

On The War On The Enemy Within

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“On moonlight nights the long, straight street and dirty white walls, nowhere darkened by the shadow of a tree, their peace untroubled by footsteps or a dog’s bark, glimmered in the pale recession. The silent city was no more than an assemblage of huge, inert cubes, between which only the mute effigies of great men, carapaced in bronze, with their blank stone or metal faces, conjured up a sorry semblance of what the man had been. In lifeless squares and avenues these tawdry idols lorded it under the lowering sky; stolid monsters that might have personified the rule of immobility imposed on us, or, anyhow, its final aspect, that of a defunct city in which plague, stone, and darkness had effectively silenced every voice.”

“I have no idea what’s awaiting me, or what will happen when this all ends. For the moment I know this: there are sick people and they need curing.”

Albert Camus, *The Plague*.

As I write this, states across the world are at war against the virus we are calling Covid-19, or coronavirus, in an apparent battle to restabilise civilisation as we have come to know it. The hyper-real media Spectacle is overflowing with war reports, from all angles.

To claim victory, India is utilising colonial-era draconian legislation as a weapon of war against this enemy.¹ French president Macron has positioned himself as a general, engaged in “kinetic war” – meaning warfare that is not “soft” and is seeking to use lethal-force – to battle against Covid-19.² Similarly, Boris Johnson, who is currently the Prime Minister of the government in occupancy on this island I live on, has revelled in the “war” imagery.³

But what does war against a seemingly invisible presence, which is entirely absent until we find it within ourselves as-bodies, mean? Well, it seems to be a war against the-enemy-within. This is not in entirely the same sense as a civil war, or state measures against an uprising – both of which are perhaps also somewhat relevant to this situation. This isn’t a war effort by states against a civilian presence that they are seeking to eradicate, like Franco’s efforts against Catalonian anarcho-communists seeking to instigate revolutionary-culture in Spain.

¹ www.bbc.co.uk

² www.politico.eu

³ www.spectator.co.uk

This is something potentially far worse.

Ask yourself this for a moment – what is a virus, or a disease, or a plague or an epidemic? I don't mean this in an entirely biological sense. No, this question is with regards to our experience of this situation phenomenologically.

My thoughts are that what "IT" is is the invisible and inhuman energy of death arriving without any real means of controlling or subduing it, and the potential "IT" holds to spread. In this sense, and the way that death is always "here" as part of life, this is a war against life – as civilisation has always been a (suicide bomber-type) war effort against life. If this is a war against plague and Camus is correct in the message he seeks to communicate in *The Plague*, of plague always being here lurking in the inhuman spaces of the world, then where does this effort really stop? Again, the anthropological-machine of Leviathan has always been a war against life, but where does this intensification stop?

I am not going to provide an answer to those questions here. Perhaps this intensification of the acceleration of this culture will result in the type of system-collapse radical-environmentalists have desired, with gravitational earthly-eros(?). Perhaps technologies will provide means of sustaining this culture further into the realms of techno-totalitarian state-authoritarianism(?).

Where is this culture now though? Under the ideologies of lockdown and work-if-you-are-biologically-acceptable, this global culture has enframed itself spatially to become both a prisoner-of-war camp, where everyone is a convict, guilty by association just for being a living body, and a labour camp, where individuals are put in positions of needing to risk infection to avoid economic ruin. All images of what has been known as "human-life" has been erased and pure machinic-functioning, as that which the anthropological-Reality embodies, is laid bare.

As bodies capable of contracting this virus, we are automatically enemies of the state. Your friends, neighbours, family, strangers you walk past, are all potential enemies. Fear spreads, because the media has successfully propagated the ideology of terrorism, and the message is "your-bodies-are-the-enemy".

Are you a living being, experiencing life as an individual body? Well, you are as bad as any Jihadist, Anarchist or any other radical who might be a threat to the state-apparatus. As such, you are an enemy within and are at war against the enemy within yourself.

Lets consider another seemingly-invisible presence that arises out of our bodies as individuals, one which anarchists and radical-environmentalists value. The untame, wild, energetic quality of freedom, from the perspective of the state, is like a plague, as something that arrives unexpectedly from inhuman places, with the potential to undermine and collapse production-narratives. This enemy of this state is also an enemy within, as this energy arises from the bodies that we are, as we are within these state-territories. "Be confined to your house" and "only leave to serve the anthropological-machine" have both been messages used to intensify domestication, which these state-measures we see today are an intensification of.

Environmentalism and anarchist thought, particularly of anti-civilisational dispositions, have a quality to them that is affirmative of the body, our bodies and the bodies of the environments our bodies live within. Consider this quote from Armand's *Revolutionary Nudism* –

*"This is to affirm the right to the complete disposition of one's bodily individuality
Against social and religious institutions in which the use or usury of the human body*

is subordinated to the will of the lawmaker or priest, the nudist demand is one of the most profound and conscious manifestations of individual freedom.”⁴

Body affirmation has a health-oriented aspect to it, which is unsurprising, given that the empowerment of our bodies is sensually immediate through our experiences of our bodily-health. One of the central locus’s of authority in contemporary society is in the industrialised health-machine, with its focus on pumping out fit-for-work humans. The infrastructure of bio-politics is immense by any reckoning – from a civilisation-critical perspective, this culture is in its entirety a bio-political endeavour, as a war against the body of earth. The politicisation of health has infected much in the way of thinking about healing. But regardless, the opportunity for adventure, creativity and rebellion lives within the fertile soil of our lives.

One of my favourite comments on anarcho-primitivism, by an anarcho-primitivist, is when John Moore states “*anarcho-primitivism is very concerned with medicine*” in *A Primitivist Primer*.⁵ after he makes this comment “(u)ltimately, *anarcho-primitivism is all about healing*”, which is no less beautiful. These statements speak to this moment in a strangely inviting way. Out of the sheer horror of this situation, the potential for radical healing is seemingly also here, with all that is dreadful about where we are. The drops in pollution levels; the non-human animals, less scared by the anthropological-machine at work, exploring cities; the crust of this planet having a chance to recover from the vibrations of industrial infrastructure; and many more examples; these all seem to signify a kind of bodily-potentiality contained within the energy of this moment.

Rather than including ourselves within the narrative of war on the enemy within, where we are engaging in a violent assault against our bodies, I see this as an opportunity to explore radical-healing, individual-empowerment through bodily care. If we can strip bare the bio-politics of this moment and treat this as an opportunity for radical-medicine-person⁶ work, for ourselves and those beings human-animal, non-human-animal and non-animal we love and feel a desire to care for; perhaps we can find within this destabilisation of Leviathan space for radical liberation.

What potential for healing does exploring herbal-medicinal practices hold for enabling us to heal from Covid 19? Could fasting, as a means of calming inflammation and improving blood pressure, be means of empowering us through taking agency towards the health of the bodies we are? Meditation is a direct means of healing from the stress this culture exacerbates (and is largely fuelled by), so what might a radical-meditation practice look like? And what of the exploration of medicine songs and ecstatic dancing, with their ability to emotionally uplift us and strengthen our bodies through exercise – are these not activities with radical potential for healing and strengthening ourselves?⁷

⁴ theanarchistlibrary.org

⁵ theanarchistlibrary.org

⁶ I refrain from using the word shamanism partially due to the term’s links to cultural appropriation, but equally due to that the word originally referring to one Siberian culture’s type of medicine-person and would not have its current usage if it were not for Witsen’s book and the use of it by anthropologists stereotyping for academic pursuits.

⁷ There is the potential criticism here that I am playing into the ideology of new-agers and into the pockets of those who profit from the new-age industrial-complex. While there might be a risk in writing this that this might be used by exploiters from within that world of business or ideology of naïve optimism. What potential crystal-healing might or might not have, or any other similar practice from within that space, is not something I am commenting on here – save for the impact of mining is an ecological disaster, as the treatment of many workers within that area of production is a disaster. I keep crystals in my house that were given to me during cancer treatment, by loved ones to help me heal, but would feel uncomfortable buying any myself now. This would go for many false-promise exploitative “cures” that new-age practitioners use, which might be positioned as cures to sell by the industry.

This situation has the potential to become a big moment for pharmaceutical industries and my next comments are in no way intended to diminish the value in individuals, who might only be able recover from pharmacological treatments, recovering from this virus. It is worth considering the intensity to which pharmacology is reliant on petrochemicals, as well as the plastic industry, and how much profiteering, with little regard for actual living beings, could potentially emerge from this situation. This bio-political centralisation of the means-of-healing has the potential to be an authoritarian nightmare. Taking this opportunity to explore anarchistic means of healing, divorced from state-apparatus and market-profiteering, seems the best way to make this space one of radical potentiality.

In bringing this to a close and to sum up – be not at war with your body, but in love with the body you immediately are and care for it in ways that provide the greatest means of empowering yourself. The anthropological-machine's war against the body and its enemies within the body, be that your body and the energy of untame freedom within you or the body of earth and all the non-domesticated life within there, is revoltingly abusive and ultimately suicidal, in the way that (even a sustainable) obliteration of the living world is as sure a route towards death as possible.

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