

Feral Aurora

Beyond the Pale

Lee Paxton

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Civilisation is the 'highest' achievement of man. And yet, in all its supernatural grandeur, it is quite perverse, a distinctly human disorientation. What do I here mean by 'civilisation'? I mean an amalgamation of all things *noble*: morality, selflessness, fidelity, piety, hard work, unconditional love, purity, 'progress', etc. What this means: Self-sacrifice, sublimation of the animal instincts, waiver of the will, forfeit of freedom. One must love the beautiful, and only noble things are beautiful! One must love the good, and only civility is good!

"Renounce your shameful nature, man! Embrace the higher life!" Yes, the prophets of civilisation bid me be ashamed of everything which undermines it. I must constantly be in conflict with myself – my animal nature and my 'noble soul', my devil and my angel. How at home Zarathustra, Plato, and Valentinus would be in this milieu! For their millennia old worldview, their misguided ethic, still stands proud as the essence of civil-mindedness.

When a man fails to live up to the demands of civilisation, to its transcendent, quasi-religious ideals, we call him an 'animal' or a 'beast', and hearing these words he is expected to repent, bow his head, and self-flagellate. If the chimpanzee had the necessary powers of comprehension, he would surely look upon this as most bewildering, thinking to himself, "Why does this animal hate himself so? Why is he so dedicated in his pursuit of not being what he is? He is the cleverest of creatures, and his cleverness has made him stupid."

Try telling a snake that it's ignoble for him to bite you. It's entirely meaningless to him. For nature there is only creatures, their desires, and their powers. Concepts such as morality are entirely rooted in language, which allows us to create a world of mental abstractions. However, abstract ideas only exist in the mind, not in nature, and are created by us in the process of thinking, they do not pre-exist thinking. The process of reification, in which we mistakenly ascribe precedence to thoughts over the thinker, as if they have a 'life of their own', takes its course through the varied manifestations of 'civilised thought', which is by degrees not in accordance with the reality of the world. Civilisation is the product of man *possessed*, where noble ideas hold sway, and people are their play-things; where the houses men have built have become their prisons.

Everywhere *impulsiveness* is chastised and *compulsion* is preached. To be a 'good citizen' is the noble way, to subordinate oneself to laws and ideals. With what enthusiasm the progressives chant 'citizens not subjects'. And yet, what is the citizen but the subject who has pride in his subjection?

At the same time the left-wing anarchists declare their opposition to ‘the state’ in all its manifestations, and then reel out their ‘universal statute on the equal rights of man’.¹ How better to describe a state, I ask you, if not as an institution which enforces a statute? This fact, that anarchy, as opposition to the state, cannot possibly be reconciled with a system of radical equality, is the Achilles’ heel of the left anarchists. Unwilling to admit the need for force – and thus swap their black flag for a red one – they have no answer to the question of how to realise their utopian vision. The great dictatorial regimes were merely being practical when they undertook campaigns of murder, imprisonment, and indoctrination.² An ideal, by its nature, opposes the natural order of things. They say you can’t fit a square peg into a round hole. Well, maybe you can, but you’re going to need a hammer and a file.

It is surely time for the discontents, who no longer wish to live in shame and servitude, to slough off, not only the vestiges of religion, but of civility; to laugh the prophet from his podium, to stand fearless before the hero, and to put the torch to their statutes.

But we who would be free find ourselves in a conundrum. For everywhere on this earth that we may step we are followed by a bureaucrat with his regulation book, watching our every move, ready to call forward an army of enforcers at the first sign that we are ‘taking liberties’. And thus we find ourselves unavoidably enemies of the state, for a state is a centre of ‘legitimacy’. It is in its nature to dictate ‘valid freedoms’, to determine for me what I can do and who I can be. It promotes and defends liberty only insofar as it is *ideologically sanctioned* liberty – which hardly deserves the name at all.

But, detractors, don’t misunderstand me. Nihilists like myself are not the enemies of ‘society’, as such, for who would oppose friendship and co-operation? No, I envisage a society, but one quite different from what is currently understood by the term. One of spontaneous order, created by men to serve themselves, in which our actions no longer honour ideas, but honour our creative wills alone. One unopposed to the potency of the individual. Social, and yet deeply individualistic, personal, inasmuch as my community is *mine* – I choose it, it is not lord over me. Order, but *chaotic* order – genuinely ‘free association’. Post-normative – that is to say, rooted in *will* rather than abstract moral-philosophical justification. No longer a sacred idol owed obeisance, but a tool to be used for my satisfaction. A network of wilful individuals, the terms of our community not dictated to us, but decided by us, together. If we cannot come to terms, we simply do not associate, we live in separation, for no statute claims dominion over the whole land.

Thus we distinguish between ‘civilisation’ and ‘society’, as between ideological order and spontaneous wilful order, as between the idealistic and the naturalistic. We call for society with a small ‘s’. We fight not for the glory of abstract ideals – not for the Good, the Holy, the True, the Right – but for *ourselves* and that which is *ours*. Man’s reign is over, for I am not Man, I am nothing but myself.³ I will no more pay tribute to the spooks of civilisation. I cast out the demons which have possessed my ancestors. I wash my hands of the sovereign phantasy.

They will call us barbarians, but they don’t know what that means. They will imagine us drinking blood because they are lost in their myths that to be untamed is to be savage and cruel. But nature is not cruel, it is simply indifferent. Cruelty is a neurotic affectation, that is to say, a prod-

¹ Something which, we should note, the ‘anarcho-capitalists’ and libertarians are also guilty of in their reification of the ‘Non-Aggression Principle’.

² Pol Pot’s ‘Year Zero’ is perhaps the most lucid example of this, but there are plenty to choose from.

³ The most persistent of ideals is the most absurd one: that a self should seek not its own well-being, but that of some other.

uct of unresolved tension. When impulses cannot be freely expressed, when the libido cannot be satisfied, a man becomes frustrated, and that frustration, when persistent, gives birth to resentment and anger towards whatever is judged to be its source. To elicit suffering in that source is the most potent way to manifest one's might over it, to rule.

Civilised power is judged necessary in order to stop this sort of behaviour. If one does not give too much thought to it, this makes sense. But, with its absurd moral dictates, it actually ends up *causing* even more 'immorality' than it set out to suppress. Is it not obvious, for example, that a civilisation with stringent rules on sexual morality, in which women withhold their sexual affections lest they become 'sluts', will be more plagued with frustrated, resentful men resorting to rape, or unconsciously switching their attention to more passive sexual objects, such as children?

No doubt the more learned reader who wishes to discredit this perspective will take recourse to the arguments of Thomas Hobbes, who I would venture is, at least in his basic arguments, the political philosopher of modernity par excellence. In a 'state of nature' lacking any inherent justice, Hobbes proposed, men are destined to be constantly in a state of war, for they will at first be jealous when they see others with things they don't have, and so take it by force, and second, in fear of the first happening, will seek to dominate each other to ensure safety. Because of this, people living in this 'anarchic' form of society can never flourish. They will struggle for survival, subsistence alone will be difficult, and advanced culture and industry will be impossible.

In light of this problem he proposed that a sovereign power of which all men are "in awe" is necessary to force civil behaviour. Only in fear of this power can men be expected to respect each other. Men should accept this because, whilst they will be required to give up certain freedoms, yet it will bring about a peace that will improve and extend their lives.

It is a clever argument, but one full of holes. If men have a tendency to act as Hobbes claims, then why on earth would I put my trust in one, or a group of them, to rule over me? They can swear their devotion to protecting my 'legitimate interests' all they like, but I know that at any second they could appropriate my possessions, take my wife as their mistress, or order me shot. If I cannot trust my neighbour as my neighbour, then to trust him when he puts on a crown and calls himself 'King' is patent foolishness. One would almost think that Hobbes was entirely ignorant of history. If the thing we are to fear is the arbitrary will of others, then to wholly surrender to the arbitrary will of another is *unthinkably stupid*.

Even were we to imagine that the sovereign power was somehow determinedly benevolent, the value of the system would depend on it having *global* dominion. If competing sovereign powers exist – i.e. nation states – then that state of war remains, and now it is not only small-scale conflict between individuals or tribes, it is conflict pitting millions against each other. The state tells me it has my interests in mind, that under its watchful eye I need no longer fear my neighbour, and then at the drop of a hat 'we' are at war with Iran, and I am sent to get my body exploded in a ditch somewhere. But it's alright, I am dying for freedom (a most *noble* cause)! And the cherished freedom I shall have the good fortune to exercise is the right to be a fetid, mangled corpse.

I do not disagree with Hobbes that the 'state of nature', as they say, is one rife with conflict. But this is something which cannot but accompany life, insofar as life consists of a multitude of bodies, each with their own will. The only workable road to a world truly without conflict is the extermination of all life. I do not like it, but it cannot be otherwise, and the utopians will forever find themselves thwarted.

And so, if I am to be conquered, it will not be with my consent. I will not sing a national anthem with a gun pressed to my head. And I will not beg for my freedom, I will declare it! So I call for the dissolution of civilisation. Iconoclasts and outlaws, rebels and untouchables, discontents, defectors, reprobates, egoists, cynics, heretics, neanderthals, expatriates, warriors, radicals, dissenters, frauds, failures, dreamers, schemers, somebodies and nobodies: wedge your fingers in the cracks, and pull...

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