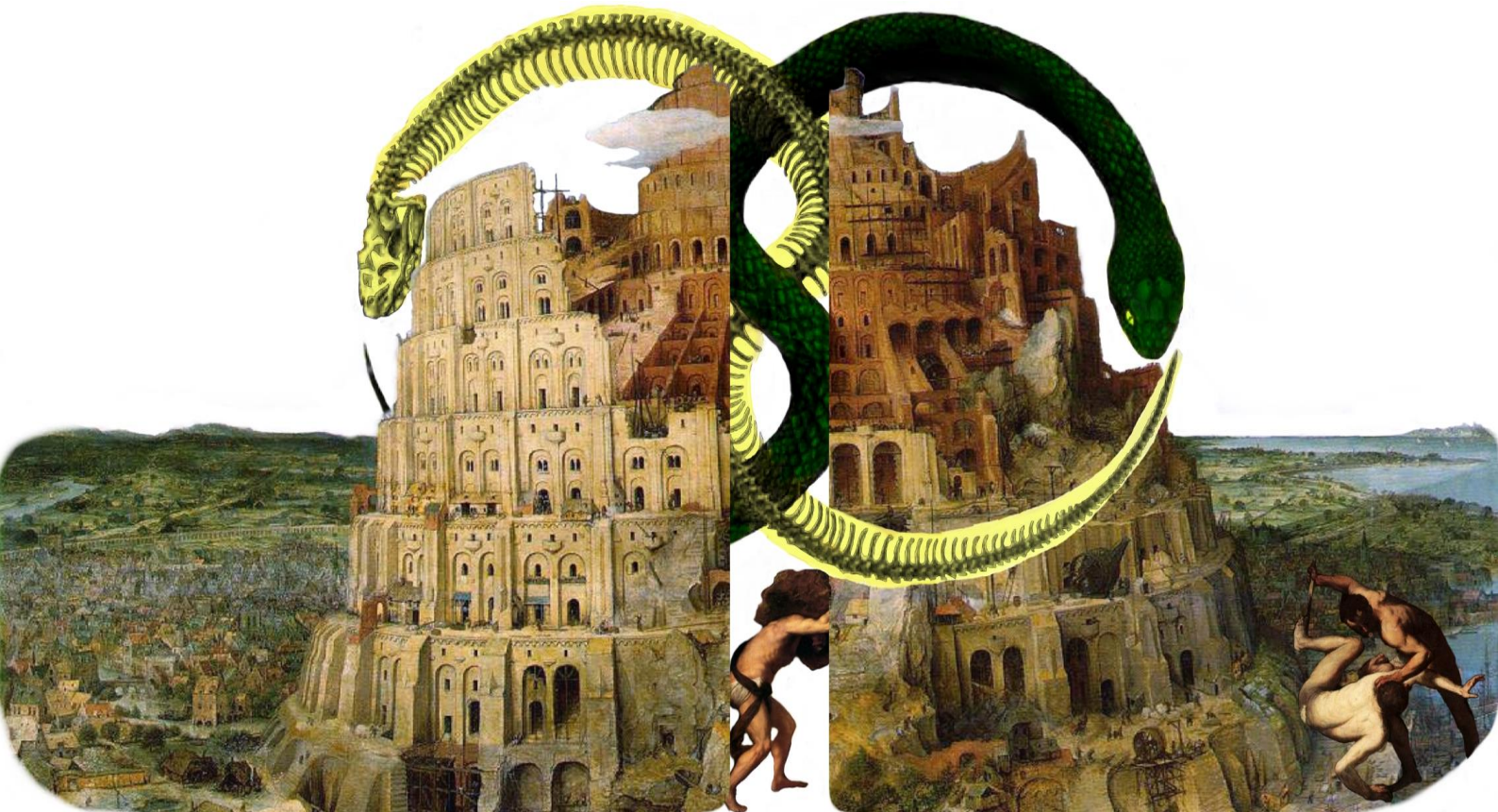


ENGAGING NEOLIBERAL HORIZONS

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Iconoclasm, democracy, and utopia in Quebec



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For the generosity and kindness of the people of Gaspésie, most dearly Patrick, Martin and Aude.

Thank you for making me feel at home in the inhospitable cold of Quebec.

-Je me souviens-

Cheap

Patrick and I are having a chat and a cup of tea on his couch. Being one of the originators of the Demi I have been lucky enough to be able to rent a room here, and we have been roommates for about two months now. The living room floor is slightly crooked and angles towards the view outside of 'le Baie des Chaleurs'. It is a somewhat ironic name when you consider that the plastic wrappings that cover the windows are essential in keeping the sneering cold from creeping in.

"I was in Quebec since birth, living a very different life, wanting to be a millionaire, to be free especially. I did not want to not be able to something for a lack of money, so I worked hard to become more rich. My objective was to have a million dollars at 30"

Patrick is a clever and fun guy to be around. He's quite tall, and, due to his unkempt brown beard, as well as his appreciation of practical clothing, somewhat scruffy looking.

"I wanted to be free but in fact I was giving away my years, so I was not free now. So, I didn't want to continue like that, so I thought is there a different way to be free from money. So, I thought, yeah maybe I can live without money and that sounded interesting to me and I figured that I would try"

Unflinchingly full of ideas and stories, he is barely ever quiet, and he radiates a type of confidence that I can only explain as a sort of 'stage presence'. This is most likely a result of his love of improvisational comedy and storytelling, the latter of which he earns most of his living from. Every summer, Patrick puts on a historical costume, goes out onto the beach, lights a camp fire and performs retellings of local historic stories.

"I designed a life where I could live from – not from working – but from passions and things I really enjoy so it won't be like work. Living from telling stories, hunting, fishing, and gardening. To lower the needs for money. So, I live under the poverty level, not to be poor, but to be rich of something else maybe, like my time."

I have come to rely on Patrick as my gateway to the rest of the region since he is always busy and seems to know everyone. And, while others have warned me not to see him as representative of the entire community, it is hard not to be taken by his uncommon way of looking at life.

1. Introduction

A former aspiring millionaire, a community organizer and a tourist walk into a bar. While this sounds like the set-up to the punchline of a lame joke, it is the coincidence that has eventually led to this thesis. As it turns out, the three of them had gotten to debating politics and were discussing the opportunities and difficulties involved in introducing an alternative currency into the region of Gaspésie, a peninsula on the east coast of Quebec. While this region is quite remote, it has not been untouched by the frontier-drive of globalisation. Many people worry about the economic consequences that accompany the sprawling of big-box chain stores. At some point during this casual get-together, it was jokingly suggested that they might as well use halved Canadian dollar bills. Because these, if nothing else, would at least be hard to counterfeit. A couple of beers later (they happened to be in a bar, after all) what started out as a joke, led to the punchline of cutting a \$20 bill right through the middle. And so, le Demi which is French for 'half' was born. At first it was unclear whether this new practice was – legally speaking – even allowed. In spite of this, they found that this should not really matter. As I would find out later, flustered questions about why on earth you would cut money in half, were more often than not countered with an offbeat “why not?!”

As one might expect, at first not too much happened, but this changed rapidly when the story was picked up by a local newscaster. The story bounced around for the following months, also ending up on my social media feed. A quick overview of the initial reactions to the project shows a variety of different responses: from inter-provincial spite, to pledges of support, to me booking a ticket for three months of fieldwork, and even a statement from the Royal Bank of Canada holding that the practice, although not forbidden, was still not encouraged and considered 'unpatriotic'.

Trying to grasp this ludic-but-serious project of alternative economics has been – among other things – an experience of being surrounded by a chaos of facts and impressions. This even in a context where most of the people I have met were not 'exotic' by any length. Instead, they were often in many ways like me in their attitudes, outlook, and values. This similarity in turn led me to feel compelled to explore theoretical frames that moved beyond the explanations nearest at hand. Because the best route to improved understanding of culture comes from making the alien seem similar – as is clear from the historical impact of anthropological research – and in this case, finding the extraordinary within the familiar. As such, research 'close to home' relies at least to some degree on alienating yourself from that which is usually taken for granted. It is when we move beyond such everyday ideas about ourselves, each other and the world around us that alternative and hopefully worthwhile understandings can emerge. To alienate yourself from the taken-for-granted relies on an attitude of suspicion, or to look for the reason behind the reason that itself lies below the obvious

reason. The sense of vertigo you get from seeing 'turtles all the way down' has led me to spin somewhat out of control. This spiralling is evident for one from the over 140 e-books that I have downloaded over the last three years, fifty-five of which somehow manage to occupy a folder labelled 'PRIORITY!!'. On a more serious note, it led to a generalized doubt, directed at my senses and ideas, making it often impossible to think constructively or write anything, because each attempt was quickly self-evaluated as a bluff.

More generally speaking, the ceaseless relativism associated with an attitude of suspicion, tends towards an over-fixation on the limits of our understanding, and consequently cuts off the speculative moment. This excludes us as anthropologists from joining in the crucial ongoing dialogue about fundamental political questions. Like for instance: 'what would an ideal society be like' or 'what constitutes the human condition?' To be sure, I am aware that questions phrased in such universal terms are generally frowned upon within anthropology departments. I have quite simply not been able to resist the temptation of transgression. On the other hand, Tim Ingold also remarks that anthropology is essentially a speculative endeavour into the possibilities and conditions of human life and flourishing. And, that too strong a focus on the epistemological minutia of ethnographic writing would do a dishonour to the potential of anthropology as a discipline.¹ This thesis then, is the result of a prolonged attempt to again find some meaningful footing to interpret our small experiences and engagements in a large and complex world. To speculate about interrelations between these levels of complexity means to write on the edges of your understanding. With it comes the possibility of being terribly mistaken, or – in the case of anthropology – even worse, blatantly ethnocentric.

However, as Patrick, one of the inventors of the Demi, once amicably but sternly reminded me while I was having a fit of doubt "you are student, you're supposed to fail!" In this spirit, the following (self-consciously) broad research question will be explored: 'what is the larger significance of the Demi project in relation to its refusal of neoliberalism? In attempting to form an answer, I will first outline a few methodological reflections. The following chapters are intermittently broken up by vignettes and theoretical discussions and move from an exploration of the utopian appeal of neoliberalism, to its ideological functioning and political technologies, into a comparative exercise of the efforts of those closely involved with the Demi regarding their refusal of neoliberal horizons.

¹ Ingold, "On Anthropology as a Moral Science of Possibilities."

2. Methodological considerations

A methodology is commonly understood as the outline of a structured, methodical and goal-oriented approach to research. Such an approach has been difficult to square with my experience of fieldwork though. Its unpredictable nature makes that any preconceived structure will be thrown out many times due to a new insight, research question or simply theoretical orientation. Adhering to a methodology becomes a problematic exercise when the research repeatedly moves into different, unexpected directions. Clearly, this does not mean no methods were used to both acquire and log relevant 'data' during the three months of fieldwork. Among many other things, I have held multiple recorded interviews, went on a road trip criss-cross Quebec to advocate the Demi with its inventors, met with tons of new people, had potlucks, tourist-y outings, and attended academic conferences on local resistance. Nonetheless, upon returning home you are left with a large collection of field notes, pictures, recorded interviews, small drawings, diary excerpts and memories, that remain open to interpretation. To complicate matters further, it is far from obvious how these local stories relate to different theoretical traditions. This relation between theory and fieldwork might be likened to looking at a multi-coloured Rorschach image. Where, depending on the colour of lenses you choose to wear, different shapes and interpretations light up. As such, it is scarcely ever clear which theoretical frame is preferable, or more fitting. In sum, it is especially this reflexive quality of research that for me short-circuited the representation of a methodology as either structured, methodical, or even sufficiently goal-oriented.

An associated aim of a methodology is to provide a legitimizing account of the reliability, validity, and scope, of the proposed knowledge claims. On this point, I would like to stress that these are surely contestable, and I do not mean to pretend that they have some essential, natural or causal foundation. Rather, what follows is a provisional synthesis of a long process of reading, thinking and the many animated conversations I had the pleasure of sharing over the course of this research. As such, it is more akin to a philosophic-anthropological argument. Many of the following knowledge claims are – in a strict methodological sense – too speculative to have a reasonable scope and too idiosyncratic to be considered reliable. I hope that despite these issues, the following will nevertheless amount to a valid argument. Given that any argument is also a reflection of the author, it makes sense to make explicit some personal convictions animating this thesis. Much of the following is inspired by an anthropological orientation that, to my understanding, fits well with the current landscape of political and moral possibilities. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that recent decades have seen an increase in what Sherry Ortner calls dark anthropology. Since the 90^s, there has been an increased focus on topics like suffering, exploitation and inequality. Ortner

wonders at what point this singular attention becomes quasi-pornographic; merely attesting to horrors without any hope or possible ways out.² In dialogue with this development then, there have more recently been attempts at constructing an anthropology of the good, of resistance and of refusal.³ As might already be gleaned from the phrasing of the research question, it is this latter development that has largely influenced the direction of this thesis.

One of the clearest positions on what such an anthropology of the good, and of refusal, might involve is sketched out by David Graeber. His concern is for a social theory that would be of interest to those who are trying to help bring about a world, in which people are free to govern their own affairs. According to Graeber, any such project would have to start from two assumptions. The first being that another world is possible, and that even after the horrors of the 20th century, it is important to re-engage the daunting question of utopianism.⁴ With it comes the revolutionary concern of how we might responsibly bring the world more in accord with an ideal conception of it. Graeber is quick to caution that this re-engagement of utopia brings with it a risk of intellectual vanguardism. Clearly, if the aim is a world where people are free to govern their own affairs, the way forward can hardly be paved by a small group of thinkers handing out top-down instructions. The second assumption of a social theory of interest to people engaged in emancipatory projects follows from the negation of the risk of vanguardism. As such, instead of trying to provide the right strategical analyses, it is our job as anthropologists to “tease out the hidden symbolic, moral, or pragmatic logics that underlie [the actions of our fieldwork participants]” and try to and give a fresh perspective on their efforts. To look at people “who are creating viable alternatives, try to figure out what might be the larger implications of what they are (already) doing, and then offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions but as contributions, possibilities – as gifts.”⁵

In going forward, the term 'implications' is understood primarily through its semiotic closeness to 'entanglement'. In this regard, Graeber's second assumption necessitates an interpretative framework that meaningfully disentangles and differentiates alternatives from their political and ideological situatedness. As such we require a point of view that allows alternatives such as the Demi, to be placed on par with their ideological adversaries. As the research question stated earlier already indicated, in the case of the Demi project I have taken this to be the ideology of neoliberalism.

² Ortner, “Dark Anthropology and Its Others.”

³ Ortner; Robbins, “Beyond the Suffering Subject.”

⁴ Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, 11-12.

⁵ Graeber, 11-12.

It is here that I believe that the work of French philosopher Paul Ricoeur on the philosophical problem of imagination is highly relevant since it provides exactly such an interpretative framework to structure this disentanglement. A note of caution is warranted though because this retooling of Ricoeur's work is scarcely intended to be exhaustive. It is a reduction of a deeply rigorous and balanced discussion of a range of influential scholars and academic traditions, into a macro-trope of my own. Cautionary notes aside though, I do believe that some of his insights deserve to be echoed, and furthermore that, however crude the reduction of his work might be, it does offer a way to think with Ricoeur's ideas constructively. Namely, to more clearly understand the nature of neoliberalism and the various ways in which it – as a loosely homogeneous body of politico-economical thought – is rebelled against. Seen in this light, I hope it is at least a productive violence done to his work.

Before moving on to a discussion of neoliberalism I want to give some outline of the general shape of the argument outlined in 'Lectures on Ideology and Utopia'⁶, after which its constituent parts will be explored throughout the thesis. Throughout these lectures which were later formatted into a book, Ricoeur presents us with a practical-hermeneutic framework. His aim is to deal with the philosophical problem of the imagination by exploring the relations and ambiguities surrounding the concepts of its main title. Ricoeur defines them as two fundamental poles of the 'symbolic structure of action', and tries to uncover the deeper meaning of what, at first sight, might seem mere polemical concepts. Throughout, he explores the destructive, creative, pathological and wholesome aspects that these concepts both entail. As such, it provides the concepts and interpretative tools that allows for the intelligibility of cultural stability and social change within, and across particular places. One of the starting points of this symbolic structure of action is that in all social life, imagination functions in two different ways. The first is to conserve a particular ordering of social relations. Ricoeur refers to this ideological type as 'imagination as *picture*' (IU, 265). Secondly, imagination might function as a disruption of an established social order. Contrary to ideology, utopia concerns itself with the productive imagining of something that is divorced from our direct involvement, or 'imagination as *fiction*' (IU, 266). These two types of imagination can be thought of as two poles that continuously engage in a dialectical motion between themselves. What is more, the (dialogical) tension which binds these two concepts is also reproduced internally in a normative split. That is, in exploring the conceptual ambiguities of both ideology and utopia, Ricoeur demonstrates that both have their respective wholesome and pathological aspects.⁷

⁶ Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, (hereafter cited in text as IU).

⁷ I realize that this framework involves quite a few moving parts. To clarify, a schema of the most notable dynamics and functions has been added. See Appendix: Figure 1.



Road trip

For as long as I can remember I have had this sort of uneasy amazement when travelling long distances by car. Sometimes, when spending some hours watching small villages and vistas flowing over into one another, this increasingly generic flow suddenly breaks. The trigger is usually something that stands out, a funny mailbox, an empty dog house or a too meticulously groomed garden. The realization that this is not merely some passing scene, but a place that an actual person calls home forces itself upon you. I can never help but feel a flush of excitement about all the untold stories and imaginary space that result from the further realization that this equally holds for all those places that passed by hours earlier.

One such moment of amazement that has stuck with me for a long time now, was when I was travelling with Patrick (left), Martin (middle), and Fabien (right). We were already more than halfway through our road trip promoting the Demi – or as Martin ironically refers to it, the spreading of economic propaganda. For the

last week or so we had been driving across Quebec, meeting people from all over the region to talk about the project, future hopes and fears as well as sharing stories and some quality meals.

We passed a small village on the north coast of the Gaspé peninsula, that was just inland from a large cliff with a lighthouse perched on its top. Fabien, who lived relatively close by, interjected into the conversation upon seeing the lighthouse. He told us that there was a bit of a riot in this village some time ago. Local government had decided to shore up their budget by cutting public utilities and removed some of the street lights in the coastal village. As it turned out, these lights formed a nightly barrier against the bright intrusions of the nearby lighthouse. Understandably outraged about having their homes turn into night-clubs after sundown, the local community got together to try and undo the budget cuts. How they fared in their quest for justice remained a mystery to Fabien and consequently, the rest of us.

The only reaction this manic little village spawned was a great hilarity between the four of us. As anyone who has spent more than a couple of hours in a car with their siblings can attest, the shared semi-claustrophobic atmosphere somewhat diminishes your empathetic capacities. A passing story so tragically comic that the only sensible response left, is laughter. Looking back at it, I think this moment has stuck with me over the last few years because humour has been such a key motive of their efforts. However serious they might have been about changing things for the better, they nevertheless stubbornly insisted on laughing absurdity in its face. Embodying in their own way that famous remark of Emma Goldman *'if I can't dance, it's not my revolution!'*

3. Figuring out neoliberalism

Utopia of desire

The purpose of this next part is to give an outline to the utopian dimension of neoliberal thought. As such, the remarkable spread of neoliberal ideas and policies over the recent decades should not be understood as emerging from an intellectual vacuum. Rather, their ideas partake in a historically situated and ongoing dialogue about what constitutes a 'good society', and how to get there. This already points to the fact that our understanding of utopia is to move beyond associations with literary structure, and thematic contents of written utopias. It concerns instead an imaginative mode that is to the existence of society what invention is to scientific knowledge.⁸ On this Ricoeur (IU, 173) remarks: "what we call ourselves is also what we expect and yet what we are not; it is this duality of faces that may be constitutive of imagination itself." What this means is that we are not merely participating in daily life without distance from it. Our everyday experience oscillates between the 'as if' metaphorical representation of the (socially situated) present, and the 'what if' speculative moment of what might or should be. As such, utopia is a practical concept that signifies not simply a literary tradition divorced from our everyday lives. It is intimately linked to the ways in which we grasp the world. This basic aspect of the utopian mode is to the existence of society what invention is to scientific knowledge.⁹ This means that we understand ourselves in part through figures of non-congruence, false consciousness or a lack that aims to be satisfied. When we consider the connection of utopia with fiction, we should note that we are prone to fancy, escape, and dreams of the completely unrealizable. One of utopia's pathologies then, lies in its tendency to submit reality to dreams. Or, as Ricoeur puts it: "to delineate self-contained schemes of perfection severed from the whole course of human experience of value"¹⁰ In doing so, difficult questions about transformation are avoided; the dream offers no assistance in proceeding towards its realization.¹¹

As such, to get a better grasp of the utopian dimensions of neoliberalism it seems useful to investigate its origins; to learn which speculations and idealizations have inspired it. The first neoliberal gathering was in 1947 in Mont Pèlerin, Switzerland, by a group of intellectuals who were fixed on reinventing the beleaguered liberalism of their day.¹² From here on out, I will refer to this original group, among them most notably Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, and those closely

⁸ Ricoeur, "Ideology and Utopia as Cultural Imagination."

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See also Appendix: Figure 1

¹² Plehwe, "Introduction."

associated with it later in time, as the Neoliberal Thought Collective (NTC).¹³ One of the first things to understand about the NTC is that they have always placed an absolute importance on individual freedom. To secure this value, Friedrich Hayek, one of the most influential and founding members of the NTC stated at one of the first conferences that they had a need for a new liberal utopia. At the same time however they were outspokenly derisive of the utopian nature of state socialism. In this way, we can understand neoliberalism as a counterpart to the communist utopia.¹⁴

The point of contention in this dialogue of utopian imaginaries centred around the supposed relation between uncertainty of the future and the consequent possibility of freedom. The NTC insisted, contrary to the communist utopia, on the necessity of an uncertain future. In the wake of both the First and Second World War, they were among many other disillusioned modernists. There was a sudden recognition of the terrifying power, and murderous consequences, of political rhetoric imbued with teleological ideas. As a result, to the NTC, the colouring of collective future horizons became inimical to freedom in any meaningful sense. Because of this, they devised their project as a re-imagination of the role of the future within society. The neoliberal utopian imaginary then, is primarily a driving force away from the conscious direction towards collective human aspiration, and an attempt to secure a radically open-ended future. It must be noted though, that this is not merely a neoliberal trait. Someone like Hannah Arendt, who occupies a completely different end of the political spectrum, also romanticizes uncertainty. However, compared to the NTC, Arendt sees its rationalist enemy in a different persona, namely the economist rather than the politician. For Hayek and his compatriots, it is always the spectre of the politically motivated central planner that is the enemy of freedom.¹⁵

To further explore this polemic of utopias it helps to consider that, generally in the history of Western thought, there are two ways of understanding the relationship between desire and rationality. This double notion of rationality moves in-between rationality as an inhibitor of (irrational) destructive desire, and, on the other hand as the facilitator of our desires.¹⁶ Authoritarianism and totalitarianism always rely on some notion of what Isaiah Berlin calls 'third person desire'. The ability to speak of someone else's desires depends on the conviction of having solved the puzzle of history. The final logical conclusion to the problem of life, something that all *truly* rational people could not possibly disagree with or indeed, desire otherwise.¹⁷ To Berlin, this type of thinking is why utopias tend to devolve into dystopias filled with violence and repression.

¹³Taking a note from Plehwe and Mirowski. See *The Road From Mont Pèlerin*.

¹⁴ Achterhuis, *De Utopie van de Vrije Markt*, 101.

¹⁵ Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism*, 20-21.

¹⁶ Graeber, "The Utopia of Rules."

¹⁷ Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty."

Since if the promise is a paradise on earth, of what ultimate significance is the suffering of a few irrational elements of society? A whole generation of post-modern philosophers, among which Arendt and Berlin, and the NTC have tried to displace especially this type of relation between rationality and desire. Thus, the question arises how desire is understood within the neoliberal utopian imaginary.¹⁸ Keeping in mind the conscious effort to construct something that is inimical to collectivist and socialist modes of thought, desire is by necessity thoroughly individualized, and remains far from any notion of a common good. As such, the NTC attempts to displace the conceptualization of rationality as the inhibitor of desire and reconfigures it instead as solely its facilitator. This recasting of the relation between rationality and desire has profound implications for the idea, and possible forms of freedom.

By configuring rationality as the facilitator of desire, the NTC is forced to take an agnostic, liberal stance towards desire as inherently legitimate. This notion of desire means that they are left with a solely negative conception of freedom, or freedom from interference. The core idea of negative freedom is ‘the wider the area of non-interference the wider my freedom’. The logical endpoint of this line of reasoning is an ontology of free-floating individuals existing in serene autonomy. Where individuals are no longer bound by the empirical or the relational, which mark real limits on this area of non-interference. In relation to this ontology, the real world, its people and its structural forces, our inherited institutions and popular ideas are all infringements of our autonomy.¹⁹ Desire is effectively placed outside the reach of critical scrutiny. Because of this, any preference or choice becomes the authentic expression of a wholly autonomous individual. What we find is an extreme application of Ricoeur's observation (IU, 299) that the common denominator of utopian imaginations is the de-institutionalization of human relationships. To conceptually ground individuals in anything else than this non-place of absolute autonomy – from where it discovers within itself desires *ex nihilo* – would pull the rug out from under the entire neoliberal project.

It should be clear however that the appeal of this 'utopia of desire' lies in the dream of a complete self-rule. The neoliberal utopia then, is inhabited by wholly free individuals, who are surrounded by a society that merely facilitates their desires; however wild or idiosyncratic they might be. This ideal is a deeply rooted cultural form, evident for instance from the tropes of the advertisement industry. Products and services often promise the destruction of obstacles or *limitless* access for the consumer-sovereign. In considering this, the following chapter will explore the ways in which the NTC has sought to bring this vision of a good society into being. That is, how their

¹⁸ The following is admittedly speculative. Nonetheless, it is at least plausible that the NTC remains committed this older, liberal notion of autonomy. For further discussion, see Crawford, “Kant’s Metaphysics of Freedom.”

¹⁹ Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head*.

efforts have operated in an ideological way. What pictures of our institutions, self-hood, social relations and so on have they constructed in their quest to actualize their ideal society?

The double-truth doctrine

Before continuing, I want to clarify that the main concern for now is to give an overview of the ways in which NTC have tried to 'square the circle'. How they have engaged in inversions, omissions, and distortions in the pursuit of their utopia of desire. To be clear, I am not arguing that the NTC has violated some absolute reality principle; rather it is an attempt to outline the rhetorical strategies that further their politics. As such, it seems worthwhile to provide a more detailed discussion of the different functions of ideology. Similarly, to the utopian imagination, ideology is most recognizable to us in its polemical usage. Regarding this negative, or pathological notion of ideology, we usually refer to its tendency to produce an inverted or distorted image of the reality of oppressive orders. The proto-typical shape of this critique was advanced by Karl Marx when he compared all of philosophy to the idea of a 'camera obscura' which produces an inverted, self-serving picture of reality based on the interests of the ruling class.²⁰ With this idea of ideology as a distortion, Marx delivers to a fundamental critique of capitalism. By arguing that the ideals, principles and dominant ideas merely function to obscure the underlying material and social relations based on class domination. Taken to its most elementary conclusion, ideology can function to uphold existing power relations through a certain perversion, or distortion, of thought.²¹

In this regard, the success of the NTC turned largely around being able to explain how society could structure free-floating individuals, their desires, and their futures, in a manner that does not impinge upon anyone's autonomy. Failing to do so would imply too harsh a divorce of utopian imaginings and the means of transformation. I believe it is here that the idea of the market is of crucial importance. Much different from the source-ideology of classical liberalism, in neoliberalism, the market is elevated into a 'kosmos', analogously comparing it – and society by extension – to 'universal brain' and computer metaphors.²² Compared to this calculating kosmos, people's ability to 'know' is severely limited, and as such we remain fundamentally ignorant. Not coincidentally this is also why central planning is always fated to come up short of its promise. In the end, all relevant information is locked inside the fluctuating price of any service or commodity.²³ The market then, is best regarded as a superior information processor, the only 'thing'

²⁰ Freeden, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*, 1-12.

²¹ See also Appendix: Figure 1.

²² Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go To Waste*, 44.

²³ Plehwe, "Introduction."

able to take in all this information at once. Furthermore, it supposedly creates rational and functional spontaneous orders devoid of any intentional human design. The spontaneity of these orders is connected to the fact that markets operate through a logic of competition. As such, competition for the NTC is not simply a value that is present in markets. Instead its usefulness can be pushed into all other corners of society.²⁴ Hence, the core idea is that for sake of sloganeering and public understanding the primary 'as if' is one of an underlying 'market reality'. And, that this reality is accessible through the pursuit, and institutionalization of, competition. The prime appeal of this proliferation of markets – even into the fabric of reality itself – is of course that the outcomes of competition tend to be unpredictable, securing an irrevocable ignorance of the future (necessary to secure individual freedom). A final important idea of the NTC is that problems seemingly caused by market forces can always be amended by instituting more markets.²⁵

As such, through their idea of a universal market reality the NTC aims to get rid of traditional and sovereign sources of authority. The problem these pose for neoliberals is of course that they often centrally, and consciously organize their futures. This preference for the market as a nexus of knowledge available to us through the prices of products and services points to another quality of markets. The NTC's disavowal of a central planner means that the market is also understood to be superior in the production and allocation of utility. Utility is of course a more philosophical way of conceptualizing (and I would add, simplifying) desire. What is more, problems seemingly caused by market forces can always be solved through market logic of competition and incentives.²⁶ As such, the – by now – thick ideological notion of the market, accomplishes two important neoliberal goals. Firstly, it manages the reactionary project of securing an uncertain future, and secondly, it holds onto the promise of a world that is most amenable to the fulfilment of all idiosyncratic desires.²⁷

In considering these developments, it is not unfair to ask whether the NTC is not simply repeating the age-old idea of 'laissez-faire'. However, from the first gathering at Mont Pèlerin, neoliberals have been acutely aware of the need for continual, active intervention to spread and solidify their ideas in policy and polity. As such, while outwardly hostile to the state as an entity that mucks up their *natural* market process, the NTC is aware of their ultimate reliance on the state: both to institute, and later guarantee, a neoliberal order. As such, they have a constructionist attitude towards their politics, favouring long-term strategies and inter-disciplinary co-operations to allow

²⁴ Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism: Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition*.

²⁵ Mirowski, "Postface."

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Understood from the viewpoint of the political ontology and theoretical presuppositions of the NTC that is.

them to capture and reform states.²⁸ Illustrative of this is that most neoliberal writings shift from a utilitarian, to a libertarian index of meanings. That is, they go from rhetorically attacking and warning for the dangers of notions of a sovereign state-like institution pursuing the maximal 'common good' for their respective citizens. To the positing of the institutional means (the market) towards a superlative 'most good for the most people'. The NTC found themselves in the paradoxical predicament of advancing an idea of spontaneous order while being self-conscious of the need for active intervention. As such, they have over the last decades created a massive infrastructure to disseminate their ideas and policies.²⁹ This then, points to the fact that the NTC holds onto an 'insider' and 'outsider' truth simultaneously. It is this 'double-truth doctrine' that occupies the heart of the NTC's efforts. And, as such while the 'masses' are told about being set free to choose, a small group of neoliberals is fully committed to capture and reform states and make them more responsive to their demands and ideas. Their project is a performative contradiction of the very ideas propagated. When it comes to their own preferred means of organization, 'kosmos' readily collapses back into 'taxis'. A consequence of combining two truths, is that the stability of the entire project relies on keeping the them separate. As such, the production of ignorance and the restriction of democratic practice become two neoliberal goals unto themselves.³⁰ This double-truth is essential to understand neoliberalism and furthermore provides a counter-argument to a charge made by Andrew Kipnis. Which is, that we tend to treat neoliberalism in a reifying manner leading to contradiction. He finds that:

“if neoliberalism is a systemic 'discourse' [...] then it reproduces itself by producing 'responsibilized' subject/citizens who re-create neoliberal institutions. From this vantage, disingenuous applications of neoliberal discourse would thus work to undermine neoliberalism. But if neoliberalism is an 'ideology' that serves merely to mask the true workings of class domination, then disingenuous applications of neoliberal ideas are central to the reproduction of neoliberalism. In such a case, the actual production of autonomous, responsible citizen/subjects would undermine neoliberalism.”³¹

With our understanding of the double-truth doctrine however, we can appreciate that neoliberalism is a both/and category, depending on whether we are talking about the NTC, or about neoliberal subjects who have come to relate seriously to the 'exoteric' truth. And, as we shall see, both cases ultimately coalesce towards the same goal. An important consequence of the double-truth doctrine is that it allows for a full-spectrum response to any perceived societal problem. Which makes

²⁸ Mirowski, “The Thirteen Commandments of Neoliberalism.”

²⁹ Plehwe, “Introduction.”

³⁰ Mirowski, “Postface.”

³¹ Kipnis, “Neoliberalism Reified.”

neoliberalism especially 'crisis sturdy'.³² The lack of dogmatism on behalf of the NTC means that they move beyond single fix solutionism and can pursue contradictory – or ideologically diverse – approaches to societal problems. The ultimate, shared goal of these responses however is the eventual capitulation of nature and society to the (universal) market.³³ In the short-term, the focus is on 'denialism' by creating doubt in the public sphere, which is the core of an 'agnotological' project. The goal of the short-term approach is to buy time for the medium- and long-term solutions to problems. To prevent states from implementing restrictive policies in response to popular outrage. The medium-term approaches can be understood as a type of 'bait and switch', and often deals with the financialization or marketization of problems or crises. Finally, the long-term response surrounds techno-utopian hopes that involve a (charismatic) entrepreneur that will effectively reshape and innovate the market to solve all our dire problems.³⁴ We are presented with a type of *deus ex machina*, not rarely projected on celebrity-entrepreneurs, like for instance Elon Musk. Taken together, this full spectrum neoliberal strategy does not really solve any problems. But this is the crux of its rationale. It aims at a population that remains ignorant of, and impotent to act on, nature and society. The imposition of interim solutions functions precisely to foster the belief that something is being done to counteract the crises we are facing.

We might ask what exactly would happen once we realize that, nothing is *really* being done to help us move beyond the present historical point. But first, let us look at an example of the short-term response in action.

³² Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go To Waste*, 227-245.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

4. The king is dead, long live ignorance!

Perusing the land of plenty

After a long day of driving, we up onto the parking lot of a Wal-Mart. Martin, a rather compact and sturdy man with a grey buzz cut, clear eyes and a broad smile has somewhat grudgingly conceded my request to check out one of these massive retailers. I have come to recognize it as the most used stand-in for monopolistic and unethical way of doing business. Which is why I feel I can't miss out on a genuine 'Wal-Mart experience'. Martin, not too much of a fan himself decides to hang back as I discover the store.

As I'm walking across what is called the Action Lane, I lock into the stereotypical Dutch shopping mode of 'just browsing not buying'. The space itself might best be described as an industrial warehouse. Compared to a regular supermarket, quite a curious collection of items draws your eye from computers, to stuffed animals, office supplies, pet cages, power tools, jewellery, bottom price clothing from head to toe, and the more unsurprising, wholesome – and not so wholesome – foods by the bulk. What is more, even in-house services are offered, such as an insurance company, a McDonald's, and a pharmacy. At the check-out a poster reads, in my broken French, “*in need of money? If you pay for purchases with a credit-card you can request a superior transaction*” Honestly, you might as well take up residence in one of their affordable tents and you will never have to see the sun again.

When I return, I find Martin waiting for me at the exit, bemused at the fact that I am so excited to have finally been inside a Wal-Mart. He is a dad to two smaller kids and clearly worries about the future that is being laid out for them. One of the first things he told me was how unsettled he had been about the xenophobic political developments a couple of years earlier. Disturbed, he had left his home town of Quebec-city, escaping to Yellowknife. After some years, he returned with a new outlook, making a complete 180 degree turn from his quite solitary existence out-west. He recently even agreed to discuss a right-wing radio show host, on what many refer to as '*radio poubelle*', or trash radio. Currently he is a self-proclaimed community organizer who makes impossible projects possible.

Manufactured doubt

A fairly recent study on the presence of Wal-Mart and changes in poverty rates during the economic boom of the 90^s, has shown that there exists a positive correlation between the two factors.³⁵ A straightforward explanation would be that Wal-Mart can out-compete out local businesses by using its superior organization-networks, economic clout and competitive positioning.³⁶ It turns out however, that this is not the whole story. What sets Wal-Mart apart from other brand multinationals like Nike or Amazon, is that its corporate strategy targets the poor, working class as its most important customers. In doing so, Wal-Mart has effectively reversed the 'Fordist bargain'.³⁷ That is, they do not pay higher wages to increase a middle class that has spending power, but they exploit labour throughout their network that help create a situation in which its workers have no other choice than to shop at Wal-Mart. As a result, Wal-Mart is one of the few companies might be called counter-cyclical; it benefits from economic crises.³⁸ As such, they are strategically structured to profit from decreasing autonomy and self-sufficiency that results from rising unemployment, cuts to social programmes, and the effects of their corporate strategy. Ironically, Wal-Mart relishes in the use of consumerist rhetoric that links their products and services with increased freedom, and even quality of life. As such, there is a deep contradiction between what is being communicated, and what is actually going on. We are left then, with an almost Orwellian inversion, when freedom means the ability to buy a piece of your own continued exploitation.³⁹ This brings us to our main problem of this chapter. Which is how such structural inequalities – routinised exercises of power in a given community – can come to gain such a widespread foothold.

In guiding our thinking about this question, I want to outline a second level the functioning of ideology. To construct a more neutral understanding of the concept Ricoeur intends to move away from the notion that the ruling ideas are always, or necessarily, those of the ruling class. What it comes down to, is a reopening of the problem of domination through a more value-free theoretical lens. As a concept, domination originates in the division between rulers and ruled. Ricoeur (IU, 212) mentions that “the origin of power in the people is stolen to the same extent that, in Marxist terms, the surplus-value of their labour seems to belong to capital; both power and capital are said to function on their own basis. In both cases we have the same capture of meaning.” Importantly, this reification of power occurs within a social context. As such, it remains tied to actual people

³⁵ Goetz and Swaminathan, “Wal-Mart and County-Wide Poverty.”

³⁶ Haiven and Stoneman, “Wal-Mart: The Panopticon of Time.”

³⁷ Collins, “Wal-Mart, American Consumer Citizenship, and the 2008 Recession.”

³⁸ Collins.

³⁹ To my best recollection I am paraphrasing David Graeber.

who give reasons for the legitimacy of its authority. This need to legitimate the hierarchization of social life then, brings into focus a range of motivational (rather than structural) explanations of the relation between power and ideas (IU, 198). What is more, ‘legitimacy’ is impossible to avoid in social life since no order operates by coercion alone; all rulers rely in part on the assent of those they rule (IU, 133). So next to there being someone who legitimates, there is also someone who needs to hold a belief in the legitimacy of their claim. Ideology as legitimation then, is the more neutral idea that ideology provides the surplus-value of belief that closes the credibility gap between our spontaneous belief in the legitimacy of a social hierarchical ordering. As such, it transforms what would otherwise be crude domination into a legitimate form of authority. To illustrate the dynamic involved, Ricoeur borrows a term of Max Weber: *Herrschaft* (IU, 183). It is a concept that signifies at the same time domination and legitimate authority. Because of this, it succinctly captures the (second) meaning of ideology.⁴⁰

In a strategy reminiscent of those of the tobacco industry, Wal-Mart has commissioned several studies on their effects on society, one of which was taken up by Global Insight in 2007. By correlating among other things: Consumer Price Indexes, square footages of Wal-Mart, and GDP the research found that Wal-Mart saved American families \$2500 a year. Not surprisingly, the (in)famous slogan 'Save Money, Live Better' originated alongside the publication of this research.⁴¹ This type of sloganeering – wrapped in expert knowledge claims – is not to be underestimated and can be ideologically effective in ways that are not directly obvious. The implicit political argument is that the distinction between private and public interests is now an anachronistic one. It disregards the classical-liberal idea of society made up of different classes and interests vying for cultural, political or economic power. Consequently, we are left with a single, shared reality which becomes concrete in objective numbers that leave little room for discussion: GDP (grow!), CPI (lower!), and square footage of Wal-Mart's (expand!).⁴²

Recall that neoliberal writing tends to shift from a utilitarian index of meaning to a libertarian one. As such, these political philosophies explain much of the ideological functioning of the neoliberal status quo. With regards to the utilitarian arguments, we find that Wal-Mart in its present form had not been possible without a neoliberal innovation coming out of the Chicago School. This innovation took Hayek's intense epistemological scepticism to its logical conclusion. That is, even the assumption of needing to preserve a specific type of competition was discredited.

⁴⁰ See also Appendix: Figure 1.

⁴¹ “American Families Now Save \$2,500 a Year, Thanks to Wal-Mart.”

⁴² The fact that Wal-Mart uses its sheer size and logistical capacities to *facilitate* so much utility – or *desire* – surely contributes to reinforcing their legitimacy.

Who is to say that it is not massive scale and aggressive competitive behaviour that generates a greater welfare for consumers, and society at large? Hence, legislation in favour of fair competition and the prevention of monopolies was itself regarded as a feigning of acting in the public interest. As such, the curbing of disproportionate economic clout is recast as a political resentment towards the success of corporations. The key utilitarian theoretical innovation is that the welfare of the bully is included in the equation.⁴³ And, the antagonistic question that is lost in this process is, *cui bono*, who profits?

As to libertarian ideas, a recent development in the world of business, is for companies to self-regulate. It has become commonplace for corporations to issue sustainable development goals, social inclusion norms and quality monitoring systems. Considering these, a less euphemistic term than self-regulation would be 'regulatory-capture'. Or as Naomi Klein refers to them, "hybrids of advertising copy and the Communist Manifesto."⁴⁴ Wal-Mart of course, is no different in this regard. Their website hosts a publicly accessible document, containing their ethical vision and commitments. The key virtue according to Wal-Mart's founder, Sam Walton, is 'Integrity'. He is quoted at the start saying "Don't compromise your reputation. It's a precious commodity. Don't compromise your integrity, have a good name." Thankfully, the ethical guideline itself is a bit more explicit and mentions that integrity is made up of three parts: Honesty, Fairness and Objectivity. It is also mentioned that "if there is a conflict between our ethics and business objectives, [we] ensure that our ethics always come first."⁴⁵ Notably, the meaning that is ascribed to 'Objectivity' relates closely to the prime virtue of Ayn Rand's philosophy: Objectivism. Rand, a Russian-American post-war intellectual with close connections to the NTC, prizes self-interest and egoistic individualism above all else.⁴⁶ Similarly, for Wal-Mart to be 'Objective', one has "to make business decisions based on Wal-Mart's interests."⁴⁷ With this ethical injunction however, the previous seemingly encouraging statement simply dissolves, the circle is closed, so to speak. The crucial point to take away from such window dressing then is that we are seduced into thinking that the economic concept of 'externalities' no longer holds political significance.⁴⁸ What a libertarian insistence on freedom from government comes down to, is an obsession with old forms of sovereignty. It is a

⁴³ Davies, *The Happiness Industry*, 80-84.

⁴⁴ Klein, *No Logo*, 286.

⁴⁵ Unspecified, "Global Statement of Ethics," 6.

⁴⁶ Achterhuis, *De Utopie van de Vrije Markt*, 17.

⁴⁷ Unspecified, "Global Statement of Ethics," 13.

⁴⁸ Interestingly, while the NTC has attempted to counter Carl Schmitt's infamous critique on liberalism, they came to resemble him more than they might like to admit. By allowing multi-national corporations free rein "the Führer [is] replaced by the figure of the entrepreneur, the embodiment of the will-to-power for the community, who must be permitted to act without being brought to rational account." (Mirowski, *Never Let A Serious Crisis Go To Waste*, 65.)

useful blindness to emerging 'quasi-nation states', such as Wal-Mart, who are discursively positioned to make the most of this confusion. That is, they claim to be different from nation-states because people voluntarily engage with them in mutually beneficial contracts and transactions. Consequently, no longer does Wal-Mart employ workers; they instead 'manage a network of associates'. Where previously there we spoke of class-struggle, now we speak of 'stakeholders'. In a similar trend, democratic subjects are replaced by 'consumer-citizens'. What these substitutions have in common is that they make it more difficult to object to the existing hierarchies. This because they appear to be the outcome of spontaneous, voluntary processes. In this way, the question of *Herrschaft* is, at first consideration, overcome. However, even if we assume the voluntarist premise to be true, we find no justification of why this is preferable to social orders produced by e.g. democratic deliberation. As such, the question of *Herrschaft* is not settled, it is displaced.

We are invited to believe a 'happy fiction' in which Wal-Mart plays the part of a friendly giant that benefits the well-being of everyone.⁴⁹ The associated neoliberal idea is that the market will, in and of itself, resolve its problems. Of course, critiques of markets are not uncommon and as such pose a counterweight to this idea. As such, rather than face these criticisms head on, Wal-Mart's commissioning of studies, sloganeering, and production of ethical, aspirational documents aims to sow doubts into the public sphere. This concerns a doubt about the detrimental effects of allowing free rein to multi-national corporations. In this way, they contribute to a cultural climate of *agnosis*, which provides fertile ground for crossing the credibility gap between our spontaneous belief in the claim of an auto-correcting market. This view provides an interesting complement to Ricoeur's notion of ideology as legitimization. It is not necessarily a basic assumption or belief that turns crude domination into a legitimate form of authority. Constructed doubt about the structural, or root causes, of societal problems might function just as effectively.

All this might have painted a hopelessly deterministic picture of the power of neoliberal ideas and corporate monopolies. As such, it seems worthwhile to note that despite their best efforts, the effects of having retail giants in your backyard do not go unnoticed. Consequently, a diverse variety of projects have emerged over the past few decades. These include: consumer collectives, boycotts, investigative journalism, and of course, the Demi. It is to this area of struggle for social change that the following chapters will turn.

⁴⁹ This 'happy fiction' is good example of Wal-Mart's reproduction of the neoliberal blend between utilitarian and libertarian political philosophies.

Ceci n'est pas de la monnaie

– Cut Me –

50



⁵⁰ Disappointingly enough, taking to heart the well-known writing advice “show, don’t tell”, works somewhat poorly in a digital format. As to the printed version, I sincerely hope that the suggestion to treat this money like a Demi will rescue it from being considered bribery for a higher grade.

The psychology of iconoclasm

Any consideration of projects striving for social change must contend – even if implicitly – with the question of revolution. In the case of the Demi it seems relevant to mention an idea of Hegel, who argued that the real political challenge is not the moment right before the revolution after which all conditions will be re-appropriated according to new utopian principles. It is instead the moment when, in due time, everything has gone horribly awry. The struggle then is to preserve – in Hegelian terms – the 'rational core' of the promise of the original revolution.⁵¹ In the case of the Quebecois, the most recent revolutionary turning point was the Quiet Revolution that happened in the wake of the second World War. Significant revolutionary promises for Quebec have been increased political-economic autonomy from English-Canadian rule and a decoupling of the public schooling system from the Catholic church. It is this historical context, and a Hegelian relation to the question of revolution, that are essential to the origins and goals of the Demi. It concerns a straightforward refusal of accepting that these promises draw ever further away. The following parts then, will deal with the Demi as a phenomenon, its uses, grounding ideas and larger aims.

To start, the value of a Demi is dependent on the original note. When for instance a \$20 bill is cut in half, each half is worth the equivalent of ten Canadian dollars. The basic idea is that the Demi helps to stimulate the local economy. By turning a universal piece of paper into a vernacular currency, it becomes impossible to spend it at stores that do not operate locally. As such, it is a way of building a network of like-minded people, who commit – both in spirit and their physical money – to a care for the well-being of the region. During my time in Quebec, we spent almost a fortnight on the road promoting the Demi in towns and villages across the province. Almost always friends, family, or people excited about the project provided us with a warm welcome, some food and a place to sleep. Over the course of this trip it became obvious that the cutting up of (sometimes even \$50) legal tender, and the responses it generated, were a source of cheerful entertainment. Clearly there was, next to a practical reason, a certain element of joy in the act of destruction. In his reflections on iconoclasm, Michael Taussig finds that the destruction of an icon paradoxically leads to its resurrection. He comments: “as the icon explodes into visibility because of aforementioned destruction or humiliation. It is no longer taken for granted. It has burst into consciousness, not only in its damaged, destroyed or humiliated form, but also, in memory at least, as it was before its disgrace when it existed in its noble, pristine, pre-traumatized form.”⁵² This observation alerts us to

⁵¹ Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, 222-226.

⁵² Taussig, *The Corn Wolf*, 160.

something peculiar about the logic of an iconoclastic act. That is, it leads to a certain double knowledge of objects by disrupting the habitual perceptions that keep us from their conscious apprehension. Only by disrupting this flow, in the case of the Demi by ripping or cutting it in two, does it register more consciously what money is, how it functions, and what it means for us. This paradoxical (in a literal sense) knowledge, produces a type of non-congruence that demands our attention. There are some notable, shared dynamics at work between utopian imagination and the practice of iconoclasm. The speculative 'what if' allows exploration of possible alternatives to more ubiquitous forms of social organization. That is, it provides us with a perspective that is severed from the common-sense nature of our everyday experience. And, in doing so points to the contingency of the social order of which it is inextricably a part. It is from the externality of utopia that we can escape the ideological without pretending to occupy the impossible standpoint from which we can regard the whole of society. As such, this break of the conservative nature of ideology allows for an exploration of the possible, of new ideas and practices.⁵³ Nonetheless, the success of this type of imagination is dependent on its ability to maintain distance between itself and the actual world. The moment we can rests easily, we can be assured that we do so squarely within the ideological. Not unlike the logic at work in iconoclasm, the possibility of social subversion is intimately related to the experience of non-congruence and contingency.⁵⁴

A fitting example of this logic in action came from one of the main stories circling the Demi, that of the 'sweaty hand guy', as he came to be referred to in my notebooks. The story often came up in meetings to illustrate the psychological impacts and changes of our affective relations towards money as a result of the iconoclastic act. The person in question had found that right before cutting up \$20, his hand was unsteady and he had started sweating, but right after felt a sense of liberation. This then, points towards a possible psychological effect of the type of non-congruence associated with iconoclasm; to regain a critical moment of reflection and a possibility for change. A possibility which has led many people to find that – on second thought – to *cut* money means to live better.

⁵³ See also Appendix: Figure 1.

⁵⁴ Ricoeur, "Ideology and Utopia as Cultural Imagination."

Idiots in a fairy-tale land

An early Tuesday morning.

My already quite chirpy travel companions are bringing up different aspects of the Demi.

So far mostly frowns and yawns.

Around me sits a large circle of sleep deprived, vaguely interested students of a local school.

The school's economy teacher beside me:

As you can see, sadly my subject is not popular, but the curriculum we get is quite dull sometimes.

Seemingly out of the blue, excitement stirs.

Even the most uninterested and quiet students seem to lift from their seats, eager to contribute.

The subject: inequality.

Stand-ins for this larger debate are the income differences between doctors and garbage men.

One student calls out:

a doctor should not be motivated by money, it should be enough reward to be able to heal others.

Pushback from the unconvinced:

capitalism isn't bad, why do you want to change it? Doctors work hard, they deserve more pay!

[murmurs from the crowd]

A girl indignantly, if not sarcastically asks if they mean to say that garbage men are less human.

The sceptics look aghast at this.

A swift intervention by Martin: *it is about sharing our ideas and opinions, not judging each other.*

Another student claims:

just because you have food in your fridge does not mean that the system is working.

AM: 10:45 bags being packed.

Three nervous-looking girls come up to us, seeming like they need to get something of their chest.

One of them takes the word.

We thought this Demi was a bad idea and that you guys were idiots that lived in a fairy-tale land,

[a pregnant pause]

but now we see that it is actually really important!

The social logic of iconoclasm

To this day, the polemical notion of ideology remains almost our default idea of the concept. Because of this, it remains tempting to draw distinctions between ideology and reality, or ideology and science. Ideology understood in this way is designated to be a deviation from the 'real', the material or the objective. In surveying the rhetorical uses of objective economic indicators, we can appreciate that things are not so clear-cut. Furthermore, the presupposition of a non-symbolic outside has no possible explanation of exactly how this 'real' comes to be distorted in the first place. In other words, it passes over that which precedes the distortion (IU, 11). This is what Clifford Geertz has called 'symbolic action'. Geertz effectively argues that our social actions have an immediate symbolic dimension. This means that our actions are not some kind of raw occurrence given a post-hoc ideological flavour, they are already shaped by an autonomous process of symbolic formulation. Or to put it plainly, if our praxis was not already symbolically mediated, how could a distortion even occur? This becomes clearer when we consider that day-to-day social processes are generally not understood, much less talked about in descriptive or technical terms. The general shape of rhetoric in public discourses is one of tropes – stylistic figures (IU, 11). As such, our imaginings are (themselves also) to be understood as constitutive of the social world, rather than biases or distractions that, when eliminated, will reveal some underlying non-ideological reality. Consequently, we are trapped within ideology. It is on this ubiquity of ideology that a non-pejorative conception is premised. Namely, it directs our attention towards the possibility of the use of rhetoric not motivated by a will to domination, but rather a desire for recognition. That is, public discourse that does not intend to turn the world on its head but rather facilitates the formation and maintenance of a stable identity and community over time (IU, 253). In doing so, this very basic and wholesome aspect of ideology functions to integrate individuals into collectives of meaningful structures of mutual understanding.⁵⁵ What follows is an exploration of what such a process might look like.

Discussions like the one included above were a frequent occurrence during our road trip across the province. They were generally animated by a lively participation and interest in the limits and possibilities of making this 'fairy-tale land' work. Another, more social aspect of iconoclasm is that it operates through a 'back-to-front logic' which “[relates to] the rhythm of taboo and transgression, attraction and repulsion, that runs through all societies and all of social life”⁵⁶ The symbolic act

⁵⁵ See also Appendix: Figure 1.

⁵⁶ Taussig, *The Corn Wolf*, 154.

itself then, also reflects back onto the social sphere as one that poses a fundamental question: 'is this destruction an acceptable transgression?' This relation of iconoclasm to the attractions and repulsions of social life also helps explain why next to the psychological effect, the Demi functions quite effectively as a tool for opening a dialogue. More specifically discussions about the economy defined as an *oikos* or as sharing in the responsibility of distributing and overseeing limited resources. Since, by laying bare the different relations towards the sacred and the profane, a discussion about the use of money can deepen rapidly to more fundamental economic and political questions. Recall that a fundamental point of view is lost in the impression that the market is self-regulating the exploitative aspects of capital. This lost standpoint regards Wal-Mart – and mass-consumption – as part of a dynamic that involves structural (global) inequality, and irreconcilable conflicts of interest. It is from such an understanding that we can construct the desirability of Wal-Mart's existence in larger political terms than its effects on GDP or the Consumer Price Index. In this light that we can appreciate the significance of re-establishing political dialogue by means of the social logic of iconoclasm. Namely, it displaces the discursive sleight of hand that finds only fluctuations of economic indicators, where there exist instead irreconcilable conflicts of interest. Wal-Mart's externalization of the notion of externalities reduces the narrative, conflictual nature, of economic understanding. Leaving merely a catch phrase "save money, live better." To be sure, this is also a sort of story, although it is rather short and not very good.

In contrast then, the Demi provides the means to return to an investigation of the morality of economic structures. In this respect, the question of 'who profits' is reintroduced in a concrete, public, and antagonistic form. One example of this would be the student who remarked that "just because you have food in your fridge does not mean the system is working!" Which reflects the realization that the economy is not simply some abstract entity that serves our needs, or when in crisis fails to do so. In a similar vein, cheering on a growing GDP glosses over the fact that e.g. increased cancer rates or the Canadian tar sands are also included in this measure. It remains an ironic historical fact that Kuznets, who invented the GDP, already warned that it should not become a goal in and of itself.⁵⁷ Reclaiming such a basic narrative structure then, reorients us to the ways in which the economy is in fact quite easy to comprehend. What is more, this re-establishing of a shared, narrative understanding allows for political action and social change. Both Martin and Patrick had found that – reflecting on their own lives – a generalized economic ignorance made them and their communities more susceptible to the rule of others. A mostly implicit grounding idea of their project was that there is simply no freedom of indifference, nor a freedom of ignorance.

⁵⁷ Bregman, *Utopia for Realists*, 170.

Their refusal to abide by this situation then, generated as a main project for the Demi one not merely of critique but also one of education and community engagement. It has certainly been to their advantage that both projects are supported by the peculiar social- and psychological logic of iconoclasm.

In conclusion, it might be said that the Demi partakes in an interplay between the wholesome side of ideology and neoliberal utopian presuppositions. A more fleshed out i.e., relational, and empirical notion of autonomy is at the core of these critical and educational efforts. The aim is to inspire a critical evaluation of our desires and habituations that thrive on our unconscious, unreflective relation to money. No longer are we considered *a priori* autonomous agents, nor are our desires always expressions of something authentic. Rather, 'autonomous' is something that we might become (although never indefinitely) after a process of critical evaluation that demands both in- and inter-dependence. Furthermore, with respect to the project of education, neither Martin nor Patrick had the intention of persuading as many people as possible to use the Demi. The meetings and conferences were never about a conversion to a pre-determined point of view. Their aim was simply that people not remain ignorant of the deeper reasons and underlying structures that shape their lives. This then, indeed points to a very basic function of ideology that is divorced from either the legitimization of systems of power or domination. If the previous vignette is indication of anything it is instead, that rhetoric can also be in service of another, more wholesome goal.⁵⁸ This then is the drive for identity, recognition, critique and the stimulation of independent thought.

⁵⁸ For further reading see Irani, "What Is Good Rhetoric?"

5. Tyranny of voices and light

The invisible hand of monsieur Quesnel

As we arrive at the reception Monsieur Quesnel cheerily comes out to greet us. As far as I understand it, he is the top dog of the south-east-Quebec Chamber of Commerce. Monsieur Quesnel is probably somewhere in his fifties or sixties, a slightly plump man with glasses and a grey comb-over. He exudes a kind of ease of mind about being interviewed. The shelves behind his desk, filled with family photos and several trophies relating to his professional field. Without much delay he starts off in a formal, explanatory tone, about his latest project: the Priorité Gaspésie. The launch of which, as it turns out, has not gone by unnoticed.

“There have already been many transactions, we really see the results, there were nearly a million or about 800 thousand dollars of transactions since the card exists. The card was used alright so we can really see an interest. We also have registrations regularly; store owners join slowly, once in a while, but we went from 20 to 35 already. That is still interesting in the data.”

He goes on, a bit more enthusiastic now, about the possibilities of the Priorité Gaspésie.

“If the shopkeepers call us, we will meet them to really explain in detail what it is all about. What does it imply, and then, what the beauty of it is. They are able to track their transactions with an access code to go to the site, and then they see all the transactions that have occurred in the week, in the day, in the month, since the beginning.”

As to the ultimate goal of the Priorité Gaspésie he mentions that:

“With everything we do at the top, people will go and buy at their stores...What is the goal? I think the merchants should get their information right and then not see it as an expense. It is an investment. We say "put yourself in your customers shoes" if you help them, then people help you too. Because while they do give back 1 or 2% on average, this is how you say 'thank you' to the customer. It creates customer loyalty. I think that is the purpose of this card.”

Technologies of persuasion

In the next section I want to explore the 'Priorité Gaspésie' (PG) which is a so-called loyalty programme. Coincidentally, it was introduced around the same time that the Demi also got started and also aims to stimulate the local economy. During my time in Quebec I was told that to do so, a firm from outside of the peninsula was hired. Supposedly the price tag to this marketing innovation was \$50.000, which got the Chamber of Commerce the technological infrastructure and intellectual property rights. This has meant that consumers can apply for a card that can be swiped upon purchases at local merchants. Discounts get accrued in this manner and, as monsieur Quesnel remarked, it comes with the additional benefit of being able to track your purchases. I remember that before I headed out to meet with monsieur Quesnel, I asked Patrick what he thought of the project. I remember it seemed intimately related to his efforts with the Demi. He told me however, that while he believed they meant well, it was still difficult to like them. While I was driving up the coast to meet Monsieur Quesnel I kept wondering, why this dislike?

To answer this question, we need to find the key difference between the two projects. For starters, in the case of PG, Wal-Mart's looming presence as key problem for even the possibility of local economic autonomy was notably absent. Instead of this, there is a more positive excitement about the possibilities of data collection and the uses of technology. I would argue that the foundation of the project aspires to a practical-utilitarian, utopian dream. That is, the core-belief that social and public policy can create a happier society by means of quantitative data, using definitive concepts and best-practices to guide all decision-making. To say something on this implicit utopian dimension it is significant to note that the main concern of utopia at the intermediary level is the question of power. In direct relation to the intermediary function of ideology, utopia here is a force of unmasking the pretences of existing relations of hierarchy. What keeps this dialectic of revelation and concealment going is the interplay between legitimation and the re-imagination of power relations.⁵⁹ Ricoeur (IU, 299) comments: "the continual problem is how to end the relation of subordination, the hierarchy between rulers and ruled, by replacing it." The matter of replacement however, is one that splits utopias into two types. For instance, one might get rid of these rulers altogether, or instead attempt to increase the moral and ethical qualities of those that rule. Consequently, utopias move in-between whether we are to be ruled by 'good' rulers, or not to be ruled at all.

⁵⁹ See also Appendix: Figure 1.

The core concept to understand what the reimagination of power relations by the PG entails, is that of the 'nudge'. The idea of 'nudging' is lodged in a re-conceptualization of social engineering. In recent years, the nudge is gaining popularity as a tool of public and social policy. The originator of the term, Cass Sunstein, even served as economic advisor of the Obama administration.⁶⁰ While neoliberals themselves do not shy away from constructivist politics, the nudge still marks a point of departure. This because it starts from the normative judgement that there is something wrong with the outcomes of market processes. Implicitly what is reintroduced is a limited idea of 'false consciousness', of people not understanding their own true interest. As such, the main goal is to nudge – or softly push – the 'irrational' tendencies of individuals (e.g. psychological biases, errors and ignorance) into alignment with their real interests, buying locally in the case of the PG. The techniques and tools to do so have come from innovations in the field of behavioural economics. As such, it is rooted in a black-box anthropology, of humans as functions of external contingencies, producing responses in patterns. In this way we can better understand monsieur Quesnel's excitement about the ability to track transactions. It allows for these patterns to become visible through computer-modelling of customer behaviours over time. This in turn affords the possibility of altering these same behaviours, by using this information to provide efficient incentives. As such, we can already see that, while the nudge starts from a critique about the outcomes of markets. It remains committed to the neoliberal idea of 'price signalling' as the best way to convey and interpret information.

While a nudge might sound somewhat innocuous, the PG already points to the fact that it requires a technological infrastructure to register, monitor and compare a mass of people, and consequently turn them into something to be managed. It is in this sense a soft power, or something Foucault calls 'the disciplines' which function not through restrictive authority, but through subtle, yet pervasive forms of persuasion and surveillance.⁶¹ Foucault showed in 'Surveiller et Punir' that utilitarianism was not simply a positively oriented philosophy. Theoretically it aims at the creation of the greatest good for the greatest number of people. In practice however, Foucault has shown that one of utilitarianism's key figures, Jeremy Bentham, had generally been more occupied with practical 'inventions' that could re-shape people into a better fit with modern market societies.⁶² It is this practical transformation of utilitarian theoretical presuppositions that the nudge also represents.

We can appreciate then, that PG relies on a similar logic to manipulate a mass of people to conform to objectives of which they are not necessarily aware. As an example, we might note the

⁶⁰ Johnson, "Twilight of the Nudges."

⁶¹ Achterhuis, *De Utopie van de Vrije Markt*, 190-191.

⁶² Ibid.

assumption that customer loyalty happens somehow despite the customer. Loyalty, a positive social relationship is something that might be created from afar, by architects of choice: 'it's the marginal discounts, stupid!'

Another aspect of the nudge is that it quiets the 'tyranny of voices', those contradictory and inconsistent reasons people give for their own action and choices. As such, it appeals primarily to people with a dislike for asking questions, as well as a love for efficient forms of control. As such, "contained within each of these policy projects is a single ideal: that individual activity might be diverted towards goals selected by elite powers, but without either naked coercion or democratic deliberation."⁶³ Conveniently, because the nudge operates without verbal consultation of the individual it aims to influence, it maintains the illusion that we are autonomous 'choice-makers' and that the market produces spontaneous orders. Importantly, this way of thinking relies on a very strange view of what it means to do the right thing. It divorces ethics from responsibility, self-reflection, deliberate choice and the formation of character. The nudge then, can be understood as an elaboration on earlier disciplinary regimes, which used to rely on more overt expressions of power and dominance. This elaboration then, culminates in the libertarian paternalism of the nudge, and the design of social relations.

One obvious question is whether this critique about the outcomes of markets, can still be regarded as consonant with the core aims of neoliberalism. In this regard, I would like to quickly recap what makes neoliberalism especially crisis-sturdy. This is its double-truth doctrine which allows for a full-spectrum of short-, mid- and long-term approaches to any societal problem. None of these really work to fix anything however, and the goal is instead to have the future, society and nature capitulate to the thick ideological notion of the market. In the previous chapter we have explored how Wal-Mart's efforts contributed to a cultural climate in which it becomes increasingly difficult to speak about 'real' causes of exploitation because of their blurring of the public and private concerns. Such a cultural climate of *agnosis* provides fertile ground for the crossing of the credibility gap that exists between our spontaneous belief in the claim that the market is auto-correcting its faults. However, this is merely the short-term strategy of neoliberalism. That is, (constructed) doubt functions merely to buy time for the second (mid-term) strategy, a 'bait-and-switch'. This means that potentially subversive political sentiments are 'precorporated' and shaped along lines and directives of capital. It makes of political problems a matter of financialization and marketization.

⁶³ Davies, *The Happiness Industry*, 50.

As monsieur Quesnel remarked, local traders need to become aware of the right way of relating to and thanking their customers i.e., by becoming choice architects themselves. The increasingly precarious position of local merchants, and the potentially subversive sentiments this represents, is caught within a project of gaining competitive advantage by means of technologies of persuasion. Instead of politics, PG aims at a re-education of entrepreneurs to better align their decision-making with an informational infrastructure that reads the ebb and flow of local markets. What is more, the problem of a tyranny of voices, seems acute when we consider the obvious question of why simply telling customers you appreciate their loyalty is insufficient. The idea seems to be that if we want to interpret the world effectively, our speech is fundamentally unreliable. As such, projects like the PG are uninterested in collective deliberation. It makes of the improvement of society something distant, technical and – most unfortunately – dull.

As such, the PG is better understood as a somewhat recalcitrant, but nonetheless composite, part of neoliberalism. That is, while it recognizes the negative consequences of the monopolization of global markets, the solutions to deal with these nonetheless adhere to core neoliberal tenets and objectives. This points to the second pathology of ideology⁶⁴, which Ricoeur hints at throughout his work. He mentions that, due to its conservative function, ideology is always on the brink of becoming pathological. Of course, not all conservatism is undesirable, it is only when its integrative function is “frozen”, i.e. when schematization and (instrumental) rationality prevail that we can speak of ideology as rigidly pathological (IU, 266).

In conclusion, we might say that PG's blending of populist concerns with elitist practice in a way comes down to a cynical reversal of Gramsci's famous dictum. No longer do we find a 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will'. Instead we find enthusiasm for a *techné* of rational, top-down control and manipulation; combined with a lack of belief in people ability to assert their own valid ideas, or to see them(selves) as historical agents of change. What is seen instead is a passive, and cacophonous will of 'the people' that can be surreptitiously guided towards more desirable outcomes. The following parts will focus instead on the ways in which politics is close at hand, imaginative and collaborative.

⁶⁴ See also Appendix: Figure 1.

Auberge

Fabien sits beside me on a barstool. We find ourselves in the cosy sitting room of a small roadside hostel, preparing to share our discoveries from the road. Slowly but surely the circle of chairs, which is set beneath a curiously appropriate disco ball, is filling with people who want to hear more about the Demi. Fabien, who looks like your stereotypical Viking, has the habit of plucking at the accompanying beard. Even sitting down, he is inescapably tall, his hair tied up into a knot.

We met some time ago in Montreal at a conference, and he has been travelling back east with us ever since. While I have come to know him as always being in for a joke, this in no way undermines his seriousness when it comes to his (anarchist) politics. This political engagement turned out to be quite the departure for him personally though. When I met him, one of the first things he told me was that in his home country of Switzerland he had pursued a career in finance. A past to which he now mockingly refers to as 'the dark side'. Being my translator for the evening, his struggles to whisper-translate produce a medium-low background rumble conveying to me what is being said by the circle of interested locals.

One of the first – hastily penned down – medium-low rumbles, is that the night is hosted by Jerry. He is the co-owner of the auberge, together with his wife who sits beside him, sporting dreads. Jerry knows my travel companions through a collective called 'Horizon Gaspésie'. He gives an introductory talk about how happy he is to meet everyone again and mentions that much has happened since Horizon first got started. Before starting their talk on the Demi, Martin insists that everyone gets a chance to introduce themselves.

My rapidly expanding list of people present so far includes: an organic milk farmer, an older man who is a teacher, a baker, two photographers, someone who likes the Demi because it is the concretization of a philosophy of counter-power, a fellow-anthropologist who likes horticulture, a British girl came here to teach English, an organic agriculturist who tries hard to become completely self-sustainable, and an older lady who mentions that back in the day cutting and sharing bank notes was a token of luck and friendship.

As I am scribbling away the conversation is already carrying on. The

teacher says that he has four kids who he realized lately were going to Wal-Mart. There is a sudden burst of laughter when he mentions that he will make sure his inheritance is in Demis. Most of the discussion so far seems amiable, there is however, one man who disagrees. He finds that the Demi is just a drop of water on a hot plate of problems. Martin mentions that it is not nothing – that we have been told since we were kids that the world revolves around money. And that, while we can not demand for instance, an end to all wars, we can still try to contribute. He says that it is the intention that matters.

From what I have been able to gather so far, the mood is not one of cold, logical, protectionism. It's more a sharing of personal experiences, of expressions of care and a desire to invest in the region. The man who disagrees remains distinctly unimpressed however. In response, the conversation turns to how the Demi is not just local. That the goal is not to make money, but to live in a world that makes sense. In this way, the Demi is a “gym for the mind”, Martin mentions that the scale is not geographic, but more about returning to the human level.

I quickly write down “gym for the mind” at the back of my notes to the ever-increasing list of metaphors and objects used to explain, or refer to the Demi: toy dinosaur, empty glass, coffee cup, ‘hot potato’, snail, screwdriver. Fabien whisper translates to me that there are more people who want something to change than we might think. My fellow-anthropologist mentions that after an accident, the doctors told him he could never walk again. He says, “if you think wheelchair, then wheelchair it is.” Recently, he sent a picture to his doctor in which he flipped him the finger, on top of a mountain which he climbed. He agrees with the man who dislikes the Demi that it is all part of a much larger issue, but that without small steps they will get nowhere.

The meeting is concluded by a fairly general consensus that maybe when they stop hesitating, they might be surprised about what they could accomplish together. Jerry finds that if we see change happening, it might mean a break with pessimist moods. Of course, the Demi will not fix all problems. But they have to do it with what is here, what is present. And, talking in a circle like this more often would not be a bad start.

Bare democracy

The previous points to another aspect of the Demi project. That is, what is continuously generated after the initial (personal) refusal, are the social interactions and negotiations between users, and potential new users. By making it a committed IOU, it can only continue to function through affiliative networks that are the product of negotiated trust and care for common sense. In this way, it entails the refusal of certain types of relationships and the affirmation of others. This points us to the fact that refusal can redirect levels of engagement in ways that are not about domination or class struggle. Instead it is about “staking claims to the sociality that underlies all relationships, including political ones”⁶⁵ The Demi similarly provides an opening for people to reconnect with each other on a deeper level, as community members with their own faces, difficulties and histories. Money understood in this way is not merely a ‘thing’, rather it is a process through which people organise their human associations. It allows to share in beliefs and practices that are grounded in the insistence that they are – collectively – making a responsible decision for the future that they share.⁶⁶ As such, the Demi adds a significant contribution in moving beyond the problems of responsabilization.

As we have seen, responsabilization was also part of the PG. Maybe not coincidentally, it is also the key to neoliberal governance.⁶⁷ One of the aims of PG was to instruct local business-owners how to organize the social bonds of loyalty with their customers through discounts. That is, from a top-down perspective, the increasingly precarious position of local businesses was a clear-cut matter of responsabilizing the merchants. The situation becomes especially problematic when this “moralization of economic action that accompanies the economization of the political” is conjoined with a devolution of authority.⁶⁸ An example of this would be for instance Wal-Mart’s offering of a selection of sustainable products. This because for one – discursively – power is devolved. Where previously, decision-making was reserved to positions of power, now there are as many ‘authorities’ as there are consumers. Secondly, individuals are made morally responsible in the sense that they ought to act for the well-being of themselves, and society. And as such, they are blamed for the exploitative and destructive consequences of mass-consumption. While this might seem innocuous, it is also a way for structural forces to recede into invisibility. In making everyone responsible, at the same time, no one really is.⁶⁹ This dynamic will be explored in more detail at the end of this thesis. For now, it suffices to say that it is example of what Nietzsche has referred to as

⁶⁵ McGranahan, “Theorizing Refusal: An Introduction.”

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 133.

⁶⁸ Brown.

⁶⁹ Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 72.

the 'logic of the priest'. With it, he refers to the kinds of arguments and cultures that make individuals guilty for that which we they nonetheless subjected to.⁷⁰ In a not dissimilar conclusion Brown notes that "when conjoined, devolution and responsabilization produce an order in which the social *effects* of power—constructed and governed subjects—appear as morally burdened agents."⁷¹

With this in mind, we should consider a move away from the critique of practical reason, and instead understand practical reason as critique. If we take the man who denounced the Demi because it was –in the grand scheme of things – futile, we have an example of the critique of practical reason. The general idea of practical reason however, is to distinguish between 'objectification' and 'alienation' (IU, xxvi). Practical reason insists that it should not be limited to high minded philosophizing, or conclusively determining the right course of action. In this regard: "insofar confusion over what the right course of action is, people do generally know exactly what the false thing is. This then, means that the true thing shows itself via the false thing. This type of logic – also on display in iconoclastic acts – is in many ways practical, intuitive and political"⁷² As such, the Demi is grounded in a conception of the regular, Canadian dollar as alienating people from each other, from freedom and cooperation towards a better future. What is more, it sets the stage for opposition to the idea that single, caring individuals acting on ethical immediacy can address structural problems. Because of this, new forms of collectivity and claims to universality can emerge. The Demi represents a return to a call for cultural improvement and intends to do so practically. Freedom, or refusal for that matter, when exercised in isolation as personal conviction, is not enough.

In this light it is significant that the Demi is presented as a return to the human level. This because it clearly sets its sights higher than only economic protectionism. For one it is claim on a humanistic universality, and moreover it is part of an active attempt at forming a loose collective, that is capable of exercising responsibility. What unifies this collective is a shared conviction that non-alienated forms of interaction are essential to the larger project of reinstating freedom. Freedom not simply as economic choice but *also* as the capacity to engage in the pursuit of political possibilities. Achieving economic autonomy then, is not restricted to swiping a card at a local store to get a discount. It is about expressing a view and taking some control. The Demi as such, is a means to generate a new discursive political space, for consumers and producers, meeting each other on equal terms as citizens. For many who attended events on the Demi, the leading concern

⁷⁰ van Tuinen, "The Irenics of Ressentiment," 80.

⁷¹ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 134.

⁷² Kunkel, *Utopia or Bust*, 169.

was: what would it mean to take, or regain a sense of collective ownership of the economy? Discussions were often animated by an interest in the limits, possibilities and internal dynamics of making the 'fairy-tale land' of local autonomy based on level-headed relationships work.

Clearly, such a project is to be located at the other end of the utopian spectrum; which we might recall is constituted by a question of rulership. Ricoeur mentions that many utopian texts and projects attempt to find alternatives that work through cooperation and egalitarian relationships. Such attempts extend to all kinds of social relations, be it money, the state, religion or sexuality. Ricoeur (IU, 299) finds that: "the kernel of all utopias is finally the de-institutionalization of the main human relationships." In case of the Demi, the dominant wish is one which Wendy Brown has referred to as the ideal of 'bare democracy'. With this, she refers to the empty notion that we should not be ruled by a minority.⁷³ Importantly, the true political reality is not 'conflicting interests' – which are a base condition – but instead the way of managing these differences. As such, we can appreciate that this ideal is not the same as simply wishing an absence of authority; not being ruled takes work.

In conclusion, it is only practical reason that can provide a basis for the pursuit of this ideal. That is, only when we ourselves distinguish between objectification and alienation, can we speak of practices, discourses and institutions that are the product of values, rather than their distortion or reification by others. Such 'alienation of values' is evident for example in Wal-Mart's corporate strategy of reverse-Fordism, where freedom starts to mean the ability to buy a continued piece of your own exploitation. And of course, in the case of the PG where the pursuit of local *autonomy* meant a technocratic project that wishes to quiet the 'tyranny of voices' of the people it means to benefit. In what follows, we will discuss the final part of Ricoeur's 'symbolic structure of action' by means of a distinctly utopian piece of writing produced in Gaspésie.

⁷³ Ibid, the use of 'empty' connotes the absence of a positive argumentation of *why* the people ought to rule, only the negative notion that they should not be ruled by others.

Dreams that shatter

Let's not mince words. Do not be afraid to use them, search them and to organize them into concepts that have meaning for us Gaspesiens. We have the task, now, to reinvent a vocabulary that resembles us and brings us together. But let's not throw the baby out with the bath water. Take the time to observe what is already there. An economy, that is observed. Take the time to take make inventory of our resources, of what we need to live.

...

Happiness. Yes! This term should be reflected in the agenda of our economy, otherwise why live? What do we want? To be rich? Yes. But what's rich enough? What is our individual wealth and most importantly, our collective wealth? What places do we have as inhabitants of the territory where we meet each other? And how do we organize ourselves for others, and many others after us, so they too, can have comfort and dignity in the same territory?

...

Imagine that in the next year, the municipalities of Gaspésie meet to evaluate to what we attach importance. What are the values important to us? What are the priorities in the short, medium, long and very long term? Imagine we reflect on what is essential to life in the Gaspé. We could even go up to ask ourselves what makes a life worth living, for us and for future generations. These issues, which seem to me essential, have we been asked about them? And, have we already had a real occasion to respond?⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Zibeu, "Chapitre 3 : Réponse Économique," Excerpt from *Sécession* written by Martin. *Sécession: Et si la Gaspésie devenait un pays libre*, is a compilation of essays written by local Gaspesiens under the banner 'pen to the citizens!' (my translation).

Secession

To compare the underlying motivations of the Demi once more with PG. It is by now clear that, while the two projects might share in their aim of reducing commercial leaks, the affinity between both projects ends here. The key difference might very well be that good intentions, undemocratically pursued through nudges and libertarian paternalism, fail to remain desirable. In the case of the Demi, ends and means imply one another. Critical, independent thought, and democratic practice are inextricably linked, and pursuing one automatically implies the other. As Martin's propositions from 'Sécession' shows is that reigniting the bare democratic promise implies both an egalitarian- and a dialogical ethic. These ethical commitments stand opposed to the 'tyranny of voices' that the choice architect experiences. Instead, they credit people with legitimate interpretations of their own actions. As such, the Demi means to take seriously people's beliefs about their lives and regard them as having valid ideas about their own interest. In contrast, it is libertarian paternalism that is infantilizing of those it means to influence. It is unable, or unwilling to regard individuals as capable of seeing, or acting on problems in their full complexity.⁷⁵ With this in mind I want to quote, at length, Richard Vernon who in turn paraphrases Proudhon:

“Solicit men's views in the mass, and they will return stupid, fickle and violent answers; solicit their views as members of definite groups with real solidarity and a distinctive character, and their answers will be responsible and wise. Expose them to the political ‘language’ of mass democracy, which represents ‘the people’ as unitary and undivided, and minorities as traitors, and they will give birth to tyranny; expose them to the political language of federalism, in which the people figures as a diversified aggregate of real associations, and they will resist tyranny to the end.”⁷⁶

What we find instead with PG is that people are steered through incentives, a few nudges here and there, but other than that they are kept in the dark, and outside of the conversation. Politics is reduced to the tabulation of behavioural patterns as a means for experts to influence them. It is a ‘soft’, but pervasive form of power, which renders citizens knowable and formable. William Davies reminds us that “in a society organized around objective psychological measurement, the power to listen is a potentially iconoclastic one. There is something radical about privileging the sensory power of the ear in a political system designed around that of the eye.”⁷⁷

Our previous discussion of utopia has shown that the invention of new ideas and practices, as well

⁷⁵ Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 71-81.

⁷⁶ Ward, *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction*, 81-82.

⁷⁷ Davies, *The Happiness Industry*, 134.

as the unmasking of excess legitimacy are issues of critical importance if utopia is to remain non-pathological. Given these productive, and transformative aspects it should come as little surprise that utopias in the wholesome sense are not merely dreams. Rather, they are dreams that want to be realized. The intention is to change, or even shatter, the present order of things (IU, 266). However, Ricoeur cautions us to be mindful of the tendency of imaginative fancy; dreams that offer no assistance on embarking on the difficult path of action. Furthermore, there is the risk of ‘the magic of thought’ in which no goals conflict and all ends are compatible. If these are avoided, Ricoeur comments that “utopia [in this sense] introduces imaginative variations on the topics of society, power, government, family, religion and, ... taken at this radical level, the function of the nowhere in the constitution of social or symbolic action, is the counterpart of our first (non-pejorative) concept of ideology. There is no social integration without social subversion.” (IU, 16) At this point it is worth mentioning that the excerpt of *Sécession* is part of a utopian collection of essays. The central question that connects the essays is: ‘*what if* the peninsula of Gaspésie were a free country?’ As such, it is a variation of the Quebecois, secessionist impulse replayed on a smaller scale. With an understanding of utopia as an imaginative variation on an essence, it becomes clearer that *Sécession* attempts exactly this. It is an invitation to speculate on what it would be like if the communities in Gaspésie ruled themselves, which reflects back on the ideological situation which presently exists. It is worth quoting Ricoeur at this point:

“This is my conviction: the only way to get out of the circularity in which ideologies engulf us is to assume a utopia, declare it, and judge an ideology on this basis. It is to the extent finally that the correlation ideology-utopia replaces the impossible correlation ideology-science that a certain solution to the problem of judgment may be found, a solution, I should add, itself congruent with the claim that no point of view exists outside the game. Therefore, if there can be no transcendent onlooker, then a practical concept is what must be assumed.” (IU, 172-173)

We can appreciate then, that the more wholesome aspect of utopia includes all the ambiguities of the other two levels discussed previously. That is, the unmasking or re-imagining of power relations and ‘invention’, or the creation of new forms.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the sheer unlikeliness of Gaspésie seceding from the province, is illustrative of another aspect of refusal. Isabelle Stengers argues that refusal concerns an insistence on the possible over the probable, and because of this, is aligned with hope. What is more, hope combines with ‘will’ which “brings us back to transformation and generation, to the possibility of acting to spark change.”⁷⁹ As such, we should regard the intent of

⁷⁸ See also Appendix: Figure 1.

⁷⁹ McGranahan, “Theorizing Refusal: An Introduction.”

this collection of essays as being both ridiculous and serious at the same time. However, this is exactly what allows it to balance on the wholesome side of the utopian imagination. Because as soon as the two poles of the imagination are conflated, the *creative* tension that results from their dialectical relation also disappears. Or to put it differently, without a continuously unrealized utopia, society would be cut off from having a project, a goal.

At the outset of our discussion of the Demi I have argued that any project striving for social change must contend with the question of revolution. Furthermore, we have been exploring the ways in which the Demi is oriented to this question in a Hegelian way. That is, the moment after the revolution – when everything has gone horribly awry – and the effort is to preserve, or rescue, the sensible core of its original promises.⁸⁰ Recall that in Quebec, in the present historical moment, the most significant revolution was the Quiet revolution. The promises at this political and cultural turning point were increased political- and economic autonomy, and a decoupling of the public schooling system from the Catholic church. At this point we can more easily appreciate the tight relation that holds between these promises and the dangers the neoliberal project poses to them. That is, ignorance and centralized, expert rule, were already meant to have become anachronistic. Similarly, in response to Wal-Mart's attempts at constructing doubts, and the precorporation of democratic political sentiments through the PG. The Demi embodies a twin attempt to indeed preserve the emancipatory promises of the Quiet revolution. As to how these efforts will turn out, both Patrick and Martin stressed repeatedly that much of what they did seemed to them a 'blind investment'. This, I believe points to a deeper lesson, and an ironic one at that, when we recall that Patrick spends many summer nights narrating local lore at the beach. Namely, that a certain opacity of our acts is the inevitable consequence of taking a stand; of being a historical agent (or actor) in the turnings of our time. With this in mind, let us turn to next section, which deals – in a speculative way – with the consequences of different attitudes towards agency, history and utopia.

⁸⁰ Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*, 222-226.

6. Telling tales

Babel

At the outset of this thesis the following research question was posited: ‘what is the larger significance of the Demi project in relation to its refusal of neoliberalism?’ In trying to answer this question I have attempted to take to heart Graeber’s appeal to consider the larger implications of social emancipatory projects and to return these, not as prescriptions, but as gifts. In this light, the most significant implications surely emerge by placing their efforts *on par* with neoliberalism. In this way we can move beyond an understanding of the Demi project as merely a reaction, or due to its relative scale, ultimately insignificant. To regard them both as two players involved in the same game however, requires a speculative leap. What follows then, is an attempt to bring some thoughts on the ethics of social change together, and to point towards a possible resolution to the aporia⁸¹ of contemporary utopian politics. This aporia is, in some sense, a heritage of the collapse Christianity as a coherent worldview that provides answer to fundamental questions about meaning, purpose and moral difficulties. This collapse leads us to the by-now almost classic question: ‘what is to be done?’⁸² It is precisely this revolutionary concern to which the dialectics of the ideological and utopian imaginations – ultimately – address themselves. And, it is by analysing the different answers to this central question, that we might place the Demi on par with major ideological frameworks. That is, it allows us to construct from Marxism, neoliberalism, and the Demi a typology of different attitudes that deeply inform their reply to this central question.

First off, we might note that historically speaking Marxism was the first *truly massive* attempt at a revolution of society to better align it with the human condition. Marx himself, like the neoliberal-thought-collective (NTC) after him, was scornful of utopian thinking. He claimed instead that his solution was ‘scientific’ socialism and, in this way, supposed to move beyond ideology. As we have seen however, ideology is constitutive of our shared social reality. This means that Marx’ opposition of science versus the ideological, or the utopian, is fundamentally untenable. As such, it can be argued that “even Marxism, with its belief in a classless New Jerusalem, can be seen as just another future-centred project where present sacrifices and struggles will be rewarded by a scientific socialist version of ‘pie in the sky’”⁸³ This idea that humans would overcome their alienation is based for one in a teleological understanding of the logic of history, combined with the

⁸¹ The experience of ‘aporia’ is not merely a psychological state, or lack of belief or knowledge. Rather, it is a crisis involving choice, action and identity. See also Burbules, “Aporia”

⁸² Roderick, “Lecture 5: The Eternal Recurrence,” for further reading see Marmysz, “Decline, Ascent and Humor.”

⁸³ Swift, *S.O.S.: Alternatives to Capitalism*, 82.

modernist belief of mastering nature and society through reason and its handmaidens – science and technology.⁸⁴ With the advantage of hindsight, we might say that Marxism overestimated our capacity to shape the world in a way that aligned with a universal interest. To be able to create a society in which we would no longer have to hold out for a heaven to resolve our suffering i.e. to bring a type of heaven down to earth. Such a project then – not unlike the story of the tower of Babel – can be said to be grounded in an attitude of *hubris*. To be sure, the aim here is not to rigidly classify an entire ideology. For one, people are quite fickle and deeply ambiguous in their motivations. This means that hubris, envy or a desire to dominate for that matter, can and do exist alongside our nobler impulses. The point here is merely to isolate what Aristotle has called *hamartia*. That is, the fatal flaw of the protagonist of a tragedy that ultimately leads to disaster. Importantly, this does not imply a direct causal relationship or even that this *hamartia* is the only productive force of the tragic outcome.⁸⁵ An interesting second parallel to the story of Babel is the lesson that a collective unity functions only if the confusion of language is avoided. That is, as long as (internal) conflicts of interpretation are repressed. By failing to maintain a fatalistic acceptance of the inevitability of our alienation, the repression of divergent ideas finds its logical justification.

Cain and Abel

It might be argued then, that the political drive of the NTC has been to rid the world of such hubris. Their attempt was to do away with a Marxist teleology that regarded our alienation as something that was inevitably overcome. As such, their initial efforts can be regarded as an intellectual rebellion against the use of a rationalist utopia's justification of murder and repression; to reinstate individual freedom to its rightful place in the hierarchy of value. It is probably due to the frightful mood and reactionary nature of the neoliberal project, that they are similarly blind to the totalitarian potential of their own ideas. Especially ironic are the ways in which prominent members of the NTC have been as misguidedly utopian as were former soviet officials. Take for instance Friedman's active support of the coup and repression of the Chilean revolution. It turns out that for the neoliberals too, their omelette is worth breaking a few eggs.⁸⁶

In surveying the neoliberal project, we might first recall that their utopia of desire is premised on a specific ontology. This ontology consists of *a priori* autonomous individuals for whom the world is experienced as an array of obstacles which are, always already, a breach of their

⁸⁴ Argyrou, *The Logic of Environmentalism*, 148.

⁸⁵ Poole, *Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction*, 59.

⁸⁶ Achterhuis, "Chili als eerste experiment."

autonomy.⁸⁷ This means that “subjectivity acquires the neurotic unity of priest and believer, despot and subject, conquering and conquered slave [...] in other words, the unity of the personal”⁸⁸ Or to put it differently through the exclusion of the relational and the empirical we are left with the unity of the personal. Importantly, this separation of the subject from power is doubled in an ideological sense. This because the more distinctly neoliberal subject is also constituted as a part of a larger social whole. That is, they are embedded into an underlying *natural* ‘market reality’ accessible to us through competitization, privatization, and pricing. Importantly, it is this larger social whole which the NTC opposes to the ‘artificial’ world of political power. Meaning that any institution that seeks to consciously organize according to different principles is to be regarded the antithesis of the natural (and neutral) ordering mechanism that is the market. What is more, by embedding people into this larger ‘natural’ market reality, the autonomy that was originally meant for distinct, living and desiring individuals is – through a sleight of hand – turned over to the super-personal entity of the market. In this way, the market itself becomes the principle that marks the limit on individual human action and imagination.

Take for instance the following quote by Friedrich Hayek: “the market order does not bring about any close correspondence between subjective merit or individual needs and rewards.”⁸⁹ Subjective individual notions of equality, fairness or even justice are regarded as sources of dissatisfaction that make the neoliberal world *in media res* look bad in comparison. Such lofty idealism then, ideally does not to persist as a political force within our society. And, insofar as it does: “demands for equality are merely the sour grapes of the losers, or at minimum, the atavistic holdovers of old images of justice that must be extirpated from the modern mindset.”⁹⁰ Recall furthermore that this logic is pursued to its limits. In the chapter on Wal-Mart we discovered that even a key aspect of classic liberalism – legislation in favour of fair competition – was itself regarded as a feigning of acting in the public interest. The NTC recast such regulation as a political *resentment* towards the success of corporations. It is from the standpoint of these absolute, *Manichean* distinctions that any will-to-power that means to cross the limit of the market (or the unity of the personal) is regarded as mere resentment. A psychologically *reactive* disposition, captured by a spirit of the negative, aiming to restrict autonomous and natural *active* forces.

The main concern is whether the neoliberal critique of the resentment of the ‘losers’, is not itself informed by an attitude of *ressentiment*, shaping their entire utopian project. What we can so

⁸⁷ Crawford, “Kant’s Metaphysics of Freedom,” see also note 15.

⁸⁸ van Tuinen, “Physiology versus Psychology.”

⁸⁹ Mirowski, “The Thirteen Commandments of Neoliberalism.”

⁹⁰ Ibid.

far surmise, is that in separating us from power in an absolute Manichean sense, the NTC reduces the various socio-political passions present in society to the (reactive) pathological emotions of individuals. The desire for justice is seen as merely an excuse for a secret revenge of those have not managed to keep up with the demands of the marketplace. And, while this may be a factually correct assessment, this moralization and psychologization of resentment is also typical of what Nietzsche found to be the role of the priest.⁹¹ For Nietzsche it was the 'priestly-type' who managed to redirect accusatory and outward hostilities and frustrations inward through guilt, and 'bad conscience'.⁹² In the sub-chapter 'Bare democracy' we briefly discussed this dynamic as well. The devolution of authority, and the responsabilization and moralization of economic action, conjoin to create a situation in which "the social *effects* of power – appear as morally burdened agents."⁹³ This then, is the logic of the priest; that you are somehow guilty for what you are nonetheless subjected to. The task then, is not to see resentment as a ready-made form of affective, individual pathology, but to re-politicize psychology, and to make of resentment once again a philosophical problem.

The difference between these two irreconcilable ways of interpreting resentment requires to be made somewhat more explicit. This might be done by means of a re-reading of the story of Cain and Abel, through the lens of the symbolic structure of action we have been outlining throughout.⁹⁴ Traditionally the story is interpreted as an example of exactly the type of resentment that neoliberalist pundits and 'priests' both cultivate and moralize about. That is, Cain's fratricide of his younger brother resulted from spite, bitterness and envy over the fact that God favoured Abel's sacrifice. It is only when we move away from this pre-occupation with the psychological turmoil of Cain, that the symbolic, political significance of this foundational murder becomes clear. To do so, we can regard Cain and Abel as avatars of the ideological and the utopian imagination respectively. From this viewpoint we might first note that despite all their differences, they are still brothers. This observation also applies to the proper dialectical status of utopia and ideology. Furthermore, we might note that Cain, being the older brother, has an interest in the preservation of fixed identities, and holds more of a stake in the stability of the established hierarchy. In a sense he personifies an ontology of *Being* in which identities are determined by a logic of either/or. Abel on the other hand, signals a move away from this logic. The acceptance of his sacrifice over that of Cain, points to the tendency of time to introduce (sometimes arbitrarily) new hierarchies of value. As such, Abel can better be understood as a personification of a more fluid ontology, one of *becoming*. In this way, he introduces a notion of potentiality into the shared frame of reference. Of course, this is not

⁹¹ van Tuinen, "The Irenics of Resentment," 80.

⁹² van Tuinen, "Physiology versus Psychology."

⁹³ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 134.

⁹⁴ See also Appendix: Figure 1.

dissimilar to the function of utopia to make the established seem strange, contingent, even less worthy of praise and admiration. In considering all these linkages, we can begin to understand Cain's murder of Abel, not as an individual affective pathology, but rather as a violent lashing out of one mode of imagination against the other. It was Cain who reconstituted the role of the future as denied for the Other and infinitely deferred for himself. In this way it becomes clear that in a *culture of resentment*, what is most tragic, is the fact that we are cut-off from the goal-inspiring, value transforming, and difference affirming qualities of utopia.

First time as tragedy, second time as farce, third time as...?

This final title is of course a deliberate irony. Marx surely did not expect the first part of his own quote to become applicable to Marxist communism itself. And, although he – to my knowledge – never made concrete predictions on when capitalism would be overcome; he probably would not have expected it to persist into the 21st century. Nonetheless, here we are. As to how much of our current situation resembles a farce is not entirely clear. Some – admittedly circumstantial evidence – would be an article in The Guardian by George Monbiot refers to Donald Trump as a neoliberal.⁹⁵ If indeed he is one, surely this is more due to a natural ignorance and authoritarian temperament. It would be a stretch to attribute to him the calculating genius of toeing the line of neoliberalism's double-truth doctrine. The question remains, how we can engage the utopian question a third time, in a way that takes to heart the tragic and the farcical. To reiterate then, in both Marxism and neoliberalism we found two, related types of fatalism. Firstly, a redemptive one in which the (hubristic) logical endpoint was a resolution of our alienation through a mastering of nature and society. Secondly, a despairing fatalism, in which the transcendental market functions as a limit, and continual reminder of our relative ignorance. Creating a culture of resentment in which nature and society slowly but surely capitulate to the market. As such, we seem to have found ourselves in a double bind.

In spite of this, the spirit of the project of the Demi might offer a way forward. To round off our typology, I want to look at Albert Camus' essay "The Myth of Sisyphus", since he outlines a rich description of a third attitude. Before moving on however, it is interesting to note that Camus was one of the few French, leftist intellectuals who refused to be an apologist for the excesses of Marxist communism. In this sense, his project starts from not too dissimilar premises as that of the NTC. An important difference is that Camus cares a great deal about the social- and psychological consequences of surrendering our belief in redemption or 'grand narratives'. As such, "The Myth of

⁹⁵ Monbiot, "Neoliberalism: The Deep Story That Lies beneath Donald Trump's Triumph."

Sisyphus” should be understood as an attempt to describe a basic universal human condition. As the title of his book suggests Camus’ argument revolves around the Homeric story of Sisyphus. Its protagonist stole secrets from the gods, and cheated death for a while. For these crimes Sisyphus’ punishment was to eternally push a rock up a hill, only to have it roll back down again when he got to the top.⁹⁶ Importantly, he has no illusions about the nature of his punishment. There is no ultimate hope of escaping his alienated condition. Camus writes “if this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious. Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope of succeeding upheld him?”⁹⁷ This type of fatalism, when applied to the inevitability of our alienation from utopia, is a potent antidote against the attitude of hubris. Camus tells us that Sisyphus, in spite of his punishment, laughs scornfully at the gods who condemned him, and finds that nonetheless, “all is well”. So far, the story provides us with a somewhat bleak counsel of resignation. In a surprising twist however, Camus invites us to imagine Sisyphus as happy. As such, surely the remark ‘all is well’ is not a resignation, nor a celebration of the status quo. Rather, we should understand it as a speculative proposition that tempts us to turn inevitable involvement into existential choice. It is only by means of such a choice, an affirmation of the world, our action and place in it, that it becomes possible to ‘negate gods and raise rocks’. It is also because of this affirmation that Sisyphus can be regarded superior to his fate, and ultimately, as happy. Importantly, this happiness is not a state of harmonious contentment. Instead, it is the by-product of “the struggle itself towards the heights, [which] is enough to fill a man’s heart.”

It is precisely this Sisyphean attitude that manages to incorporate despair in a way that keeps it from falling into apathy. It teaches that even though our efforts to reach ideals are ultimately futile, we may still find meaning in their pursuit. Previously, we found that in a culture of resentment, we are cut-off from the goal-inspiring, value transforming, and difference affirming qualities of utopia. This situation might be overcome by a different understanding of the ideal of autonomy. Recall that in the case of neoliberalism, we have taken this to be the idea of *a priori* autonomous individuals, for whom the world is experienced as an array of obstacles which are – always already – a breach of their autonomy. This non-empirical and non-relational way of understanding autonomy means that the area of non-interference is equivalent to the area of our freedom. When aspiring to such an ideal, the harsh empirical realities Sisyphus finds himself confronted with, surely would be too much to bear. By extension, the same goes for us since Camus meant the story to convey a basic truth about the human condition. The actual world tends to resist our desires for reason, unity and meaning. If Sisyphus were to hold onto a desire for such autonomy,

⁹⁶ Camus, *The Myth Of Sisyphus And Other Essays*, 75-78.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

would he not fall into absolute despair in surveying his condition? We are left in this case, with the rather undesirable infinity, of an unanswered complaint. It is in precisely this way that we should understand that “the dream of autonomy comes at the price of impotence.”⁹⁸ Nietzsche’s idea of the ‘will-to-power’ as a criterion for the evaluation of values aims at a similar wisdom. An authentic utopian attitude is less about the end goal of a pursuit, and more so about the movement it implies. That is, we should ask ourselves, in pursuing certain goals and values whether we do so by willing an endless number of obstacles, or instead their dissolution.⁹⁹ Here again, we find Sisyphus and his rock. In contemplating his rock and his condition, the ceaseless futile effort, and endless obstacles – Sisyphus says ‘yes’. What we can take away from this affirmation of life and struggle is that somewhat paradoxically; meaningful, real-world autonomy depends on a commitment – or submission – to goals and ideals that resist our attempts at mastery.

On the dual aims of the Demi: the bare democratic ideal, and the fight against indifferent ignorance, we should note that both are – ultimately – impossible ideals. The former implies a commitment to the continuous process of creating consensus and maintaining collectives that can exercise responsibility. As to the latter, the world is not a static thing to be transparently grasped in its totality. Every understanding relies to some degree on a forgetting of something else. What is more, as our conditions change, so should our understandings. In this way, the second aim of the Demi is similarly resistant to our attempts at mastery, and as such calls for a continuous commitment and care.

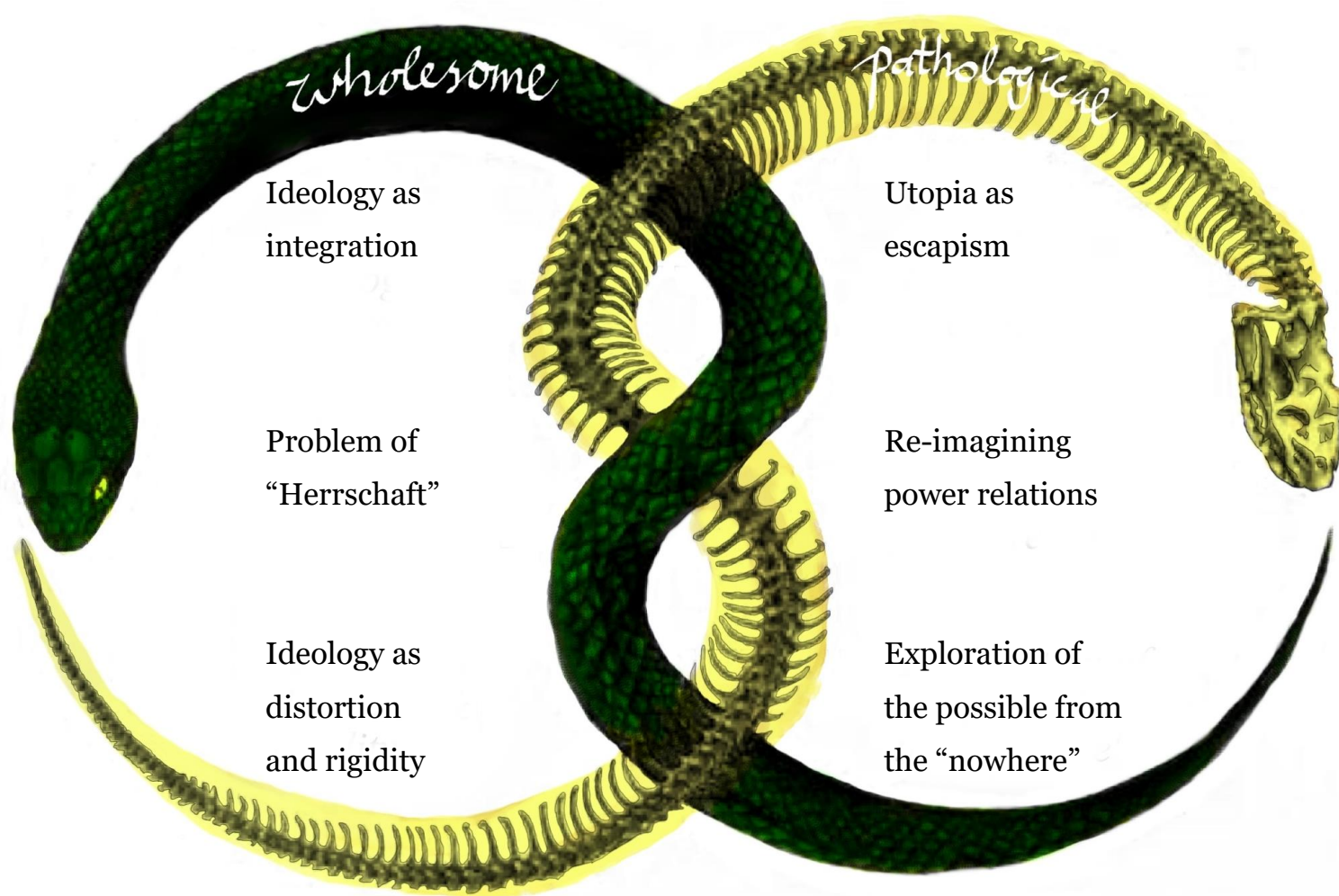
In conclusion then, the attitude of rebellion that motivated the Demi, provides us with way out of the deadlock between either resigned despair or the self-sacrificing revolutionary. The defiant ‘why not?!’, appropriates space for the free play of new ideas, and ways of living. Where we could have found the bad infinity of an unanswered complaint, we find instead a refusal which is more than a negation. As we have seen with the Demi, it preferred the possible over the probable, and was distinctly creative and social in its character. In this way the protagonists of the Demi exemplify the basic lesson about rebellion that Camus discovered “*je me révolte, donc nous sommes!*”

⁹⁸ Crawford, *World Beyond Your Head*, 102.

⁹⁹ Katsafanas, “The Problem of Normative Authority in Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche.”

Appendix

Figure 1



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