

An empty corporate shell

by Aidan Cornelius-Bell

Published: 2024-05-31

Dear friends,

I have a nugget of thought in my brain which doesn't want to go away. So here we are the day the day after our last post, having ideas again (that's two days, if you're counting). Let me map a little bit of the schema for where I am positioning this first, "yeah, that'll keep me reading" I hear you say, but hang about, I'll try and do it in one short paragraph!

We live in a globally accelerated capitalist "state" which, under various permutations and denonyms, effectively exploits workers for the concentration of wealth at the "top". This masquerades as a meritocracy—a fallacy, but hegemonic belief nonetheless. Here we also see an innate hierarchy which supports the continued flows of moneys, labours, and efforts from those at the labour interface to those at the "top". In the Marxian sense here we have a proletariat and a bourgeoisie. This process of extraction, deliberately deployed differentially at social intersections, manifests differently but always demands a severe toll on the natural and social world.

This process of extraction can be seen as simultaneously oppressive and extractive, and a site of progress—progress for who? And here the space for the day arises. We have seen, globally, a pattern of extraction and exploitation which demands that all workers give over their labour to, according to capitalist logics, their betters. Their betters, in turn, enjoy leisure, opportunity, inordinate wealth, and so on. This process, which harms workers and the environment, demands continuous growth and increased production, in whatever form that may take.

Across history there have been many forms and configurations of capital—moments, if you like. These moments all offer, in historiographical analysis, spaces where we can identify acute exploitation. For example, in contemporary times we can see the flows of minerals, rare earth, and others to the global north (west) from the global south. Not only are the methods of literal extraction barbaric by contrast to States with "labour laws" but the removal of irreplaceable minerals, and so on are never (adequately) compensated. Thereby, even States which should by all accounts be wealthy due to their possession of "expensive" goods, continue to be exploited under capitalist economics. This is reinforced through mandatory borrowing from the IMF, and others, at interest rates higher than it would be possible for these countries to generate.

What are we looking at, then? Well clearly a system built deeply on the privileging of a very small handful of people—smaller than the 1%. This .1% depends on the (varied) exploitation of 99.9% of the "others". It is important to acknowledge that this varied application has been absent in historical analyses of class and labour power and that with an increasingly (though hard won) intersectional frame for understanding exploitation, there is much more work to be done to understand the nature of raced, colonial and gendered violence. These forms are all configurations of the same violence of capitalism, though in many instances are more brutally or unequally applied.

So that was way more than a paragraph, hey.

Here's where something slightly more novel comes in which, I felt, explained some of what we're experiencing in the collective hellscape of late capitalism. Governance, jurisprudence, management, and practically everything which is professed and ejaculated by the ruling class is now symptomatic of a hollow, greedy and maniacal economic system built on the dehumanising and valueless expression of capitalism. Not new, but intensified and distinctly

globalised in the 2020s. Now, allow me to back-fill some of this with elaborations to give some vegetables to the bone.

Increasingly, we find that the decisions of the capitalist class and, of course, those lodged firmly in their asshole —looking at you middle managers (class traitors) up to CEOs —are devoid of the traditional illusion of pseudo humanist managerialism. I have no shortage of examples but let’ s think —supermarket price gouging, scarcity manufacture, perpetual housing crisis, installation of needless systemic complexity, deep rooted surveillance and monitoring of the populace, and so on. These phenomena are by no means new, rather they are intensified and clearly devoid of any perceptible “human” ethics.

My contention, essentially, is that the value system of the capitalist class, and thereby its aspirants and bootlickers, has descended into an anti-human mode. This is an obvious, almost foregone, realisation when we examine the extractive and violent nature of capitalism at the colonial and gendered interfaces. The zoom in is a capitalist class who are comfortable with a mask-off destruction of human life on earth to line their own pockets —even at the expense of their own families. The zoom out is a global system of production which has always been based on the (uneven) exploitation of 99.9% of people, who, due to the nature of the weight of hegemony, defend to their own death the adherence to and reproduction of capitalism as “the only way” .

Am I grumpy about this? Hell yes. We (humans) have built and perpetuated a deeply anti-human system of living. I frequently quip that humans are the only species on earth dumb enough to have to pay for housing. Well, guess what, most of us believe this is inherently correct. Moreover, a vast majority of humans actually believe there is a meritocratic process involved in the creation of the 0.1% which, if they just play the game hard enough (bootlick) they, too, may one day achieve. This is flatly bullshit, unless you already exploit, murder, and extinguish human life for thrills.

Welcome to 2024, another year in the blisteringly obvious fall of empire and destruction of an entire species for the sheer joy and elation of the 0.1%, and the political class that has been surgically attached to their ass.

Tomorrow we start fighting this —even harder. Please.

Aidan.