



ECOOCENE

POLITCS

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Outro

I was born in a totalitarian regime, the utopian dream turned inside-out, entrails masquerading as skin. My parents, out of the same kind of folly that makes some “conscientious objectors to economic growth” today (Stengers 2015), raised me for a world that did not exist. They thought and acted as if they were in a different world. Not that they were unaware of the dramatic situation that objectively surrounded them. But they saw no point in capitulating to it.

Many, though perhaps not most, of the people I knew then had the same kind of madness. All of them were very young when they were forcefully modernized in the service of a great ideal. They had grown up knowing nothing else, forbidden from accessing anything different that may have put their own situation in perspective. The world around them was in many senses natural, had the air of inevitability that any system must have if it is to endure. The status quo may be disliked, even hated, but it must appear inevitable.

The developed world of today seems just as inevitable in its consumptive apparatus. We can barely imagine a future that will not be one of parasitism, both inter and intra-specific. Increasingly, we cannot imagine a future without tragic loss. Though ostensibly very different, the consumer capitalism of today and the totalitarianism of the twentieth century are similarly stifling to the imagination; both ensure a decomposition of the surrounding world in tandem with a psychic and moral decomposition of the human.

Looking back at ancestors we may yet recuperate the resolve that some found, the freedom that came from refusing to dream the present away in favor of the lucidity of their historic loss. It is that lucidity that forced them to live in the shadow of the present, in a world that could create the possibility of joy. They were not perfect. They pretended and lied like everyone had to, they survived, martyrdom was rare. But they

also subverted and fought against the inevitability of their future in their daily lives, in the small gestures and sideways steps that put them out of synch. They often acted as if no-one was in a luckier position than them.

Many of my parents' generation insisted on thinking freely, on having a conscience, on being fair. They did that from within a world where those kinds of commitments could be deadly. Their folly would not have been rendered useless by the indefinite continuation of totalitarianism. If anything, that indefinite continuation would have made it even more imperative that they endured in their hopeless obstinance. Hopeless they were. Their refrain after the revolution that concluded the regime was "we never thought it would end". They truly didn't. And yet they were stubborn, not only in the absence of a horizon, but because of it. That kind of stubbornness is the stubbornness of life, betting on that which it cannot hope for, because that is the only way to live.