

Viewpoint: End of Days

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Introduction

Are we on the brink of human extinction? Is civilization destined toward self-annihilation? We must not underestimate the risk of the possibility that we may become extinct fairly soon. Let us examine some cold sober facts: We are facing a planetary ecological crisis due to global warming, despoliation of our natural resources, mass scale industrial pollution, desertification, deforestation, widespread collapse of ecosystems, and extreme climate change; world overpopulation is nearing a record tipping-point, where food and water scarcity will bring about more famine, drought, pestilence, and death; human violence and aggression in concentrated pockets are on the rise worldwide, with every inhabitable continent in turmoil, civil uprising, military conflict, or war; unbridled capitalistic exploitation of consumer masses by corporate conglomerates, financial institutions, Big Pharma, and insurance sectors are unprecedented, with obscene disparities in wealth and poverty to the point of social implosion; global catastrophic hazards have escalated due to the environmental crisis, encroachment by man, destabilized markets, hegemonic national politics, collective ideologies, corrupt governmental policies, deranged despots, nuclear threats, terrorism, religious fundamentalism, Internet espionage, cyber hijacking, space wars, threats to public health, bioterror, infectious diseases, and psychological self-interest driving everything from vain desire to the local economy and international relations, not to mention the anathema of evil, abuse, trauma, greed, and the psychopathology of everyday life. Regardless of the degree of threat we assign to these calculated risks, we cannot ignore the ominous dread hovering over a wishing humanity.

Our recalcitrant dependency on fossil fuel is slowing digging humanity a shallow grave. The burning of coal, whether in industrial manufacturing or to heat a home, is gradually suffocating the planet (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2015; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015). The problem is so bad in India and China that you can hardly breathe in Delhi and Beijing. Soot from wood stoves covers the roads of Kraków to the point that it feels like walking on a floor of oil. From hazards due to refining oil, fracking, tar sands extraction, natural gas leakage, pipeline distribution, transport accidents, off-line rig explosions, to run-a-way greenhouse effects, our ecosystems are deteriorating rapidly, hence threatening the sustainability of our natural resources and life on this planet. Glaciers and polar icecaps are melting, sea levels are rising, heat waves, droughts, wildfires, bitter coldness, severe storms, torrential rains, floods, rising ocean temperatures, hurricanes, tsunamis, freshwater scarcity, and unpredictable weather phenomena that are so variegated throughout the world signals our changing global climate (Climate Central, 2012; Flannery, 2010). All these issues leave us in a profound and compounded predicament of future survival. And with the projected statistical prediction of adding another billion more people every decade to the world population, our lot in life hangs by a hair. As our world economies are in flux and tumult, hence threatening the availability, price, and affordability of basic human requirements for sustenance, such as water, food, shelter, and medicine, as well as education and valued commodities that nourish the physical, emotional, and spiritual lives of the masses, we are likely headed for calamity. But we dissociate these realities, because they are not happening to everyone at the same time and in the same place. We can no longer afford to bury our heads in the sand.

The Political Unconscious and the Fate of Humanity

We must seriously question the prejudicial unconscious forces that drive such political states of affairs (Mills & Polanowski, 2007), from individual and communal choices to international policy, for collective humanity is neither unified in its aims nor prioritizes matters outside of its immediate scope of partisan

desires or regional inclinations. Is the political unconscious a universal phenomenon, namely, is it structurally inscribed in the very ontological fabric of the psyche? This would suggest that, with qualifications, notwithstanding divergent groups and individualities that comprise a community of followers identified with attaining certain material gains, pleasure, or reinforcing a self-serving perspective or worldview, all

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people are predisposed a priori to favour certain unconscious attitudes even if they are irrational and ultimately self-destructive. And it is unequivocally taking place on a mass scale across all civilized and developing parts of the world.

What we are witnessing in concrete forms is how the collective psyche is divided based on unconscious politics identified with certain ideologies fortified by cultural relativity. Here we should question the capacity of collectives to make rationally informed judgements when desire, self-interest, and insular governmental hegemonies make decisions that affect us all. Yet government is elected by the people in democratic countries, which brings us to question why in recent political times the majority of citizens would vote for leaders—say, in the United Kingdom and America, who are anti-environment, anti-immigration, xenophobic, racist, religiously intolerant, misogynistic, anti-gay, and pro-war, just to name a few indecencies. From *Brexit* to the election of U.S. Republican president Donald Trump, humanity should beckon a call to reason. It is no surprise to psychoanalysis that we are witnessing the disintegration of culture, for illogical decisions are unconsciously chosen based on emotional prejudices, which speaks to the greater manifestation of collective social life immersed in its own *pathos*.

10 Billion

The world population is now over 7 billion people, which has proliferated by 1.4 billion in less than 15 years. Following this unprecedented hurried growth, it is estimated there will be over 10 billion inhabitants by 2050 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015; Worldmeters, 2016). Most scientists believe that the Earth will not be able to sustain that many people, and if possible, not without grave consequences (Emmott, 2013). The mass consumption of resources will likely be too taxing to support the plenitude of food required, which takes the majority of our water supplies and fertile earth surface to grow. Given that mass industrial and environmental pollution has severely tainted global water availability (Bozzo, 2008; Salina, 2008), compounded by unforgiving climate change, the paucity of clean drinking water is an urgent ecological and humanitarian crisis. The bottom line is that now, within our current times, we do not have enough water or food to go around. Imagine what it will be like with 3 billion more people crowding the planet all vying for the basic necessities of life?

No longer is the threat of world destruction simply due to the forces of nature itself, rather it is from man. We continuously poison our seas, land, and air, plunder our natural resources with callous disregard for future consequences, and disrupt Earth's regulatory mechanisms (Lovelock, 2006), hence insuring the slow but steady deracination of our planet. Our ecosystems are deteriorating rapidly, and with the rampant marauding of our environments, such as with the industrial excavation and burning of fossil fuels, cattle and sheep farming, mass mining, agribusiness, and the artificial manufacturing of biofuels, this systemically harms biodiversity and the atmosphere by accelerating greenhouse gas emissions, which further contributes to the global climate crisis that threatens our sustainability (Weisman, 2013).

The Evil that Men Do

As if the despoilment of our globe is not enough to worry about, we have to continuously face the prevalence of human aggression. All occupied continents are engaged in military battle, and there is no foreseeable end in sight. World superpowers, rouge nations, dictators, tyrants, revolutionists, insurgents, and international politics fuel existing warfare, hence leading to repetitive cycles of death, despair, transgenerational trauma, and systemic ruin. Global economies have been shattered, social infrastructures effaced, and daily ways of life destroyed, where entire communities have perished (Diamond, 2005). Whole societies have been displaced, historical traditions broken, established customs nullified, and cultural identities lost. Diasporas, mass-scale refugees, and the walking wounded scurry to neighbouring territories, often herded at their borders. Chaos, uprisings, and revolt over impoverishment, maltreatment, and retaliatory aggression lead to further warfare, civil disorder, violence, and crime.

Within our warming world, as the size of the global population balloons, and as we become even more overcrowded, there will be more scarcity, competition for resources, ruthlessness, and qualitative abjection. Dearth and human angst will likely motivate mass panic and brutality under the so-called influence of social Darwinism, which will predictably lead to more human tensions, exploitation, war, and suffering. Here the danger is of internal disintegration. Rather than mimic an empathic civilization, we will likely devolve into primitive desperation where the ability to consider the lives of others will be eclipsed by the need for immediate benefit and tribal survival, even if that means we abandon a moral stance toward

the inalienable Other. This is as predictable as rain.

As our world economies are in flux and tumult, hence threatening the availability, price, and affordability of basic human requirements for sustenance, such as water, food, shelter, and energy (e.g., electricity and heat), the world is becoming less stable, predictable, and safe. No longer can we pretend that everything is fine as long as “We,” in our sheltered, privileged Western lives, remain unscathed or untouched by the events that transpire around us. Here universal security becomes an illusion. As we experience greater economic and social disparities worldwide, leading to concentrated pockets of civil protest, disobedience, and mayhem, such as what we currently witness in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, every nation feels a trickle-down effect that not only threatens universal wellbeing, but also safety at home.

And when enemies are no longer foreign, conflict is generated from within a society where economic and class discrepancy, racial division, religious intolerance, political injustices, and governmental treatment of collectives leads to societal dissent, uprisings, riots, coups, and rampages, for we all have the need to find enemies. We owe this tendency—sometimes paranoiac, sometimes justified by real circumstances—to the psychodynamics of human emotion, much of which is unconsciously motivated, hence outside of our conscious reflection and social awareness. Because we are primarily driven by unconscious affects and prejudice, not by rational analysis and constraint, we are guided by our primordial desires, conflicts, and complexes. This is equally true of nations, states, and superpowers, where politics serve to manipulate multiple psychological wishes and vulnerabilities in the masses and opposing cultures or peoples, while promoting the self-interests of those sailing the ship. This is human nature, for man is a political animal (Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk1:1253a1). However, politics are inherently corrupt without a watchtower ensuring that human exploitation is curbed.

Disparities, Injustice and a Lack of Universal Ethics

Even within well-meaning democracies, inverted totalitarian principles based on self-interest operate unconsciously within societies that are complicit with national policies, self-instituted laws, and actions that mistreat and harm opposing nations and groups without provocation. Here the silent masses implicitly

condone the deeds of their nation's leaders. And when other societies are negatively affected by a superpower, the backlash is violence. This occurs from both within the citizenry affected by the decisions of a nation state, as well as external protest and reaction. These vectors create a two-way relation of dialectical strains, namely, pressure from within and without. Political injustice and social exploitation predictably lead to civil disobedience, bloodshed, insurrections, and rebellions. When an individual, community, or nation is done wrong by, even if it is only perceived, the toll is resentment and the need for revenge.

In today's world where every form of transgression enjoys a psychological motive, rational justification, legal defence, and/or pastoral forgiveness, the limits of evil seem to be standing on a crumbling precipice. Once deemed the unequivocal antithesis to moral absolutes, evil has acquired a new form of acceptability. From commonplace cheating on university entrance exams, income tax evasion, fraud, and economic bleeding of consumer society, to partisan lobby manipulation, bribery, corruption, breach of trust, political illegalities, and military campaigns that could care less about collateral damage, we have entered into a techno age of anonymity, facelessness, and disposable objects where dehumanized alterity becomes the projection, displacement, and denial of our own interiority, in other words, the evil within.

When people feel abused and experience no sense of justice, it violates a universal ethical principle, one that is shattered with the realization that there is no universal ethics, that is, no metaphysical dispensary of the “good and right” watching over them. From anarchy and ochlocracy to nihilism, the human animal becomes a machine of violence. Aggression begets aggression, a simple iteration as repetition compulsion. Tempestuous human relations lead to further social discord, animosity, and bellicosity with no hope in sight of reversing this discernible pattern.

Developmental traumas and attachment pathology besiege the plight of the human being, hence hampering the ability to have healthy relationships, to feel genuine love and intimacy, and to have empathy and compassion for others, where normativity is coloured by *pathos*. Child abuse in all its odious forms is a primordial scab on humanity: it becomes the bedrock of suffering in every society where kids are held hostage in emotional concentration camps by their parents or culture, victims who themselves have been abused, oppressed,

subjugated, and demoralized. Here the enemy lies within our families and community cryptically threatening our sense of refuge, wellbeing, and safety at home.

Disease, migrant prejudice, refugee influx, child slavery, ground ghetto fighting, mass execution—barbarian style, and the drop in black gold sustain our attention every night while watching the daily news. The world has become a very dangerous place. Whether we admit it or not, we all live in fear of being assaulted, mugged, or raped, where road-rage, purse-snatching, abduction, and home invasion are common occurrences. Anyone could be targeted or murdered for the change in their pockets, where safety is sought in gated communities, rural isolation, or in owning firearms for self-protection. From random crime to gangs, the mafia, drug cartels, the sex trade industry, child soldiers, and human trafficking, no one is immune from danger even if they own a Glock.

The Doomsday Clock is Ticking

When nuclear armament, bioterror, world overpopulation, major climate change disasters, global warming, mass-scale industrial pollution, water scarcity, food shortage, nanotechnology used for ill, and extreme economic disparity threaten universal security (Leslie, 1996; Rees, 2003; Žižek, 2010), what shall we expect next? The Internet has become a prominent global weapon: cyber spies and computer hacking can derail technical operations anywhere, which can endanger the safety of nations and kill people at whim. With the manipulation of a computer mouse, one can readily steal, obstruct, and infect information programs with viruses that cripple corporations, banking systems, communication networks, and world economies. With the transnational price of oil plummeting, the fickle economic fluidity in the Eurozone, India, Brazil, North Africa, United States, Canada, China, and Russia have all felt the pinch of recession; and with the spread of the Taliban, Jihadist extremism, Boko Haram, and Islamic State militants such as ISIS and ISIL, the destabilization of global security adds another layer of panic to a foundering world economy already worried about public safety.

The tribal warfare in Middle Eastern Islamdom is perhaps one of the greatest threats to global stability, where Armageddon and messianic holy wars are manufactured by psychopathic leaders in the name of God affecting everything from air travel and tourism to border crossings, national security, counter-intelligence, and unbridled global surveillance. Racial uprising

and social volatility in the US, UK, South Africa, and Germany, among other nations, only reminds us that skin colour means something to a hating Other. And with religious chauvinism among Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Jews, radical fascism, tyranny, totalitarianism, and more beheadings are just around the corner. Christendom in America is interfering with civil liberty rights and conditioning how government should view education, morality, and private affairs, while autocrats in North Korea and Iran flex their muscles with nuclear testing only adding to more alarm in global security and instability in foreign affairs (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2016).

Deregulation of industry and the push for privatization of business under the auspices of free democracy, open markets, neoliberalism, and global capitalism only leads to systemic corruption, for without regulation, checks and balances, and central oversight, every modality of dishonesty, venality, exploitation, and vice will enjoy its swindling moment or else pay a parasitic lawyer to find a legal loophole. Banksters and the mega-financial sectors have become too big to jail.

Living in the End Times

Human nature is replete with psychopathology. We are not warm, loving gentle creatures by disposition, rather those qualities are developmental achievements due to domestic socialization practices inherent to a civilization process (Freud, 1930). We can easily regress to animality when hard times hit, the underside of evolution. The way we aggress, abuse, oppress, and use others as throwaway objects speaks to the dark side of the psyche: family cruelty, sexual molestation, physical abuse and intimidation, crime, sadism, murder, human trafficking, sex trade, baby buying, children sold into slavery, and so on, become the new normal. Although I claim no call to Armageddon, unlike the cult crazies, conspiracy theorists, doomsayers, and religious fanatics, we may be hard pressed to ignore an obvious question: Are we living in the end times?

Once the four horsemen of the apocalypse, namely, flood, famine, fire, and war, including pestilence and death, have now been replaced with global pollution and climate change, rapid proliferation in the world population, shrinkage in natural resources such as water and food, terrorism and sects of death, technological hubris and risk (e.g., biogenetics, nanotechnology), economic corruption and squandering, and the prevalence of psychopathology in politics, governance, and

national leaders. The problem of evil makes these global prophecies of fate all the more expeditious. Will humanity avail itself to subvert its selfish and aggressive propensities toward self-annihilation? Knowing that the world is going down the pea-patch in a hurry, how ought we to live?

Before jumping to conclusions, we would do better by studying the situation soberly. If we get caught up in reactionary polemics or emotional hyperbole, it becomes way too easy to lose rational perspective. It is not incumbent upon a philosopher or psychoanalyst to solve the world's problems, yet perhaps it is sufficient enough to point them out. Although I do not profess to resolve this planetary crisis, I would consider myself modestly lucky to be able reframe the issues in such a way as to offer a foreboding warning to humanity.

Through our continued maltreatment and sully of the Earth, we are slowing committing global suicide. Like a sadomasochist or a drug addict, we know that we are hurting ourselves, yet it just doesn't move us to action. Is this due to apathy, an eclipse of empathy, and/or a failure to take responsibility for our self-destructive deeds? Or is this a crass defence, the momentary dismissal of reality for the more immediate desire to consume and gratify our pleasures and whims? Our pursuit of immediate satisfaction overrides the rational necessity to delay gratification and secure more healthy parameters for future enjoyment. We may also posit a collective interpellation that lies at the heart of global psychology: humanity is so immersed in its own immediate presence that it cannot fathom a future absence, hence the cessation of human life due to our own emotional heliocentrism. This is largely attributed to, I suggest, an omnipotent grandiose denial fuelled by unconscious social fantasies that condition the worldview of masses. Collective humanity simply will not entertain the sobering truth of such foreseeable catastrophic risks to our continued survival. Unconscious wish fulfilment is so strong that the need to believe in a futurity that for all practical purposes will go on forever is delusional: It is only on the condition that we suspend empirical evidence for the politics of unconscious ideology that we can go on living in denial. These fantasies fly in the face of the reality principle, for we cannot negate the fact that we are incrementally killing ourselves. But despite all the evidence, deep down we really can't allow ourselves to believe it is so.

These observations lead us to the conclusion that our immediate concerns and desires we fulfil in the present are more important than the

future, and that of our own children's and grandchildren's future, a rather myopic form of selfishness indeed. Here we have failed to contemplate the ethical and have not held sacred the covenant we have pledged toward respecting and preserving our earthly *alma mater*, the nurturing ground of our existence, without which we will no longer sustain life. In the wake of all knowledge, we continue to conquer, consume, exploit, and kill. This is humanity's death drive.

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