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On the Coronavirus

NEZUMI

March 25, 2020

The following are tentative thoughts written on the 9th of March, the least we can be sure of in considering the current state of affairs.

According to Scott's *Against the Grain*, what made epidemics a menace to humanity was agriculture and the simultaneous sedentarization that came through the raising of livestock. In the same book, Scott explains that the origin of the state lies in the enslavement that came through grain production. In other words, epidemics are the other side of the nation as enslavement. Since then, infections have broken out as the mirror of civilization. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, epidemic is civilization's decideable.

We needn't go so far as to quote Foucault on history since then. Modern history was formed as a defense against riots and infections. The prison and the hospital are symbols of this. Prisons were created with the division of the working and non-working, the criminalizing of the latter, and the mobilization of the former as the cornerstone of primitive accumulation, the city was reorganized as a base for the reproduction of this labor, and "social medicine" was born. This was also the birth of governance through biopower.

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Retrieved on 2020-03-29 from anarchistnews.org
via HAPAX blog, translation from anarchist news

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Neoliberalism is the upgraded version of this, and goes hand in hand with advancing “*anzensei*” (security) to its upper limit and making people completely responsible for themselves (the total entrepreneurialization of the individual). Militarily, this corresponds to dronification.

That governance is entering a new stage through domination by algorithm by way of AI. Its forerunner was China as a “happy surveillance state” (Kajitani Kai, Takaguchi Kouta). This is exactly what Deleuze called a “society of control.” It’s exactly because the coronavirus was born from the future of this governance that it’s destructive to civilization.

According to Ishikawa Yoshimasa, what distinguishes things this time is the extreme equilibrium between the pathology of the epidemic itself and the reaction to it. What laid the grounds for this was the maximizing of “*anzensei*” (security) in society, the transformation into a “control society.” Thus an unbelievable spectacle has arrived in which the state itself is halting production, consumption and exchange. Right now, society is collapsing society, civilization is collapsing civilization.