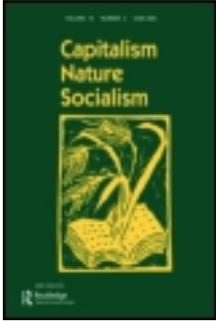


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Publisher: Routledge

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UK



Capitalism Nature Socialism

Publication details, including instructions for authors
and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcns20>

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Published online: 03 Apr 2014.

To cite this article: Kris Forkasiewicz (2014): Animal Fragments, Capitalism Nature
Socialism, DOI: [10.1080/10455752.2014.904562](https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2014.904562)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2014.904562>

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HOUSE ORGAN

Animal Fragments

Kris Forkasiewicz*

The Difficulty. The topic is like a thorn in one's side, the name itself the worst insult, so close to home it strikes; like a stubborn itch, it brings back what one would like to have left behind but never has and, until one's final breath, never will.

You Animal, You. If you are reading these words, and I was able to jot them down, that is only because you and I are both animals. Reading, like writing, is an animal thing—one must be sufficiently fed, rested, quiet, warm, and otherwise unperturbed enough to care; one needs hands to feel, eyes to see, and a living, full-bodied relation to the world to be able to contextualize and interpret its meanings syphoned into the succeeding lines of text. These seeming basics form the very texture of our daily lives. But we notoriously belittle their significance, bent on thinking that we are more than this, and that animality does not do justice to our profundity. If pushed to resign ourselves to animality, at least for the time being, we will purport to represent its very apogee: rationality, politics, religion, language, or—a socialist favorite—production. We will still feel more than “just” animals, hoping eventually to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps out of the animal condition. And if there comes an itch, unforgiving in its imposition, we might try even harder. In doing so, we will end up that much more awkward, like a philosopher who desperately tries to keep discussing the most other-worldly things while fidgeting convulsively around his chair. Like him, we will fail. Even if we succeed, we will fail. We are nothing more than animals hiding behind a smokescreen of suppressive practices and misconceptions, the curious animals pervasively and misguidedly dissatisfied with their condition.

The Boils of Marx. Writing in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels offered a famous and probing materialist insight into our animality, albeit without using the term:

The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of

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independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness. (Marx and Engels 1845, 42–43)

Marx and Engels were here just about to venture off into a discussion of the “greater” things related to production. But they would do so without fully digesting the presuppositions of their own creed: our economic arrangements and productive undertakings consist precisely in an interweaving of millions of those inconspicuous daily moments and movements through which we exercise our animal natures. It is from these minutiae of life, and from how we undergo them, that our metaphysically and ideologically inflected fantasies of productive self-determination are woven. There is no “ascending from earth to heaven” (Marx and Engels 1845, 42) that we could speak of. As much as ever, we remain embedded in the earth. So I tend to picture Marx stubbornly, maniacally attacking his burdensome boils with a razor (Hunt 2009, 208–209) right before he sits down to draft the next page of *Capital*.

The Cold Lens of Materialism. In his *On Materialism*, Sebastiano Timpanaro summarized the materialist worldview:

By materialism we understand above all acknowledgement of the priority of nature over “mind,” or if you like, of the physical level over the biological level, and of the biological level over the socio-economic and cultural level; both in the sense of chronological priority... and in the sense of the conditioning which nature *still* exercises on man and will continue to exercise at least for the foreseeable future. (Timpanaro [1970] 1975, 34, italics original)

More accurately, not only are we conditioned from A to Z—down to every pore and with no expiration date wholly permeable to the rest of the world—but the separation of “man” from “nature” is already a post hoc abstraction from lived experience; it is made possible only with a shift effected through a perspectival step back, a perceptual withdrawal of sorts. A wide perspective “from above” arises when “mind” (aptly framed in quotes by Timpanaro) is *posited* as the counterpoint of “objective reality.” Both are provisionally extracted moments of reality’s dense pre-reflective texture. This perspective, once assumed, can be utilized in complex analyses of historical, economic, social, and other systems—at which marxists have excelled and to which we have grown so accustomed. However, part of the same movement of abstraction, materialism loses the grip on a sense of reality that comes with all the immediacy, say, of running into a brick wall—an experience which brings all the abstracted levels of reality *back together* into a lived unity. It is this felt, animal sense of materiality that we ought not to lose sight of. “Scientific points of view,” wrote Merleau-Ponty in the Preface to his *Phenomenology of Perception*, “are always both naive and at the same time dishonest...” ([1945] 2005, IX). Materialists or not, we “cannot shut [ourselves] up in the realm of science” (Merleau-Ponty

[1945] 2005). It's not that science is "wrong" but that, like morality, religion, etc. for Marx, it too loses any semblance of independence. It needs to be put in context and proportion: it is done by live creatures. Real life does not follow materialist premises; those premises are abstracted from it. Economics, geography, biology, history—these too are animal fragments. We can afford a cold, scientific materialism only at a high price of the loss of the elusively obvious, the directly felt, the self-presencing. And this loss is the context of most socialist theorizing.

True, not all marxists accept the specifics of Timpanaro's materialism but, Merleau-Ponty argues, its reductionist basis was already professed by Marx himself. For Marx grounded his theory of history "on a view of unexplained and 'perhaps mythical' Nature that is supposed to be self-contained, 'pure object, being in itself,' but which is never present in our experience because the latter always 'shapes and transforms it'" (Hamrick and Van der Veken 2011, 13). Nature is here already abstracted from experience as an Other, some mute primary stuff on which we act. "Therefore, this pure Nature in itself is 'everywhere and nowhere, like an obsessive fear'" (Hamrick and Van der Veken 2011). And isn't the figure of the animal likewise everywhere and nowhere—but not here!—for us, a source of obsessive fear?

On the Animal as a Notion. The "animal" is ultimately but a heuristic notion—a point of entry into the lived reality of corporal sentience; a discursive tool for the excavation thereof from beneath a rotting pile of bad faith; a magnifying glass held up to what we really are in our quotidian, bodily experiential immersion in the world. It will hopefully serve well and long enough to enable a diagnosis of a profound disorder in the ongoing relations of certain peculiar bipeds with their multivaried kin and their declining world. If no timeless, unvarying essence of animal(-ity) is anywhere to be found, all the better—it is reality, not the concept, that we strive to remain faithful to. To that end, we assume the healthiest perspective we can conceive of, such that it will prevent us from drifting astray along yet another chain of exceptionalist self-gratification. In the process, we will have to curb some of those productivist fantasies on which, in their Enlightenment mood, Marx and Engels were so keen. There is no ladder upon which to climb heavenward. We can believe otherwise only on account of massive self-deception which reduces our earthly embeddedness to a matter merely of objective conditions and eradicates it as felt experience. We have been climbing a phantasm. We now have to let this phantasm collapse, materially and discursively, so that the lost animal feeling can be revived. It is plausible that at some point, the notion of the animal will no longer be useful. It is likewise plausible that a saner animal would no longer need to call himself/herself *anything*. But reliance on the notion makes sense in a context of pervasive corporal self-abnegation and massive instrumentalization and extermination of other live creatures. We need the "animal" now more than ever, and so do, indirectly, the countless scores of other sentients whose blood stains the floors, walls, and steel bars of slaughterhouses and labs, zoos and breeding/holding houses, forests and fields, streets and backyards, and docks and trawler decks.

Real Animals. Animals are, at bottom, phenomenally distinct sentient creatures vitally engaged in ongoing relations with their enviroing lifeworlds. On account of their very sentience, not one of them is merely passive, a ball bounced around the pool table of life by external momentum alone. They not only absorb, like a rock would; not only react to stimuli, like a plant does, nor are they pieces of rigidly preprogrammed machinery, although that's how they still tend to be pictured. Live creatures are given—down to the very depths of their fleshly selves—to situations, to which they *intelligently respond* with a range of expressive means available and that is proper to their bodily organization. Given over to situations in a dialectic of carnal life, the animals give back. To be deemed intelligent, their responses need not resemble the clumsy self-consciousness of a philosopher; they can just as well as evoke the graceful intelligence of a skilled dancer, “subterranean” in its immediacy, embedded in the body's very instincts and bubbling up to the surface of consciousness already pregnant with and expectant of meaning. With differences in bodily makeup, the means of expression and meaning-making will differ for a bottlenose shark and a pygmy killer whale, a red-footed tortoise and a silver-haired bat, a Chianina cow and the farmer that sticks a knife in her or his throat. But their lifeworlds will open out onto one another and overlap, and the animals will become each other's kin, their own flesh continuous with the flesh of the earth.

It's a Carnal Thing. Creatureliness is the wonder and horror of our animal condition, the outline of our facticity. Beneath our various machinations and, more to the point, right down through them, we are engaged in a delicate balance of holding on and letting go attributable to all animal life. Our individual and collective responses to our lived situations may be adequate or not. We have collectively committed innumerable mistakes, and that is fine—errancy is inscribed in animality itself and can sometimes enhance life (Nietzsche 2001, 104). On top of those mistakes, however, we have been making, time and again, a massive error, the accumulated weight of which has put our animality upside down.

The body is not a vessel for the mind, nor is there a dialectical relation between the two. The “mind” is a reified aspect of the body—the somatic nature of the sentient organism—a clumsy shorthand denoting the latter's many ways of dynamic coping with its world. “Mind” reduces the totality of those ways to the narrow (Lakoff and Johnson 1999) field where consciousness—itsself an awkwardly rigid category—makes itself manifest. “Body am I entirely, and nothing else,” say Nietzsche's awakened and knowing, “and soul is just a word for something about the body” (1976, 146–147). There is no need to uphold “mind” or “mind-stuff” as an ontological category in its own right (see Dewey 1929; Rorty 1979). Everything purportedly mental is actually somatic. We would do better to drop the discourse of “mental” and talk of explicitly and implicitly somatic practices: the former exemplified by someone's digging a ditch in the ground to get to drinking water, the latter by contemplation of, say, death. Such contemplation, too, is undertaken by none other than the body itself.

The ineffability of animality—that unnameable thing itself—is a symptom of self-estrangement. That self-estrangement is ultimately, Marx would agree, material in nature: we are thrown onto the backside of the circumstances which we have ourselves built up and which preclude us—paradoxically though this may sound—from becoming, or living as, what we are. Consequently, revival of animality, not only as an objective condition (which holds as fast as ever, and can only be “overcome” with our extinction), but as a felt quality of living, is about letting material conditions emerge to the fore in which animality could speak with a voice swept clear of the distortion accumulated through habitual self-abnegation of the living bodies that we are.

Corporal Self-Abnegation... That we believe so badly in the potency of “mind” is more than conceptual confusion; it reflects the profound imbalance in our corporal constitution—a small-scale analog of the socio-ecological crisis itself. Our living bodies are swarmed by chronic attempts at an auto-vivisection (Bell 2011, 166) of their undesirable constituents, identified for eradication as instincts, passions, emotions, and all the rest of the sensuous—all with which we feel ourselves gripped by the world. The authoritarian reign of the ego—an extortionary, mafia-like conglomeration of bodily drives—runs rampant across the otherwise far more spontaneous and deeper experience of worldly immersion. The strong ego is equated with “the intelligible character... in rational control of all its impulses, the kind taught in the whole tradition of modern rationalism” (Adorno [1966] 2004, 294). It would suck the rest of the organism dry as part of its campaign of instinctual repression inculcated in us more thoroughly with each passing generation. To paraphrase Debord ([1988] 1990, 58–60), we have come to manipulate reality to a degree so great that we have become paralyzingly confused about reality itself—what it is and whether it even exists. While Debord was talking of the reckless scheming of governmental intelligence agencies, the ego is likewise nothing but a network which, come together, becomes infinitely manipulative, claims for itself a governing function, and performs it in a deceitfully secretive, elusive manner. Not unlike capitalism, the ego conceals itself precisely through its ubiquity. Only seldom does it come out into the open, mostly to put out emotional fires, like with Lenin’s quick suppression of his tears at hearing Beethoven’s *Appassionata Sonata*.

...And Some of Its Manifestations. It is not just that we think our situation incorrectly, although that’s part of the problem. The ego’s ascent is, in a sense, the body’s rational response to living in an increasingly derailed society. Consistently with Marx’s advocacy of primacy of “life” over “consciousness,” our collective situation is now structured in a manner that invites and facilitates the self-excision of our animal selves, paves the way to exploitation and extermination of other animals, and compels us to recreate this setting indefinitely on an ever-larger scale. We find ourselves prompted to think compulsively, to the point of neurosis and breakdown; to synchronize our movements with accelerating clock-time and hurry busily through our days; to adhere to ever-tightening standards of behavior and appearance, including in sexual and working life; to sever experiential ties with the rest of

nature, including our animal kin, by physical displacement to crowded cities and their cramped interiors; to forget the difference between day and night, let go of the scent of grass, the feeling of sea breeze on our skin, the directness of face-to-face encounter, the texture of acorns in our hands, the taste of the soil, now increasingly poisoned, on unwashed vegetables; finally, to experience ourselves, from the cradle to the grave, as objects of cold, impersonal administration; and all of it in accordance with the patterns enforced by the grinding wheels of the capitalist machine. Entangled in capitalist relations athletes train themselves into cripplement; manual workers dig themselves into an early grave; others suffer chronic stress and fatigue; and all of us lock ourselves away in the confines of the four walls, wherefrom many of us, benumbed, bear witness to the world's eclipse. All of this pales, however, in comparison with what the other animals, in many billions annually, suffer at our hands.

Animal Exterminationism. “He’s such an animal,” we hear, and we think “that can’t be good.” A standard “You animal!” is hurled at us and we feel insulted. Why?! Because to be announced “animal” has heretofore meant to be pushed off the ledge of what is valuable; to be deemed and made eminently and unceremoniously usable and killable; to find oneself in a position of extreme vulnerability and precariousness; to fall victim to aggression, hatred, systematic manipulation, and extermination; to slide down into the vortex of a perpetual holocaust. Novelist Isaac Bashevis Singer had Herman Gombiner, the protagonist of *The Letter Writer*, address a befriended mouse in these words:

What do they know—all these scholars, all these philosophers, all these leaders of the world—about such as you? They have convinced themselves that man, the worst transgressor of all the species, is the crown of creation. All other creatures were created merely to provide him with food, pelts, to be tormented, exterminated. In relation to them, all people are Nazis; for the animals it is an eternal Treblinka. (Singer 1974, 234)

“Outrageous!” goes the typical reaction to the comparison, reflective of the general outcry against animal liberation, both from the right and the left (Sorenson 2011). Given the stubborn entrenchment of speciesism, it is no wonder that animal liberationists are deemed fanatics and extremists. Veiled by the night, brave men and women break into and sabotage sites of exploitation, liberating the tortured; they risk their freedom, now facing terrorist charges in the USA (Potter 2011) and other severe repercussions elsewhere. And this is what they get in return. Perhaps in this case, they should embrace the invective. Perhaps, as Debord and Wolman put it, “it is good to be fanatic about certain things” (1955). If the defense of the anthropocentric paradigm is despairingly unrelenting, that is because the assault upon it is growing in both strength and substance. As soon as the resilient frame of speciesism is kicked from beneath anti-animal prejudice, its whole structure will collapse; comparisons of animal exploitation and the Nazi holocaust will not be questionable, and both will be seen as instances of animal oppression. In fact, the indigenous of the earth know all

too well that there have been many more than the one holocaust Europe was so struck by. Underlying them all—materially, including conceptually—is oppression of “animals,” the despised to which the indigenous have commonly been relegated, forming part of a veritable hierarchy of “killables.” Nothing short of a *a priori* drastic devaluation of animality could have made facile killability and total instrumentalization of other animals excusable. Without it, the hierarchy of killables will finally collapse. There will then be no doubt that the billions upon billions of real, breathing, feeling, suffering individuals annually trapped, bred, raised, enslaved, vivisected, ground, stunned, asphyxiated, bled out, and skinned count as holocaust victims (see Monson 2005). 2011 saw the release (“retirement”) of a group of 38 chimpanzees into grass and sunlight after their kidnapping from the African jungle and into 30 years of captivity in metal lab cages and dead cold exploitation. Their mothers, used to nurse them to up the status of “experiment-ready,” were all slaughtered after six years of raising their babies. The little ones, “hooked up to machines and pumped full of chemicals, [had] truly [been] prisoners of utter despair. With no stimulation, no nurturing love and no hope, many were driven to the brink of madness and sometimes beyond” (Hall 2011). They will know no true freedom; for that it is too late. But, scarred beyond repair and redemption, at least, some of them were not completely broken. On the day of release, 37-year-old Suzi could be seen sunbathing on her back after 35 years of darkness. Moments earlier, Clyde took a brave peek into the outdoors before hugging his brothers and sisters, smiling and waving in joy at finally getting to be outside. A tip of relief on an iceberg of misery.

Holocaust Conservation. The tragedy of this ongoing holocaust, and something that considerations of species survival and extinction cannot grasp, is that its victims, as Karen Davis puts it, “are unable to die and become extinct under conditions equivalent to their eternal rebirth in a bottomless pit” (2011, 41). Consideration of these standardized victims does not compute in the standard discourse of biodiversity unless their misery—itsself passed over in silence—is linked to environmental degradation. Just as our biologically conceived makeup does not exhaust our lived subjectivity, graphs of biodiversity fall way short from serious treatment of actual animals. Species is a category too broad and abstract to enable insight into the suffering of a real live creature (insofar as a conceptual category is needed here at all). The recent black rhino kill-off permit auction by a conservationist group calling themselves the Dallas Safari Club (Nelson 2014) illustrates the downright pathological manner in which we tend to reconcile the extermination of animal individuals with bio-conservation; it shows how ethically deficient the rhetoric of biodiversity can be. First the rhinos pay the price of anthropic encroachment by losing their homes and having their family members decimated. Then the remaining individuals’ will to live is checkmated by a bid among moneyed, avid killers, \$350,000 in the bank, and a bunch of bullets. The killers are tentacles of a system that first puts black rhinos—and countless other victims—in grave danger, then purports to protect them, only to later raise the danger level to extreme at the barrel of a gun. Killers masquerade as benefactors, capitalists as nature lovers—often the same people, always the same morbidity at work. With friends like these, who needs enemies? The insatiable

hunger of the capitalist, who has now co-opted environmental concerns, opens for him fresh avenues of manipulation, hence the “development” of so-called enviropigs, victims of the biotech and meat industries who can be exploited for their flesh while contributing less to pollution. “The researchers involved in this project [we are told by one of its animators] are very driven and passionate about addressing an important environmental problem while increasing options that might be useful for adoption in many parts of the world” (Green Muze 2010). Bottomline is there’s money to be made, and it opens way to slavery and murder: this is what carnality means under capitalism. But this is no unique perversion, just another step in the age-old process of desecration and reification of sentient life, commonly known as domestication. In the end, domestication is a lousy euphemism for gearing into live creatures’ natures only to warp them under arbitrary control. An exercise in violent submission and instrumentalization since its earliest beginnings, the enslavement of other sentients has provided a precedent for a whole range of oppressive practices that grip the vulnerable to this day. Witness the prevalence of collars and chains, originally designed for subduing unruly pigs or cows, in North-American slave trade. And what of the origins of a cage? Late capitalism pushes this “domesecration” (Nibert 2013) further: it breaks down biological barriers at an unprecedented pace, coming to chain our very DNA to productivist interests. Even ontology comes to lie at its feet; our very integrity as sentient creatures comes to be questioned, dissected, and rearranged. How could we have thought that genetic instrumentalism would stop with pigs, rats, mice, or rabbits? How could we think we would become free but with the destruction of *all* cages? At bottom, as with workers of our own kind, the crux of the problem does not lie with particular conditions of exploitation—not with the lack of softer collars, longer leashes, lower voltage on electric fences. Those ridiculous additions would be the equivalent of a “nicer” pimp—he will beat “his girls” less often but keep them down all the same, with all the cunningness he can muster. A “benign” shepherd will similarly “care” for “his flock,” but will keep it timid, manageable, and dependent. Nothing is more devious than an invisible chain. The problem, in all of these cases and regardless of species, is unfreedom itself. The capitalist knows far better than the humanist the fallacy of speciesism. A species barrier—an infinitely porous and unstable category (see Dupré 1995, 2002; Wilson 1999)—is not as good a safeguard against exclusion as some still believe to be. “Humanity” has never been anything but a perpetually renegotiated and contested concept (Fernández-Armesto 2004), and an instrument of exclusion *par excellence* (cf. Agamben 2004).

On the Fetish of “Self-Transformation.” Engels chided William Morris for his reluctance toward marxist high theorizing, the latter “rarely [disguising] his lack of interest in the rational, technical precepts of scientific socialism” (Hunt 2009, 323). “To speak frankly, [Morris would say] I do not know what Marx’s Theory of Value is, and I’m damned if I want to know...” According to Hunt, “Engels feared it would take an exhaustive course of biweekly seminars to teach Morris about socialism, ‘but who has the time to do it, and if you drop him for a month, he is sure to lose himself again. And is he worth the trouble even if one had the time?’” (Hunt

2009, 324). But Morris didn't need to be reformed in the way Engels fancied, nor could he have been. We cannot mold ourselves into becoming socialists through any sort of fundamental collective self-transformation. That is as impossible as it is, hopefully, unnecessary. For otherwise would not the movement toward, and the practice of, a socialist society consist chiefly in an endless stream of administrative decisions? In scientific implementation of preconceived solutions? In an inexhaustible catalog of procedural arrangements? A never-ending campaign of specialist button-holing? Would we not end up going to one meeting after another, discussing and negotiating ad nauseam the most minute details of our everyday lives? Things like these are the provenance of animals who put too much trust in consciousness and become dragged down with thought. But if there is no "socialist animal" to begin with, there will be no socialist society—for whence could it be conceived? Out of thin air? Created *ex nihilo*? If there is no real, organic potential for socialism in our carnal natures, that is, if socialism just "isn't there" and would have to be *constructed*, there will be no socialist animal—for who would fashion him? Deriding our transcendent craze, Paul Eluard wrote that "[t]here is another world, but it is *in* this one" (quoted in Abram 2007). If there is socialism, either it is in our very bodies or it is nowhere: there will be no socialism without animals who can intuit it and are drawn toward it. Meanwhile, our flesh and blood are poisoned with pernicious teleology not unlike religious dogma. Stephen Jay Gould remarked he was "somehow less interested in the weight and convolutions of Einstein's brain than in the near certainty that people of equal talent have lived and died in cotton fields and sweatshops" (1979, 777). And what about those of lesser scientific talent or inclination? To hell with them? We seem to think it bad that we are not all theorists, intellectuals, and analysts. We seem to need things specialists can grant us: more technology, more progress, more secrets wrung from nature stretched out on Bacon's rack. So we want to become them. But the Einsteins of the world would perhaps appreciate freedom from compulsory Einsteinhood and a chance to just enjoy themselves. We deserve, as Paul Lafargue (1898) put it, a right to be lazy. And the earth deserves a rest from our scrutinizing gaze. Laziness is not idleness, Bob Black (1986) has pointed out: "the pleasure of torpor [is] never more rewarding than when it punctuates other pleasures and pastimes." And those may well be, crucially, useless to capital accumulation. Taking the time to enjoy life has nothing to do with the harried entertainments forced down our throats by the capitalist apparatus. Laziness is not avoidance of responsibility; it is the other side of revolution, a way out of a life spent in the barracks and the factories.

Versus Prometheus. We know that Marx was drawn to the figure of Prometheus—right down to his own beard and the underlying mythic "deep structure" of his thinking (Wessell 1984). It is but a slight exaggeration to hold that Marx felt himself to be—or aspired to becoming—a modern Titan, the bringer of the fire of communism to humankind. Socialism, broadly conceived, has inherited the Enlightenment scent of Prometheanism. The gods failed to stop the original Prometheus from stealing their fire. There then remained only punishment and damage control; too little too late, the gods tied the Titan down but were now unable

to stop the stone from rolling down toward the holocaust. Prometheus, by virtue of his very name—derivative of foresight (Etymonline 2013)—ought to have stopped his own self: “those that see the future best take heed. It’s both a gift and a curse” (Metzen 2011). Benjamin’s angel of history cannot help but see, looking back, what Prometheus could not:

[A]n angel [is] looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling ruin upon ruin and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin [1955] 2007, 257–258)

History has been propelled ever onward only at the cost of eradication of countless Others and the otherization of our animal selves, all heaped upon an endlessly growing pile of misery. The myth of progress, entwined in millions of our cramped daily movements, must at long last be exploded. Animal liberation is part and parcel of the detonation; without it, Prometheus’ ashes will not be allowed finally to settle.

After Empire. No doubt, we need to find new ways with which to curtail, if not make up for, the wrongs of past and present. This is part of our confounding predicament: it pushes us to look for the new to restore the best of the old. But the predicament cannot—as is so often the case—serve as justification for doing more of the same: no redemption lies with the emperor in new clothes; his garment conceals only future catastrophe of empire built by a species self-avowedly hand-picked by the gods. Empire is the highest form of parochialism. The tireless efforts of Marx and countless other theorists notwithstanding, no amount of tinkering with dialectics will make reality conform to it. The hidden positive of Negative Dialectics should not be defined, forced out of its implicacy through the forceful means of linear thinking. It will emerge, if at all, as “the other side” of change. But even Adorno, the greatest theorist of negative dialectics, had massive doubts about this. Perhaps especially him. For the positive, the redemptive, the salvific may not be there at all. The turmoil of the current age of capitalist supremacy may well turn out not to be a mere step along the way toward better things. On the sought-after other side, there might be just another nightmare. The philosophical anthropology inherited from Marx has to go, part of what Matthew Calarco (2008) has called “jamming the anthropological machine.” It is to be hoped that we are not condemned to speciesism—domination of the other animals gave the original impetus (cf. Nibert 2002, 21–27) to the emergence of the current global disarray—a “false totality” (Adorno [1951] 2005, 50). A world less discordant, and more in sync with earthly rhythms, will certainly not emerge or be restored if we keep going about things the way we’ve been doing so

far, including, above all, in the socialist tradition. Socialism finds itself in the uneasy tension between ecological humility and political radicalism. This tension is continually to be lessened—if not exactly resolved—with the house-cleaning of the wayward anthropoi, of which the overthrow of capitalism is a necessary but insufficient step. We do not and cannot truly respect and love one another until we settle in our proper place among the other animals and give in to the difficult Eros of the earth. The foundation of supremacist humanism is crumbling, even as it morphs into endospore forms, seeking shelter here and there, in the hidden corners of our failing common sense and the remnants of our once-exaggerated hopes. It prevents, and terribly so, a consenting, graceful, free-flowing return to what Simone Weil called “the creaturely abandonment to pitiless necessity” (Pick 2011, 3).

Socialism: Hard but Worth It. With the belated addition of the prefix “eco-” to its name, socialism has set itself a whole gamut of tasks, the scope of which we are perhaps only beginning to grasp. Although, in a Marxian vein, relative precedence can be given to practical over the more theoretical struggles—with the former setting the terms for the latter—which come first may oftentimes be difficult clearly to determine. No matter. Somewhere between fact and hope, there are activists who are ripe for reception of a socialist ethos that takes our creaturely natures as a central theme of practico-political concern. And then there are scores upon scores of animals—of differing propensities, sensibilities, colors, shapes, sexes/genders, sizes, and communal affiliations—who dearly need the revolutionary and restorative insight this ethos would entail on our part. Those of us who have heretofore called themselves human, and felt themselves alien to the earth, may anew become ready to see themselves—to the extent that they will still need mirrors—as earthlings surrounded by myriad others, all equally deserving of respect and refuge from the capitalist executioner’s unrelenting blade.

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