

The normalisation of greed

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Dear friends,

Not a day goes by where the direct affects of “line may only go up” capitalism doesn’t destroy another part of the human soul. Every single day in the anglosphere workers are robbed. Every single day in the rest of the world workers are tortured. The dual processes of exploitation and extractivism for capitalist ends are not only the infatuation of the capitalist and political classes, but have so deeply infected the psyche of the worker that new values have taken root in civil society. These are perpetuated by the bourgeois in the vain hope that they will now be saved by the bourgeoisie as the planet burns.

There are a few dimensions of interest to our inquiry today. Let’s get cracking!

First, greed as a notion historically. From the 15th century, Europe’s leaders leant on desire for wealth, resources, and power amongst other bourgeoisie to leverage brutal globalist expansion. Indeed, even religious “values” de-centred greed from the working masses, but as increasingly profitable genocide and colonisation grew, the values around prohibiting greed fell away. Even with a small handful of enlightenment philosophers (and 99% of the inhabitants of the “colonised” world) questioning the drive to capture, capitalise, and extract the world over, the ruling class was far more interested in profits.

We went from a primary driver in society nestled in “power” to one nestled in “resources”. Increasingly European nations pivoted from monarchical societal organisation, through to proto-capitalism, and eventually to full scale extractivism for the sole benefit of the already wealthy. During this process, the working classes were removed from their land, women were vilified (as witches and various other “sorceress” labels), and nature was discarded as the source of life, power, mystery, fear and opportunity. Instead the reign of “man” dawned – in a gendered and literal sense, at the expense of “mother” nature and any woman who dared look sideways at an insecure male ego.

The infectious nature of this “anti-feminine” (relevant theorists will have far better ways of explaining this than I) gripped and drove expansion, extraction, and arguably the emergence of the thin but hyper masculinity now manifest in the Barbie-style endowment of Andrew Tate. This rewrite of values, as Marxist feminists advance, saw the de-centring of women from societal leadership, knowledge, and power [1]. But it was also one of the first in a long line of excuses for radically rewriting (European) human values towards “profit first”. In essence, modern day “line must go up” is just an intensification of proto-capitalism and the stripping of relational, ecological, and human values from society.

Second, the inherent nature of capitalist exploitation. Who didn’t see this one coming, really? When we take anti-nature, anti-woman, anti-worker, and anti-sustainability as core values of even proto-capitalism, the obvious manifestation in what some call “late stage capitalism” is likely a deep intensification of this value set. Everything is polarising. Everything is fractious. Everything is serious. Everything is -now-. And it’s always a fight. When you nest your societal values in the negative, “anti”, a deep and festering hatred and bitterness grips that social order. We can see this all around us: growing impatience, frustration, xenophobia, racism, extremism and overt misogyny. At this juncture, perfectly “reasonable” people are moved to extreme, violent, and often unprovoked action to fight back against some great unknown.

Though, and literally the extent of my horror knowledge, “the call is coming from inside the house”. As we know, particularly with xenophobia and racism, the hatred fuelled perspectives of a small group can lead to exponential increases in daily “normalised” violence,

lateral violence, and extremist violence from the dominant social group against the “other” . What value drives this? Negative “difference” ? Lack of understanding? Just generally shitty humans? Possibly all of the above. In addition, however, we cannot ignore the value set of capital as an extractive, othering, and divisive economic system. The values inherent to capital require civil society, and importantly the proletariat, to divide on the basis of any difference – black/white, gay/straight, neurotypical/autistic, Norwegian/English, manager/worker, beer/spirits, you name it, capitalism can divide you over it.

A politics of division, hatred, fear and anger underscore capitalism. Notions of fairness, comradeship, respect, compassion, and so on are utterly alien to this system. Moreover, they are antithetical to capitalist -production-. After all, it only cares about the NASDAQ line going up – profit at any cost. While “democracy” rests precariously as our system of social organisation, so powerful is the capitalist class, and the infection that is the capitalist ontology, we now sit in a world where capital controls the social order, where money buys votes, where companies destroy the planet and people for the benefit of less than 500,000 people.

Third, the normalisation of greed. Sadists amongst us may think of the frog in the pot of slowly boiling water. But we would have to stretch this euphemism generationally, such that the frogs had created an entire ecosystem of life and experience inside the pot, with decades of reproduction and the water slowly heating for it to fully capture the scope and scale of the capitalist project. In 2024, a CEO buying yet another yacht, yelling at their employees about eating too much avocado toast, and offering no raises (even to match inflation, which they have manufactured themselves) is just par for the course. But it is not the CEOs with whom we need to be concerned. Indeed, CEOs are going to CEO. Vice Chancellors are going to Vice Chancellor. Stock market eggheads are going to promote line go up. It is those who should be peers and comrades to whom we must take the magnifying glass.

It is my assertion that equal first in the harms of capitalism, yes –equal, is the rewriting of values. This is equal first with the violent murder, exploitation, and expropriation required to fuel globalist expansion. Because we could not have the latter without the former. This is anything but a slow process. We have seen capitalism ravage the world. Our only home. The only home we are yet aware of in this universe. While science, medicine, philosophy, ecology, spirituality, and many more have evolved globally, leading to, for some, a rise in standards of living and opportunity, this has come at a violent, deadly, and ravaging cost to other humans and the planet. Furthermore, this cost already affects those who were initially robbed, exploited and expropriated from once again. The repeated intergenerational destruction of livelihoods, families, relationships, places, ecosystems, and more can only come from a value system fundamentally incompatible with human life. So while violence is a quintessential value of capitalism, the bundle of values are inseparable and offer nothing of value to humanity or the planet.

In my daily life, I see more and more advocating greed, violence, division and misanthropy. Instead of, historically, a performance of care, community, and collaboration by the bourgeoisie, now we see a normalisation of violence. This is not a change in the capitalists, political society, or other ruling apparatuses. Rather, it is a departure amongst the bourgeois (qua “middle class”) from pretending to care, into abject phlegmatic sociopathy – allied with their bourgeoisie masters. By and large the remaining bourgeois, at least in Australia, were exposed to a brief analytical impulse in the 1960s and a revolutionary interest spanning almost 1940-1985 in certain quarters. The values of compassion, comradeship, and shared human endeavour – apparently – were just a convenience to the middle class, now replaced with unbridled narcissism. What a world.

Fourth, the synthesis of malignant values, capitalist exploitation, and expounders of greed.

Well, I suppose I could leave it there. But this is the world we are living in. And people like you, and people like me, are told we are “justice sensitive” . We are pathologised. Caring about compassion, empathy, holding respect and reciprocity as central, looking to nature and ecology to solve everyday challenges –this, now, dubbed “disorder” . The corporate-patriarchal-capitalist-psychiatry complex has found a way to say that “giving a shit about people and planet” is a condition [2]. The corporate-capitalist-political complex has found a way to say that protest in this vein is unlawful and “disruptive” [3]. Our social order is so deluded, misguided, and tortured that we are now medicating those who care –god knows, I suppose, we need it, surrounded by a void of care.

So it is in the everyday act that we must find and foster compassion and care. And no, I do not mean lick the boots of the sociopaths. They are too busy climbing up the ass of the capitalist who leases them power. I mean building comradeship and solidarity with other working and expropriated peoples. This is where we reassert value – and a value system of care, compassion, value, equality, egalitarianism, and so on –a positive value system, one which feeds humanity – not destroys it. Go on, then, find a friend and share some human values with them. They need it as much as you do.

“We were right, we were giving

That’ s how we kept what we gave away” –Young, 1978

In solidarity,

Aidan.

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1. Federici, S. (2014). *Caliban and the witch* (Second, revised edition). Autonomedia.
 2. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-to-know-about-autism-and-justice-sensitivity-8631234>
 3. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-02/south-australia-public-obstruction-laws-explainer-/102418400>