
REQUIEM FOR HUMANISM

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Liberty-equality-fraternity, the three key words/keywords written like that: united, indissociable, the three forming a hyperword, a hyperconcept. At heart they are still only a modern hyperutopia. If we start from the fact that the French Revolution has been largely kidnapped and turned into a sphinx or an icon, we will recognise that the old socio-political tree is languishing in its old age, rotted by that ideological conglomerate called neo-liberalism—a conglomerate of highly conservative reasons and interests—and is dying in the sad, globalised state of post-democracy. In this piece I want to forge the ideas and the utensils that might help prune from our old oak those many awkward reactionary grafts which have deformed its original beauty; extirpate the corrupt wood of the post-bourgeois softness and try, very carefully and laboriously, to make that hollow mouldy trunk—that home to sinister vermin—sprout shoots and these must spring from its original, purely revolutionary, genetic power.

As someone once said, we, the chosen species, are very unfortunate. Chosen, but by whom? Modern biology teaches us that the species, sacks of selfish genes interacting randomly with each other and with their changing surroundings, are incapable of controlling their own fate; and humans, ultimately no more than a zoological species, are no exception in this regard. But we seem to forget this when we talk about progress, an archaeological left-over of the old Christian edifice; what we call humanism is nothing more than belief in progress, hope that the growing technical and scientific knowledge will free us from the threat of disease, will provide us with increasing well-being and will extend our life expectancy. It is a vain illusion because humans, an intelligent and creative species whose knowledge will undoubtedly become even broader, is also the most destructive and most predatory of species. Today, when progressivism and conservatism and the terms “left” and “right” have ceased to mean anything, it might initially seem as if the prediction of the twilight of ideology had come true, but the real debate is a different one: the real debate is between Darwinian evolutionism and humanism or between natural polytheism and Biblical monotheism. A key issue regarding progress: the debate between the optimism of those who see it as the source of prosperity and those who—from a position of rational pessimism—consider that such a thing is not only improbable but impossible, given humans' selfish and radically predatory nature.

Now, following the pact of non-intervention and mutual co-operation between the technical world and faith, a proto-totalitarian technocratic pact, our hope of salvation lies in the technical and scientific humanism which will bring us, if not paradise, at least the hope of a longer life and one of greater quality. And most importantly: it is not that our thinking has become globally united around liberal economic ideas (let alone increasingly prostituted and deformed political ideas) but that a new “chosen nation”, the United States, is being established which is proclaiming itself to be the fountainhead of reason, right and holiness.

But if, as always happens in mass society, the majority—opulent or needy—is kept in the profoundest ignorance, the rich part, entombed in the neo-caves of the vulgar or luxurious shopping centre; the poor part is consumed by indifference, hurry, unstable despicable work and stultification. In the meantime, a select minority of biomedical scientists has managed, through a knowledge of the human genome and the help of that great new engineering of the twenty-first century, genetics, to seize control, still very partially, of human development. We now have the idea of conscious human evolution. The concept of humankind taking charge of its own destiny is only meaningful if we attribute consciousness and intent to species: but Darwinism tells us that the species are only currents in the continuous flow of genes. If, in this century humans can remodel their own nature, it will not be to any preconceived plan, but the final result of a series of sordid struggles between large corporations, international organised crime resulting from globalisation and the deep reticular sewers of contemporary states.

The Earth now houses somewhat over six billion humans. If drastic measures are not taken, by 2050 that number will have increased by at least 1.2 billion. A total human population of close to 8000 million cannot be maintained except by laying waste to the planet and a new biological artificialness will be implemented to feed this colossal number of human beings. A new geological era, the “Eremozoic Era”, will begin in

which there will no longer be any biodiversity, only humans and the proteins, lipids and carbohydrates needed to feed them. Apparently, there are just two ways in which the elegant, selfish and bloodthirsty predator that is mankind can be halted in his tracks. Either the Earth's own self-regulating mechanisms will make the planet less habitable for humans, or the side effects of our own activities will put paid to our current demographic expansion (climate change and greenhouse effect, among others). When an animal population extends beyond its natural habitat and grows exponentially, it becomes a plague. And a mathematical model will have to be fulfilled to control this population, so that the greater part of the collapse will have to occur in little over a hundred years: by 2150, the biosphere should have returned to the safe population levels of homo sapiens that existed before the plague threshold was reached—about one billion individuals. Humans may not be able to make the Earth disappear, but they can bankrupt their environment and make its habitability very difficult. And the new technologies are ambivalent, dual: they can resolve many of modern man's problems, but they can also lead to new ones, because these technologies also serve to prey, steal and kill. Pogroms are as old as Christianity; but without the railway, the telegraph and zyklon gas, neither the Holocaust nor the Stalinist gulags would have been possible. The most profound reason why man will never be able to be master over technology is that, when a technology is introduced, man himself alters it to extremes that we will never be able to fully understand. It is said that moral progress is much slower than technical and scientific progress; but that is our fault. Environmental or “green” thinkers and activists are utterly naive in this regard. In their struggle against technology they tell us that the world can be turned into an instrument of human interest. They are wrong, because the technical, prelude to the technological, is not a genuinely human instrument, as we can clearly see from the ants and bees, which are much older and more primitive than ourselves. To view our bodies as being natural and our technologies as artificial is to give too much importance to the biological accident that led to the advent of homo sapiens. Moreover, if machines end up replacing us as is ultimately intended, what will happen is an evolutionary change of a significance similar to that which occurred when bacteria combined to create our first ancestors.

Humanism, whether religious, Marxist, existentialist, technological or ecologist, is a doctrine of salvation which preaches the certainty of humankind to be lord of its destiny in this world and, if this were not quite utopian enough, also in another world of an unknown nature. Human beings, through their own actions, lack the biological capacity necessary to save themselves and the planet. There once existed (and still exists in animist cultures) an idea that is quite deep-rooted in our psyche and which explains the emergence of environmentalism: an awareness of a shared destiny with all other living species. But the great majority of humans, in their development, are not governed by intermittent moral criteria—and still less by their own interest—but by the needs of the moment. Even if a politically irrelevant minority knows the importance of the evolutionary process, most of the human species ignores it and drugs itself with false hopes of humanity.