

Free-Will, Determinism, and Objectivity

It seems common sense that people are of their circumstance and of their own volition; however, on a greater scale there's perhaps an inevitability, burgeoning along the rising tide of globalization and mass media: the quantification of man-kind.

If a human being could have his value forecasted by the likes of his financial credit, his personally tailored probability for dissent, or his biometrically designated genetic viability would this be the end of his purpose, his free-will, his meaning? That to be subsumed as only a part in a grand scheme of things, to make man legible in a seminal work, what would that work be? If a human's opinions, aspirations, or thoughts could be quantified by all their contingencies, that of their birth, upbringing, or quirks, would that information be valuable for all, for some, for the future, or even true in the proper eternal, or, meaningfully objective sense?

This is an imminent confrontation in our near future, and even at present quite palpable. Determinism has been on our minds for millennia by question of moral responsibility and ontological necessity; but only recently has it been a prospect which might illustrate and define our lives physically and epistemologically. From the crisis of modernity on, it has held a symbolic anguish in the minds of all in some way shape or form, but particularly since the digitization of mass media it's become not only an ontological, and ethical problem, but an economic and political one. Spyware, National Security, Data Brokerage, human beings are harvested daily, predicted, pre-figured, understood; currently we are conditioned, sculpted, and soon created.

I see three worlds in the future, though for all we know one of them is already written. The first one is an obvious one: a boom, a blast, then black. The second is the same, only without the green glowing charm: not a bang, but a static fizzle; a toot, everything written, said, trapped, understood, castrated of any novelty. The third is only a hope, where chaos is

currency, privacy exists, and certainty elusive. It's continuous in thought, but unknown because its purpose is to be sought but never found.

We'll focus on the latter two.

First: That Cannibalistic Curiosity Leads to the Sin of Certainty.

To objectify human beings, to make us legible, or predictable—to rationalize us—requires irrational, unreasonable and self defeating foundations of illusion. Without fear, assumption, and illusion we hang suspended above the totality of incoherence. The nation's sovereignty illustrates this sufficiently, a war bringing a people together, an existential threat, a feared ideology. Limitation is what gives people identity, but that force is erroneous, and so, it is not only sought, but found and defined by unrecognized metaphor, by hasty generalization. To rephrase: nothing is merely sheer, it's only the allure to make things clear. This raises the interesting problem that meaning itself is built from blocks of non-meaning, and you can wait and watch, or repeat (when saying the same word over and over again for example), and see it dissolve.

From this, what do we make of curiosity, is it essential for our survival? Sometimes absolutely, and other times absolutely not. Because of this, information is reduced to the binary fact of life and death, propelling us forward. For the individual this may seem trivial, but at the scale of society things start to get messy. We copy each other; we're curious about each other's gaze, intent, and the flow of events, mistaking mimicry for understanding. We see something succeed for another, we do it ourselves; even when the activity would be at a glance wrong—shameful, foolish, stupid, embarrassing—they feel validated nonetheless, despite their action being arbitrary. When we hear about an investment that's booming we buy, when we learn it might be shaky we sell, and the mimicry becomes deceptive, in other

cases catastrophic. Only out of our misunderstandings do we repeat and act and play into what we are, therefore a society is a string of acts and pretendings.

If it is given that curiosity is a survival mechanism alone, then what it pursues is the pretense of certainty. Certainty is an animal already eaten, an enemy already killed, a problem already solved, and crucially, to make something into something it wasn't; all we can ostensibly know for certain, is that which no longer evades our perception, or resists our interpretation—for something to be *of* us. But if knowing a thing for certain, makes it no longer that thing, how could we know that thing for certain? How can we even be certain of ourselves, if knowing anything about us changes what we are?

Problems arise when we assume a certainty yet to come, a determinism out of an individual or group, here we often moralize with indictments. As if one can be both pre-determined, and responsible for their person and place. In this we conflate a moral projection with an ontological necessity, mistaking the demands of judgment with the dictates of reality. From here curiosity leads to its own restriction, its own expectation, and its own ignorance. A decision dons the apparel of a certainty, and thereby guarantees a binary outcome. In the modern world, we live in a space of unprecedented progress, yet somehow, certainty, which is only applicable from the recoverable past from our sliver of consciousness, is used as political auspice to hone the masses into normalcy, a sense of objective divine clemency, for conformity. This, we call civility.

So something we don't know, can't know, is utilized and assumed to create a picture of necessity.

Civil entrapment is, and always has been, manifest by allure to bread and circus; though our present spectacle especially, planetary in scope, protean in strategy, it depends on the ease of distraction to fizzle us away in a curiously comfortable demise—it might be, as has been said; *the last man* (Nietzsche *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 8). Modern predation is civil,

and preys on base instincts: ironically, the predatory appetites—hunger, sex, pent-up rage. These allow the mind to simulate its satisfaction by giving in and resigning, tiring away, giving way to the predictable and ugly state of stagnation and repetition. Though only if the man is already thought to be dead can the flicker of instinct be exalted as meaning in itself; it is now simply entertainment, pastiche, memory. The distortion of this mimicry is left unexamined. When we look at a man today he is only a diagnosis, a character without a tacit soul, a unique patchwork of copies, seen on television, limned from disciplinary labels, made of laze and corpulence. We have become our own food, organic material transmuted and distorted: a bioengineered sandwich copied of processed ground beef copied of a slice of cow. The quality of nourishment decays; repetition has lost sight of its end. The ends of this superficial satisfaction have a fatal flaw, a binary assumption: reduction to redundancy, appearance without essence.

We can't ruminate on the question of what this intangible essence is, it's better to ask what it is not. Ineffable it may be, even mythical or false, it is felt nonetheless, let's say as a shadow. It is conveyed only by the absence of its light: an inmate without freedom; an animal in a zoo; could be a child in a school. Just like a shadow, it's a convention to say that it is, despite it only sensed in absence. But the shadow cannot be equivocated *as* this essence, whether it is or is not, certainty is out of the question. It is only a two-dimensional silhouette and that is all. The danger is its mimicry. A false light is now emitted and pervades from this silhouette—the screen.

The revolution may not be televised, but the tidal lock *is* the television; though its end will only summated in the ash. Scripture gives an idea: "*Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven*" (Gen. 19:24), "*Lot's wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt*" (Gen. 19:26). Thus is our fate: solidified, extracted of motion, granular and sclerotic. The sins of the city are never

satisfactorily elaborated. I imagine it contains not pagans, profane prostitutes, bandits and thieves or the prurient and unfaithful; but financial speculators, corporate lawyers, behavioral analysts and—worst of all—*reductionists*:

The harbingers of spiritual entropy, reducing meaning to quantifiable, verifiable understanding; the men and women who rebrand *decay* as development, conflate it with return, then turn it around and sell it back to us—a new fat-burning prescription that reputable experts recommend, Comte with his messianic conscription of man to predictable forces, or to the evangelical paying dividends to Jesus—all for the return—though not of the prophet; for the profit of capital, the profit of certainty, the profit of quasi-spiritual content. The difference is only in the packaging.

The product? Impersonal, dispassionate power and control, the yearning to override the forces of moral compulsion and calculate. To be, today, means only to be seen; to be measured upon by the screen of universal comparison. To get, means not to abide by moral standards, but to outsmart, to ‘know your enemy’.

The positivist is positive only in spearheading negation through and through—it is the natural extension of reductivism. Certainty replaces reflective contemplation, dismissing thoughtful revery as cliché and gratuitous. Instead of a dream, to discuss and nurture, a delusion of certainty, pomp, and pretense develops. The material of reason replaces the spirit of faith, forging an artificial perfunctory hive-mind of narcissists. The civilizing force of faith in reason is against the cultural dynamism of faith in contemplation. No longer is it to find the real meaning—the interesting, the important—but merely to find the vulgar truth, to be right, for insularity to be externalized; utility *qua non*, without a thoughtful end or goal, misabiding means. To pretend as if reason renders faith vacant is to misinterpret its necessity. What compels you to trust in reason? That dormant unrecognized faith is what leaves the mark of insanity.

In a way, reason overlooks its unreasonable foundations; alas “[...r]eason is always a region carved out of the irrational[...u]nderneath all reason lies delirium and drift.” (Deleuze *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974* 262). To do anything requires value, i.e., an unreasonable presupposed platitude; if you have nothing to die for, what do you have to live for? How can such a statement be distilled by reason, let alone formal logic? It requires faith. Such oversight is the delusive precipitation of our confinement.

Bureaucratic clerks and credentialed nihilists reduce culture to civilization; “let’s be civil”, they say as we’re locked in a courtroom, the odds of reason stacked against us. The word is used only to beg the question: ‘equality’ under the law. Meanwhile, a woman is facing a single public attorney against several Ivy League lawyers defending her employer’s sexual misconduct.

Dissent is pathologized as insecurity by extending law into the psyche; the double-meanings of law are gaslit and left unsaid; the science of behavior sets normalcy as an objective standard; the odd are painted as incommensurate, yet still somehow comparable as inadequate to the odds. Though there is defence: “A concept is a brick. It can be used to build a courthouse of reason. Or it can be thrown through the window.” (Deleuze and Guattari 13).

It strikes me as odd that to be ‘Oppositionally Defiant and Disordered’ is extolled to such a degree in popular culture, yet to be diagnosed as such isn’t contentious at all. There is yet such aversion to the self-accordant will to create that must come before defiant opposition; otherwise what more can be created than only a discriminate *inversion* of values; reflection of one’s prejudice and mutation to one’s enemy. That’s just the gamble, “[h]e who has to be a creator always has to destroy.” (Nietzsche *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 85). Though it’s quite well to illustrate, as noted by Max Weber in his lectures, after the Red October of 1917, the Ochrana agents chasing Soviet revolutionaries thereto were given cushy jobs by the

soviets as Cheka agents, chasing dissension, only now, for the very same revolutionaries they once pursued; they fulfilled the same function (Weber 100). They destroyed negative structures and only created the exact same dynamics out of ignorant spite and hatred. The faith they had in themselves was left unrecognized, and in that the common means of similarity with their enemy. When the colors of a photograph are inverted it's still the same picture. Enemies only fight over the *same* river. Same product, different packaging.

Are we perhaps the product?

Being sane—let alone complacent—in a profoundly sick crowd is no good measure of mental health, as Kierkegaard's prescience continues to make its rounds, the individual's courage—and let's add his sanity—remain inversely proportional to the crowd that surrounds. Therefore, for the crowd to deify a set standard of meaning is to make God a coward. Yet this is what defines us, indiscriminate clicks, tallies of meaning on a screen.

For the psychiatrists, professors, politicians, institutionalists—the arbiters of the crowd, it's far more effective to subdue dignity inwardly than risk revolt outwardly. Today's crowd—flattened bureaucratically to the level of their appetitive instincts, their lowest common denominator—today's crowd are psycho-civilized to docility from birth. The normalcy of stability, is sustained by stripping courage from the divine and exalting an unprecedented complex of conformity. The alienated validation from this impersonal crowd has replaced the community. Individuality is now inscribed as a political weapon of surveillance, rather than as it's been, a memorandum of soulful character; it is now only the former, as a diluted, perverted, hypercommodified, and distorted copy of the memorable. Banal measurement over symbolic cachet; the abstract has lost its decorum “[...]substituting for the individuality of the memorable man that of the calculable man[...]" (Foucault 212).

Descartes has been inverted. There is no ‘I’; there are only fragments reified into a facade, masquerading themselves as juridical objects to be ascertained from the outside.

Meaning now exudes solely from the material machinations outside the mind, all the way to the docile body—and the mind-body problem returns. Centrifugal awareness has been reversed to centripetal analysis, though to the same nihilistic effect. Consciousness gives a glimpse of the indwelling discord in this paradigm—it's immaterial, illegible, problematic. When consciousness is addressed, it is either hand-waved as happenstance or entrusted to the divine law of a thought-dismissing-cliche. But the psyche's reduced nonetheless to the 'epistocracy' of law and psychiatry where truth comes from the, perhaps well-meaning, but high-dwelling twinkle-deeche of academia. The psyche is sacrificed to be immortalized as part and parcel in the *history of science*. It's abdicated from its throne of gestalt and exiled to triviality; its freedom is subsumed and pre-empted to the deterministic architecture of prediction and understanding by social and institutional power... or perhaps it exists only as a process of realizing itself—understanding itself—just like everything else.

To replace the nuts and bolts of machines and viscid glossamer of current beliefs with the flesh and blood of human beings means to endure the harm that comes with revolt, strife, difference and dynamism; this is also to put man against the structures both integral and, hitherto, inseparable from him. To maintain control and stability, the yearning for preservation of the positive forces that make us who we are, i.e. novelty, difference, art, must be pre-empted, co-opted, and overridden. How is this done? By sequestering the individual, by attuning the present and thereby the future as an inevitability, by continuous conditioning, by expectation, by the invasion of privacy? It could just be the natural order of things to subsume all novelty into the sameness of social structure; from the Ochrana to the revolution then back to the Cheka, libertinism to liberty then back again to libertinism, dependency from dependency back to dependency. Do we do it to ourselves, is it an idea with a mind of its own, or is it, simply, us being ourselves? Is it really even in our very nature to last as unrelenting novelty, or could it be '*the eternal return of the same*'? (Nietzsche *Will to Power*,

frag. 1066). Is that truly our purpose: contradiction as *necessity*—contra formal logic? How would we even embark on such an unstandardized course of disorder? It would be loaded with risk and peril.

Is there necessarily diametric opposition between the perfectly imperfect and the yet to be perfected—absolute self-realization, unfolding of the negative-squared by the process of elimination? Wouldn't that be to defeat the purpose of the former, to define and render dissolute, by the illegible knowledge of the other? As Deleuze put it with regard to Hegelian dialectic, a concept is only a static rendition of reality. Dialectic contradiction, therefore, cannot adequately explain the process of difference, novelty, or change, “[...]he concrete will never be attained by combining the inadequacy of one concept with the inadequacy of its opposite[...]

” (Hardt). So, is free-will bound to be set against determinism? If it were truly the case that we had any choice at all, how could we have domesticated ourselves with such persistent success? Maybe, it's not the tyrannical structures of our ideological, technological, or political institutions, but the architecture of our minds. It's quite possible that we *are* mathematically predictable, objectifiable, and maybe even thereby absolved of our guilt along the way; simple products dissolved into circumstance, ghosts in a machine.

In the *Introduction to The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, Camus suggests that “the great problem of modern times arises: the discovery that to rescue man from destiny is to deliver him to chance”—and therefore vice-versa. Maybe, this tension shouldn't be resolved, left in super-position for perpetuity. But we'll carry on anyway.

It's important to note that, philosophically, many times in history have followed similar course. In fact, this determinism of current day isn't clean-cut or without its own idiosyncrasy and its own unique up-bringing, its own intellectual freedoms; still, there's an interesting relation to that of other cultures—and their deaths: civilizations.

Notes: Not Part Of Project

Counter-positions. Frame from an optimistic benefit of doubt, then add the consideration—combine... or reject— ”The concrete will never be attained by combining the inadequacy of one concept with the inadequacy of its opposite.” - Deleuze

“If we may reasonably suppose, on the basis of all our experience without exception, that every living thing dies—reverts to the inorganic—for intrinsic reasons, then we can only say that the goal of all life is death[...]” - (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 166)

Spiritual Aristocrat

- Edward Bernays
- Freud
- Tausk and the “Influencing Machine”
- Goebbels maybe
- Hobbes
- Bentham
- Encyclopaedists and the Enlightenment

If a person could be certain not only that an action resulting in personal benefit would not be discovered but also that if this action were discovered, no punishing consequences would follow, then would there be any reason for that person to act morally? Maybe not, maybe so.

- Plato and an inversion of the band of invisibility to all things being visible by expansion of the spectacle
- Palantir especially regarding the ring and the parallel between LOTR and Glaucon, Promis, Prism

- DARPA, INQTEL: Financialist Mercantilism, Free-Market presupposes “Free”

“The fates drag the one who does not will; they lead the one who does” - Hegel

“A tyrant institutionalises stupidity, but he is the first servant of his own system and the first to be installed within it.” - Deleuze

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