

PART VI

**COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS
ON TOTALITARIAN WORLDVIEWS**

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

TOTALITARIAN TRENDS TODAY

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In my essay on Pasolini I emphasized he thought contemporary Italian neocapitalist consumer society was more totalitarian than the ‘classic’ fascist regime that had preceded it. Today a wide variety of authors have been focusing on the degradation of parliamentary ‘democracy’ and rise of new forms of totalitarianism in the West, concentrating on the de facto hegemon of the West, the Empire, the USA, as well as its faithful poodle and progenitor, the UK.¹ The analyses vary in their focus and the severity of their diagnoses and prognoses, but their number and their urgency are in themselves empirical confirmation that something very serious is occurring. Most of the analyses focus on the relation between political institutions, economic agents, and conditions of emancipation, participation and self-activation (or lack thereof) in civil society. These in turn affect the analysis of the kind of state that has evolved and is evolving in the USA (and the UK). Most focus on developments on the parliamentary²—totalitarian continuum that are closer to, develop, and/or emphasize totalitarian forms of control.

¹ F. William Engdahl, *Full Spectrum Dominance: Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order* (Boxboro, MA: Third Millennium Press, 2009); Mike Lofgren, *The Deep State: The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government* (New York: Viking, 2016); Sheldon Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Naomi Wolf, *The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Pub., 2007), in which the author lists the ten steps used to transition from a parliamentary, constitutional, government to a fascistic one (and discusses each step); Tariq Ali, *The Extreme Centre: a Warning* (London: Verso, 2015), principally about the UK; James Meek, *Private Island: Why Britain Now Belongs to Someone Else* (London: Verso, 2014).

² I don’t use “democratic” because very few Western parliamentary systems approximate actual, diffuse, participatory, democratic practices.

F. William Engdahl focuses on the geostrategic impact of the Empire, especially after 9/11. He shows how the Empire used the so-called “end of the Cold War” (after which George Bush started invoking, and aiming for, a “New World Order”) and the 9/11 attacks as crises to exploit in order to deepen and entrench its forms of global control, to aim for the sort of planetary Empire the Third Reich had envisioned in its dreams of a “*Tausend Jahre Reich*” (with intentional eschatological implications³ to rival biblical ones).⁴ These forms of control escalated by orders of magnitude in many areas; its goals are clearly expressed in a phrase like “full spectrum dominance”: the depth and extent of the surveillance state enabled by ever more sophisticated electronic technologies are the prime example of this escalation. As part of the ‘public-private’ Trojan-horse tactics that take root with neoliberalism, many areas related to global institutions see escalating activity (leading to attacks on national sovereignty, especially of small nations): using two propagandistic tools, R2P (responsibility to protect) and “humanitarian imperialism”,⁵ foundations (the National Endowment for Democracy, George Soros’ Open Society Foundations) to promote coups (“regime changes”) camouflaged as “color revolutions,”⁶ and resorting to selective manipulations

³ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), also uses this eschatological conceit, this time more Hegelian in origin, to predict the EU is the kind of ‘institutional arrangement’ that humans most likely will experience at the end of time. I discuss the totalitarian characteristics of EU institutions such as the European Commission below. These prophetic ambitions are in themselves indicative of totalitarian (at least psychological) leanings, an elite prophetic cottage industry that mushroomed with the collapse of the USSR and the gradual political suicide or buy-in/out of the parties of virtually all the ‘old-left’ from communist to social-democratic. Manifest Destiny belongs in this eschatological category.

⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997), advocates preempting the emergence of any possible rival power or alliance of powers to challenge the US (one of the figures whose strategy for the control of Western Europe and the Eurasian continent he endorses is Halford Mackinder, a British Empire ideologue, who recommended and pursued a divide and conquer strategy to prevent possible alliances between Germany and Russia by using Eastern Europe, cf. the Ukraine today).

⁵ Jean Bricmont, *Humanitarian Imperialism: Using Human Rights to Sell War* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2006).

⁶ There is an egregious history of the use of entities like the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations by the National Security State for decades during the Cold War: cf. Edward H. Berman, *The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign Policy: the Ideology of Philanthropy* (Albany:

of NGOs to promote foreign aggressions and the Empire's agenda. The escalation is both rhetorical (responsibility to protect, humanitarian intervention),⁷ providing cover for assaults against civilian populations

State University of New York Press, 1983). The institutions with the very Orwellian names above, squarely belong in this tradition. Soros of course made and makes his billions by the most parasitic means possible: speculation not only within financial capitalism, but in currency exchange markets (no constructive investment purpose here whatsoever). The name adopted by the Soros Foundations refers to a famous book by Karl Popper, a very good friend of Friedrich von Hayek, probably the preeminent prophet of neoliberalism. Both Popper and von Hayek were members of the Mont Pelerin Society. These foundations are not only tools to entrench neoliberalism globally, but precursor models/examples of the 'public-private' partnerships that neoliberalism so adores. In addition to their frequent role as private-public partnerships, foundations also massively interfere in the political arena: the Bill Gates Foundation by promoting privatization in education, and insidiously and indirectly by damaging efforts at sustainable agriculture and technology.

⁷ These new forms of totalitarianism typically follow forms of 'self-entitlement' and justification that claim to be fighting (old forms of) totalitarianism. This trajectory is common among ideologues of neoliberalism, such as von Hayek and Popper, but also in its 'fascistic turn', from (extreme) left to right (Mussolini's biography being exemplary in this case), typical of former red-diaper babies like David Horowitz. Samantha Power, one of the main architects of R2P and 'humanitarian' pretexts for the Empire's aggressions, takes this form of self-justification to new heights, writing the introduction to a new edition of Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken, 2004), once the author is no longer alive to approve or not. She underscores Arendt's late inclusion of Stalin's Russia in the book, because it dovetails so well with the "opposite extremes but equal" cliché, even though she grudgingly has to admit that the book's worth is more in the area of existential testimonial than of analysis or ground-breaking research. Arendt's argument that national governments often violate their citizens rights is what most attracts Power, because national sovereignty is the institutional obstacle to global dominance that needs to be eliminated (marshaling the Disneyesque pretexts of humanitarianism). There is a microscopic omission in her account of the global situation: the Empire itself, its record of endless aggressions and support for the most varied forms of terrorism from the Contras to Islamic terrorists, to neofascists and 'left' terrorists in Italy during the years of the *strategia della tensione*, to dictatorial and totalitarian regimes globally (from colonels in Greece, to Franco in Spain to dictators in Portugal, to Latin America, to Africa, to the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia). Practices, aspirations to power and global control that completely contradict the humanitarian claims (the world upside down once more). The rhetorical trick of trying to blame war-crimes on its victims by using the despicable Orwellian phrase "human shields" is just a tiny part of the New World Order's propagandistic

and their infrastructures (Iraq, Yugoslavia, Syria, Libya, etc.), that take terms like “freedom fighters” for mercenary terrorists in Central America, to entirely new levels of perversion, but also real, including completely unlegislated and uncontrolled new technologies like drones, or (ab)using NGOs, whose legitimate goals focus on helping civilian populations, to actually undermine these populations’ autonomy and well-being and advance the neoliberal totalitarian agenda (forms of camouflage/dissembance and exploitation of the legal loopholes allowed/devised for ‘public-private’ partnerships).⁸

arsenal. On ‘humanitarian’ pretexts for imperialist intervention and control, cf. Jean Bricmont, *Humanitarian Imperialism*, and David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 178. There are insidious uses of feedback mechanisms within the extreme perversions of this foreign policy: funding Islamic terrorists to overturn the Assad government in Syria, leads to millions of refugees, who overrun Europe. The EU proconsuls rather than (rationally) rethinking their support/allegiance of the Empire’s foreign policy, use billions they are not making available to Greece or to the 99% of their own countries to deal with a problem exclusively created by the Empire’s totalitarian foreign policy. The current ‘solution’, in violation of EU and international law, is a mindboggling ‘fly-wheel’ of migrant persecution and shunting between the EU (Greece mostly) and Turkey, enforced by NATO police actions, and with Turkey being granted ever more billions and institutional privileges by the EU to engage in this, while at the same time promising ‘safe-havens’ in Syria which in reality will be used for further promotion of Islamic terrorism by the Empire. This while Turkey is rapidly devolving into an ever more totalitarian state, with journalists and opposition politicians jailed for long terms for (allegedly) insulting Erdogan, the president. Cf. https://www.rt.com/news/334905-un-eu-turkey-deal/?utm_source=browser&utm_medium=application_chrome&utm_campaign=chrome and https://www.rt.com/news/334837-turkey-migrants-eu-brussels/?utm_source=browser&utm_medium=application_chrome&utm_campaign=chrome.

⁸ Michael Maren, *The Road to Hell: the Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity* (New York: Free Press, 1997), shows some precursor elements and components of this (ab)use of/by NGOs, in this case to aid dumping in underdeveloping countries by (especially agribusiness) corporate interests close to Empire so as to undermine and/or prevent independent and alternative forms of development by these nations or regions. The perverse role of many NGOs is also emphasized by David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 177 ff., where he discusses their role in both privatization and avoiding accountability (like foundations, they are another example of the ‘private-public’ partnership). NGOs’ connections to ‘humanitarian’ imperialism and the Empire’s aggressions abroad are discussed in many works, a good example is: <https://interestingblogger.wordpress.com/2013/09/16/big-capitalists-and-human-rights-ngos/> The ambiguity of NGOs’ institutional presence is proven by the fact that Wolin, when concluding the work cited above, believes they might work against the new forms of totalitarianism.

While Engdahl focuses on the totalitarian goals and implications of the Empire's expanding geostrategic ambitions, including some of its institutional tools, Mike Lofgren analyses the domestic implications of the entrenchment of the "Deep State", especially since 9/11. Both Engdahl's and Lofgren's accounts emphasize how frequent and essential the resort to fear is in incrementally hollowing out the institutions of the constitutional parliamentary system, the (by now virtually only alleged) separation of powers, in continuously enlarging the National Security⁹ State, while degrading the shadow of a 'welfare' state to virtually nothing. From the Truman Doctrine to making an intentionally opaque, undefined, "war on terrorism" a process with no possible end after 9/11 (including such egregious totalitarian tools, in violation of international law, as "preemptive strikes"), the institutions of the Deep State thus guarantee their endless parasitic growth at the expense of the economy and civil society hosting them. Homeland Security has become the third largest Cabinet department. Generating and exploiting fear of the other has been a fundamental tool of all totalitarian regimes (Jews, gypsies, Communists, or now 'terrorists,' Islamic radicals, etc.).¹⁰ Fears and crises are constantly used not just to expand the surveillance and repressive apparatuses of the state, but also to prop up, and in fact monopolistically further concentrate,

⁹ "National security" is a phrase invoked very frequently and almost always with no valid justification: a deep resemblance to the Mob counting on 'omertà.' It is also a complete oxymoron: it is not "national" as it only defends the interests of sectors of the oligarchy; for the 99% it is the opposite of "security:" in fact the 99% become the real 'human shields' in the implementation of its totalitarian policies. For the manner in which the Deep State exploits fear (complementary to 'security') at all levels, cf. Wolf, *The End of America*.

¹⁰ The insidious con of course being that, as in Italy with the funding of terrorism of both the extreme right and 'left,' of coups (one of the heads of CIA counter-intelligence, James Jesus Angleton, had a long standing relationship with Prince Junio Valerio Borghese who attempted various golpes in Italy), of cultivation of 'stay-behind' sapper/terrorist groups like the NATO organized and funded project GLADIO, or of Masonic shadow and parallel governments (the P2 Masonic Lodge), much of Islamic terrorism has been organized and funded by the Empire, from Afghanistan with the aid of Pakistani intelligence, to Chechnya, Kosovo, Libya, Syria, etc. often with the help of friendly theocratic tyrannies like those in Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. So a "war on terrorism" that won't end not only because the criteria and adversaries are purposely undefined, but also because the Empire is constantly playing both sides to topple sovereign nations that are not surrendering to neoliberal impositions.

the sector of finance capital,¹¹ at taxpayer expense, rewarding criminal conduct at the top of the oligarchy while making poorer homeowners and taxpayers pay for the fraud of others, not performing any actual investigations, or introducing any serious forms of accountability and monitoring (“too big to fail” is the scare-tactic in this case, which just invites further expanded unaccountable conduct of the same kind, followed by future even more catastrophic crises).¹² A DC insider and eyewitness, Lofgren’s account is invaluable for this reason. It is both an empirical documentation of many of the totalitarian practices that are

¹¹ Lofgren, *The Deep State*, 153 ff. shows how the relevant departments and the judiciary have basically not been pursuing anti-trust enforcement at all for the last several decades.

¹² The uses of fear and crises to actually reward and protect the perpetrators and further enable the predatory and totalitarian aspects of the neoliberal state against the civilian population it is supposed to represent are legion. Among the better of many accounts are: Philip Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste* (London: Verso, 2013), which goes a long way towards demonstrating that the neoliberal state is the opposite of a hands-off ‘laissez-faire’ entity (a certain kind of left has also been under the delusion that the ‘the state’ is intrinsically a more ‘social-democratic’ and welfare oriented entity than the private sector: a delusion probably induced by the post-WWII decades, but which has little empirical backing), but pursues privatization(s) of remaining areas of the ‘commons’ for rent-extraction in an extremely activist manner, with many totalitarian components; and Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), somewhat more superficial and generic, but she captures some of the overarching practices and culture. From a right-wing, libertarian, perspective cf. <http://fff.org/2015/06/25/national-security-states-crisis-racket/>. The use of fear reaches down to the almost banal, as in the electoral advertisements for the two parties in the US, which are virtually never predicated on achievement(s) or constructive proposals, and almost always instead on fear of what the other party is, has done, might do, or will do. It is also included in the excellent analysis of neoliberalism by David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 162 ff., who specifically examines its connection to the ‘debt trap’ as a means of “accumulation by dispossession.” For neoliberal totalitarian capitalism’s reliance on debt as preeminent means of “rent-extraction” cf. Michael Hudson, *Trade, Development and Foreign Debt: a History of Theories of Polarization and Convergence in the International Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 1992); *Super Imperialism: the Origin and Fundamentals of U.S. World Dominance* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), and <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/02/19/the-new-global-financial-cold-war/>. For the most recent in depth account on global financialization and indebtedness, consult <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/02/19/the-next-global-financial-fault-line/>. For the intentionality of these policies’ execution cf. John Perkins, *The New Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2016).

becoming routine in the Deep State, but also an observation of its growth and entrenchment not as something planned from above, by a classic totalitarian form of power where party and state are closely intertwined, but as something that is premised on the internal dynamics of Empire, the growth and metastases of monopoly capitalism.¹³ This transformation from a (barely outlined) welfare (Keynesian) state to a warfare National Security State, to a new kind of totalitarianism, is occurring mostly thanks to growth in the following areas: the military—‘security’—industrial complex, the financial sector, the high tech sector (Silicon Valley). All of them are following neoliberal, privatization induced, globalizing prescriptions. One omission by Lofgren is the Deep State’s relation to academia: the American Psychological Association and the American Anthropological Association have both been drafted by the Deep State and involved in scandals as a consequence.¹⁴

Sheldon Wolin is a political scientist, and his account includes more connections to political theory, and to the political and institutional history of the US, than either Engdahl’s or Lofgren’s. He analyzes the capture of governmental institutions and functions by the ‘private’ (i.e. corporate) sector, hence the “incorporated” of the title,¹⁵ the kinds of managerial personnel that increasingly dominate this ‘public-private’ monstium

¹³ This totalitarianism is consequently not predicated on a transparent, activist, often coercive, ‘molding of the masses,’ one in fact partially predicated on a fear of them (cf. Ortega y Gasset, often for plausible reasons, sometimes not), but rather on the subterranean homogenization achieved via consumerism. In fact today (actually, from a rational perspective, and one not historically conditioned by the elites, probably always) it is most of humanity that desperately needs to confront the elites: cf. Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: Norton & Co., 1995).

¹⁴ For the very extensive connections of the highest officers of the APA with the National Security State and torture, cf. *The Guardian*, July 14 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jul/14/apa-senior-officials-torture-report-cia>; for the AAA collaboration in counterinsurgency efforts in Iraq, cf. (of many articles) <http://www.counterpunch.org/2007/09/28/when-anthropologists-become-counter-insurgents/>. David H. Price has also written extensively on relations between anthropology and the practices of the National Security State, see *Threatening Anthropology: McCarthyism and the FBI’s Surveillance of Activist Anthropologists* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹⁵ ‘Corporatism’ is an important component and ideal for many fascist governments, one in some senses connected to the medieval corporations, in which an ideal of (enforced!) harmony of the distinct (the illusion/delusion being the ‘distinctions’ are only functional) parts of the ‘body politic’ is pursued. The ethos within Japanese corporate structures (still classically capitalist in their external functioning) also deeply relies on this kind of ‘corporatism.’

(“managed democracy”),¹⁶ and how it is interconnected to an imperial and ever more intolerant and totalitarian state (“Superpower”), yet scarcely examines neoliberalism and the capitalist developments since the ‘Thatcher counter-revolution.’ Wolin uses “inverted totalitarianism” to underline it is the result of incremental processes of encroachment and degradation of some ‘traditional’ and supposedly constitutionally guaranteed governmental functions and actions, rather than the sudden capture of power by some party/state combo (entailing top-down, collectivist, and imposed (coercive, violent) forms of change and conformity). Tariq Ali captures an essential component of current totalitarianism: how it combines a public image of moderation at the ‘center’ with very extreme policies and institutional practices, turning the propagandistic nostrum used for preemptively silencing critics, “opposite extremes but equal” (referred to any alternatives on the left and right), upside-down. This extreme enforcement of ‘normalcy,’ of the Thatcherite TINA (There is No Alternative) ideology, analogous to Fukuyama ‘end of history’ ideologies, aims to fuse the new totalitarianism with the ‘everyday,’ the ‘eternal present’ (lacking any genetic explanatory history), and the ‘normality’ of common-sense. Particularly poignant when examining the Manichaeen two-party systems of Anglo-Saxon origins, Ali also explains relations between the UK, the US and EU convincingly. James Meek’s *Private Island* provides detailed empirical analyses of privatization’s devastations in ‘everyday life’ in the UK.

A number of these authors list possible remedies and believe in ‘civic action’ as a remedy (Lofgren), or are nostalgic about 1960s ‘movementism,’ or that of the Democratic ‘left,’ and hope to see their revival (Wolin), or hope for the general reawakening of a more conscious citizenry (a Wolin student, Chalmers Johnson, cf. footnotes below). A common historical trope/analogy deployed is that of the transition from the Roman Republic to the Empire, one that is both symptomatic and misleading.¹⁷ Both

¹⁶ The preeminent role of public-private partnerships in economic terms is to privatize/monopolize/pillage gain/profits/rent-extraction (since often what is being privatized is a public asset sold to the private sector for a tiny fraction of its actual value), while ‘publicizing’ risk (as happened with the TARP and other Wall St. bailouts by the US federal government): so in actual fact eliminating any actual risk for the oligarchs involved, while the public foots the bill through taxes, higher fees, lesser services, etc. As in the case of the ‘free market’, the term ‘risk’ in current neoliberal capitalism is devoid of any actual meaning.

¹⁷ For some historical discussion of how it is misleading on a class and institutional level, and characteristic of mostly bourgeois forms of self-delusion about ‘civic engagement’, cf. Michael Parenti, *The Assassination of Julius Caesar: a People’s*

Lofgren and Wolin also use comparisons to “Leninism” or a Stalinist USSR. A nation/Empire whose elites have so consistently and violently opposed any and every form of left-wing party gaining any institutional traction seems to undermine the comparison from the very start (the US and UK represent almost unique exceptions compared to other Western parliamentary systems in this regard): right-wing totalitarianism has instead represented a persistent, documented, source of attraction for the Empire and its elites, especially in foreign policy, but not only. From Prescott Bush to Henry Ford, from Charles Lindbergh to Thomas W. Lamont and from Walt Disney to William Randolph Hearst, extensive swaths of the US elite were great admirers of Fascism and Nazism.¹⁸ So it would seem a much more plausible, if partial, analogue.

The Empire as a Special Case but an Exemplary One

The unique history of the US since WWII can be listed as one reason it has evolved its special form of totalitarianism. A ‘Cold War’ fought for many decades to impose (‘free’) capitalism throughout the globe brought

History of Ancient Rome (New York: New Press, 2003). Moreover the US has been a de facto Empire for close to ¾ of a century (with the relevant impact on its nominal status as a ‘republic’), just escalating its unipolar aspirations after the so-called “End of the Cold War.”

¹⁸ From the symbolic (the Roman Empire), to the proven connections and connivances: on Wall St. (Lamont mentioned above); the Dulles brothers (who organized an ‘underground railroad’ for Nazi war-criminals to Latin America); their law firm, Sullivan and Cromwell (cf. Nancy Lisagor and Frank Lipsius, *A Law Unto Itself: the Untold Story of the Law Firm Sullivan & Cromwell* (New York: Paragon House, 1989)); trading with Axis powers (Charles Higham, *Trading with the Enemy: an Exposé of the Nazi-American Money Plot, 1933-1949* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1983) and *American Swastika* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985); the reinstatement of Nazi businesses and elites in Germany, including making the Nazi secret service, the infamous Gehlen Organization, the foundation of the future German service, the BND; importing Nazi scientists (Wernher von Braun) for the space program and other National Security State projects (Annie Jacobsen, *Operation Paperclip: the Secret Intelligence Program that Brought Nazi Scientists to America* (New York: Little Brown & Co, 2014)); supporting Axis junior partners like Francisco Franco and dozens of other fascistically oriented dictatorships around the world, mostly during the Cold War, but extending to Islamic theocracies like Saudi Arabia today. For the continuing indirect influence of these totalitarian connections on today’s right in the US, cf. Jane Mayer, *Dark Money: the Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* (New York: Doubleday, 2016). Cf. also the essay by Pierluigi Erbaggio in this volume.

the state's most repressive, aggressive and militaristic institutions to a position of dominance within the state as a whole. These can be seen as the origins of an increasingly dominant National Security component (in Lofgren's terminology, the "Deep State") within the state apparatus as a whole. Considering the US was mostly ruled by a two-party system (a "one-party system with two right wings," characteristic of most British former colonies),¹⁹ that it evolved from a British colony via successive waves of colonization and immigration (the drive West along the "Frontier") from the most diverse cultures and origins (virtually erasing the Native American populations and their cultures via prolonged genocidal practices), coalescing superficially via the "melting pot" in forms lacking firm cultural and institutional foundations (but which, along with early levels of mass-literacy, pioneered corporate mass-media, public relations and marketing, etc.),²⁰ one can understand how its society and population (whose prior history and genesis/transmission of values were mostly erased) were suited to being molded by an especially individualistic and aggressive form of capitalism.²¹ The gradual rise to dominant Western and then global power (Empire) following a succession of wars: WWI, WWII and the "Cold War," entrenched what has variously been called the Warfare State, military Keynesianism, or a permanent war

¹⁹ "Our only political party has two right wings, one called Republican, the other Democratic. But Henry Adams figured all that out back in the 1890s. 'We have a single system,' he wrote, and 'in that system the only question is the price at which the proletariat is to be bought and sold, the bread and circuses.'" [Gore Vidal] From: <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/529557> (omitted: gerrymandering; Superdelegates; no proportional representation; etc.)

²⁰ Cf. Adam Curtis, *The Century of the Self*, a justly celebrated documentary that explores the relations between the founders of psychoanalysis (the Freud family), Edward Bernays (public relations and propaganda), Matthew Freud, and consumerism, commodification and mass-culture. The 'everyday capitalist' analogue to the much vilified overt propaganda apparatuses of 'classic' totalitarian regimes. Forms of individual opaque persuasion that are closely tied to the new technologies and visual media (and hence also the visual arts). One could of course now extend the Freud family connection beyond Curtis, to finance capitalism, propaganda by the corporate media, and the Tory establishment in the UK in the person of Baron (David) Freud.

²¹ In Europe monopolies (like England's East India Company) were developed earlier than in the US, but in connection with colonial and imperial operations by the state; the US instead saw the formation of some of the first and biggest industrial monopolies (not initiated by state or political power, though certainly with later forms of collusion), typically in the sector dealing with transportation (including fuel). Instead the later technologically driven monopolies were mostly in the sector of communication(s).

economy, some of whose economic characteristics are tied to monopoly capitalism,²² making the US a very special case when compared to other Western parliamentary systems.

This prominent position, militarily and economically, relative to other Western parliamentary systems, translates to inordinate influence on the most important institutions within them, and an even greater one on virtually all alliances and multilateral institutions (UN, NATO,²³ World Bank, IMF). Its dominant position in the world of the mass-media, press-agencies, entertainment (TV programming, Hollywood, now the Internet), an ever expanding global network of bases,²⁴ and a special dominance within the sectors of finance (partnering with the UK; the dollar as global reserve currency) and energy, allowed the Empire to increasingly penetrate, control and dominate both sets of institutions. The ‘choice’ of political economy by individual nation-states (with the exception of a few very large and powerful ones, like Russia, China and India for instance) and the terms of interaction with the ‘global economy’ are consequently almost always very far from “free,” but instead coerced to a greater or lesser (simpler or more complex) degree.

These forms of control, that have mostly reduced the EU to a proconsular appendix to Empire,²⁵ via NATO, the unelected, unaccountable, and very opaque European Commission, and OECD among others, mean that incremental shifts towards totalitarianism in the Empire and the UK are felt strongly within the EU as well (though in individual member nations ‘democracy’ may not yet be so degraded).

²² Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: NLB, 1975). Also Seymour Melman, *Pentagon Capitalism: The Political Economy of War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970); *The Permanent War Economy: American Capitalism in Decline* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974); *Profits Without Production* (New York: Knopf, 1983).

²³ Cf. <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/02/19/nato-and-the-bananazation-of-western-europe/>

²⁴ Cf. Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004). Also Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: the Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²⁵ Cf. Victoria Nuland’s comments about the EU and the ensuing coup, against the diplomatic solution being brokered, in Ukraine; the forced landing of the aircraft carrying Bolivian president Evo Morales; the persecution of Julian Assange (Sweden, UK, EU arrest warrant); the migrant crisis <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/02/19/how-humanitarian-imperialism-led-to-europes-refugee-crisis/>: just some of thousands of examples of abject toadying to Empire.

The National Security Aspect of the State

The Empire's unique history, most especially phenomena like the Cold War and McCarthyism (which built on an entrenched hostility to the left dating to the 19th c., cf. the Haymarket affair, later the 'Red Scares'), prepared the institutional framework for a massive metastatic growth of the repressive, surveillance, and military areas of the state, the burgeoning National Security State.²⁶ The so-called "war on terrorism" which by definition is against non-state, and ambiguously defined adversaries, is also intentionally conceived of as without end. The huge bureaucracies and immense budgets of the National Security State could thus not only be preserved with absolutely no "peace-dividend" in the aftermath of the 'end' of the Cold War (which actually never did completely end, with NATO expanding to Russia's borders; a war now being resurrected in Washington as both an alternative justification for the permanent warfare state, and an escalation in the pursuit of total global control), but actually enjoy significant growth. The Department of Homeland Security has now become the third largest Cabinet department (significantly after the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs) with almost 250,000 employees, and this in not much over a decade.

This metastatic growth has been accompanied by massive privatization: from the private prison industry, to the thousands of private companies involved, to the privatization of much of the war provisioning and support effort and mercenarization of those sent to fight,²⁷ to gargantuan

²⁶ The current presidential election has seen an aggressive resurgence of McCarthyite tactics by the oligarchical media, the Neocons, and those sectors of the elite aligned with the commanding heights of the Democratic Party, in the wake of the hacks of the DNC and ensuing revelations regarding the Democratic sabotage of Bernie Sanders' campaign. Julian Assange, Wikileaks, Donald Trump, and several others have all been accused, via insinuation (in typical McCarthyite fashion), no proofs provided, of being in collusion with, or agents of, Russia: in its turn resurrected to perform the bogeyman role once assigned to the USSR in the Cold War. These tactics (in the moment used to distract from the actual content of the revelations), and the paranoiac, obsessive, focus on an "enemy" (Russia) led by a leader now being called "fascistic" (following Hillary Clinton's very imaginative rhetoric of calling any leader that does not kowtow to the Empire a "new Hitler"), Putin, are both very symptomatic of the current stage of the Empire's 'official' politics, and its unipolar aspirations and fears (after Brexit). The clear rhetorical undercurrent is that anyone opposing Hillary Clinton is "unAmerican."

²⁷ Cf. the rise of Blackwater/Xe/Academi as symptomatic for the whole sector (the UK is now the leader in global mercenary firms).

involvement of private companies in the spying and monitoring efforts:²⁸ the NSA's relationship with Booz Allen Hamilton's, a company that gets 99% of its revenue from the federal government, involved as we know from Edward Snowden in the PRISM mass-surveillance effort of ordinary US citizens (with many illegal ramifications) is typical. Booz Allen is an excellent example on a number of fronts: it is majority owned by the Carlyle Group (which has many former national security state employees on its board, and very close ties to Middle-Eastern totalitarian theocracies like Saudi Arabia), it showcases the Washington 'revolving door' for individuals who allegedly work for the government as 'public servants,' while de facto focusing on securing later employment for astronomical salaries in these private sector companies (often monopolies or oligopolies) which they are supposed to monitor, then proceeding to shuttle back and forth between both sectors. These public-private partnerships are one of the many paths leading to the spread of the new totalitarianism. When involved in issues or areas of development where the public side of these partnerships might be subject to legislative oversight by public entities, the partnerships use the private side of the equation for 'cover;' when the private side gets scrutinized for potential criminal activities, it can invoke "national security" clauses and protections. In other words: heads the totalitarian state wins, tails and its subjected (drone) population loses. One of countless examples of how completely the propaganda of the totalitarian neoliberal state and its actual economic practices contradict one another. Nowhere as in the National Security State is there less actual market competition: this is the land of no-bid contracts, and permanent revolving doors.²⁹ Thanks to the increasingly dominant role of finance capital, this sector of the state absorbs ever-increasing percentages of the national budgets, while removing all that investment from truly productive

²⁸ Cf. the series "Top Secret America" by Dana Priest and William Arkin in the *Washington Post* (it ran from July 19th to December 20th 2010), available at: http://www.pulitzer.org/cms/sites/default/files/content/washpost_tsa_item1.pdf. Also for the increasing concentration/centralization (i.e. monopolistic consolidation) of private intelligence contractors cf. <https://www.thenation.com/article/five-corporations-now-dominate-our-privatized-intelligence-industry/>

²⁹ And the many tricks and ruses the Empire developed to get its way abroad are now being ever more deeply implemented in the core of the Empire itself, a preeminent case of institutional and political 'blowback' (and central to understanding what 'globalization' actually means in class terms). Cf. Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: the Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Metropolitan/Owl Book, 2004); *Nemesis: the Last Days of the American Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006). And also John Perkins, *The New Confessions*.

(economic and non) ventures. Those sectors of the state that might minimally assist its citizens are subject to expanding and accelerating cuts.

The Neoliberal Aspects of State and Society

Understanding neoliberalism within the complex framework of global capitalism is key to understanding the new developing forms of totalitarianism. Wolin and Lofgren's analyses focus on erasure(s) of the 'proper' or common-sense distinctions between public and private institutions (enterprises, corporations), less on neoliberalism. A linear, social-democratic, explanation could invoke Max Weber's idea of the "iron cage" to explain the tendencies to rationalization, (unregulated) bureaucratization and hence oligarchy in parliamentary systems: but I believe it would be partial and simplified at best. It cannot explain the increasingly irrational results, or the constellation of interest(s) represented.

David Harvey provides one of the best, most accessible, explanations of neoliberalism within the context of the contradictions of capitalist devolution: it pays attention to historical detail, empirical complexity and specific institutional and social outcomes.³⁰ The extreme scissors between propaganda and reality are one signature characteristic of the Neoliberal State. The monopoly capitalist (imperial) economy has never been less truly market or competition oriented. The Neoliberal State uses privatization, 'deregulation' (special interest regulation), capitalization of outstanding areas of the 'commons', legislated and coerced takeovers/pillages, as some of the major means of imposing a regime of ever-increasing rent-extraction and escalation of parasitic practices. As capitalism swallows more of the natural and social worlds, both in geographic (spatial) terms, and via in depth penetration of areas not yet absorbed (education, the knowledge industry, 'religions,' interpersonal relations (dating, etc.), all the way to the glaring but symptomatic: fresh water, clean air, and other ecologically related areas), in which the material properties of affected areas become secondary to the imperative of capital realization, the world becomes ever more "upside-down;" capitalism itself, with ever stronger tendencies to financialization, becomes ever more 'abstract' (because of the self-reflexive, financial instruments being developed): consequently, with an ever decreasing portion of the world left to capitalize, it is dependent on the realization of capital by any means necessary, rather than on traditional means of realization via production in (more or less, now definitely less) competitive markets. Similar tendencies towards ever

³⁰ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

greater abstraction to those in financialization, can be witnessed in the establishment of (ever more unaccountable) globalized institutions. David Harvey has named these institutional practices aimed at despoliation (“redistribution,” obviously only upwards) “accumulation by dispossession.”³¹ These resemble means used during the phase of what Marx called “primitive” or “original” accumulation (during the initial establishment of capitalism as a mode of production), but the current adoption of these institutional means would seem symptomatic of a system that is exhausting its options (i.e. the contradiction between forces and relations of production). Harvey includes privatization in this process: but the ‘commons’ affected now extend to areas (giving corporations entitlement to, naturally preexisting, genetic materials they had no role in developing), and self-reflexive means of profiting from crises (carbon-trading schemes to ‘solve’ pollution problems generated by capitalism, not because they are the most effective, but because they please finance capital the most: in turn creating ecological devastation by altering the ecosystems in which they are implemented (replacement of forests, or other ‘green’ surfaces)) that scarcely resemble classic “commons.” Resort to these institutional means is symptomatic in at least two ways: a) an increase in the ‘coercion factor’ by which income/rents are extracted³² and b) the fact that profits can be generated with increasing difficulty following the canonical ‘motor’ at the center of the system, profits generated via production and competition in markets. The ultimate *telos* of this increasingly totalitarian capitalism is a completely inverted world (cf. Wolin), an upside-down universe in which all of reality is simply an excuse for the realization of capital, by any means necessary.

³¹ Ibid., 159, where the author lists its four main features.

³² I purposely use “increase” because regardless of the propaganda or the (self)delusions on this topic, capitalism has always been built on a very authoritarian foundation in the world of production and exchange. Cf. Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998): a degradation premised on the despoliation of both (often artisanal) knowledge of work practices and their transmission as well as control over the labor process itself. So Western civil societies’ ‘democratic’ (in reality only parliamentary) facade is premised on a very different reality in people’s everyday lives, which largely vitiates their claims to ‘openness’ from the beginning.

The Capture and Evacuation (Voiding) of Institutions

Current totalitarianism mostly entrenches itself in the Empire (and globally) via the degradation, voiding, degeneration of those institutions historically assigned the role of representing the citizenry and guaranteeing a “constitutional order.” Recent studies have shown just to what degree ‘public’ institutions are simply tools of oligarchy.³³ One instrument employed for this evacuation is the manipulated use of crises, fear, and panic (9/11, the 2008 crash). Another, probably mostly unintended, dynamic is that between ‘non-profit’ single-issue groups, the oligarchical party system and the state. Instead of parties being ‘aggregators’ for the concerns of those it is supposed to represent, their voiding by oligarchy means individuals often turn to single-issue groups to attempt to address specific concerns. This leads to there now being probably on the order of 100,000s of single-issue groups in the US alone. Since they all have to fund themselves to survive, ultimately that often becomes one of, if not their principal, goal(s). It leads to all the negative aspects of competition, for resources for advocating for often very similar causes, a gargantuan proliferation (even only at the level of contacts with the public: e-mails, solicitation mail, etc.) which no individual citizen could possibly comprehend (hence negative feedback mechanisms), competition instead of coordination on many public interest issues which have common origins (fracking: the environment, public health, corporate accountability, aquifer management, etc.). In essence a form of ‘privatization’ which once again provides the illusion of ‘democracy’ while in reality further entrenching the voiding of institutions, citizen disillusionment, wastage of resources instead of economies of scale: instead of political coalescence and concentration in one or a few institutions to coordinate problem solving (whether parties or other institutions) so as to involve, aggregate, organize individual participation and action, leading to immense multiplier effects, there is disenfranchisement, atomization, dispersal, of almost the entire civil society (as opposed to the dominant fractions of oligarchy which create ever more global, opaque, and unaccountable institutions to enforce their predations world-wide).

³³ Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups and Average Citizens,” *Perspectives in Politics* 12 (3) 2014: 564-581; Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Another method, which has both preceded (the UN for instance),³⁴ but mostly accompanied globalization, is the removal of many important decisions affecting human beings worldwide to unelected, unaccountable, opaque ‘global’ or regional institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, NATO, the EU, and so forth. Far removed from the realities of national politics, most citizens are only vaguely aware of their existence, know very little about them, and have virtually no way of influencing or affecting them. The EU is an example of the intrinsic totalitarianism of these unaccountable institutions, specifically the European Commission and the ECB.³⁵ As with similar Western examples, one could call these forms of “disenfranchisement” or “denial of service” totalitarianism. The EC and the ECB control many vital factors and processes in the lives of Europe’s citizens, but the citizens have virtually no control over the individuals who control these institutions. The European Parliament is an elected body, but its powers are virtually only nominal. It has little control over the operations of the EC, and virtually no mechanisms to hold them accountable.

Another path for voiding institutions is via legislation (or its removal, lack of enforcement or evacuation) or the creation of new legislative bodies.³⁶ The fate of habeas corpus in the US since 9/11 goes to the foundations of the legal system and the guarantees for individual rights (dating to the French Revolution) and therefore to a specific government or regime’s political nature: “democratic” or not. As with the sanctioning of the assassination of US nationals abroad without any legal or court proceedings (no charge), the practice of extreme renditions, the use of torture and the creation of extra-judicial concentration camps (Guantanamo), the removal of privilege in attorney—client conversations, the degradation-removal of habeas corpus shows the extent to which the regime in charge in the US has moved from parliamentary to totalitarian (in the words of its Constitution another appropriate term would be

³⁴ At least in the case of the UN however the ‘path’ for citizens from national to UN institutions is, relatively, transparent (the Security Council is of course one of the major exceptions, and still represents traditional ‘big power’ politics).

³⁵ Perry Anderson, *The New Old World* (London: Verso, 2009). In June 2016 the Brexit/Lexit vote delivered its opinion.

³⁶ Persecuting, silencing and harassing those who would uphold the rule of law and point to governmental and corporate serial violations is of course one mainstay of the increasingly totalitarian state. As the ACLU has stated (and Helen Thomas confirmed) no administration has persecuted whistleblowers (and so tightly controlled the press) as the Obama administration.

“tyrannical”).³⁷ The law is constantly used to enforce oligarchical interests against the majority of the population: the passage of Citizens United, Colorado’s use of state laws to ban local prohibition of fracking,³⁸ the overturning of Glass/Steagall by the Clinton administration, or the use of jurists close to the Chicago School of Economics to rationalize shutting down the enforcement of anti-trust legislation,³⁹ a prescription which has been followed de facto by all US administrations in the last decades.

The Empire already practices extreme double-standards internationally: it has exempted itself from participation in the International Criminal Court (ICC), but likes to use it for kangaroo proceedings (or threats thereof) against heads of state that do not kowtow to Empire: Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milosevic, Muammar Gaddafi, while NATO or other ‘allied’ troops are never charged with war-crimes. At the same time (an example being tax proceedings against Microsoft in Ireland) it now tries to claim that US national jurisdiction and law can apply in other countries’ jurisdictions.⁴⁰ Recently the Empire has escalated the use of the “law” as a means to both persecute international whistleblowers and dissenters who have revealed and are exposing its ever more totalitarian global web: one of the prime targets has been Wikileaks and its founder Julian Assange. The web of deceit, manipulation, fabricated charges and the connivance of many European countries and institutions (the UK, Sweden, the EU courts responsible for issuing an arrest warrant, etc.) is quite mindboggling.⁴¹ But it now seems to have added other countries’ “law-enforcement” personnel and institutions as an even more camouflaged secretive weapon to engineer

³⁷ For an account that is still excessively benign, and focused exclusively on the legal issues of habeas corpus, cf. <https://www.brennancenter.org/publication/ten-things-you-should-know-about-habeas-corporus>

³⁸ Cf. <http://www.bna.com/state-law-preempts-n17179892912/>

³⁹ Mike Lofgren, *The Deep State*, 153 ff. (Richard Posner and acolytes). The very foundations of corporate law are of course already fraudulent: the Gilded Age gave us the fiction of corporate ‘personhood.’

⁴⁰ Cf. <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/sep/09/microsoft-court-case-hotmail-ireland-search-warrant> The case of US judge Thomas Griesa ruling in favor of vulture funds located in offshore tax-havens and against Argentina (which had restructured its debt) in a Manhattan court is an analogous combination of contempt for international law and totalitarian creep of national jurisdiction(s). In terms of the relentless assault against individual rights and privacy, the FBI is now suing Apple in order to undermine the company’s privacy and encryption protections (to the extent they actually exist).

⁴¹ One of the best accounts of the extent and depth of this totalitarian persecution is by John Pilger: <http://johnpilger.com/articles/assange-the-untold-story-of-an-epic-struggle-for-justice>.

'soft' coups against governments that aren't toeing the Empire's line: in Argentina Alberto Nisman (who Julian Assange documented had extremely close ties with the CIA and US embassy personnel) was attempting to prosecute president Christina Fernandez (who had the audacity to refuse to bow to the Empire's protected parasitic vulture funds, cf. footnote 40), and once weakened, and having lost the election, her successor Mauricio Macri, an imperial darling, promptly acceded to the vulture funds' blackmail (to the applause of propaganda outlets like the Financial Times); in Brazil, the two main prosecutors of a group the Wall Street Journal has dubbed "the nine horsemen," another Empire protected group of soft-coup engineers, prosecutors Deltan Dallagnol (Harvard Law) and Carlos Fernando dos Santos Lima (Cornell Law) are both products of the Empire's institutions: "They're trying to bring some stuff from the U.S. legal system into the Brazilian legal system," said Jose Vicente Mendonça, a state attorney in Rio de Janeiro and former Harvard classmate of Mr. Dallagnol. "It's part of a general changing of the mind-set in Brazil. This is a turning point in the Brazilian legal system."⁴² Of course what they are not saying is that the administrations targeted by the Empire (as was Honduras, whose president Manuel Zelaya the Empire ousted in a coup, something they attempted in Venezuela multiple times against its president

⁴² Mr. Mendonça doesn't seem to be quite aware of how perversely ironic this sounds in context. Cf. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/how-brazils-nine-horsemen-cracked-petrobras-bribery-scandal-1428334221>. The chorus of imperial propaganda outlets is of course unanimous: NPR a loyal accomplice of the *WSJ*: <http://www.npr.org/2015/07/08/421225013/lead-prosecutor-brings-ghandi-like-attitude-to-brazils-corruption-scandal>. For an excellent piece, including the background on one the architects of this 'judicial' soft-coup and his theories to 'justify' it, Sergio Moro, cf.: <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/03/08/the-brazilian-earthquake/>. The soft coup has of May 2016 lead to its intended result, the impeachment of president Dilma Rousseff on preposterous grounds with no legal basis (use of funds allocated for different purposes, as practiced by virtually all her predecessors in office), while some of the leading perpetrators of the coup are those actually guilty of corruption and holding illegal offshore assets (Eduardo Cunha, close to current coup leader Michel Temer, of course another darling of the Empire). As a contrast one should point out that Eliot Spitzer, who was only prosecuting Wall St. malfeasance very moderately, was targeted by the FBI for sexual activities that normally would never have brought this escalation in investigation: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB120536943121332151>; curious how top law-enforcement in the Empire actually de facto protects the most powerfully corrupt racket on the planet (cf. the 2008 meltdown and the absolute lack of major prosecutions then), i.e. Wall St., from prosecution. So we can see what kind of "law" Brazil is actually importing/adopting. The circumstantial evidence is overwhelming: only those bent on only believing "coincidence theorists" could refuse to open their minds to empirical evidence.

Hugo Chavez, and that is only listing the most recent of hundreds of either coups, attempted coups, invasions, regime changes, extortions, etc. in Latin America) are ones that implemented policies favorable to the majority of the population and not the oligarchy (cf. the Argentinian debt, or Chavez's investment in projects for the poorest segments of the population). Virtually no government, in the Empire itself, or in the West, let alone in the rest of the world, is corruption-free. It is only a question of who forces whom to keep quiet, and who encourages whom to expose someone else. Virtually all governments in Latin America have been or are currently involved in various forms of corruption. But it is the Empire's extremely selective 'prosecution' of which governments to target, and in such rapid succession (Argentina and Brazil, Petrobras, are/were virtually concurrent), with the obvious tacit aim of breaking the coalition of progressive Latin American governments that were not aligned with the Empire in foreign policy (and/or 'guilty' of belonging to the BRICS coalition), that is so suspicious: as with the selective targeting by the ICC, this manipulation of the application of the law and other countries' judicial systems is actual proof of the most utter contempt for not only justice, but for the rule of law: by voiding the equality of its application, it is voiding its very foundation. And the Empire's and proconsular propaganda apparatuses coordinated puff-pieces on the prosecutions in Argentina and Brazil are just part of the smoking gun for those willing to investigate. This use of 'comprador' personnel has been a staple of the National Security establishment: typically it was in the police, the secret services and the military (the infamous School of the Americas was one its most feared and nefarious institutions). In Germany, one of the countries in Europe most thoroughly penetrated and colonized by the Empire, it was very recently found the German secret service, the BND, was actually spying on German companies, parts of its own government and European allies on behalf of the Empire.⁴³ This is not the exception in how the Empire tries to control the globe: it is the rule. But now it seems, to try and hide its soft-coups even more thoroughly it appears the next 'model' is to use comprador personnel in foreign countries' other institutions, still related to "law" enforcement, but more in the judicial sector.⁴⁴

⁴³ Edward Snowden revealed some tips of the iceberg. Here is another probative individual case: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-spying-trial-idUSKC N0T51QP20151116> .

⁴⁴ The Supreme Court of Spain railroaded judge Baltasar Garzon, expelling him from the judiciary, under pressure from the Empire, as also revealed by Wikileaks. Garzon who was guilty, in the Empire's eyes of, among other things, attempting to bring Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet to trial. The very recent coup attempt in

The creation of new legislative bodies, following the ‘globalizing’ “removal/abstraction” process (as with NATO, EC, IMF, etc.), is however perhaps the most devastating and consequential in terms of completely voiding the rule of law, and entrenching ‘disfranchisement totalitarianism.’ The recently signed Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement (TPP; but the sister-agreement being fraudulently ‘negotiated’ with the EU, with major EC connivance, the TTIP, contains the exact same provision for totalitarian tribunals),⁴⁵ includes in its secret provisions the creation of unaccountable supranational (“investor-state”) tribunals with which multinationals will be able to sue individual nation-states. It is going to be manned by personnel that previously worked for multinational corporations.⁴⁶ This action is totalitarian on a number of different levels: it de facto voids all the political, institutional and legal procedures by which citizens can decide which

Turkey has in this case also highlighted how initially the aim was perhaps more along the ‘soft-coups’ line: cf. <https://www.rt.com/news/353963-cia-fbi-turkey-coup/> (the Gulen organization and the “Dec. 17th process,” which was a judicial coup attempt along the lines of those in Argentina and Brazil). Once Erdogan moved back closer to Russia and Putin following Brexit, the US proceeded with their usual blood-soaked ‘further options,’ which have destroyed most secular civil societies in the Middle East, a process that *The New York Times*, in its usual hyper-hypocritical perversion of history propagandistic twist, in a series of daily special reports “Fractured Lands: How the Arab World Came Apart” (starting on August 11, 2016; as if this was an act of God...), hides precisely the not only principal but uniquely central and causative agency, namely that of current and recent US aggressions, and that of especially British (and partially French) imperialism and colonialism prior to that (and in carving up the geographic area into the arbitrary Bantustans they are today).

⁴⁵ Intentionally negotiated in the utmost secrecy, totalitarian precautions used precisely so as to avoid any public scrutiny or discussion of its actual contents, a procedure also being followed in the case of negotiations on the ‘sister’ agreement with the EU, the TTIP, with the proconsuls dutifully following the Empire’s totalitarian lead. For some of the documents and sell-outs the EC and other EU proconsuls were trying to hide from its citizens, cf. <https://www.ttip-leaks.org/>. The actions of the EU proconsuls, as is almost always the case, belie the high-flying rhetoric. José Manuel Barroso, a former chief of the European Commission, accepted the position of head of Goldman-Sachs Europe, very soon after the Brexit vote (Mario Monti, Mario Draghi, and Anders Fogh Rasmussen, former head of NATO, being some of the other most prominent proconsuls tied to this bank; the bank responsible for cooking Greece’s books so as to ‘allow’ it to join the EU, something for which it was never prosecuted). He and Rasmussen are the quintessential incarnation of what interests and what kind of abject dependencies the EU de facto represents.

⁴⁶ Cf. <https://wikileaks.org/tpp-investment/press.html>

laws, personnel, procedures they want to govern the nation in which they live (it abrogates national sovereignty, a strategy we already saw at work in Samantha Powers' R2P; it abrogates self-rule); it creates a completely unaccountable institution; there is no input whatsoever by the overwhelming majority of the people it affects on the selection of its personnel; in giving these additional extraordinary special powers to multinational corporations, the individuals and interests it represents, it completely voids the very foundations of any democratic legal system: equality of application of, and representation in front of, the law.

Totalitarianism: Why and How

So far I have shown many of the converging trends that have led to forms of coercion, surveillance, voiding of laws and institutions, and impositions of unaccountable ones that are all analogous to more classic forms of totalitarian, fascistic and dictatorial control. Though the processes involved have mostly been gradual, and not all conducted from one identifiable center/node, typically of the party-state kind, they have been accelerating; due to their opacity, (mostly) avoidance of blatant and widespread violence, they tend not to enter public awareness.⁴⁷

Where 'classic' totalitarianism employs activist means to mold individuals to conform, in consumer 'disenfranchisement totalitarianism' human beings are reduced to bundles of 'skills' (human capital) and (often induced) needs/desires, useful input for monopoly capitalism: they no longer possess the qualities that make for a truly autonomous, responsible, subject, that can therefore also exercise its political rights and form a self-conscious, self-activating and self-legislating community (the processes Pasolini was analyzing at the end of his life). The 'citizen' atrophies and individuals become willing (if mostly not very conscious) participants in the bloating of their consumer (desiring) functions. Combined with a mostly devastated (in terms of accountability, access, representation and democratic participation) institutional landscape, this becomes the perfect

⁴⁷ Or when they do the corporate mass-media are there to 'naturalize' totalitarian phenomena such as the surveillance state: cf. the CBS series *Person of Interest*, which is very symptomatic in this regard (the lead actor, Jim Caviezel, had the leading role in Gibson's *Passion of the Christ*, itself a very symptomatic version of the Christian story). Surveillance is only one of very numerous totalitarian abuses facilitated by digital technology: the creation of millions of phony accounts/entities in the social media to subvert public discussion, approval, norm-creation and, of course, elections is a less well known one. Cf. <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/04/22/hillary-clintons-support-base-as-bogus-as-us-democracy/>.

setting for ‘disenfranchisement totalitarianism.’ There is a particularly negative vicious-cycle feedback mechanism between the voiding of institutions, realities and emotions relating to disempowerment and disenfranchisement, further hollowing of the institutions, and the ever more dominant (and ersatz) realm of consumption (which reinforces the neoliberal control and degradation of individual subjects). The capillary level of control and (ab)use of hopelessness at the individual (social, political, and psychological) level is what makes ‘disenfranchisement’ totalitarianism even more “totalitarian” (in the original, fascist-adopted, etymological and aspirational sense of the term) than its ‘classic’ counterparts.⁴⁸ In terms of definition some have tried to contrast dictatorship, as rule by an individual (aided by some entourage(s)), but lacking in institutional and ideological mechanisms to which all must conform, which are instead more typical of totalitarian regimes where party and state are fused to a greater or lesser extent, to totalitarian rule. Thought of as a continuum this analysis does have some persuasive power (Gentile’s critique of Arendt, showing fascism was indeed totalitarian (it had adopted the term as self-descriptive) also relies on it), but in many empirical cases the distinctions are not so easy (Portugal, Latin America). Fetishizing individual rule in dictatorships is misleading: rule is often possible and can be enforced only because of the complicity of personnel in dominant institutions and sometimes of entire institutions. The scholarship devoted to the issue(s) is also divided to a significant extent: in the Marxian tradition, even at it’s most creative, and open, the focus is on the relation of totalitarian states to the capitalist economic system (including the issue of imperialism, which Arendt partially addresses), on relations between classes, and less on the cultural specifics and dynamics of each totalitarian system (Nikos Poulantzas is a good example).⁴⁹ In the

⁴⁸ Trends that can be verified, if only by superficial and indirect measures, in examining the statistics of participation in elections and in trends in party or labor-union memberships. These kinds of planned induced ‘demoralization’ were/are part of planning during foreign aggressions, such as the Contra war(s) in Central America. The psychological warfare components have a long history, now plausibly part of the blowback used in the escalation of totalitarian control in the Empire itself. At the level of ‘public intellectuals’ we have an analogous process of voiding of progressive beliefs, ethical principles and tacit/surreptitious adoption of the ‘extreme center’ consensus as de facto values: cf. Chris Hedges, *Death of the Liberal Class* (New York: Nation Books, 2010).

⁴⁹ Nikos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship* (London: New Left Books, 1974) and *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1975), *The Crisis of Dictatorships* (London: New Left Books, 1976), *State, Power, Socialism* (London: New Left Books, 1978).

liberal to conservative tradition(s) (Renzo De Felice, Emilio Gentile) a great deal of attention is paid to cultural (also institutional) specifics and dynamics, but much less to issues relating to the interaction(s) of economy, classes and the state (and all of these to civil society). ‘Disenfranchisement’ totalitarianism is different, in that it by voiding institutions it simply removes citizen access to any tools and means of redress and participation. It overturns the bedrock of liberal definitions of democracy: informed consent (dissent).⁵⁰ The corporate mass-media and persuasion industry largely take care of vitiating any serious interpretation of the “informed” part of the equation.⁵¹ It is totalitarian in that via consumption ((ab)using the natural/material foundations on which human needs and desires are based) it molds individuals much more totally and surreptitiously than could ever be dreamt of by ‘classic’ totalitarianism; of course in addition to institutional ‘voiding’ there are the ever more total and invisible networks of surveillance implemented by the National Security State (which are indeed analogous to ‘classic’ totalitarianism), the use of fear, and sometimes violence. It complements this emerging form of ‘disenfranchisement’ totalitarianism within the Empire and its ‘advanced’ appendages by adopting/adapting modifications of more ‘classic’ forms of totalitarian control it had experimented with in the underdeveloping areas of the subjugated ‘periphery:’ this is institutional, political, legal, social “blowback” writ very large (the National Security State).

The acceleration of the “New World Order” and the new totalitarianism was enabled by the so-called “end of the Cold War,” the self-destruction of the organized left in the West (aided by the corporate mass-media and persuasion industry), and the heritage of a 1960s ‘movementism’ that, while accurately criticizing problems and dysfunctional elements within traditional institutions of the left (internal lack of democracy, accountability,

⁵⁰ I emphasize “liberal” definitions. The illusion of “equality” (premised in its turn on the illusions generated by the juridical fictions of “equality in front of the law”) in participation in parliamentary electoral procedures (one person one vote) very fundamentally obscures the extremely unequal class and structural economic productive features the capitalist system is based on. It entrenches and fetishizes the separation of “politics” from “economics.” These inequalities of course have only reached incomparably higher levels with the increasingly unipolar impositions of imperialist neoliberalism. For an excellent account of this illusion, and how it relates to those of Western Marxism and the reception of Gramsci, cf. Perry Anderson, “The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci,” *New Left Review*, 1/100 (November-December 1976): 5-78.

⁵¹ Cf. Herbert Schiller, *Culture, Inc.: the Corporate Takeover of Public Expression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); *Mass Communications and American Empire* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

true participation and interaction, in parties, unions), proceeded to organize along ‘movementist’ models, mostly along a ‘charismatic leader/elite’ vs. mass of followers scheme, which not only practically eschewed issues of organization, but then theoretically and practically removed institutions from consideration. An issue that is currently central to the left’s almost complete incapacity to aggregate, organize and intervene as an actor with some historical staying power.

At the level of specific cultural practices, the new totalitarianism differs quite radically from ‘classic’ forms. Most religions are *avant-la-lettre* forms of irrationalist, totalitarian ideology, though often not used politically, socially or institutionally in the manner of ‘classic’ totalitarian ideologies. The work of the Italian historian of fascism, Emilio Gentile (a pupil of Renzo De Felice), focuses to a large degree on issues of fascist culture and institutions, and specifically on the opposition “political religions” vs. “civil religions” and the associated symbolism, rituals, cults, and other practices. He associates “political religions” with totalitarian forms of government (hence fascism) and “civil religions” with parliamentary forms of government (a paradigmatic example being the USA).⁵² While Gentile is fairly persuasive in his in depth analysis of fascist cultural practices, and some of its ‘religious’/symbolic/ritualistic components, I find the opposition between “civil” and “political religions” less so. In both cases we are dealing with irrationalist forms of persuasion and cohesion/consensus building, though they may differ in the degrees of coercion adopted, and in other political teloi and values. The best defense against having the “masses” manipulated and deployed in support of ‘classic’ totalitarian regimes is to have “individuals” that are educated sufficiently, living in acceptable economic circumstances and being treated socially, legally, institutionally, on an equal enough basis which will mostly prevent widespread grudges against society from arising. Quite clearly these circumstances were never close to being realized in Italy during or after the Risorgimento.⁵³ Gentile tries to confront the transition(s) from the Risorgimento to the fascist regime, arguing that had

⁵² Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), *passim*; for a discussion of the US, cf. p. xiii ff. His more detailed discussion of fascist culture, symbolism, ritual and relations to “political religion” occurs in *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell’Italia fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 1993). In partial contrast cf. Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated*, ch. 7 “The Dynamics of the Archaic.”

⁵³ Facts should not really be contested here. Of many works to remember, the classic, if somewhat arbitrarily edited, Antonio Gramsci, *Sul Risorgimento* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1959).

the Risorgimento's "civil religion" been more persuasive, struck deeper roots, later totalitarian developments might have been preempted.⁵⁴ He shows how Mazzini's mystical ideas would contribute, via Giovanni Gentile, to the elaboration of a "political religion" (fascist) from a "civil religion" (Mazzini's, part of the Risorgimento's).⁵⁵ Transitions along the continuum between "political" and "civil religions" are therefore always possible, and occasionally realized; the intolerant utopianism inherent in some "civil religions" can easily lend itself to be transformed into a "political religion." In addition many "civil religions" contain some fairly fundamentalist and intolerant elements themselves: the Monroe Doctrine and the whole US idea of Manifest Destiny is one of these, and so is the US as the "indispensable nation": these are ideological/mythical/mystical foundations for the most aberrant forms of imperialism. Starting with the writings of the Founding Fathers, the US looked to Rome as a very special model: there is controversy about Republican Rome vs. Imperial Rome, but in many ways the two are inseparable. Symbolically this constitutes a strong connection between fascist Italy and a 'parliamentary' US. By discreetly endorsing the 'centrist' solutions of a 'secular culture' and its alleged anodyne civic virtues, Gentile follows a common myth among Italian intellectuals, one prescribed, but rarely followed in individual practice: for instance Norberto Bobbio's mythologization of Carlo Cattaneo and Anglo-American Protestant culture (and the "Partito d'Azione") following WWII. These myths devoted to the UK or the US bear absolutely no resemblance to the realities, certainly not today, but scarcely even immediately after WWII.⁵⁶ Non-coincidentally, these solutions resemble the 'civic' solutions proposed, directly or by implication, by Mike Lofgren, Sheldon Wolin and Chalmers Johnson in the works quoted

⁵⁴ Emilio Gentile, *Italiani senza padri. Intervista sul Risorgimento*, ed. Simonetta Fiori (Bari: Laterza, 2011), 3 ff., where he contrasts the wishes and ideals of the 'padri fondatori [founding fathers]' with the realities of a contemporary Italy that does not respect those ideals (let alone practice them). One of Gentile's major myths is the would-be centrality of this (homogeneous?!) 'secular culture' (coming from where? rooted in what?) as a foundation for the harmonious 'polis'. Gentile makes some essential points about Italy's fragmentary history, but one cannot just solve these by waving the magical wand of cultural homogeneity/hegemony. The material history does not support these wishes: as Pasolini well knew (Tullio De Mauro later commended him for this), one of the infinite facts that would have inhibited this 'secular culture' were the astronomically high rates of illiteracy (one very real contrast to the US at the same time), and the lack of any actual national language (which will not be realized until after WWII).

⁵⁵ Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio*, 10 ff.

⁵⁶ Cf. Tariq Ali, *The Extreme Centre*, and Mike Lofgren, *The Deep State*.

above. They derive from analyses which don't discern the agents of 'disenfranchisement' totalitarianism in the motor(s) and institutions of monopoly capitalism itself. Modern totalitarianism has essentially always been an institutional form for the "advancement of capitalism by other means." Its current incarnation, both in its genesis and its functioning, is so to an even greater degree. To the extent "religions" and 'rituals' are developing they are those of consumerism, and, an empty shell of a ritual, 'elections.'

Adopting "religions" in Gentile's sense, means to deny individual emancipation, foster the illusion of living in an 'eternal present,' a 'normality' of the kind I mentioned discussing Tariq Ali. At the level of culture it reinforces the vicious cycle between 'disenfranchised' citizenry and retreat/super-investment in consumerism, with another vicious cycle: creating ersatz 'solutions' at the level of Kultur for the ever accelerating and expanding contradictions in the realm of Zivilisation. Even in the apparently most legitimate parliamentary 'constitutional' order, given the accelerating pace of change globally, citizens are never asked for their input to modify, validate or update constitutions and legal systems that affect them throughout their lives with a certain regularity. This exclusion is symptomatic of the enormous gap in "democracies" between self-representation and reality. Another omission in Gentile's accounts (which relates to the fact that he examines the possible shifts between "civil" and "political" religions less as tendencies on a continuum and more as rigidly separate poles), is how these "religions" relate to the more medium-long term trend(s) of secularization. Raymond Williams examined how various other realms of cultural production could assume 'religious' functions in bourgeois societies.⁵⁷ This relation of "religions," myths, rituals to the 'freezing' ('recycling of the 'same' as a means/delusion of control) of time and history (and certainly their comprehension) is key to understanding a series of important connections between the roughly parallel (d)evolutions of neoliberalism, postmodernism/-ity and contemporary informational technologies. One is the 'space-time' compression David Harvey discusses. The other is an aversion, leading to enforced preclusions, to understanding historical genesis and context, whether of economic conditions or of intellectual and artistic production.

At an abstract or 'high' level of cultural elaboration, it is symptomatic that the overwhelming majority of postmodern 'philosophy' is grounded in

⁵⁷ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) among other works: as well as partially being the results of processes of secularization.

the thought of Martin Heidegger and his ‘ontologisms’,⁵⁸ which could, somewhat reductively, be described as a secularization of religious categories (tied to his anti-Christian crusade). The connections between secular and religious forms of existentialism are one confirmation in this regard. This has led to attacks on the concept of ‘subject,’ camouflaged as attacks on (supposedly ‘bourgeois’) ‘individualism’ (Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s are exemplary), without proposing any viable substitute. The ‘subject’ therefore becomes an evacuated concept, exhibiting very symptomatic parallels with the ‘neoliberal’ subject as merely a bundle of (production-integrated) skills and (consumer) needs. The same can be said for frameworks related to genetic materialist understandings of time and history (“ontology” is the preferred means of erasure here): exemplary is the postmodern critique of so-called “grand narratives” (in reality an irrationalist critique of materialism in many guises) often presented as almost ‘totalitarian’ (because they had depth and scope), which in destroying any rational networks leaves the voided ‘subject’ adrift in a sea of ‘power’ whose nexuses s/he will never be able to discern (a sinking into the primitive swamp very much akin to Heidegger’s dreams of the ‘subject’s’ ontological ‘absorption’). Both the reasons for selecting the targets of these postmodernist attacks and the legerdemain ‘philosophical’ substitutes

⁵⁸ A thinker with very well known Nazi allegiances and institutional bonds, which the overwhelming majority of the ‘maitres-a-penser’ who rely on his thought mostly dismiss, avoid, censor, trivialize, most likely because of the large amount of symbolic (and real) capital that this logorrhoeic industry has invested in him; a comparable case of censorship by omission is that experienced by Timpanaro’s critique of Freud (by the, mostly Freudian, psychoanalytic and related critical, communities). The so-called *Black Notebooks* are only the latest, obvious, but relatively minor piece (except they definitely put to rest the issue of his not being a racist) of evidence relating to him. Cf. for some partial investigations Victor Farias, *Heidegger and Nazism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Emmanuel Faye, *The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), probably the most detailed investigation into the connections between Heidegger’s philosophical works and his Nazi political convictions (Faye in fact demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt that Heidegger was a Nazi ideologue: since Nazism was a complex movement, obviously not the only ideologue; for instance in his attack on the notion of “subject” which his French acolytes and followers have so eagerly made their own), and Nicolas Tertulian (a student of Georg Lukács) “Histoire de l’être et révolution politique,” *Les temps modernes*, 523 (February 1990): 109-136 and “Qui a peur du débat? Réponse à Miguel de Beistegui,” *Les Temps modernes*, 529-530 (August-September 1990): 214-240.

actually exhibit very significant, mostly camouflaged, escalations in pseudo-conceptual frameworks either derived from or very similar to ‘religious’ ones, and in their irrationalist, unfalsifiable, anti-Enlightenment and anti-scientific⁵⁹ tendencies they exhibit actual (not invidiously presumed) totalitarian tendencies. Daniele Balicco (and Franco Fortini) have underscored some of these consequences and aspects in French postmodern thought.⁶⁰ Important observations on the connections between neoliberalism and postmodernism/-ity have been made by David Harvey, who shows how neoliberalism could exploit some 1960s ‘counter-cultural’ tendencies to its advantage, in this sense joining with postmodernism as its accomplice,⁶¹

⁵⁹ Cf. Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals’ Abuse of Science* (New York: Picador, 1998), which includes the famous hoax Sokal pulled on the journal *Social Text*.

⁶⁰ Daniele Balicco, “Una lettera a Nietzsche: Fortini e il nichilismo di massa,” *Allegoria* 63 (gennaio-giugno 2011): 103-133. Balicco discusses Fortini’s concept of “controllo dell’oblio” which also points to the erasure of an understanding of time/history, although the causes Fortini invokes are slightly different. Balicco’s analysis shows some of the major consequences of the French postmodern tradition’s adoption of Nietzsche-Heidegger foundations, how easily Wall St. and the art and architecture it patronized could love this tradition, and finally its adoption/transformation in Italian thought, most specifically in the area of so-called ‘operismo’ around Mario Tronti, Massimo Cacciari, Antonio Negri and Alberto Asor Rosa, and the politically and philosophically deleterious consequences it has had (104-124 especially). Attacking the ‘subject’ as in Deleuze and followers is also an indirect way to avoid an ethics of responsibility and cogency, because an evacuated ‘subject’ will not be either coherent or historically grounded enough to assume any responsibility—many of these philosophical strains could be seen as an opaque attempt at rationalizing the adolescent egotism, contempt for other/past generations, “tutto e subito,” ‘terroristic’ attitudes that precluded serious (and self-emancipatory) engagement with the ‘past’ that Pasolini had seen so acutely when diagnosing the 1960s (in Italy at the very least) as mostly a ‘civil-war’ of the bourgeoisie against itself. A way to erase long-ranging institutional practices and norms from the past and replace them with the fungible ones of consumer monopoly capitalism, as it was morphing into the neoliberal totalitarian model in ‘advanced’ Western countries. Pasolini could register the enormous anthropological consequences of the transition so clearly in Italy, largely because there many past cultural practices forged by peasant or working classes had been better preserved than in the US or UK for instance.

⁶¹ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 37-43 (where he also discusses the relation between liberal utopianism and emergence of fascism). Harvey’s *The Condition of Postmodernity: an Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990) also discusses postmodernism’s (and partially the New Left’s) self-delusions (cf. 351-355), and the constructive, ‘bridging’ role of Raymond Williams, but overall, since it was written much earlier than the work

just as later the 'neoliberal' state as enforcer will join with the forces and ideologies of neoconservatism: I would add that postmodernism essentially tends to substitute the concept of "class" with that of "identity," and avoids discussions of the latter concept (and reality) as intrinsically social constructs, neither mythical protective bunkers, nor floating gelatinous fads to be changed on a whim. Both Terry Eagleton and Perry Anderson have also contributed important works showing connections between postmodernity and contemporary neoliberal finance capitalism, and the erasures of time/history.⁶²

Pasolini was ahead of his time in understanding the totalitarian dangers lurking in consumer monopoly capitalism, in understanding 1960s movementism as something at least as inhibiting as it was professedly 'liberating,' but especially in insisting on his materialist notion of the 'sacred,' connected to his idea of "sono una forza del passato [I am a force of the past]." He opposed the kinds of instrumental uses of "religion" adopted by parliamentary and totalitarian regimes discussed above. Insisting on both a materialist, and a historical-genetic understanding of the past runs completely counter to some of the basic elements of postmodernism (and Pasolini never believed "grand-narratives" were intrinsically nefarious: they had to be tested and live up to their claims). Insisting on a (materialist) respect for the 'sacred,' for existence independent of and apart from the human species, to be acknowledged as such and not only as potential fodder for human instrumental (ab)use, runs counter to both the dominant political and ideological currents of capitalism, especially in its neoliberal variant, but also to those of much of the institutionally dominant 'left.' It points directly to how "upside-down" our world is. The fact that now scientists (specifically geologists) are seriously considering naming our 'contemporary' geological era the Anthropocene (because of the impact of the human species on our environment) speaks volumes about Pasolini's proposal and concerns.

Never has the contradiction between the potential for decentralized and democratic planning (the availability of both science and technology), and

on neoliberalism, it doesn't yet fully appreciate the dominance of developing totalitarian trends.

⁶² Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London: Verso, 1998) although Anderson generally finds Fredric Jameson's analyses, especially *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991) more empirically grounded than I do. Obviously the fact that like so many other 'post-'s, postmodernism can only define itself through epigonal succession, is another symptom of its apparent 'floating-free' of history.

the actual irrational totalitarian abomination of oligarchical ‘planning’ for pillage been greater. Proposing a new foundation for social, political, economic, ethical and inter-species relations, like that outlined by Pasolini, in and of itself does very little to counter the ever more predatory and degrading totalitarian trends we are witnessing, which need to be addressed at the level of institutions, but it does counter some of the most entrenched and unexamined dogmas of contemporary (postmodern) ‘high’ culture head on.

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