Fossil Stories and White Supremacy

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A friend communicates to me that they believe that the presence of racism within the riots that have been seen across these isles these past few days is overstated, suggesting that this is largely spectacle and that most of the rioters are taking opportunities to vent some existential despair; voicing that they are more concerned about the "emergency powers" that the state is taking on. I don't know. I'm not in Belfast or Manchester or London or Liverpool or any of the other cities where the cameras are filming, or the towns where others are amassing under the banners of Cause. There are individuals in online local discussion groups advocating that people "protest" where local Muslim communities gather, in the town a few miles from where I live – apparently the town was plastered with anti-migrant propaganda this weekend. I don't know what they would do or what danger they are to those who they see as worthy targets for attacks – sacrifices for their Cause. This doesn't feel like just spectacle. This feels like opportunistic bigotry. This feels like racism. This feels like white supremacism.

Sure, there is a spectacle. Of course there is a spectacle. I have no doubt the state will use this moment and this spectacle to further assert the illusion that it has any control over anything. I also have no doubt that media machines will push narratives to draw in an audience and exacerbate situations for financial gain. Yes, there is a spectacle. Underneath and behind this spectacle, there is the flesh of life and at that point of contact events are happening that impact lives. This is what concerns me. The threat posed by these Causes utterly revolts me.

In my conversations with folk and individuals regarding what is underway upon these isles in the North Sea, regarding racism and bigotry and the violences those ideologies seek to justify, there is a general feeling of horror and awfulness – where words never do justice to the experience, as awe is ineffable and unspeakable, beyond the limits of language and symbolic representation. I spoke recently to two Jewish men about the worsening antisemitism and anti-Arab racism upon these isles, and we share in the difficulties in talking about these matters when conversations get ransacked by ideologies and pushed into stupid "my ideology vs your ideology" or "my people vs your people" type dialectics, without any nuance, or actual appreciation for who they are speaking with. I speak with well meaning folk in my local community who say things like "I thought we were past this", as if racism and bigotry and these ideologies were things that this culture had progressed past in some Historical movement towards completion, and "I thought everyone understood", as if this were all just a matter of having understanding through the right information. From where I stand, racism and bigotry seem to be cancerous diseases of

civilisation that require more than Historical progress or information to survive and heal from. Like with cancer, I see no easy answers or definitive cure, whilst also having an intense desire to prevent the spread and kill the presence of, with an orientation towards life preservation and affirmation.

I am completely devoid of belief that state measures would, could, can or will do anything in killing these pernicious ideologies, while feeling that they will more than likely render more attracted to them. Racism and bigotry seem to me to rest upon (at least) three (perhaps fundamentally conservative) axioms/principles, which I also see as being foundational to the logic of statism – perhaps this foundational similarity goes someway to accounting for states often pushing for and rely upon racism and bigotry(?). The first of these axioms is the principle of separatism, which seeks to advance the de-ecological illusion of separation and is perhaps best articulated in the philosophy of Hobbes. Separatism advances the notion that the state must keep wildness/"nature"/life away from citizens, so that the Totality must solely contain that which has been assimilated into productivity, separate from life outside of the polity. Those individuals and cultures who contradict that of the Totality, non-conforming to the standard ideology, are positioned as worthy targets of violence and abuse, to either expel them out of the polity or to have them killed within. That separation is an ecologically and ontologically meaningless notion matters little to the Causes that rest upon it and use it to push for hostile alienation. The second axiom is that of the great chain of being, which I see as the ecologically and ontologically meaningless illusion of hierarchy in any form whatsoever, and could easily be summed up in the concept of supremacism, whether or not that is white-supremacy, human-supremacy or whatever other example you can give. This illusion of hierarchy/supremacy rests upon the notion of an ordering to life, that relationships are organised within a system of statuses that places some above others. Upon this foundational concept, racist and speciesist machines function to create the political realities of white supremacy, as colonialist powers, and anthropocentrism, as totalitarian agriculture. As I see nothing in the way of an Orderer, as some God-like presence to organise and systematise such a hierarchy, I see nothing to establish such an ordering. The third foundational axiom that I notice, though there will undoubtedly be more than what I am seeing as I write this, is the myth of control. The myth of control strikes me as being centred around the idea that some individuals or political machines are or should be in control of "the situation", which really means something of repressing the freedom to choose of living beings and being ecologically violent to shape habitats as to fit some notion of design, thus making "the situation" as it ought to be. How this manifests in the Causes and ideologies of racism and bigotry is a push to "take control" of what those deemed lesser on the great chain of being do and where they are, in line with separatist ideals, either through appeals to the established state or through attempts at building micro-states that tyrannise those they seek to alienate and separate from, through localised modes of despotism. With regards to the established state, which postures itself as atop of the great chain of being, there is a push to assert the notion of control through attempting separation through border-control-policies and prison-system-apparatus and other means of practicing despotism.

No, I don't see the police or any other aspect of the state as being able to challenge the ideologies and Causes of racism, bigotry and white supremacy, as they rely on the same rationalisations, the same logic, the same reasoning. My political pessimism inclines me towards the belief that the displays of statist force through legislative changes will ultimately lead to escalating reactions in the name of these Causes. Those who have been arrested will serve as symbolic martyrs,

to rally and assimilate more members within these collectivist totalities; or at least this is my expectation. The state cannot legislate against or imprison ideas, let alone those that the state is seemingly founded upon, and strikes me as powerless to stop their survival or spread.

How can these cancerous concepts of civilisation – the illusion of separation, the myth of control and the ideology of the great chain of being – be killed, their survival ended and spread stopped? I don't know. I have no solution. That there is a question means that there must be an answer, right? Perhaps, but I see nothing for certain. My instinct is that a radical transvaluation of values, beginning with individuals engaging in conversations and iconoclastic creativity, would go somewhere of the way to this and potentially bring healing. I don't know. I wonder now a darker question; does this need to be killed, if the ecological conditions upon which it depends dies?

All presence is transient. All dies. All ends. Eternity is meaningless before death and we are living in a mass extinction event. The stories told by the fossil record, if we are to believe them, articulate the message that none survive this experience of life. The stories of rocks and stones, mountains and cliffs, affirm that even the strongest, toughest, most stubborn of presences weather and erode, break down, crumble, fall apart and collapse, with rain's and gravity's indifference towards these Beings rendering their attempts to retain their form absurd. This thought feels inhuman and I am remembering Camus' affirmation of inhumanity laying at the heart of beauty – and his affirmation of those creatures frequently called Humans secreting inhumanity too. I am reminded of Turgenev's poetry regarding a man surviving a storm with a dog and of a meeting with Nature, as well as Jeffers' poetic inhumanism. I do not believe that the state, white supremacism, those cancerous concepts, these horrific political machines will survive this mass extinction event, and believe that they will – like the Ice Age megafauna who didn't survive the global warming of their age; like those who didn't survive the glaciations that were the Eocene extinction event; like the dinosaurs who couldn't survive the ecological changes brought about by the K-Pg impact; like those who didn't survive the global warming of the Permian extinction event; and those who couldn't out last the extinction events of the Devonian era – be rendered extinct. I don't know; this is belief, not knowledge – and I have Shestov's words of "all things are possible" in my mind.

Does this affirmation of absurdity and inhumanism necessitate a personal embrace of indifference towards those who I love and co-exist with? Does this grant reason to cease efforts in trying to care for those others I come into relationship with throughout my life? I see no necessity and I see no reason. Yes, I can take strength and draw courage from the affirmation that I believe that these cannot survive this ecological and existential crisis. This though brings to my attention an anxiety regarding what living presences, what habitats and living beings, which cultures and tribes, might survive this extinction event, and live on for however long they do. I do not know and cannot know; I'm condemned to the ecological-existential-uncertainty and see no real means of transcendence from this situation. This anxiety that arises within my body affirms my freedom to actively care or choose not to actively care, the potential consequences of either actions, the absurdity of either actions, the abilities to respond that I have to hand, and my desires to care for those I love and co-exist with around me.

Fossils of a small fish, ammonites and trilobites in my house bring to my attention that all living beings are doomed to die and that extinction seems to me to be the only promise of the future. From my garden I hear the familiar sounds of birds singing, who I see as surviving dinosaurs, and think of the strength it took to survive those extinction events that fossils speak of, as well

as the absurdity, as many of their survivals are at real risk amidst this ecological catastrophe. I look again at the fossils and think of the arthropods who live in my garden and who will be eaten by those birds whose songs I listen to fondly. I then think of the cat who lives with me here in my house in Devon, an exilic species taken from Africa by colonialists, who came to live in the forests in the land often called Norway and were brought to the brink of extinction by war and who now lives here with me, a predator in a habitat where the larger predators have been culled to extinction – I love her intensely, this ecological exile who lives here with me.

I don't know if white supremacy can survive this mass extinction event or if it cannot. I am confident that one day it will be a fossil. But today white supremacy lives upon these isles in the North Sea. The state that has been built upon here is the legacy of colonialism, empire and all that white supremacy values. The media is focused on what the state is doing to stop the violence and I remain in disbelief that the state is anything more than a pathway to anything other than intensified violence.

The potential for more white supremacist, anti-migrant separatist and micro-statist politics throughout the coming days, weeks and months, feels very likely. This cancer seems to have been growing and spreading, amidst a liberal spectacle that has shined so brightly it has seemingly blinded many to this spread and growth. And there is a spectacle happening too, regarding these Causes, which will be looking to profiteer from the violence and spread horror and upset and fear. Perhaps I am, in writing this and putting it out to be read by others, feeding into the spectacle and perhaps worsening the situation further(?)! The suggestion feels absurd; as if this short piece of writing could have a significant and meaningful impact upon this situation – these are words unable to speak the unspeakable or articulate the ineffable awe of awfulness(… I wonder if the guitar, piano or dance would be a better choice of articulating this feeling and thought).

For those of us surviving and co-existing here, upon this archipelago, amidst the political machines of white supremacy, separatism, totalitarian agriculture and colonial-industrial-ruination, I feel sad. Visceral and raw sadness. There is anger and fight and fury and a will to resist, rebel and revolt there too, and prolonged personal confrontations with health struggles have left me with little energy to cathartically express these more active and energetic feelings – it has taken much energy to write this short piece of writing, with much feeling of revolt throughout. So the feeling that I have most intensely in this moment is that of sadness.

When I listen to this sadness I hear the most primal-animal aspects of my being crying out for healing and loving relationship; a call for grieving what has been lost amidst the violences of white supremacy and a desire to meet with others who are surviving amidst all of this. In sadness, aspects of my self and desires that are beyond reason, ideology and civilisation are communicated and if I listen to them, rather than repress and ignore, I notice that the sadness contains motivation. Shestov described despair as the penultimate word, as part of his philosophical rebellion against (the despair of) reason, necessity, rationality and causality; affirming belief as what comes after despair. What do I believe in? I believe in myself; my courage, my strength, my determination, my will, my freedom and my creativity. I believe in the will-to-life/power/preservation that I see in those living beings who I co-exist with, their resilience and strength and bravery. I believe in death and that that is all absurd, that we are living in a mass extinction event that will likely outlast this cultural experiment in civilisation, and that that end of civilisation will not be the end of the world or life, as living beings shall will on and overcome the ecological challenges that they face.

All dies. The sadness will die. At some point the belief will die. I will die. You reading this will die. Protesters and counter-protesters and the police and the state will all die. Innumerable living beings are dying due to the political machines that are this culture. In my garden wild birds kill wild arthropods and death happens there too. Death is all that the future holds, as we will all be extinct. White supremacy will be extinct and those Causes will die. Right now, the sadness, belief and revolt lives, as does white supremacy and the Causes pushing its ideology. Death and presence sire creativity, which I see as the expression of freedom; the creation of healthy habitats, the creation of challenging art, the creation of loving, caring and supportive relationships, as wilful acts of defiance, disobedience, nonconformity and rebellion, expressing the freedom to break from the logic, rationality and reasoning of separatism, control and the great chain of being and iconoclastically destroy those machines, all feel like desirable births.

I distract myself for a few minutes from my feeling unable to end this through rereading Benjamin Zephaniah's poems We Refugees and The British and feel love for who he was in life.

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