such public spectacles. For there is also a deep metaphysical need to stage and visually consume such spectacles. They must inform the citizens as well as the State itself that the metaphysical world order on which coercive authoritarianism is predicated, is still intact. Any form of coercive authoritarianism rests on a metaphysical picture that is

as much philosophical as it is theological. It divides the world into the dualism of a transcendent Coercive Authority and the masses governed by it—for their own protection, of course. There must be an unbridgeable gap between the Coercive Authority and the masses; moreover, rituals must punctuate important moments in the dualistic relationship between the two. The King might toss coins to the masses in a gesture of formalized good will; the High Priest may ritually humiliate the King in order to show the stability and reach of the transcendent Coercive Authority; victory parades must be staged to show the triumph of Good over Evil. In the modern state, spectacles of coercive authoritarian bureaucratic efficiency must be staged; as must spectacles of State violence, explicit or implicit, such as the unleashing of wars, stringent checks to guard against terrorism of all sorts, and elaborate surveillance mechanisms to show that the eyes and ears of the State are everywhere. All these small and big gestures add up to a metaphysical picture that both absolutist, proto-capitalist States and modern fully capitalist Hyperstates present to their citizens: to show them that the metaphysical world order is now as it ever will be, vigilantly watched over by Those Who Know Best.

**60. Necessity as basis of authority.** And this entire spectacle is in order to show, yet again, how necessary, permanent, and unchangeable the State really and truly is; it declares that it is here for all eternity, and that we cannot do without it; that even thinking about such alternatives is a futile exercise. It will gleefully point to the mistakes and failures of the past, and claim that it is endlessly superior to any conceivable alternative, all the while proving to anyone whose eyes are actually open, that the exact contrary is in fact the case. In other cases, the State will theatrically point towards its current condition, and bemoan the fact that a lack of purity and patriotism has led to the current, dismal state of affairs. This performance provides then sufficient reasons for yet another round of fanaticism. The MAGA movement claimed to restore the “crumbled, degenerated” American empire to its—purely mythical—former glory. It weaponized national identity and patriotism in a display of internal and external aggression. But another version of this same trick can be observed in the emergence of the IS Caliphate in Iraq: those leading the IS militia claimed that their citizens had been “impure,” “sinful,” and, all in all, not pure enough. This excuse was then used for violence, ethnic cleansing and draconian rules, all to restore the Muslim Caliphate, of course. Again, the myth of former purity is invoked to entice entire masses into working harder, becoming more fanatical, and watching their neighbors even more closely. This trick is not new, but it is amplified by means of mass communication. In Cordoba, the walls of the old Jewish synagogue have been partially whitewashed. Its intricate stucco was covered by Christian invaders, who saw in the elaborate patterns something “Oriental” or at least “not-Christian”. As a response, they covered the walls in a plain—pure—whitewash. The new order always claims to restore purity and therewith grandeur and honesty. And without any exceptions, such projects of restoring purity are always accompanied by removing or curtailing freedoms. Freedom itself is always seen as the biggest threat.

**61. Society of the Spectacle.** Guy Debord took a needlessly narrow view of the very idea of commodities. All spectacles required to cement and support authority and its claims are *metaphysical commodities*, required by the hungry or otherwise needy masses in order to cover up what they non-conceptually already know: that they are owned by the Hyperstate and kept in their subservience by the biggest protection racket ever invented. But at the same time, they are anaesthetized and soothed by the slave-owners telling them over and over again that this is not “really” the case, so that they can deceive themselves into believe that and put those nagging and unsettling voices to sleep. The Hyperstate, in the meantime, is only all-too-happy to serve up its own special brand of opium to the masses. Incense, sermons, national anthems, flags that wave in the breeze, fireside chats, endless empty promises, pomp-&-circumstance galore, big parades, daily press briefings, and regular prime-time TV speeches: these are all nothing but highly effective metaphysical rituals for silencing and suppressing the critical powers of the mind.

## **7. Mechanisms of the State Apparatus**

**62. Rituals and ruins.** Every State requires ruins in order to parade its own stability and endurance. Either they are remnants from other, opposing States, as we can see in the example of the rivalry between Rome and Carthage; or, alternatively, it must represent a former, less perfect version of the State that has been overcome and that we can look back upon with relief, knowing that the new, more effective and benevolent powers-that-be look out for us. In both cases, the State must represent itself as the natural successor of formerly defunct or illegitimate ideas. It must, again, represent itself as the natural successor to its citizens and to itself. The Hegelian point to be made here is that the State exists in an analogous way to the subject in Hegel’s Master-Slave dialectic. In the dialectic, one recognizes oneself in an “other,” and derives one’s own position in the world from this recognition. In order for this mirroring mechanism to function, one must recognize certain features or similarities of oneself in the “other.” So, too, must the State see images of itself reflected in its citizens. If the State does not receive this idealized image back from its citizens, then no coercive instrument is left unutilized in order to achieve that goal.

**63. State-narcissism.** The Hyperstate is the ultimate narcissistic subject: it feeds on its own reflection and derives its legitimacy from the very fact that it encounters its self-image everywhere in the faces and lives of its citizens. But this reflection exists only because the State shapes its citizens in its own image. The grounding of legitimacy is thus circular: the State justifies its “benevolence” and coercive control by pointing at the fact that its citizens require and demand it. But the State itself created the demand and convinced and/or coerced people into thinking that they could not do without it.

**64. Possession-Obsession.** The Hyperstate is the possessive-obsessive, singular subject of domination. The Will-to-Dominate is distributed through its social institutions, and its rules and regulations, and is enacted by its civil servants. To possess and control is the very core of the Will-to-Dominate. The worst instincts of the human race are united and exaggerated in the State. Hobbes's *Leviathan* was not an unrealized ideal, but an updated report on the functioning of the State since ancient times. What the Hyperstate cannot possess fuels its obsession. And because there is always something that eludes the possession by the Hyperstate, the obsession turns into a perpetual quest for more control, more power, and more regulation.

**65. Distrust.** Correspondingly, everyday State power is predicated on its fundamental distrust of those it claims to represent. Traditional practices, the recognition of communal moral norms, deviant lifestyles that are deemed dangerous, and questioning the existing state and judicial order are all looked upon with distrust. The conviction that there are domains where the Hyperstate cannot and should not control is additional fuel for the Hyperstate's obsession with control. Granted, not all traditional or communal practices are morally or ethically justified. But apart from their justification in moral or ethical terms, they accomplish an impressive feat: namely, to provide a space beyond Hyperstate and State control. This space is first and foremost mental, and can be described in a single motto: *Sapere aude!*, *dare to know!*, *dare to think for yourself!*

**66. New ways forward.** Those who can think beyond the mechanical, constrictive thought-shapers with which we are bombarded can conceive of new possibilities and pathways in which the State either plays an extremely limited role, or otherwise no role at all. The retort that such ways are doomed to fail in the end may be true in certain cases. But ultimately, it misses the point. Many States have disappeared as well, either because they became corrupted from inside, or otherwise because they were destroyed by other States. If we were to hold these failures against the idea of the State as such then, with the same logical force as its defenders hold it against ideas about alternative ways of organizing ourselves, then the very idea of a State is not just fragile, but inherently dangerous. The work of new forms of philosophical thought have to find a way forward that is not concentrated around the dubious and unjustified premises on which State power is predicated. Moreover, the injunction to stop searching is itself unjustified and immoral.

**67. Ideology.** The most successful technique of propaganda is to stop people from being able, willing, competent, or creative enough to conceive a world beyond the confines of our current cognitive horizon. Usually, this technique goes by the name "ideology." Ideology is the deformation of thinking by means of constructing thought-shapers and their associated modes of social pressure, engendered by the very same instruments that make innovative thought impossible. The mental space in which

alternatives to State authority could mature is systematically disturbed, delimited, denied, and deformed.

**68. Subjective deformation.** This is why every new form of (political) thought must begin with a new (political) metaphysics. The State has built up a veritable theology to support its own existence – often compliantly and even joyfully aided by religious institutions – to implant ill-justified ideas in the very texture of society. And growing up in that texture means to be deformed from the very start. In that sense, the State robs us from our subjectivity in its original, creative sense, only to restore it in a form that is not natural, but that mirrors the deeply defected image of the State. In exchange, we enjoy so-called services, rights, and protections, and are equipped with a paltry national identity that is supposed to make up for that which has been taken away by cunning, force, and deceit.

**69. Activated subjectivity.** Any form of oppression works from the basis of the subjective deformation. But activated subjectivity emerges only through oppression. Material wealth and lack of purpose creates a mere bourgeoisie. But purpose and the existential realization of one's predicament breeds relevant philosophy. Do not confuse this with so-called "class consciousness" that is the mere practical realization that one is exploited. But exploitation is just the tip of the State-induced iceberg of injuries.

**70. Erosion of political accountability.** All oppression starts with the State's testing and experimenting with the degree to which it can get away with violating its own rules without losing popular support. Once this is achieved, political accountability is gradually eroded until all that is left of the "checks and balances" is an empty husk. And in an even further evolved phase, State power does not even the effort to hide its intentions. It presents itself as a brutal force to be reckoned with, as it realizes that any real alternative can easily be controlled. But all this starts with a gradual erosion of political accountability at the hands of the State itself.

**71. Hysteria.** Every State operates on a corrosive, controlled, and prolonged form of collective hysteria that can be kindled at will. Politicians are mere conduits for amplifying emotions that can be turned on and off. All this playing on the emotions turns on emphasizing but a single thought, suggestively presented over and over again: it could be you! You, dear citizen, could be the next victim of the terrorist attack! You could be the next victim of this new disease! You could be the one responsible for the discomfort of someone else! And, correspondingly – if you fall ill by exercising too little, you keep someone else who *really* needs it out of the hospital! When you do not report this or that activity, you could contribute to the deterioration of your neighborhood! When you do not have a job, you do not have a function in society! The State as the manipulator that has use only for hysterical subjects filled with self-doubt.



**72. Temptation.** If you comply, we leave you alone: look, you could enjoy all those things if only you would obey! The pain will stop! It's the secular version of the story of Jesus and the Devil in the desert—if only you would bend the knee, all this is yours all over again. Because we took it first away from you! Rights are reduced to mere commodities to be taken away at will by the political elite that jointly represent the State-impulse or the interests of the Hyperstate.

**73. State-impulse.** Every form of organization that exceeds a certain scale develops the State-impulse. This is the inevitable tendency to amass and accumulate coercive power, monitoring, and control by maximizing the efficacy of hierarchical and organizational principles onto their subjects. The first step of this process is subjection.

**74. Subjection.** The first manifestation of the State-impulse is to claim that some people *naturally* are its subjects. This claiming gesture has everything to do with ownership. Once one is proclaimed subject of a given State, this organization uses its labor and feeds off his efforts. It claims forcibly a part of his property. By what right? I am certainly not the first one to raise this question, but it has never been answered satisfactorily. To exercise subjection on people is to condition them to accept their subservient role and give up on thinking about alternative ways of life and organization; let alone thinking about the nature and meaning of his existence in the midst of this sordid state of affairs!

**75. Anonymity.** The State-impulse plays on two forms of anonymity simultaneously. Once an organization grows beyond a certain scale, the consequences of its acts become just abstractions for those carrying them out or commanding them. When this process continues over time, we end up with a political elite that has no idea of the "situation on the ground." Lives, deaths, poverty and suffering--those are just events they encounter on carefully planned visits, and that they forget once they return to their hotels and fancy dinners. For them, the mass of world population live lives of anonymity, in circumstances that will always be mere figures or numbers to them. In turn, the scale of the State enables it to present itself as anonymous: rows of black cars advancing through the streets; masked SWAT teams, the members of which present armed anonymity; secret agents who could be your neighbor; and State surveillance through CCTV systems present the largest anonymous gaze that permeates contemporary society. Other examples: classified information; the security personnel that hinder democratic access; and entire city streets blocked off because "those in power" have arrived, thereby claiming the public space in the name of the power elite who must remain anonymous.

**76. Abstraction.** All anonymity must lead to procedure and abstraction. The natural feeling of right is mediated by jurisprudence, protocol and the customs of the judicial elite. What is called "justice" has in this situation nothing to do whatsoever with what is morally right. So, it occurs that corporations can transfer money to all kinds of

taxpayer's havens around the globe, but stay within acceptable, judicial limits, while a beggar who steals a loaf of bread is locked up. And this is called justice. But this situation, where the rights of people are trampled while the perpetrators stay well within the limits of the system can only be set up by people for whom all suffering is an abstraction--and all justice is adherence to protocol.

**77. Distraction.** All forms of moralism are either grounded in narcissism or cynical despair. Moralism appears as a stick to beat others with and claim control; or it appears to mask the growing uncertainty of people about the degree of control they experience over their lives. Both forms of moralism play directly into the hands of the State. In both cases, ideological moralism unleashes horizontal violence against one's neighbor.

**78. Moralism/perfectionism.** Current identitarian multiculturalist moralism is a form of rabid perfectionism. Those who claim that they are in favor of a "diverse, equal, and inclusive" world are in favor of a world that is remarkably without difference and therefore without Life. Perfect worlds are by definition dead worlds. All perfectionism views strife and antagonism as a residue—the results of differences that are shaped by history. Consequently, they claim to be able to see the next step of history and claim that it is necessary to overcome the enslaving manacles of the past. But this is just thinly veiled Marxist ideology of a bad sort. Usually, Marxists claim to critique ideology; in this case, they *are* the ideology, and as is often the case with such belief systems, it is nauseatingly bourgeois.

**79. On strife.** Striving, competing, and differing are not residues of the past (although they sometimes might be); and nor are they specifically symptoms of capitalism. Instead, to strive and to compete and to differ is "human, all-too-human." And so are the capacities for altruism, mutual aid, and solidarity, as Kropotkin pointed out. But capitalism exploits and magnifies the egoistic and mutually antagonistic mechanisms and turns them into the conditions for living as such; or it weaponizes these mechanisms; or, alternatively, it uses them as cornerstones for the constitution of societies.

**80. Uniformity.** The abolition of differences according to the ideological mantra of "diversity, equality, and inclusion" results in militant egalitarianism, conformism, political correctness, and more generally in the degradation of cultural expression. Once militant egalitarianism emerges, it immediately takes on two forms: benevolent paternalism, and coercive moralism. If those two tactics don't work, political correctness is used as weapon and as a control mechanism. And in the next step, every factor that makes true human solidarity possible is incorporated in sterile and anonymous Hyperstate structures or the regulations of corporations.

**81. Zoning.** Such Hyperstate or corporation spaces are zones in which the human being is required to behave according to codes to which he did not consent, and that vary over time, depending on the interest of those owning the space. Be a good citizen, act as if you are free; be a good employee and take the course on best practices, presentation techniques, or skillful negotiation; be a good person and pay taxes to the State, so that it can hand out food stamps to those from whom it extorts taxes. The human being is partitioned, segmented, exercised, trained, and in general treated like a lion in a circus. He is expected to perform social rites and confess allegiance to what those in power deem politically correct, conducive to his behavior, his usefulness, and in the general interest of those controlling the tightly bordered space in which he moves.

**82. Representative roles.** Everyone is regarded as representing some dogma, organization, interest group, anonymous mass, or freedom as such. We are required or forced to represent the downtrodden, the oppressed, freedom, this or that company, those who might be insulted or offended, those who do not have so much food as we do, the enlightened generation etc. Social performance and corporate success have taken social life over to the degree that people lose what they truly are. This performance is played out in the moral domain: this is not a time of amorality, but of morality as social performance, while certain forms of immorality are allowed to persist.

**83. Law and order.** The image of “law and order” is used as an excuse for a double crackdown: on the one hand, to show prospective enemies of the State that any form of resistance will be violently repressed; and on the other hand, to show compliant citizens that they are well protected—but also that, should they change their minds and disobey, they will be violently dealt with as well. And the legal system provides all the justification and coercive means to make disobedience and resistance illegal, and to prosecute those who question or oppose State power. The laws of the State, together with the State’s possession and control of the means of coercion, serve in this case to define what is legal, but as always, the law cannot define what is moral, precisely because what is moral, in the sense of expressing sufficient respect for universal human dignity, is inherently inconsistent with coercive authoritarianism, which is the essence of the State and its laws.

## **8. From the Fear-Machine to the Malign Metaverse**

**84. The Fear-Machine.** Hyperstates deal in fear through States and the obligations, rewards, deterrents and services they regulate—fear of others, fear of one’s fellow citizens, fear of the police, fear of being ratted out, fear for terrorists, fear of viruses, and the most fundamental fear of all: that one becomes an outcast stripped of one’s rights and privileges. This is the prime fear that causes and aggravates all others. To

be a citizen means to be an instantiation of the ideal subject. However, such citizenship comes with a package of rights and obligations. The State reserves the right to change the rules of the game, even without the citizen knowing it, and so the rights one possesses in theory can vanish overnight if the State decides so. Conversely, obligations can increase tenfold if the State decides so. And you better cooperate if you wish to keep your rights.

If there are Desiring-Machines—as Deleuze and Guattari once theorized—that is, mechanisms of desire that are so strong that they become almost a natural force, then there must also be Fear-Machines. Fear and desire always arrive together. A desire is a volition oriented towards either more of the same or towards obtaining something new. Yet, it always carries within it the hidden threat of dissatisfaction or unfulfillment. And if the desire is oriented towards obtaining or experiencing something new, it ventures into unknown territory, and as such invites fear.

Also consider the fact that fearing someone else may also be the cause of the Other's desire. A State in search for more natural resources may hungrily eye the territory of its neighbor, much to the horror of the latter, which then causes that State to want to invade its neighbor.

As the Will-to-Dominate is a continuous thirst for domination and control, it is the Desiring-Machine *par excellence*, and therefore simultaneously the Fear-Machine *par excellence*.

**85. Figurehead.** The Hyperstate *cannot* appear as a person. The State *must* appear as a person, a recognizable figurehead that serves to convince you that the State is really human after all, and that it somehow relates to your interests and preferences. There is a conspiracy theory that lizard people are somehow implicated in a world government. This is a ridiculous conspiracy theory that nevertheless contains one psychoanalytic truth: the realization that our politicians are not the actual persons who wield executive power. No conspiracy theory is required to see this. Such theories are symptoms of the fact that people know that they are deceived, and so they project screen memories on the traumatic realization, just as someone who has been violently assaulted may concoct a story about extraterrestrials invading his home.

**86. The Death drive.** As long as people think in terms of State services, you will always get the Hyperstate for free. The State-impulse merges into the Will-to-Dominate once for a group of people Life itself becomes an abstraction and even a threat. As such, the Hyperstate is the Death drive institutionalized, the destruction of individuality, the petrifying of life and spontaneity, the stifling of development, and the onset of inertia. We tend to equate material conquest with the State, but that is just the first phase of development. In the second phase, material conquest is replaced with spiritual

conquest and the consolidation of State power within the farthest reaches of the individual mind.

**87. The ideal subject.** Hyperstates shape their citizens into the abstract, idealized entities that appear as the ideal subject for the Will-to-Dominate. After all, this Will cannot tolerate opposition and even dissent. The very otherness of that which is not the amenable to the Will-to-Dominate is always subjugated and stamped out. The idea of “citizenship” is initially used to define individual and collective duties, tacitly enlisting large portions of the population into the State’s workforce. Widespread agreement with State measures is required, as is the appearance of democratic participation. As long as the existing political structure appears as enjoying support, many will accept even unjust measures. The excuse is usually that “tough decisions have to be made.” So, even if thousands of people lose their jobs due to political decisions, or are treated unjustly by governmental agencies, many citizens still defend the State when they learn of these events.

Meanwhile, the State is careful to present the political figurehead as a “human being” who deeply feels for those affected. It is surprising how many horrifying acts a State can get away with, as long as a charismatic person defends them on television. After all, can we not sympathize with the poor politician? The answer should always be no – empathy cannot be an excuse for poor decision-making. However, States weaponize empathy in a continuous barrage of misinformation, emotional blackmail and deflection directed against their own citizens. The ideal subject of the Hyperstate is therefore a person who identifies fully with the authority that the State exerts, and for whom a world without this Master-Slave relationship is unthinkable. So, an elaborate system of rewards, nudges and contemporary myths is conjured up to shape the minds of *individuals* into the minds of *ideal subjects*.

**88. Theory of the Other.** The current notion of the “Other” as despised outsider is only a small part of the entire theory of political strategy. Yes, States routinely engage in demonizing the “Other,” be it foreigners, dissidents, people with a different culture or language, or ethnic minorities. However, the State internalizes this theory in its citizens, forcing them to confront any element that is “Other” in themselves. They must suppress any impulse to question the State forcefully; and likewise, they must not entertain thoughts about a world without the State. Such Others are freethinkers, individuals, intellectuals, dissidents, the unemployed, those who refuse to cooperate, the irresponsible citizen, those who question surveillance, those who express doubt about democracy ... the list of derogatory labels is endless.

So, on one hand, the Other is an external force threatening the purported “harmony” of the State from the outside; and on the other hand, it is the “enemy within,” in the form of critical reasoning and independent thinking lurking inside the State itself.

**89. Perpetual crisis.** No Hyperstate or State can survive without crises. It must cultivate them in order to shape and subjugate its citizens. Crises are either internal (i.e. they are presented as “threats to our way of life” or “our economy”). Otherwise, they are external (i.e. faraway dictatorships, or the nebulous “war on drugs” or “war on terror”). In all these crises, the goal is to solidify the coercive authoritarian power of the State and secure a firmer hold over its subjects. Crises must end at some point, but then, new ones have to be invented or unleashed to find new excuses for control.

**90. Commodity.** The values that the State claims to defend are treated as commodities or luxuries by those claiming to uphold them. Freedom, equality, and the option to “opt out” of certain measures are defended as long as they do not form cumbersome hindrances to the Will-to-Dominate. Under the guises of crisis, even these seemingly eternal values become negotiable. But first, these values must appear as eternal, and the State must appear as its most stalwart defender. Only when this belief is firmly in place, can the State take them away in the best interest of upholding them: “Look,” they say, “we remove a freedom here and a freedom there, so that we all can continue to enjoy living the way *that we always lived!*” But next year, they come back, and with the same argument, they chip away at the very values they pretend to uphold. As always, necessity is used as the prime argument for dismantling the agency of the population at large. At the same time, the crime is denied while presenting it in the political arena.

**91. Invisibility.** In this manner, the new dictatorship will turn out to be invisible. It will insist that it does not exist. It will deny all evidence, paint those amassing and presenting cases against them as conspiracy theorists, terrorists or disgruntled citizens. All the while, the new dictatorship will continue to claim that it is a mere benign organization for “managing the complexities of society” and above all to “guarantee safety, equality, sustainability, and prosperity.” The very anonymity of the security protocol and rows of black cars will extend into the very form of organization that the State will adopt. Its newest form? The digital passport, digital currency, central financial control, constant digital surveillance, and the interlinking of digital databases in the best interest of “peace and order.”

**92. Disembodiment.** As such, many of the Hyperstate’s and State’s instruments will be *disembodied*, since they will be purely digital technology or organoid-based digital technology. However, this also means that part of the identity and agency of the citizens will be disembodied, therefore disappearing from reach. Bitcoins can be hacked; digital assets be frozen. Digital identity cards can be revoked or used to track someone. So, while physical tokens disappear, a new form of control based on tracking-and-tracing becomes possible. Theoretically, this could spell the end for costly inventions like border fences and control posts. Practically, however, these old and archaic inventions of control will form the physical counterpart and infrastructure of the disembodied measures of control.

**93. Extended sensing.** The model of the remote-controlled drone provides a perfect illustration of the current paradigm of State control and surveillance. The operator is anonymous; the technology is advanced and secret; the organization commissioning the use of the drone owns it and gathers intel; the instrument itself is largely invisible; the drone serves as an extended sensory apparatus (“eyes and ears everywhere”); and no one knows where the data is gathered and how it is used. This mode of surveillance is increasingly common, and its core tenets apply to all kinds of control systems. The QR code, tracking apps, CCTV, and monitoring of financial transactions all rely on the combination of an extended infrastructure of surveillance. This infrastructure is to the State what the web is to the spider: its vibrations signal when prey has landed on it. Literally, the attempts to police and control the world wide web and to track the movements of individuals in nothing less than the Will-to-Dominate unleashed on the only realm where ideas and thoughts can travel unhindered.

**94. Extended digital phenotype.** The current infrastructure of our world (in particular the digital networks) serve as the extended, global, digital phenotype of the State. The very possibility of control and domination is constitutive of its architecture. Tech giants use this infrastructure for marketing purposes, but the State uses this infrastructure as a form of surveillance and will increasingly use it for the distribution of services and establishing checkpoints. A suspected criminal might not be able to access his bank account, or someone accused of anti-social behavior may have his public transport pass revoked. It is a mistake to think of digital infrastructure as a free, neutral digital instrument that can be freely used by us. The old slogan “If it’s free, you are the product!” applies completely here.

**95. The science of justified suspicion.** Likewise, we end up with a science of “reading the signs.” If person X bought a box of nails, some fertilizer and a steel bucket, is he preparing an explosive device? The operators and algorithms that must interpret such information connect the most disconnected parts of our lives and weave them into new myths and narratives, based on the most restrictive thought-shapers that determine the cultural climate. The new science is one of justified suspicion, which is then used to target citizens or organizations that appear as threats to the State.

**96. The Committee on Thought-Shaping.** One could imagine a committee composed of experts and stakeholders (“The Committee on Thought-Shaping”) who meet once a month to integrate the trends and tendencies gathered by algorithms and surveillance technologies, using the science of justified suspicion to weave them into large, overarching narratives. Such narratives would have a force and conviction that would sway most politicians, because they have been formulated by panels of experts who have used only the latest technology. They could have such an impact that the products of this committee would become veritable thought-shapers in themselves. The way in which the CIA continued testing and recommending torture techniques after 9/11, even when it was clear that such techniques do not result in obtaining

reliable information, is a clear example of a mindset that is locked in its own presuppositions. New technology makes “trends” appear out of nowhere: if the mass of data is large enough, correlations will always appear. But who decides on which correlations to follow up? Which thought-shapers determine what is regarded as a threat or an opportunity? And how correct is that information when it is aggregated from so many data points?

**97. Two types of suspicion.** The technocratic suspicion let loose on society by large corporations and governments alike collides with a cultural suspicion best epitomized by the woke movement. If the high-modern tenet of modernity aimed at technocratic control, the postmodern relativist variation aims at cultural control. As with any form of control, any technology requires compliance from the culture in which it is deployed.

**98. Shape the minds.** This dual suspicion (cultural and technocratic) is firmly embedded in our education. We teach facts and STEM-subjects to achieve competitive excellence. And we teach culture to reinforce the dominant cultural narratives. But both play into the hands of the State. A population subjected to continuous suspicion becomes insecure, its roots withered away, and its foundation unstable. Suspicion shapes the mind as much as affirmation. And so, the dual barrage of technocratic surveillance (testing, scoring, ranking, monitoring) and cultural relativism (equality, inclusivity, diversity) forms the formative background for the 21<sup>st</sup> century mind.

**99. Ideology.** Here is a definition of ideology: a set of culturally entrenched, self-reinforcing beliefs, norms, and thought-shapers that appear so self-evident as a legitimate worldview that questioning it comes across as impossible, ridiculous, insane, or dangerous.

**100. Necessary condition.** Ideologies function only if those subjected to it are conscious of the fact that they are being watched. This fact must not be too present in the mind all the time. Instead, it must be present on a pre-reflective level, nevertheless shaping thoughts and actions without the subject fully realizing its impact. Any action that is conditioned by the consciousness of being watched appears as imprudent. “Let’s not do this, it might get us in trouble” sounds like a practical course of action, but it is the Fear-Machine working in the background. There are many kinds of surveillance. We might imagine CCTV cameras and digital checks as well as collective ostracizing of individuals and/or groups. The former examples represent technocratic suspicion in action; the latter examples represent cultural suspicion.

**101. Memetics.** *All contemporary ideology is memetic* in the sense that its core tenets need not be distributed in the form of a linear, coherent, and explicit argumentation. In a world shattered by the politics of fragmentation, that would be an utterly ineffective way of spreading propaganda. It can be distributed pellet-wise, in the form of small



codes, images, thought-shapers, and perceptual schemata that can be ingested non-linearly. Memes R Us. However, this mode of ubiquitous presentation does not make it ineffective. On the contrary, it exploits the fact that by necessity, no ideology is internally coherent.

**102. Internal inconsistency.** Kafka is the grandmaster of showing this internal inconsistency of ideology. Every time the individual runs into the rules and regulations, inconsistencies emerge that cannot be resolved, but that are rationalized or accepted as *fait accompli* (“we have our orders”; “we are just doing our job”; “this is the procedure, it cannot be helped”). The individual in Kafka is not just trapped in the system, but in his own efforts to make sense of it all. However, this leads again to self-doubt and insecurity, since a thought-shaper which conveys the idea that the State is always rational and well-meaning disturbs, imbalances and ultimately paralyzes the critical faculties of the mind. The State is largely a system for strategically keeping the individual imbalanced. In *Der Prozess*, we can see this beautifully illustrated. The accused is always on the move, always in-between. He is always in a non-place and cannot find stable ground or regain his (existential) balance. This mental and physical imbalance is what the State enacts on entire populations through systematic suspicion, in both its technocratic and cultural variations.

**103. Re-embodiment.** The extended phenotype of the Hyperstate reaches into the individual, and at some point, they may even invade the physical body. There is no difference in kind between a relentlessly media-broadcasted message glorifying the benign State power and a drug that induces a kind of mindset that makes it susceptible to targeted propaganda. In that sense, TV and digital media are some of the most potent electronic drugs available. In subjecting the population to propaganda of this kind, the body is seen as a substrate upon which imprints can be made. In turn, these imprints activate thought-shapers, and consequently life-shapers and action-shapers. The memetic format of ideology makes it only easier to distribute messages, ideas and suggestive themes throughout our embodied cognitive systems. In that sense, propaganda becomes re-embodied from the cultural sphere into the biological sphere. Ultimately, this re-embodiment shapes the ideal of the State.

**104. Bodily integrity.** During the COVID pandemic, we could witness how quickly States seize hold of bodily integrity once the (panicked) political consensus requires this. All that is holy is profaned, indeed. However, as necessity is the prime justification for tyranny, we can only imagine to what degree the State will not only impinge on mobility, financial transactions, behavioral patterns and ideas, but equally on bodily integrity as well.

**105. Two thought experiments.** Would it not be safer to forcibly inject suspected terrorists with a paralyzing cocktail instead of fitting them with a tracking device which can be hacked or removed? It would reduce the chance of escape to zero and

keep the population safe. Alternatively, would it not be better to implant a tactical device in every arrested protester which can be caused to track them and deliver a taser-like shock at a distance? It would prevent large protester populations from acquiring force, as the “usual suspects” can be tasered right away, once again in the name of law and order.

**106. Dystopia.** If the above experiments sound dystopian, one must keep in mind that the reasoning behind both of them is not very different from the current legislation that has been put in place after 9/11 or that has been introduced in the UK against Extinction Rebellion protesters. Moreover, both experiments conclude with the Grand Justifying Aim of this age: to keep the population safe by arresting them, immobilizing them, controlling them, or otherwise segregating them.

**107. Digital drugs.** But how is this different in kind from supplying them with an array of highly addictive digital, mobile devices that pump pre-made thoughts in their minds, thereby literally affecting their bodies and cognitive as well as affective capacities? What is the difference between an addictive drug and an addictive digital device? Will digital drugs be downloadable one day, or are they already?

**108. The Malign Metaverse.** Here is another thought experiment. Imagine a prison system where the inmates are drugged with a disorienting and mind-altering drug or hallucinogenic that provides them with a feeling of disorientation, trapping them in a mental world that makes escape and or organizing a prison revolt or escape impossible. To what degree is a Metaverse-inspired virtual reality different? Every world comes with its own norms, but who decides the norms that apply to that particular (virtual) world? What is the degree in kind between the mind-altering drugs and having to function in a virtual world that has been carefully crafted for prolonged and purposeful inhabitation? If anything, our world is something in which we are *thrown* (our Heideggerian *Geworfenheit*), but the metaverse is a world in which we are *installed*. To some degree, our social world is something we ourselves designed as well, but it cannot be understood apart from our essentially embodied, evolutionary, organic history. With the Malign Metaverse, we create a simulated world that is torn loose (or at least largely torn loose) from our essentially embodied, evolutionary, organic foundations and origins. And it thereby fucks us up systematically, to the technocratic corporate capitalist State’s infinite advantage.

**109. Anti-existentialism.** The virtual world is in the most literal sense anti-existentialist. In it, computability precedes existence. It not only strips the subject of its essential embodiment, but also denies them the power of existing on their own terms. The digital avatar is the truth of this era—a digital token that is supposed to represent authentic existence and depth. Or: a very cool digital image instead of an actual authentic personality.

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