

IMPERIAL POPULISM, FAILED RESISTANCE & POSITIVE DIALECTICS

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1 THE DEATH OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Enlightenment England and France imitated Rome, not their own pre-Christian past – and not ancient Greece, which most resembled it – as the single viable alternative to European Christianity. The poets of imperial Rome, not Athens, served as models for the voice of the Modern. As such, the Enlightenment pitted the failed philosopher-intellectuals of famed republicanism against unprecedented empire, cosmopolitanism against localism. False identification with the conqueror as a liberator has led us down the path of cowardly reason, in which the meaningfulness of language separates from the power of language: divorced are humanities and sciences. It is a crisis not just of legitimacy, but of civil society: post white flight, post GATT/NAFTA/TPP, post mergers and acquisitions, post deregulation, and post-union. What is left of post-war America in the fire sale of its industries and the communities that ran them? Their inability to cooperate under imperial prosperity. Capitalism has failed as Communism failed: each delivering hideous, destructive, technology-centric gigantism. Democratic governments fail because the people are insufficiently loyal to cooperate in self-governance. Thus a contextualization is needed for a theory of democracy, to

circumscribe it: a theory that would overcome the errors of Karl Marx, yes, but also Diderot and the Enlightenment, also Machiavelli and the Renaissance, and also Cicero of the Roman Republic. A new distinction is needed.

Accordingly: from Cicero before Christ to Bayle during the persecution of the Huguenots and from Diderot before the American Revolution to Nietzsche after the Franco-Prussian War, and from Adorno after World War II to Hyppolite and the existentialism and postmodernism that followed the narrow defeat of the Third Reich, the Enlightenment thinkers of Europe and America generally over-esteemed their critiques of culture and power, while under-esteeming their own role in the new civil society they were creating by means of polemics: the action of their writing. At center of this neglect was an under-developed strategy of critical locution, a formal, unconscious conservatism of *scriptural practice*.

Cicero represented the idealized combination of philosophy with politics to the *Philosophes*, but this was a failed example of someone who ultimately proved incompetent and lost out to the August force of empire. The *Philosophes* imagined a practice of Enlightenment, but limited themselves to a range of locution between the Machiavellian-like posture of advisors to power, or else desperately farcical and didactic expositions of power: patriotic advice or farcical negative critique for those out of princely favor. Limited to minions or betrayers of the powerful, academics, like the priests they so hated, have gradually submitted as a class to specialization within their humanistic arts, and genuflected before the limits of a certified, circumscribed expertise. Reduced to a silo of mere guild masters, academic intellectuals have restricted their societal role to degree-certified statements of authorized knowledge, often policing and seeking punishment of colleagues who exceed those limits in their writings.

Hypostasized in the figure of the failed philosopher statesman, the Enlightenment has never really exceeded the pious but impotent aspirations of Cicero. While sound in principle, the idea of achieving philosophical virtue in political action is part and parcel of the failure of Enlightenment. Before it, Renaissance Humanism and the empire itself lacked the necessary depth to bring about a greater power in language, beyond the platitudes of Plebeian vs.

ethnic Roman rights, or the injustices of Communism vs. Capitalism. This pageant of abstract equality and fanatical liberty – this fraud “comrade,” that fraud “entrepreneur”--, these are the coin of liberating empires.

As science found rapprochement with religion, Enlightenment philosophy turned against itself, culminating in postmodernity, which is a catharsis of theory and an effort to embrace the darkness of the unknowable, a “Re-darkenment.” This child of the Celtic enlightenment, now in a second Dark Age precipitated by the cowardice and ennui of The Intellectual under American imperialism, was first science, then whittled down to just technology. Unchallenged and hermetically islanded from all knowledge, Religion re-emerged historically from within the dialectical silence of Enlightenment’s empty husk.

As philosophy faded in the esteem of a science-obsessed generation, science was washed of ethics and followed a path defined by the usefulness of technology to commerce and war. An eager weapon-maker, humankind embraced a computational idea of itself, of the brain, of psychology, and reconceived the self as a system that can and should be managed and protected. Like the ancient scholastics, the widget coder type of computer engineer pursues reason for the sake of God and not for the pursuit of knowledge, which he considers inferior to belief in God, since such belief requires no justification. Frankenstein is bested by his monster, the possibility of artificial life taking on more importance than naturally living organisms.

This is the peculiar shared fetishism of colonialism and technology. The “cyborg” society is the fanatical dream of viral self-organization, latent throughout society from contemporary social networking fetishism to the anti-ideological idealism of the Occupy movement. Georg Lukacs argued that the “commodity form,” or the reduction of all things, including people, to exchangeable commodities, explained the disembodiment of proletarian consciousness among workers.¹ Imitating the Disruptive theory of the New Left, the Occupists resuscitated a nonviolent version of the direct action and flash mobsterism reminiscent of the General Strike myth-making of Georges Sorel,² soft crowd control strategies only imagined by Gustav Le Bon,³ and a new crusade of artificial radicalism `à la Silicon Valley technophiles’ unending

declarations of “disruptive” technologies.⁴ Lacking respect for theory – particularly the most important, which is political theory-- , these technophilic monks and fetishists of spectacle, these true believers in groupthink, forswear any form of intellectual leadership, and avoid ideology as if it were a social disease. They are like machine smashers, only they smash history and Enlightenment. Unreflective of Anabaptist and other religious revival traditions in America, they are unashamed of and un-ironic about their political illiteracy. They show an extreme naivety about matters as fundamental to Enlightenment as democracy, politics, or history. Indeed, the mass deny the need for any ideology, believing themselves to lack one, preferring a steady state of Byzantine political correctness to interruptions of a carefully managed, obviously bearable lightness of being – likely as not medicated. The educated classes of America have in this manner been re-barbarized through endless revisions and renunciations of the known past, and endless adjustments and strokes of collective amnesia.

Consequently, the discussion of Enlightenment must, on the one hand, pass from talk of the masses’ failure as the Marxist subject of history; and, on the other hand, avoid talk of the so-called “elites.” It must remain unfinished in the no-man’s land of The Intellectual, who is neither common nor elite. What are we to make of this no-man’s land of independent thinkers, unqualified in their opinions, resented by spouse and colleague alike for their arrogance? Is not this Intellectual --a minority across all races, religions, sexes, proclivities and pathologies--, the “subject” of history? Is s/he not the agency of all historical protagonism and of so-called “critical mass”? Resentment against strong opinions is the milieu of a repressive, imperialist civil society that condones so much violence that it cannot tolerate the uncertified declarations of unauthorized thought. Paranoia rules the deafening silence. The more silent we become, the more violent the repression becomes.

IMPERIAL POPULISM

The spectacle of the dandy causes fascism. This has long been the key problem of intellectual leadership. The decadence of creative thought lies in missing the tension required to proceed ethically through life – to be wise, not just clever – and provide an example to others of what it means to be virtuous.

The illiterate, the uneducated, the backward, common man of the world recognizes this decadence of the dandy; it is why he does not trust intellectuals. It is the core failure of trust that makes enlightened leadership impossible in post-tribal politics and civil society. Democracy theory fails to the great extent that intellectuals lack power, said Cicero and Diderot alike. Without power, no virtue, thus no command of loyalty: unleveraged thought makes for weak imperatives.

Enlightenment knowledge was born in monasteries from monks who, although illiterate in their own languages, tried to read ancient texts written in Arabic, Hebrew or Greek, and rewrote them in Latin, and later into the vulgar languages. Modern democracy has a similarly indirect, non-patrilineal origin. It was born from manufacturers who got out from under the medieval landowner-warrior class through trade, banking and the proliferation of currencies: the negotiation of mortgages with military landowners and municipal vaults and city halls to guard the mortgage documents against seizure or vandalism by landowners. Enlightenment has always been threatened by the fact that European democracy, as Marx observed, rests upon the rights of commercial enterprise against princely power, and not on the ideal of the meek versus the high and mighty, translated as popular rights against commercial interest. The failures of Marx's grandchildren of the Third International to organize workers, and their loss of proletarian political consciousness to National Socialism and rightwing imperial governments – not only in Germany but throughout the world up to this very day-- , casts its shadow over the Enlightenment in the twenty-first century, realizing the Dark Age feared by Marxist intellectuals in the decades following World War II, and contextualizing the resistance movements as well as lesser movements seeking to bring about political change through a voluntary change in consciousness, like EST, Synanon or Krishna: diverse repositories of absurdly failed anti-theories.

The threat to Enlightenment is evident not just in the failure of democracy today in the U.S., which is as palpable at the federal level of the U.S. congress as it is at the state level of each and every one of the fifty states, but also in the particular degeneration of American civil society. Ours is a society that has been delivered into identity politics and celebrity gossip, but is

illiterate in the nomenclature of war, natural resources, and power; it is a society that has grown ignorant compared to nineteenth century and early twentieth century Americans, and it is growing exponentially more ignorant by the year. Americans are a people defined by government-promoted globalization, geographic displacement, and regional civil disintegration. We vote, yes; but only a little under half of those who can vote by legal right do so. We Americans do not discuss our politics seriously in everyday life, nor do we take our voting rights and responsibilities seriously. We vote like we go to church: in order to avoid feeling bad. We are antisocial, and just want to be left alone to stew in our ignorance, consumption, entertainment, and chemical oblivion. Indeed, Americans are the most politically ignorant of modern peoples. With other nations buying into *Pax Americana* quickly joining in this civic and cultural darkness, we are confronted today with an imperial eclipse of democracy, which has devolved back into an idolatrous state, devoid of historical consciousness, paranoid, dissembling, indolent, incoherent and utterly manageable by the corporate media.

The spectacle of the dandy is matched only by the spectacle of this devolution of civil society into an idolatrous state. In return he is replaced by bureaucrats and nonprofit issue advocates, priestly castes and surrogate experts who have dissected and remarketed the philosopher's gaze into countless professions and specialties. These post-dandies are lesser professors who preside over ever-smaller niches of contemporary history.

In this brave new darkness, the only subject Americans will discuss seriously is sports, as if to undertake a diluted form of patriotism. At issue in this comic seriousness is a fake cultural conformism, whereby the sports fan pretends to be a moral member of society by supporting the local team. This is, of course, an empty ritual of loyalty. It is a new kind of pagan relic-worship. Similar absurdity is shared obviously by soccer fans in Europe and throughout its former footballer colonies. Delocalized by league gigantism with foreign sports-mercenaries, Europe apes the imperialist location-neutrality or placelessness of *Pax Americana*,⁵ reflecting the prestige of empire with none of the honor of a sovereign people: thus its incessant cheating, the antithesis of good sportsmanship, like slave warriors at the Roman circus.

Or perhaps Americans have fallen down to the ancient European level. This violent over-identification with games during an imperial maelstrom, and the sodden American former longstanding standard of anti-imperialism, for which the nation was traditionally known worldwide, from the American Revolution to Eisenhower's anti-imperialist play during the Suez crisis, is nothing more than America imitating European imperialism: these orphans of the Hippodrome. Forgotten are the pronouncements of the *Philosophes* who led the rebellion and theorized a new kind of state designed to resist imperialism and tyranny.

America's recently remembered past is today forgotten. This amnesia goes well beyond the imagination of even the most ambitious and sinister social engineers. The effect has been a dismemberment of American civil society and the death of political literacy even among the "elites." Dandyish and unserious, the Enlightenment in America today is recognizably untrustworthy. It is why the Arabs have turned against America. It is also why Europe has lost its way, following a cypher. To awaken this Cold War fool may be as hard as shelving the spies and assassins of the Russian dystopia.

Unreformed since the "victory" of the Cold War in 1989, when the Berlin Wall was breached, America has evolved into an imperial pattern of cultural decadence in which gay rights or abortion on the Left, and abortion or capital punishment on the right, trump war and trade in common civil political discourse. Reality TV has taken over. The left apes rightwing culture war, as if to rally a new post-gender majority based on unlimited new freedoms. In the influential "Don't Think of an Elephant," Berkeley-based Obama advisor (the linguist Lakoff) promoted a linguistically based tactical Democratic response to America's Neoconservative culture warrior crowd controllers: Republicans carry the archetype of punishing father, *ergo* Democrats should act like nurturing mothers! Obama completed this total schism of the bicameral mind.

Reagan and Thatcher convinced the intellectuals that acting trumps action. The theory of the "Great Communicators" succeeds in this case by suppressing actual discussion of policy or proposed actions of state. No one talks about what the government should do, and then tries to actually do it. Without such deliberate action, there can be no democracy, only a sham

democracy, a spectacle and show, where the “great communicators” act out their scripted parts. This emphasis on play-acting reveals the error of the “charismatic leader” theory.

Meanwhile, the traditional American resistance to the British Empire has collapsed into a bland, British centrism – Clinton-Gore-Kerry-Obama alongside Tony Blair and English minions in the New Labor party. The substance at hand amnesically disappears as hypocrites assume the mantle of power under a confidence game of epochal post-history-speak based on imperial ambitions since the Cold War ended in 1989. Like the Hippodrome riots in Constantinople, this victory lap of neoliberalism and domestic culture war has spun out of control into a civil society that passively supports constant medium-scale warfare all over the world by the United States. Apart from bankrupting the domestic economy, this imperial excess has soiled the American Revolutionary standard of republican anti-imperialism, and profoundly downgraded democratic legitimacy among all the world’s nations who, when they face the United States, do not encounter a champion of liberty and democracy, but just another empire alongside China or Russia. Like Bradley Manning turned Chelsea Manning, America has trivialized its Cold War victory, permanently harmed the democratic and republican ideas it once represented, and compromised the ability of any nation on earth to keep those standards we have established. This in turn exposes all peoples of the world to constant fear of warfare, terrorism, pestilence, and starvation, and keeps us in a state of irrational, socially generated fear and an indifferent assent to violence against foreign peoples and ecosystems.

The postmodern obsession with culture and identity *legalization* during periods of imperial violence has its history; it is the pattern of Julius Caesar’s imperial populism giving equal rights to foreigners and displaced former slaves or war casualties, extending rights to imperial subjects in order to survive politically against opposition by locals: in the case of Julius Caesar, the Romans from Roman families who had created the Roman Republic and made it great by military fealty.⁶ Franchising the idea of Roman citizenship, and distributing invaded lands among mercenary leaders, bought temporary support from the plebeians; but this politically expedient strategy ultimately dealt a permanent blow to local Roman culture. Over centuries, it led to the moral evacuation of

Roman republicanism into toxic decadence, dissipation of loyalty and organic leadership, and ultimately society-wide indefensibility against invaders they had once cowed. This was finally the transition of Rome from a nation that had emerged under Carthage and established its independent power based on an organically formed republican loyalty proudly reminiscent of ancient Greece into a nation that embraced empire. In this fashion, Rome came to resemble the Carthaginian plutocracy it had destroyed, undermining its own organic civil society and becoming dependent on mercenary armies in lieu of local men, which proved increasingly indefensible against attacks of the Goths, Lombards, Vandals and other hosts of imperial enemies and oppressed subject peoples. The same imperial pattern repeats today. Must we in the United States of America now fear the rage of a dominated world freshly armed with a proliferation of American nuclear weapons and American drone technologies, but unconverted to principles of democracy and self-government, or worse, theocracies and Fu Manchus?

Without loyalty, there can be no virtue, without civil virtue, no democracy.

The denaturing of society through imperial populism is the poison that killed Rome, and this same poison has infected America. America has been under its toxic spell, in fact, since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Specifically, it has transformed America's left into identity politicians devoid of historical consciousness. Anti-intellectual, American democracy bans plastic bags, approves gay marriage and transgender schools, or bans abortion, approves mass imprisonment and capital punishment. But our society demurs from serious governing. It has forgotten the exercise of ancient powers to protect and benefit citizens and local economies, sovereignty and sustainability. This juice of common life is not sweet enough for us. White flight, financial globetrotting, and corporate tax evasion have led to the abandonment of the common life. The political class reflects this indolent ennui; self-trivialized by imperial centralization of political prestige, and like Communist municipal governments under Soviet communism, America's identity politicians are not links of an organically formed democratic chain of local politics, but placeholder stooges chosen for their conformism by political

cartels. Our political leaders are a parasitic guild of party advisors and consultants ambitious for elite acceptance from the rich and powerful.

Encumbered by 150 years of imperial disempowerment of state and local governments in the continental U.S., trade agreements, unfunded mandates, and preemptions, even those few able and willing to pursue the public business are circumscribed by state laws, charter amendments, and federal requirements for funding upon which they are utterly dependent, in many cases with only 5–10% of an American City’s annual budget being “discretionary” or under local control – the other 95% being federal and state mandated uses. This practice has turned American municipalities into miniaturized Banana Republics, with their hands out, burning the free money they can get, but having no actual control over the destiny of their cities.

In the absence of real democracy, we have “bread and circuses” in the global electronic arena of terrorism and constant warfare. Invertebrate and oversized, like the Soviet Union in the final years of the 1980’s, America has now become obsessed with the potential threat of imagined intellectual radicals. A universal spying society has quickly emerged, with the surveillance of millions of American citizens by as many paid security “experts,” political targeting through ongoing collusion between spying agencies and energy corporations to target climate change activists like myself, and with an American president personally involved in routine hand-selection of radicals, whether citizens or not, and living here or not, for imprisonment or assassination by drones. Meanwhile, American public opinion is 99.9999% brainwashed by a cocktail of history-free education, a print and TV media Shanghaied by plutocratic mergers and acquisitions, downsized, and de-unionized.

Once abstract, the comparison of America to its vanquished Cold War enemy, Russia, is now palpable. A nation utterly bereft of radicalism is spied upon for radicalism, an inquisition or catharsis as the few remnants of socialist governments in former Yugoslavia, Bagdad, and now Damascus, are bombed. Arguably, both phenomena are but a witch-hunt for any remnant of socialism, whether at home in the U.S. or anywhere in the world. This is not to endorse the governments of those nations, but the pattern is less Crusade, more Cold

War: not a so-called “Clash of Civilizations,” but an imperial imposition of commerce under Neoliberal rules of “openness” and novel corporate political rights set above rights of local citizens in foreign countries.

FAILED RESISTANCE

It was in a context very similar to this description of American civil society and culture that resistance theory first rose into prominence – the epiphany of Marxists in the post-WWII milieu that a desperate tactical maneuver must be undertaken amid the devastation of profound, irreversible strategic losses within the culture. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* announced this new darkness coming in the post-Hitler world of New York and Los Angeles and concluded that, culturally, Hitler had somehow won the war. Walt Disney was the new face of totalitarianism, alongside pop music: the “culture industry” that has indeed proven all-absorbing to Americans, and now to everyone, everywhere.⁷

It was an apparently irresistible process, said Adorno’s friend Horkheimer in 1960’s Los Angeles, as he watched generations of young people evolve into a socialized state of anxiety about being overheard when they spoke about politics, class warfare, or other controversial subjects. He described his graduate students’ fear that their radical opinions might be under surveillance, and observed their inclination to adjust their speech so as to avoid getting caught: but also, he anticipated, they had an inclination to adjust their thoughts themselves so as to deliberately not think something, as if to suppress saying it, and so eliminate that thought from their own memory.⁸

This unmediated social paranoia and willed amnesia was the darkness that Adorno dreaded in the sentimentality of Walt Disney’s films and theme parks. What is a society of people who shed passionate tears over Disney’s sentimental nature-lover “Bambi” movie while mindlessly chewing the industrial cud of tortured McDonald’s hamburgers? What is a society that obsesses over identity politics while the earth is being killed by American “modernization” and the industrial crises on the oceans, forests, and atmosphere is accelerating into a crescendo? It is as if the meaning of life has

been separated from its own violence, and voluntarily forgotten – a simulation of innocence by killers – not crocodile tears, but princely tears of assassination, of the killing we regret but tragically (pathetically, actually) cannot and will not stop.

America's Left has taken the Neoconservative culture war bait. We have gay marriages enshrined by our Democratic politicians while wars pass like football seasons, the oceans die, the climate collapses, nuclear proliferation grows unabated, and the spy state flowers into dimensions comparable to those of the Soviet Union at the time of its collapse. We live in a nightmare of engineered democratic impotence: a global sucker-punch. We have a pageant of political correctness broadcast over the silent incoherent suffering of sensory-deprived sleepwalkers. After his sentencing for exposing war atrocities, Bradley Manning announced that he had decided that he is in fact *female*, and *The Nation* and other would-be "Left" publications immediately adopted his new name, "Chelsea," in their pathetic critiques of injustice against this wonderful woman. The confusion deafened America to this story, which has disappeared from the headlines like mice after the Pied Piper. Legislation was in progress to enshrine transgender recognition rights in civil society, like the rights of men, women, and former slaves, in a mad chattering choir of identity politics.

This man, under psychological torture and solitary confinement for two years prior to trial and conviction to 35 years in prison, who by his own virtue and solitary risk had exposed massive imperial military decadence and a military culture of systematic, gratuitous violence, starting a movement of independent journalism to bring these facts to the public, has been degraded. In his historic moment of condemnation by imperial military court, like Jesus hanging on the cross for his republic before the Roman governor, in the moment that the Savior spoke to God, saying "why has Thou forsaken me?," Manning announced that he is not actually a man. The intellectuals applauded, and the masses moved on to the next issue, the next TV show, the next football game....

The confusion and incoherence of the Left is amphibian. The effect in discourse is that no one appears to care that our immediate collective physical

survival is threatened. This social death instinct undermines the Enlightenment. As surfeit of passion plays and otherworldly morality, Americans over-identify with their pets, buy organic pet food, and become animal rights activists. A decadent, malevolent sentimentality presumes to replace civic virtue. Gay rights confer imperial privileges, not republican rights, imitating the race rights activists and women's activists who sought to perfect and open the imperial city's commercial liberty to all comers. Inclusion in the imperial family has yet again replaced enlightened self-governance.

In this confusion of imperial ambition, a laundry list of minority rights emerged as the defining concept of equality as the republic itself, and its civil society, was abandoned. Ignored were the rights of families to survive on a single salary so that children would have a home to return to; ignored were the reductions in wages and bargaining power from the duplication of available workforce to corporations. As the rights of foreign workers and immigrants rose to prominence, triply, the rights of the citizens of the American republic were cast aside like so many oyster shells. Imperial privilege had trumped republican loyalty in public consciousness, and in domestic policy, which now is but a subset of security in the "Homeland."

A myopic revisionism infused practical mainstream strategies of political resistance. Implicitly accepting the imperial circumscription of the republic, Ralph Nader curtailed the ambition of his critical intention to a principle of populist marketing, direct mail, and pyramid schemes intended to engineer public consent around the new victim-hero of public life in America: the consumer. In the fortress of this new power, even Nader has long observed the lack of ideas, and general lack of literacy among activists, who resemble pilgrims or paladins more than politicians.

Nader chose the consumer as a universal subject, and helped bore the world to death with platitudes of car safety, toy safety, clever ways to save money, clean government, and an even playing field for capitalism, while the wars raged, the atmosphere collapsed, and imperial shock doctrine politics trumped policy over and over and over again, like a serial abuser. Issue politics followed, with the public interest carved into a toxic rainbow of micro-constituencies – a people self-divided, self-conquered.

All these trivialized intellects of race, sexual preference, consumer advocacy and the like, have dominated the political discourse on the left while increasingly radicalized culture conservatives, perceiving their attack upon civil society (like gay education laws in grammar schools), have become increasingly fundamentalist, alarmist, and culturally polarized. A cadre of political eunuchs emerges in the empire's many capitals, enforced by the hate police and a rapidly growing definition of psychopathology. As society gets less violent, crimes are invented to keep the institutions full. *It is madhouse as utopia.* Enter the gay neoliberal: the "death of environmentalism" is announced; nuclear power declared to be carbon-free, and new leaders emerge exhorting greens to grow up and eliminate technological prejudices to GMOs and nuclear power. The degree of dissembling and unrestrained poesis is beyond Orwell; it has the narcotic, mutative, perverse, dyslexic pathos of Huxley's SOMA in *Brave New World*.

The blade of empire is double-sided, cutting in any direction, and infecting all organs. For their part, today American ecologists are buying up huge regions of the Amazon rainforest to protect ecosystems against the very indigenous people who have lived there in ecological harmony since long before the industrial revolution. Ignoring neoliberal policies that have opened up the forest to foreign corporate development, and displaced the peoples who work for them, like fanatical witchdoctors or Grand Inquisitors in a global purification ritual, they seek to purify the forest of Indians. Many ecologists today believe overpopulation causes climate change and damage to ecology, not corporations, not governments, and not America's neoliberal hyper-growth agenda, despite the fact that most CO2 is caused in the least populated, most developed parts of the world (with the exception of newcomers China, India and Brazil because of longstanding neoliberal modernization projects to make those countries develop themselves in America's image). Like Britain's Prince Phillip, these ecologists would prefer a Holocaust, however unfortunate, to a change in economic policy, which they consider immutable and permanent. Like Crusaders, they would hazard all and question nothing. This depressed hysteria or ennui of The Intellectual is the classic formula that tolerated Hitler's rise to power. Unfortunately, this dyslexic indolence has bound American political discourse for over half of a century.

POSITIVE DIALECTICS AND THE LOCALIZATION OF DEMOCRACY

Positive Dialectics,⁹ a theory I proposed in a 1992 University of Chicago thesis based on the study of anti-racists propaganda in Austria and Germany during the Revisionist Crisis of Marxism (that may explain the emergence of National Socialism), was a response to Adorno, whose *Negative Dialectics* recommended a pessimistic strategy for the hermetic preservation of the Enlightenment (which he understood as the actual cultural capacity of enlightened discourse and historical memory of the genuine event from Francis Bacon on). English ideas about the power of Reason to overcome all other powers on earth – be they religious, military, or other--, had been opposed by Johann G.V. Herder¹⁰ and others as a sterile invention of organic culture, like religion and loyalty. For post-Marxist Adorno, a second Dark Age was upon us, with the Enlightenment lost to technical domination, and the only chance of keeping historical memory also lost for good. The most we could hope for in this second Dark Age, reasoned Adorno, was lesser surrogate tactics.

Adorno's theory was the entire foundation of resistance theory, which was, in so many words, a desperate effort to preserve the memory of lost Enlightenment knowledge.¹¹ Walter Benjamin's related work posed a use of farce in art, and spawned a movement in felonious political art. But he viewed the change in light of the concept of millennial time, in which people no longer view their lives as empty time being filled with (private) experience, but as a single moment (the present) looking back into the furnace of history – a backward tragedy and confidence game. Adorno's own interest in music also reflects the simulation-oriented trivialization or "lightening" that characterizes all resistance theory. Archeologically or philologically finding the kinds of practices imagined by Benjamin's view of time as afterglow and the future as the vision of an angel being blasted backward through time,¹² looking at us standing here in the present, Michel de Certeau identified seeds of "resistance" in criminal ghetto behavior.¹³

Having myself grown up in such ghetto conditions, I was horrified by the naivety of this theory, though I still considered it the greatest version of

resistance theory I could find. The common dyslexic understanding identifies strength with big muscles, when in fact big muscles signify illiteracy and social weakness. The strong play weak, and the weak play cock of the walk when they meet on the street. The idea that *this* was resistance, I found as maddening as it is mad. On the other hand, I should acknowledge that I was a major vandal as a child, starting with churches and then, when the plum orchard near my trailer park was razed to the ground by developers, I targeted newly built houses. In time, I would vandalized my public schools too, and finally the home and limousine of the owner of the Oakland Raiders, an American football team. While drawn into the drama of resistance, defying priests and vandalizing buildings because I hated them and wanted to do worse, I was drawn also to the discovery that there was no power in resistance; thus, I ultimately understood, no virtue either. By means of such resistance, I could not accumulate knowledge or political content; but it did instead turn me psychologically into a criminal type of person – or nearly did so, until I understood the lack of virtue that such resistance involves. My criminal resistance was eventually turned around into so-called “pro-social” behavior. How? The transformation had nothing to do with any doctrines or discussed opinions about environmentalism, energy, politics, or even people. Like Nietzsche, I couldn’t care less, and I do not feel responsible for humanity. I rather recognize our filthy animal selves, and look to other things.

The first idea I had on the lack of virtue found in resistance was actually a question: how to get out of the cage of thinking at American colleges and universities? From the politically correct right Born-Again to the politically correct Left Gay movement, it is all a sentimental journey of imperial utopians pretending they will have a perfect society through endless symbolic tweaking – no Exit, no way out, but Marcuse’s late-term fantasy about revolution through sexual experience. Communism discredited, and the cream of the crop digging around for bones of resistance, back in 1989 when the Wall came down, I wanted to turn this discussion around 180 degrees and ask the questions: What is our genre? Can we do something other than critiques and farce? Why be so desperate about theory out of anxiousness over mass power, when we can simply govern directly? Not just by “participating” generally in politics based on the flavor of the month, but by strategically applying and making happen a specific, unthinkable but needed change to the rules of

commerce for major commercial leviathans, that either threaten or harm the welfare of the world's people. On this field, and provided a legal democracy, the individual can compete against a behemoth. Is this not an opportunity?

Benjamin's understanding penetrated into the role of time in the imperialist mentality. To the religious right of Benjamin, Martin Buber observed that life is empty time that you must fill with your experience; Marcuse¹⁴ pointed towards the self-programmers; Foucault assaulted schools and psychiatric hospitals, archaeologically holding up the voice of Unreason as a repressed revolutionary cultural DNA. Ivan Illich would have returned to Aristotelian, pre-Roman Christianity: that is, to cultural liberation by way of conviviality based upon the acceptance and embrace of death. But these imaginary fragmentary spectacles of resistant poesies shepherded no new agency of history. They merely reflected the turning-inward of cowards hiding among the corpses. Norman O Brown provided unlived life within us that Marcuse would sexually subvert in order to bring about a new form of class consciousness and thus deliver the long-awaited Revolution; Wilhelm Reich's Orgone machine attempted to free the inner madman to release us from an oppressive and violence-inducing Freudian Victorianism. High theory bled into street theater. Really, it was a circus of pagan frenzies. Turning away from these relics and hallucinations of human virtue, without the Athenian (localist, diasporic) example, how was Enlightenment to proceed? Is this not the dilemma of Adorno's Dark Age? We need an example to go forward, a scriptural success, or *demonstration*. Imperialism is over: we need to achieve this paradise: here.

The core concept behind Positive Dialectics is applying historical, philosophical knowledge and know-how to a different activity other than eulogies, apologies, tragedies, and farces. It is an attempt to resurrect theory in relation to an action, rather than to metaphysics. Positive Dialectics is a theory of changed locution, a different scriptural practice using the skills of an historian of philosophy: a transformed scriptural practice of history.

This is in part a story of Rip Van Winkle – a 20 year walkabout through the valley of the shadow of American capitalism, trespassing and vandalizing as I went, according to a simple premise: I would undertake a scriptural

practice of a direct imminent participation in a strategic industrial corner of contemporary history. I would build it into a crusade to realize a different energy future in mainstream U.S. politics. The theory was that this would provide direct contemporary information as a basis for dialectically generating a substantiated transcendent critique of that history. This secondary polemical force in politics would empower the language by filling it with relevance in the immediate future. It would also, for historical writing about the present and immediate future, provide original material by which to explain the historical past. An engagement, yes; but not praxis separate from theory; nor theory unbridled into poesis *à la* Derrida;¹⁵ nor archaeological assaults from the otherness or so called “alterity” – the æther of postmodernism. Ultimately, without a better foundation, the philosopher always goes for the little guy. And this turns him into a fraud that is always conspiring with the enemies of all foreign governments! He would claim high ground, call himself an internationalist....

The practice of virtue and action of character imagined from Cicero to Diderot and Karl Marx (the dismal theory of Praxis) would change not just in terms of writing about something different; it would no longer write about, but within, its subject. It would no longer criticize, but propose. It would not resist, but protagonize. It would speak across the empty time of public policy, but maintain principles of visionary simplicity and political non-compromise. It would rest upon an action of direct governance by one intellectual working, in the end, with a small group of others to establish a practical foundation of enabling laws, authorities, plans, standards, and practices to make energy localization not merely imaginable but legally implementable by city council ordinance: the basic building block of all democracy. This practice of virtue and action would, moreover, proliferate across the world’s communities.

The basic idea was to produce writing de-sequestered from within critique and applied to law. Rather than observe and advise power, in the tradition of political theory, Positive Dialectics proposed that an action of Enlightenment should be accomplished directly, not through institutions, but through original scriptural production. As such, I proposed to make a personal demonstration of how Positive Dialectics is a viable alternative to resistance

theory, to the Roman model of the lost republic, to our own failed resistance to empire.

First, this required the conceptualization of a project that would solve a big problem. As a proof, I determined to transform the U.S. electricity industry. I did so for the reason that this is the hardest industrial sector to change historically, and is both the single largest cause of pollution worldwide and the largest concentration of capital that exists in most of the world's economies, with nuclear power adding a military impact from proliferation and resulting military threats based on the presence of nuclear materials in plants and uranium enrichment facilities. Energy is the center of the domestic economy controlled mostly by power and gas monopolies and cartels. Indeed, the control of foreign energy defines the U.S. military.

These industries are causing climate change and actively campaigning against anyone who tries to do something about it. They lead the Left in a circle between bad regulation and criminal deregulation. The energy industry has resisted technological change for decades, corrupting and controlling governments and using this leverage to erect barriers to policymakers and competitors who might achieve public objectives inimical to their private interests. This has produced policy collapse worldwide as well as a rapidly collapsing atmosphere and ocean die-offs from increasing acidity and radiation. Fuel is a destructive business upon which power was built, but from which power must now firmly divorce itself. Clearly, a successful application of theory to such a great problem as this would constitute proof of the general viability or integrity – and magnitude! – of a more general political theory. This would be the first such theory since the 18th century other than that proposed by Jurgen Habermas, the student of Horkheimer and Adorno who focused on communication and got lost in the scholastic belly button of communication theory, when he should have focused on legitimation and the fact (the easily verifiable fact) that communication and information conditions are *always* imperfect. Only the past may be woven into a moral or a tragedy.

Energy clearly represents the greatest and hardest theoretical nut to crack within the admittedly ambitious purview of a theoretical experiment that aims to change scriptural practice from critique to direct governance. In

theory, if successful with this effort to shift intellectual locution to the legislation and fomenting of an alternative to the incumbent energy industry, then Positive Dialectics would stand as a politically feasible alternative to resistance theory and postmodernism. This positive dialectical legism would provide an alternative process by means of which communities could transform any policy area where important failures of democracy relative to business and public institutions have created urgent problems and dysfunction, such as food safety, health insurance, and financial security. A principle of localism is essential to this way of reestablishing democratic sovereignty. Municipal government, understood not as a subsidiary of state, federal and international government organizations, but as the natural, organic right of every community to control its government and of every person in that community to control his life: this is the sort of localism that Positive Dialectics identifies as an intellectual opportunity.

To date, the project has involved 20 years of continuous writing in virtually all areas of electric utilities, power markets, power generation technologies, demand reduction technologies, and building automation and micro-grid technologies; state and local permitting rules and procedures, public finance, energy cost modeling, financial modeling, local governance and charter amendments, and many other technical areas of work. But this project has also involved direct political leadership on major campaigns against deep-pocketed energy companies that are hell bent on silencing any and all opposition to their monopolistic control of the millions, and in truth, billions of dollars associated with keeping everyone's light on.¹⁶

The Cold War dialectic of American capitalism versus Eurasian communism is the impasse and threshold of a post-postmodern political philosophy. It is also a challenge to economics itself, specifically "price theory," and more broadly the naivety of market fundamentalism. With world carbon markets failing by design and regulatory collapse compromising public control of the energy economy, humanity totters in circles like lost chicks pecking for some foothold in a simple, local economic resilience. Separated from the very same imperial regimes and state social engineering that brought about the collapse, the democratic institutions of America have grown tired and have in fact been destitute for half a century. America's imperial navy and air force

busily spread the domestic ideological disaster known as Modern Life throughout the post-Cold War world. Who would dare deny this darkest of truths? The United States is the defining historical disaster of our time.

Changing this historical disaster will require a reawakening of basic inalienable political power. Municipalities need independence from the tired old institutions of the twentieth century, and must rest on a firmer foundation of public wealth. In order for the Enlightenment to avoid killing itself, democracy must be improved upon, not merely defended or circumscribed for transgressions. In order for democracy to improve, it must deal with serious failures of civil society to participate in self-governance and confront the very real barriers to successful local governance and autonomy imposed by federal control and corporate power. In order for civil society to self-correct and become sufficiently literate to avoid economically-caused catastrophes unlike anything it has faced before, municipal autonomy must be affirmed as the constitutional foundation for a new and improved localist democracy. What stands in the way of these needed changes is the fear that local power competes with personal power. This fear is not new. As early as the eighth century, the venerable Bede identified such fear as the cause and motive force of England becoming so vulnerable to invasion and so incapable of self-defense. Similar stories abound in the European invasion of the Americas, where cities of millions could not do battle against twenty armed conquistadors; and in Constantinople, where a small group of Franks destroyed the greatest city on earth against an utterly disloyal cosmopolitan civil society. The ambivalence of cultural disappointment and isolation in displaced American communities is mirrored in these series of historical Fromm-like “escapes from freedom.”

Affirming local democracy is like giving a job to an ex-convict: necessary, but dubious. One must choose between evils: the corruptibility of the individual vs. the corruptibility of many. Arithmetically, the Demos has better odds against corporations at City Hall than at the Capitol. Localization is at the bottom of this new “socialism” – this municipal anarchism as Murray Bookchin called it,¹⁷ or “free socialism.” At issue is a reorganization of constitutional power upon the individual, then the municipal, on which state power is based, with federal power resting upon state consent. This will not be

easy; but no solution would be easy to undertake. To think that passing voluntarily from the lie of empire to the oath of republic would be easy is simply outrageous. We must embrace the complexity and improbability of our predicament as the fullness and promise of a real life.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC THEORY

The issue of race unwound the massive socialist political movements in Europe and America in the years before World War II. As displaced populations of workers immigrated into a newly industrialized economy, racial conflict in trade unions dominated socialist theory. In Germany, re-education programs were undertaken with recalcitrant union members accused of embracing the brand of “false consciousness” recycled from Bastille Day during the French Revolution, pounding into the heads of German workers that they should not be opposed to either allowing foreign workers into the unions or to their being supported by the Socialist Party of Deutschland (SPD). This strategy led to union takeover of the party and marginalization of its intellectual leadership, who clung to Marxist ideology and split into the Spartacus League following the “Revisionist debate” with Eduard Bernstein, which in turn led to the party’s renunciation of Marx’s time-theory of dialectical materialism and rejection of its revolutionary goals. In effect Bernsteins SPD was the original “New Labor” movement, but some 90 years before in 1906–7, and in Berlin not London. The proto-Brownshirt *Freikorps* killing of Rosa Luxemburg, the champion of dialectical materialism, and anti-militarist Karl Liebknecht, son of SPD founder and one of Marx’s best friends, in Berlin, was the end of Marxist theory as far as mainstream European politics was concerned. This end was also a beginning: the beginning of the non-theory that followed it. Democratic Socialist Germany abandoned the economic revolution; and autocratic Russia abandoned democracy.¹⁸ Never the twain would meet, except perhaps in Austria, where Vienna Socialists Otto Bauer and his associates approached the same problem of union racism with a different message altogether: “These immigrants are displaced,” said his agitprop comic book character to a disgruntled racist worker; “they have been brought here by our employer; so let’s organize to help them go home.” This shift in approach, the author termed “Positive Dialectics.”¹⁹

As I understand and use this concept now at the start of the twenty-first century, the premise of Positive Dialectics is that it provides an alternative to the idea of resistance theory, which, after the example of postmodern deconstructionists such as Michel de Certeau, archaeologically searches for and interprets everyday life to find a latent form of resistance to political and economic power. By immersing myself positively into the arena of energy policy and politics, I drafted legislation that aimed to restructure the energy industry. With these new laws in effect, I anticipated that an immersion in municipal democracy would result in implementations of energy transformation at the greatest scale, it would debunk price theory, and indeed it might “restart” history²⁰ in a critical area of darkness, by providing an alternative to globalization and deregulation – these alternatives otherwise being sadly unavailable. This project took 20 years to deliver 5% of the U.S. population and create the conditions for a conceptual adoption of an economic localist strategy in both major cities and small towns throughout the U.S.

This localist strategy is an alternative to the failure of Enlightenment in the United States. Such failure is manifest in widespread domestic neo-conservatism, the collapse of public education, a political monoculture, religious fundamentalism, and resource imperialism. It is manifest, at the top level of national politics, in the form of President Obama, and at the bottom level, by a rising tide of identity politics. It is manifest in the narrow-mindedness of activists, and the over-specialization of the Liberal Arts, but is augmented *en masse* through an industrialized Fourth Estate: corporations that launder identity, avoid taxes, corrupt democracies, and finance wars. Imperialism has consumed American virtue and replaced it with perverse identity broadcasters of various stripes. A pageant of liberty fetishizes freedom in sacristies of identity, such as gay marriage and drug legalization, or three-strikes and abortion, while the alignment of corporations and empires continues unabated, even un-discussed. As such, the localist strategy that Positive Dialectics envisions aims to recuperate the American nation’s historic role in initiating anti-imperialist, democratic revolutions against traditional European imperialism.

This pattern describing the failure of enlightenment in America is decades old, arguably centuries. The motion of Positive Dialectics is directed towards this maw of history, which makes Hegel's Owl of Minerva fly at midnight – the ineluctable march of the state into the “future.” It is concerned with the idea of progress, of not turning back, while also not collapsing into mass hysterias, some *coup d'état*, and the collective amnesia of warfare and technological violence that continues to erase history and empower tyrants, making voluntary servants of its naïve, ignorant, disembodied, indolent citizens.

The trap that enforces this violence is the Cold War: the last conflict based on political theory in modern history, which has not ended for Americans, because we Americans are the home field products of Cold War social engineering. The punishment of empire? Loss of the home country. The Cold War, which ended for everybody else in the world in 1989, is still not over in America. Because we “won” the Cold War, we are now stuck in an endless victory lap that has turned into a somnambulant crusade. The Russians learned their lessons in 1989 – how Stalin had killed so many millions and assassinated his political peers, the widespread spying, etc.... Now, a quarter century later, Americans must witness the empty crusade of unhindered liberty, and the social poverty of imperial displacement and globalized industrialization on a dying planet, because we are killing it.

Having lost *habeas corpus* without as much as a whimper, it is hard to say that we are destroying the planet for selfish reasons, in some sacrifice of nature for some greater human freedom. 1.5 million Americans with security clearance spy on millions of Americans like me, and on millions of non-Americans as well – even tenured professors.²¹ A nation of citizens without civic literacy shares every detail of their vapid overconsumption experience by Facebook while spies search for the occasional over-opinionated ones. Has this led already to the totalitarian practice of blacklisting the internal enemies of the imperial state? But behind the failure and disappointment of the Cold War is the fact that both sides were wrong – were intellectually bankrupt in fact. So much lying, and so much incompetence took power and killed only in order to hold the reins of government. So many intellectuals were sucked into defending Stalin, then becoming Neoconservatives or Neoliberals when their

poor judgment came out with the Glasnost and Perestroika Gorbachev – some like Jeffrey Sachs going on to support the Shock Therapy of Yeltsin.

Humanity's lack of seriousness would appear to be its greatest enemy. Bernard Shaw mocked the Salvation Army for pretending to help the masses of poor ejected from the industrial machine, while actually filling their minds with religious fluff. These sentimental fools who want the experience of politics and the thrill of respect, but have not a clue what to do when they are in power: are they to be taken seriously? People can starve and still they cynically claim to care. But with climate change, there is no room for such shenanigans. With climate change we all die, equally. The quick encounter of the American Way of Life with biological reality is the ultimate container for human endeavor. No cheating allowed.

The ecological collapse indeed redraws the horizon of a limited Provider. The envelope of the biosphere is our opportunity, as a society, to end the practice of human sacrifice on the political stage: a million people dead in Iraq being the latest quiet atrocity. To overcome the Cold War, we must overcome not just the mania of market fundamentalism; we must also overcome the vagaries of collectivism – the perilous waters of hideous government agencies, triple-jeopardized bureaucrats, dissembling and borderline psychotic professionalism, corruption/rackets and extroverted psychopathic elected officials; the hollowness of such “comrades” must also be remembered. The next move forward must jettison the moral simplicity of the Cold War (good vs. evil, inferior vs. superior, rich vs. poor) with a more serious intent and scriptural practicing of democratic power – to achieve a circumscription and localization of commercial power in politics, and a liberation of the small, whether individual people or *small* business, from police power.

Moreover, we have to stop thinking of this as a mass movement, and think of it as an intellectual opportunity: not merely to rethink possible worlds or remember a lost world, but to directly “trespass” across systems of knowledge, cross from ideas into activist participation, into direct legislation, into direct implementation. We must overcome the devastating bureaucracies of American government, and the disheartening mediocrity of America's

elected officials. Americans cannot go back to a traditional leftist position of True Believer in putting governments in charge, because big schools, big institutions, big militaries, big power plant operators, are depressing failures. Big public housing projects in American cities are as disastrous as any Communist housing blocks ever were.

Size matters when it comes to creating civil societies capable of self governance, people equal enough to coexist and give each other regards; similar enough to agree on basic principles of conduct and good manners, idioms of distinction and standards of judgment. America, and the world, must jettison the industrialist scale-fetishism of corporate America, yes – but it must also jettison America’s military might. What is needed in this regard is a standing down, a complete renunciation and criminalization of nuclear weapons. We must jettison gigantism of every kind – industrially and governmentally. Small is beautiful indeed, as Schumacher proposes; but in this globalized world “small” is technically bit – several hundred thousand people, and not Schumacher’s return to village life.²²

To achieve this, localism must be incorporated into political theory and action. This involves a deliberate rejection of concentrated state and military power alongside a deliberate rejection of commercial power. Localization is a re-establishment of the traditional tribal idea of the municipality being the original and fundamental democratic power founded on the sacred consent of individuals. Thus, municipal power is not subsidiary to, but a constituent power of, states. The United States exists only as an extension of the consent of its fifty states, with no other valid imperial sanction. And the same goes for each of these fifty states: they exist only as an extension of the consent of municipalities.

Insofar as Positive Dialectics is concerned with moving beyond both market fundamentalism and state socialism, it rejects national and state power in the context of a local seizure or assertion of new local powers in the industrial arena. Positive Dialectics is essentially local immersion. Such immersion in the immediacy of the local allows for an imminent critique that creates the basis for a transcendent critique. This results in an action of language, which is distinguishable from resistance or negative critique. This

positive dialectical process moves us from the negative dialectical concept of an engagement of knowledge, which merely critiques existing options, toward the creation of new options. It is an occupation of political theory in a specific policy area, based on a specific historical circumstance – a window of history, a change-- in which the positive dialectician can be a stow away passenger and introduce alternative ways of doing. In my case, this has meant energy first; now, a platform of localist law and activity across the economy, government, and civil society.

4 IMPLEMENTING POSITIVE DIALECTICS

In 1992, electric deregulation was in the process of being imported into U.S. state legislatures and the U.S. Congress. Deregulation had just taken place in Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's England, and a major initiative was being brought to the United States, through the Harvard Energy Project and other credible major institutions. The University of Chicago economics professor Ronald Coase, responsible for a theory that proposed the creation of a system for pollution credits trading,²³ also provided advance knowledge that electric industry deregulation would involve legislative proposals to implement "The British Model" of power in the United States.

Looking for a contemporary window of opportunity in which to pursue a new scriptural practice of legism, I learned of a political opportunity to debate and legislate the deregulation of the U.S. energy industry, and so chose this area of economic theory in which to pursue a demonstration of my own competing theory of Positive Dialectics.²⁴ This political opening was in Massachusetts. For two years, I developed the concept of Community Choice, undertook extensive research in Massachusetts's law, and drafted a bill that was intended as an alternative to Margaret Thatcher's initiative in the United States. Securing a position as legislative aide to a state senator in Massachusetts who had just been appointed Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Energy, I used my position to draft and win introduction of the nation's first Community Choice Aggregation bill, which in 1997 was the first to become law.²⁵

As an alternative to the energy policies that Thatcher and her minions sought to bring to the United States first, and eventually also to the European Union, Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) asserted that competition would reduce waste under power monopolies, allow innovation, and lower prices of energy. Vaguely, there were promises that innovation would mean a renaissance for renewable energy technologies. Thus, Community Choice was defined in terms of an alternative and superior, democratically based way to get choice for all customers (not just big business), as having better economics and thus a lower cost base than deregulation, and a profoundly better mechanism for supporting green power.

Turning these vague theoretical promises into discreet practical realities required rethinking the entire energy production and consumption process, and interpreting the status quo with a new prejudice achieved through the perspective of the future that Positive Dialectics envisioned. The emphasis on lowering the price of energy, which Thatcher had put first, Positive Dialectics put last and reduced it to a new, lowered expectation: Community Choice would meet or beat the existing price, but dramatically accelerate renewable resource development locally in order to bring about a dramatic greenhouse gas reduction without requiring higher rates. Under market economics this is presumed UNIVERSALLY to be inherently more costly. With Ronald Coase's scheme for pollution credit trading in mind and Milton Friedman's free-market fundamentalism as a backdrop, Positive Dialectics announced routinely that Community Choice had "broken the price barrier" for green power. The new scriptural practice of legism had disproven and humiliated a nearly ubiquitous prejudice in the American Zeitgeist.

In correlation with breaking the price barrier for green power, the implementation of Positive Dialectics required the development of a secondary power, which created a City of San Francisco revenue bond authority to finance renewable energy infrastructure development. This second element provided a firm foundation for the full implementation of the theory's expanding vision of how to make the economics feasible, and thus create the intellectual foundation, not merely for the purchase of green power facilities, but for financing, building, and owning them locally. This authority was made of the detritus of the existing bond system, based on the use of tax

exempt bonds to improve building facades in economic development zones, providing a precedent for the use of municipal revenue bonds to finance rooftop solar panels for ownership by the residents in those buildings. By adapting this existing practice to provide Community Choice cities to build their own power supplies using the same monthly bill funds they were using to pay grid power suppliers, the Local Power model was fully defined as a transformative solution to the energy and climate crisis – profoundly challenging advocates of nuclear power and transmission lines to wind farms as necessary to confront these problems.

The past five years have been spent protecting this construct and maintaining the footprint or impression of its possibility, undertaking a profound immersion into the energy industry’s archaeology, hermetic practices, and secretive economics. This has involved drafting hundreds of pages of implementation plans to create specifications for massive, complex, unprecedentedly large decentralized projects. It has also involved drafting governments’ Request for Proposals documents, collecting and managing formerly secret data held by energy monopolies, and designing major regional infrastructure public works projects with major government partners and funding, including complex database and Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping work.

By pushing a broader platform for localization, Positive Dialectics has fundamentally challenged the most recalcitrant arena of public policy – energy. The resulting policy structure, called “Community Choice Aggregation,” is growing fast, recently adding the city of Chicago, Cincinnati, and Sonoma County, California, among 200 municipalities that approved CCAs in 2013, added to 1000 U.S. municipalities providing power under state laws drafted under the strategy. Today, 5% of the whole U.S. population is served by Community Choice Aggregations under these laws. CCA is already recognized for some of the largest greenhouse gas reductions yet achieved, and I have persuaded a number of major cities, like San Francisco, to use CCA to implement physical energy localization on a scale never before thought possible. Indeed, the scale is comparable to that of the construction of major bridges by municipalities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as the Brooklyn Bridge or the Golden Gate Bridge; but in the case of CCA the

enormity of this scale serves a purpose that is not gargantuan. To the contrary, the aim is the creation of a decentralized infrastructure that is to remain under local municipal control and feature shared community ownership. In essence, CCA establishes a demand-side procurement structure that causes the community to physically escape dependency upon fossil fuels and imported grid power over the first years of its new service. CCA is a major phenomenon in energy policy, politics, and economics: but the 1460 cities doing it are barely aware of each other, and do not regard it as a movement – because the work has been done and it is legal to do based on a simple ordinance of the city council. Insofar as Positive Dialectics has succeeded in environmental campaigns to cap carbon, in efforts to stop development, and more generally in restricting targeted human behaviors that favor empire over republic, it has captured the imaginations of many cities and towns in the United States that are now following this path: a path that demonstrates the success of Positive Dialectics as an alternative to resistance theory.

5 IDEOLOGY – WITHOUT A MOVEMENT

The idea of a "movement" is flawed, because it assumes a confluence between the success of an idea to propagate and result in profound or substantive change, and the success of its author to inspire the loyalty of followers. In concept, the world is hardest to influence; but the success of political theorists in politics, while rare, is not nonexistent. Still in reality, it is much harder to command loyalty than it is to influence thought. Like birds, people mimic what they hear, and in America's empty civil society, a tiny super-minority of Americans participates directly in state legislatures and city halls. In this environment of policy committee hearings, public interests are routinely represented by a handful of poorly paid people, while a slightly larger cadre of well-paid skills for organized commercial interests quietly dominate.

Their advantage is so minimal – just the advantage of being the only man in the room, or else the least shameful. Ironically, in the empty room of American politics, the individual has power.

Movements are the fictions invented by activists, to create the appearance of mass behavior. Because the government is conditioned to follow financial interests unless there is mass behavior and an issue appears on the news, activists resort to Sorelian myth in order to have enough clout to qualify as a mass movement. Thus, activists resort to a shadow-boxing of press releases, press conferences, and volunteer-centric public meetings at which a show of support will have influence on the outcome. Because of the over-centralization of political power, a few well-paid lobbyists typically define the tenor of public hearings, such that even five or ten activists in a local or state hearing will balance off that influence. If municipalities are brought into public hearings, and adopt resolutions on policy matters before state legislators, a second level of public influence is achieved, and public interests can easily trump special interests, even in the largest businesses such as electricity.

Our democracy is a theater of the emptiness of Enlightenment. The figure of the Apollonian leader is a Lord of the Flies – a figure of faith before True Believers who have gone back to the bush, but cling to any symbol of their displaced civil conscience. The theater of politics, whether federal, state or local, is a poesis in which the soul of mankind is lost through sentimental attachment to the priestly power of elected senators and representatives. Psychologically, these would-be enlightened leaders are invariably extroverts, grasping for normative foundation in the effluvium of daily events. Overwhelmed by the increasing complexity of managing an empire and a republic, elected representatives are like spies behind enemy lines. They are vulnerable to depression, dissociation, sudden conversions, and outbursts unto betrayal. They are not unlike the worst memories of the schoolyard.

In this cold tarmac of badly shared fate, elected officials drift through the passport agency of the extroverted soul. Elected officials who pass as progressive vary in form from the empty cipher to the overambitious megalomaniac. They are hungry for celebrity and popularity. By winning election, they are injected with the paranoid fantasy of the historical demigod. Men who have spent decades in isolation preparing complex stratagems of policy are blown across oceans of conviction by the winds of public opinion. It goes to their heads. They say that power corrupts, and yea, power corrupts

basely, in the form of the congressman selling a vote; but, more fundamental to democracy theory, power corrupts the simple intellectual faculty of curiosity into a gibbering and cowardly pietism. Overwhelmed by the fatigue of over-centralized power, an objective awe overtakes the opinionated *Philosophe*, or forces higher minds into more specific campaigns.

This ability to steer the activity of politics towards specific outcomes is as good as it gets. Surrounded by the courtesans of activism, the propagator of political theory on the public stage gathers no supporters, only enemies. This is the central irony, the failure to bring about a movement: the people who agree with the ideas and, are empowered to reify their possibility and project their potential benefits accept the information across the ionosphere of public discourse, but remain ambivalent towards the source. They will repeat those ideas to others, but often hide or denigrate the source.

The social incoherence of this process results from the problem of loyalty in relation to political theory, and specifically the problem of civil cooperation in the absence of shared cultural institutions: the American “melting pot” dream of global displacement. To repeat: civil society is highly susceptible to organized principled effort, but the ideas do not result in loyalty, and therefore do not take on the characteristics of a movement. Shunning and punishing leaders, the interlocutors will kill the architects of their pyramids. Unreflectingly, the allies of the *Philosophe* will propagate language in a permanent renaissance of unending novelty that is forced effectively into serial amnesia. Since the new must dominate politics, changes that take time must be repeatedly reinvented as novel. The application of theory to contemporary historical phenomena constitutes an action of trespass that ultimately rubs the world of funded NGOs and government bureaucrats the wrong way, causing them to criminalize and marginalize the trespasser, while they simultaneously mimic and appropriate his ideology. There is no enemy like the political ally: this normative identification of ideas is distinctly paranoid and defines the American political classes today.

In today’s American political milieu, the two major parties have implemented a bipartisan regime of culture war, mutually eliminating trade policy and war from official party questions. Red states order public schools to

remove Darwin from grammar school biology class reading lists, and Blue states insist that transgender kindergarteners must be recognized according to their gender of choice. Which is more fanatical and destructive? While damaging culture war legislation is now routinely passed in various strongholds (Democratic California and Republican North Carolina), this new cultural radicalism has been allowed to dominate each party at the expense of a lock-step conformism on the major material questions defining our world and time. Both parties agree that nothing will change in trade policy and war; only culture is to change, which both parties would like to dominate as much as any Taliban or Communist. The lords of energy rule, and the political caste has learned today, as in the past, to chase the proverbial crumb. These rights prevail over the deafening silence of opposition or controversy, with Democratic interventionism limited only to timid calls for “better regulation” but failing to challenge the fact that the few people who own the energy fuel that everyone else depends upon also dominate Congress, corrupt state legislatures, and own municipalities.

In the years following WWII and based on his experience in organized labor with the International Longshoremen’s Association in Oakland, Eric Hoffer wrote of the True Believer.²⁶ Influenced by generations of awareness about the dangers of ideology, today’s True Believer has a different, hidden relationship to true ideas. In a repressive Cold War political society, many bureaucrats and elected officials think of themselves as radical compared to their colleagues. Perceiving danger in displaying ideological values, like Horkheimer’s graduate students, today’s activists have internalized the prerogative of the Orwellian state to impose post-historical, anti-ideological censors on acceptable political speech during the American Cold War victory.

The internalization of market fundamentalism into political thought explains much of the paranoid criminalization of “trespass”²⁷ when politicians and activists mimic and appropriate ideology, whether the grammar and nomenclature of market fundamentalist ideology or of a “positive dialectic” such as Community Choice Aggregation. The propagator of the political theory they now call their own has become, in their minds, a poison container, like a priest, who would convert and molest them. The result of this effortless effort to convert is resentment, the opposite of loyalty.

Positive Dialectics teaches that whenever the greatest work is created, the greatest uproar of anger – resentment – is the answer. Only meaningless work pays. All innovation invokes attack amid a chattering of imitation and appropriation. It is the brawl of the schoolyard, the desire to annihilate and replace the hero. This Lord of the Flies scenario is the limit of the CCA “movement” that Positive Dialectics has generated. There is no loyalty, only a long list of stabs in the back.. Like a witch doctor, the propagator of new political theory faces death every time he looks at his allies: from the enemy, on the other hand, there is only an all-knowing and ironical silence.

Positive Dialectics is not a career, but an opportunity and a privilege. Namely, the chance to exercise one’s freedom to participate and thus empower the language that is trapped in the tragic asymmetry between poetic critique and technical hegemony in the historical world. If this is viewed as historical and not existential, then the door to the vault is open! Trespass of theory into technical hegemony is in a sense nothing more than a re-invasion of technology by philosophy: not waiting for the masses to understand, not communicating with general audiences, not caring about “the majority,” which can only wait for ideas like energy localization to become possible for them to approve or disapprove. This is not Apollonian, but hubristic in resenting the over-esteem of the masses, the shameless maw of civil desire, its thankless consuming frenzy. It would not speak down to the stupid mass of humanity, but up to its equals. It would de-specialize and occupy technical *savoir faire*; it would re-enact theory through an uncertified trespass across economic theory, law, politics, policy, finance, and engineering, in order to present not a utopian concept, but an immediate, actionable option.

HISTORY AND PRAXIS

6 Enlightenment came from Europe’s early animal past, impacted by globalization by ancient Asian and African colonialism in the northwest, bringing an awareness of the unimportance of religious belief, based upon the travels and worldly experiences of men who ventured into worlds hitherto unknown to their ancestors. The Greek Enlightenment was Athens during the

time of Socrates, and Constantinople in the time of the Icon-smashers. The Arabs, who represented the ancient world in Arabic to Europeans inexperienced in written history, absorbed it. Their appropriations of this world created the idea of Europe, and with it, the colonies, and in due time the new, first truly globalist, internationalist empire: America.

To end empire, we must prove democratic self-governance possible. From this position alone, do we stand a chance to end our reliance on the empire to feed us, keep us warm and mobile, and protect us against its enemies. The current civil culture of America is, however, incapable of such change. To be capable of independence, the intellectual capacity of political discourse must be ennobled, and the intellectual capacity of elected officials severely judged.

Positive Dialectics faces both sides adversarial; it is neither for corporations nor for governments. Specifically, localization is, at bottom, a libertarian principle: to eliminate exploitative tax and regulation regimes that over regulate small businesses and individual citizens and families, and under regulate the huge corporations that control them like puppet masters. The elaboration of a coherent democracy theory, or decentralist theory of commercial deregulation, builds municipal political localism upon an anti-statist, libertarian principle that small *is* beautiful, and moreover that protection of the small is the purpose of all governance and indeed all human culture, and particularly culture of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. The truth is, our lives are small. Human life is small, and all living things are small – and this should be honored and respected by any real republic.

At bottom, Positive Dialectics is also a modified socialism: not state socialism through control of production, but municipal socialism through aggregation of demand, democratic control of infrastructure development, and an interventionist municipal negotiation with corporations to meet local needs and priorities. If the Cold War dialectic of American capitalism versus Eurasian communism is the impasse and threshold of a post-postmodern political philosophy, this political philosophy must be termed “localism.”

A localist manifesto²⁸ and localist platform²⁹ have been prepared.

Constitutional power must be reset. It must be re-localized – building municipal power on the protection and assistance to all individuals, and building state power upon municipal power. Within the current context of their subsidiarity to states, municipalities must rebuild their traditional commercial powers upon a new circumscribed foundation. Such re-localization must not imitate or recreate the central planning monstrosities of America’s public housing and other public institutions: the gigantism that America shares with the Soviets; our prison-like schools littering the land; the hideous spectacle of virtually all public buildings younger than 75 years old.

Federal power must be reclassified as imperial. No longer equal republics in a United States, today the federal government calls this unity of fifty states the U.S. “Homeland.” The perspective of the federal government is clearly imperial. The fact that the fifty states are now called the “Homeland” means that this imperial federal government has other states to look over too. We, here in the United States are just one of them. Like U.S. corporations, which under 25 years of globalization have become global players, Americans are treated as another subject population of a larger global order. Our politics, also, are global contests, with American public opinion controllable as a ping-pong ball. A good example is president Obama when the Fukushima fallout arrived in California a week later: he told us not to be worried, that we were safe.

Localization is in this sense a return to the original focus of democracy as it was exercised by pre-Christian European peoples, or by the Greeks, whom they later imitated. In both cases, democracy was naturally local. Building up into national governments, empires, and global treaty trade organizations wielding greater and greater imperial government powers, which in modern times have appropriated political power into very large global organizations to enforce more and more globalization, the new super agencies have imperial functions and in their aggressive posture have sold the bank to the corporations. It was their job to sell the bank to the energy corporations; and it was the job of the banks to sell it to the super-wealthy, to weapons makers and other technologists. This was Bacon’s idea: the Empire of Knowledge that would overwhelm all other, more crude and malevolent, powers of

humankind. But it failed to captivate the loyalty of its subjects, Neoconservative Sorelian myths and simulations aside: forgotten, they were laundered as technology and sold at mils on the dollar to the nearest scheisster.

The U.S. Empire has ceded the powers it took from municipalities and states to corporate power, in order to unleash a commercial crusade the whole world over. Thus, while robbing America of its economic power, this global commercial crusade will continue to drive war and terrorism towards American cities and citizens, fanning the flames of war in the context of the major ecological crises that the technologies of Enlightenment, held by tyrants and traitors, are causing: the specter of an epochal catastrophe, not merely of the atmosphere, but of civil society, of our society's ability to act morally and philosophically, and the undoing, finally, of a thousand years and the greatest known period of human history. Thus, loss of the Enlightenment is no academic matter, but a fundamental threat that civilization will collapse and that we are going, as they say, back to the Bush.

By undoing the retrogressions of imperial America, we go not forward, but merely punish marked failures. We must undertake to re-invent the economic power of cities and counties. We must eliminate predation of citizens, from the federal income tax to the exorbitant municipal parking ticket. We must turn from the poverty of the reservation and assert a new *municipal* liberty; assert it upwardly and concede new liberty to common citizenry. This foundation will enable civil ennoblement and needed enlightenment of local democracy, requiring an improved level of local self-governance and less policing, less surveillance too.

The circus-like quality of democracy in America today is at the center of the rot within Enlightenment: the pathetic quality of most political life: the illiteracy: the impossibility of cooperation: the incessant posturing of the politically correct: the predominance of borderline personalities ingroup leadership. The absolute decline and collapse of political literacy in America is due to corporate-owned media and a civil population that is not only uneducated at history, but also actively anti-historical, fundamentalist, even pagan and putatively narcissistic, to a point of becoming misanthropic and

phobic. In effect, the civil population is paranoid, drugged, or actively psychopathic, and the stage of public elections a farce beyond imagination: a tunic-wrapped statue of democracy, but not democracy itself.

Improving civil discourse requires a turn away from inclusivity and open dialogue, and *toward* one that focuses on intellectual leadership and concerted, long-term, temporally specific action. The quality of the work is more important than consensus among focus groups of mainstream party hacks or chanting groups of Occupism. Intellectuals should undertake direct political organization to engage in ongoing political and policy debates, draft and adopt legislation, publish a newspaper to cities that respond to the call of localism, and drive discourse up in the debates that result. Original sin in politics must be overcome. Somehow, a judgment severe enough to make even a giant shake in his boots must be brought to bear upon the dreary mediocrity of public discussion; the people must pray for intellectual leadership rather than preventing and punishing leaders – the sad bleeding edge of intellectual and political leadership in the American empire.

The path must be paved, and energy is the first proof of concept, now a movement of municipalities representing one of twenty Americans. Not aware of itself, but rapidly becoming so, this movement was created to prove that needed changes are possible with some coherent democratic actions: not just technology, impossible in mere markets, but the new, unique markets that European cities once brought into being, and today must change yet again based upon the horrible failures of both capitalism and communism.

A basis for displaced societies *is* needed. Simple choice of loyalty to family, tribe or to all humanity, or any person: a choice between aboriginal pagan tribalism vs. Roman globalization, the Universal Church, and the idea of humanity or that we are all the same. If we care for all humanity, do we care for no man? But if loyal to a man, then not *de facto* prejudiced against outsiders? How to establish loyalty among specific persons in a nation of strangers?

To present the Localist Platform, a package of local, state and federal laws and actions, requires that we undertake a de-imperialization of our lives

and that we do so in the context of an economically globalist and highly erratic criminal business culture that breeds both corruption and the degenerate, anti-historical, non-solidarity of U.S. civil society and its Cold War imperialism.

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¹ *History and Class Consciousness* (1923)

² *On Violence* (1908)

³ *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1896)

⁴ Barbrook, Richard. Andy Cameron. "The Californian Ideology". *Science as Culture* 6.1 (1996): 44–72.

⁵ See Danielle Carlo, "The Constant Death of In-Between American Cities" (2012).

⁶ Similarly, San Francisco's mayor put forth gay marriage out of desperation from negligent to collapsing support as a plant of local machine politician, former Mayor and longtime California Speaker of the House Willie Brown.

⁷ As of 2013, Mexico hosts the television network with the world's largest audience.

⁸ *The Critique of Instrumental Reason*, (1967).

⁹ "Positive Dialectics: Otto Bauer and the Nationality Question," University of Chicago, Department of History (Unpublished Master's Thesis, 1991). Also see by the author, "The Christian is Gaunt in the Light: New Formats of Social Theorizing," New School for Social Research, Department of Philosophy (Unpublished PhD program paper, 1989).

¹⁰ Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Yet Another Philosophy of History for the Education of Humanity: A Contribution to the Many Contributions of the Century* (1774).

¹¹ Adorno's turn to music theory was reflected in Herbert Marcuse's regressive turn to cultural transformation – an early variant of identity politics, however superior in origin – see Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966).

¹² "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940).

¹³ *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1991).

¹⁴ *Eros and Civilization* (1955).

¹⁵ *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978)

¹⁶ Proposition 16, Pacific Gas & Electric, 2010. No on Prop 16 (noonprop16.org) was formed by the author, as well as a separate field campaign, funded with only \$150K against \$67M from PG&E. See powergrab.info.

¹⁷ "Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview." *Green Perspectives*, No. 24. Burlington, VT (October, 1991).

¹⁸ Vladimir Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder* (1920).

¹⁹ Paul Fenn, "Positive Dialectics: Otto Bauer and the Nationality Question" (1991).

²⁰ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History* (1992).

²¹ "The NSA's next move: silencing university professors?" by Jay Rosen in *The Guardian (UK)* (September 11, 2013).

²² E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful* (1973).

²³ "The Nature of the Firm", *Economica* 4 (16): 386–405, (1938).

²⁴ Coase informed me that I should focus on Massachusetts because it, other than California, was expected to lead the states in implementing the British Model of electric deregulation.

²⁵ Massachusetts Senate 447 (Montigny, 1995); became part of Chapter 164 of 1997.

²⁶ Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer*, 1951.

²⁷ By the same author, "Trespass and Paranoia," 2012.

²⁸ The Localist Manifesto," *El Viejo Topo* (2011).

²⁹ *The Localist Platform* (unpublished, 2013);"
