

Still I hope

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Dear friends,

It's been a wild few weeks. I can't stop noticing the growing use of media for the disestablishment of norms and ideals which have held 'polite society' in conservatism for decades. Particularly because it's not the kind of 'progress' I signed up for. For years I felt I knew where to spot the protestation to the status quo. That for the things which weren't right in the world, ethically speaking, that someone somewhere cared, and I knew how to listen. But now as truth becomes *post* I'm feeling lost.

People actually care a *great deal* about all this horrible shit going on in the world. They care in record numbers. We've seen it across the globe. At least where right-wing career parliamentarians haven't banned protest yet. Naturally institutions have never cared. And they are robustly clad in human armour used to silence, terrify, and divide the populace.

But I think, observably, over the last few weeks some of the veneer of self righteous morality chipped from the oligarchs, and pouring through: a thick monstrous sludge. Decades of aged despotism thrown in to light. And yet ...

All my life I've experienced systems as the 'little guy'. I've seen them as authoritarians, demagogues, and despots. As someone always out of sync with what was 'seen', I've been labelled (in) "justice sensitive". So the fact that almost all of our global institutions are utterly corrupted, run by tyrants, and are made of sick, warped people, is no surprise. And to me, right now, the nexus of media and (popular) culture is a deep friction that cannot be ignored. Moreover, it's fertile ground for mainstream change! And I don't just mean this in the positive sense -we're at *make or break* again.

Our media, encompassing whatever oozes from Meta and Murdoch's properties, has (re)turned utterly apologetic...to the despots. Of course the media is just another institution. We cannot, therefore, be surprised. But if we dismiss this (re)turn on simple grounds we risk allowing the despotism, paedophilia, greed, rape and torment as a status quo. Exactly what Trump, et al. want.

For theorising, this kind of dilemma has been captured in Gramscian texts, and in Gramsci's work itself. But the level to which this twist is attempting to shift society - to normalise utterly inhuman acts -is a sick social experiment on a scale seldom before seen.

In Gramscian theory, civil society institutions, including, vitally, education and media, are the meeting of worlds. Boundary objects, Venn diagram crossovers, iPhones in the blender. The space where what the ruling class, the capitalist/bourgeoisie, require from the physical world (product/ion) is communicated (somewhat subtly) through the gradual shifting of consent:

Narrative control.

Purchase and work orders.

Story (re)runs.

Reframing depictions.

Of course this doesn't account for the initial installation of the "culture" (capitalism, through enclosure and colonisation), which was done by force and genocide, not shifting consent. But once the organs of western 'civility' are/were established, it is/was largely

unprecedented to use scale force to change the population's views. That's traditionally why we abhorred dictatorships and military coups. Unless it was a CIA operation, of course.

Yet we're here. Again. Trump and his ICE army are the SS to Hitler's Germany. A show of force to *force* a way of being which is utterly incompatible with humanity. But this is just an extreme example. It is happening everywhere. It is *still* happening in Australia. It is in the way we speak to each other, and what we accept as popular culture shifts because of it.

Colonisation, and its weaker baby brother *enclosure*, remains a violent and oppressive regime used to destroy relationships with place and enable maximum extraction. This same mindset is applied to people, and has been since there was a(ny) royal family. And while I've called attention to this turning before, and others certainly have used similar language, the "mask off" roaring 2020s are here with a blast. And the flavour is the same as it ever was, 100 years ago, 200 years ago, you name it. This imbues our culture, normalising harm, but is also imbued by us, and thereby awaiting transformation.

The fundamental architecture of capitalism is destruction. Extraction. Pillaging. It is based on exploitation and expropriation. But these are words. The patterns of creation are utterly subordinated, and, so, I have words.

Words in a language designed to prevent our expression.

Yet, the media succeeds with these same words, where violence and destruction hold primacy. Because these tools have been wrought in the fires of capitalism. Built imprint by the architecture of destruction. But!

Globally media is shifting.

There's no play to civility any longer.

Flat out fascism has resurged, swinging crashing through the wall of morality, with the word capitalism sticky taped over the dozen tyrannical regimes still clinging to its fetid writhing corpse. The traditional intellectuals have ceded. In their retreat, the "acceptable" discourse has become subservience, not quality 'control'.

Recycling newspeak about famine and terrorism they nod at atrocity while supporting its foundations anyway.

Those intellectuals who occupy the power in the media, with the opportunity to transform the status quo, who are trained in the tools of propaganda, critical thinking, transformation, etc. have chosen a side. They chose metastasised devouring capitalism. Even with the alarm bells screaming to a hollow ringing in the ears, they have chosen to maintain a twisted 'middle' allowing genocide, rape, murder, persecution, and profiteering on one hand, while downplaying paedophilia, genocide, ecocide, imperialism and mass starvation.

I write long sentences. Sorry.

Yet, hope is never lost. Within us is a great deal of power. That power, I believe, is entirely realised in hope. By hoping for a better future, hoping for more virtuous leaders, hoping for justice, we have the power to unconditionally subvert the hegemony. And we can turn their empty words on them.

Yes – tools have been taken from us. Meanings have been assigned in our absence or over our cries. Words robbed, futures changed. Children killed, families maimed. Regimes sew tyranny and suffer no consequences. But the material possibility of hope as a new collective future is never gone, least not while Elon's brain chip stays out of mass production.

Seriously. It's not rocket surgery. The revolution is hope.

And we have an opportunity right now. We always have an opportunity. Because there is hope.

We can see them trying to explain away Trump' s immorality. Albanese' s pandering to US military megacorps. We can say enough.

Thinkers have come close, historically, to capturing their moment' s power. To looking cunningly into the eye of the beast and naming it. They' ve offered lucid sketches of how power appropriates and moves. They' ve examined how we think, why we act, why, why, why. Still, few have offered a transformative model rooted in praxis. Opportunity, for us, every day.

I suspect there' s been a great deal of preference in philosophising. Either by circumstance or by their own capture in the hegemonic institution, nonetheless, inaction. A solution, though, I think is in front of us. All that is required is for us to recoil -from fear.

As it stands, capitalism, colonialism, frankly most isms under a hegemonic banner, benefit from fear. Through western education fear is trained *qua* failure. By entrapping us all in a state of fear of failing, by rejecting alternatives and reinforcing the status quo, and by exploiting and marginalising entire groups of people for the benefit of very few, they have made a system in which we stand perfectly still, while they do what they will. For some, that *doing* was *relatively* "acceptable" . For others, this has meant a host of disgusting acts against sovereigns. Now, it must be recognised, as humanity sees the leaders of these regimes, that the system is against all of us as it was all along.

It surrounds us in a comfort to adhere to doing things by tradition. At least that is what they allege.

Sensible progress honouring tradition "*they*" say.

Yet they are constantly shifting the goalposts. They tell us one thing and do another. Just like they are allowed to steal your wages, save perhaps a light tap on the wrist, but it' s illegal for you to be homeless.

Through manufacturing fear - fear that you might become *one of the "unwashed"* , or "fall from grace" , or "fail" , any skill in rejecting unethical, unequal, and unfair is robbed from you. Your rights, your freedoms, your liberties, whatever and however limited they may be, are taken on every front. All that matters, to them, is the wealth of a few men and women.

We can spend decades analysing the beast that is colonial capitalism. And so we should. The score is far from settled and these criminals should be held to account. But we have, within our power, hope. And we have it now.

Hope that this system does not represent the best of humanity.

Hope that despots and tyrants like Trump are not the kings they wish to be.

Hope that we can live in balance with our incredible natural home.

Hope that we can care for each other, provide all we need, and still be happy.

Because humanity has had such communities before. Now, these communities are gated behind billions of ill gotten gains. Or persecuted for their 'colour' . The 99% of us are left to suffer, or made to suffer, just for existing, while they, 1%, literally destroy whatever they whim.

We can build a collective *becoming* that enables us to challenge what is now the most obviously broken system of "leadership" ever achieved in human history. And this doesn' t need to solve the challenges of neoliberal ideals, capitalist tendencies, or the colonial contemporary at its outset.

Because if it is human it will reckon with power, and positionality, and privilege. It will accept that intersectionality is a fundamental for human existence. And it will solve all the exacerbations manufactured by capitalism. It needs to do this in reciprocity, not purist internet ideology.

The fight is not with each other, it is with **them**. Their shifting of the acceptable discussion. Their rewriting of morality. Their dehumanising of us all.

While we' ve fought over identity politics, political spectrums, and brocialism they have taken our voices. They have denied our reality. And they have stripped us of truth. It matters zero the realities of a situation – if their executive says it was so, so it was. Just as “There is no war in Ba Sing Se” . Just as there is no rape only manufactured consent. Just as there is no genocide only settlers. These lies are told until accepted. Trump, Albanese, Milei, Orbán, Sen, Ishiba, Modi, Meloni, Wilders, Traoré, Museveni, Luxton ...a globalist breed of creeping right wing fear mongers. Their acts normalised by (social) media. Their lack of morals and practiced ethics *made* normal. The media leaping at their every command. But it' s not normal. They' re not normal. And we can **all** see it.

It feels hard to fight. Fuck, I know it feels hard. From personal struggle, to systemic oppression, to global injustice. We are beaten down day in day out by a system constructed for executive power which deliberately and directly invalidates true experiences.

Our suffering, torment, pain delivered for their avoidance of legal risk and or denting the bottom line can go no longer. We know they will never care, unless we say enough. Unless we scratch their lies off the cell walls. And we must never stop demanding truth, justice, and moral behaviour. In that way, our culture will shift of our own accord –not because of the (social) media.

Only we have the power to connect communally, reciprocally and collectively towards hope. Hope for a better future. That' s it. Praxis.

I hope that you will hope,

Aidan