



ВЕБЕР М.

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OLDTHINKERS UNBELLYFEEL WHITEHEADIAN SOCIALISM

Ми на порозі кризи людства. Наскільки корисним може бути світогляд Вайтхеда та наскільки далеко це може бути від вайтхедівської ідеї процесу при такому драматичному контексті? Для того, щоб оцінити разом поняття суспільства та процесу, теоретично та практично, потрібно спочатку визначити, що саме Вайтхедові потрібно було сказати про соціо-політичні проблеми, а по-друге, яким саме був його особистий внесок. Цей умовивід підкреслює порожнечу Вайтхеда стосовно політичних питань та силу постмодерної суміші філософії, яку він звільнює за допомогою аналізу зв'язку, що існує між індустріалізмом та війною.

Ключові слова: Альфред Норт Вайтхед, Вільям Джеймс, Льюїс Мамфорд, Джордж Оруел, Бертран Рассел, філософія процесу, політика, глобальна системна криза, війна.

Мы на пороге кризиса человечества. Насколько же полезным может быть мировоззрение Уайтхеда и насколько далеко это от идеи процесса Уайтхеда при таком драматическом контексте? Для того, чтобы оценить вместе понятия общества и процесса, теоретически и практически, необходимо сначала определить, что именно Уайтхеду нужно было сказать о социо-политических проблемах, а во-вторых, каковым был его личный вклад. Это умозаключение подчеркивает пустоту Уайтхеда касательно вопросов политики и силу постмодернистской смеси философии, которую он высвобождает с помощью анализа связи, существующей между индустриализмом и войной.

Ключевые слова: Альфред Норт Уайтхед, Уильям Джеймс, Льюис Мамфорд, Джордж Оруэлл, Бертран Рассел, философия процесса, политика, глобальный системный кризис, война.

Abstract: We face a crisis of humanity. In such a dramatic context, what is the political use of Whitehead's own worldview and how far should it be distinguished from Whiteheadian process thought? To assess together the notions of society and process, both theoretically and practically, one should specify first what Whitehead had to say about socio-political issues and second what his own actual commitment was. The conclusion highlights the personal vacuity of Whitehead on political issues and the power of the post-modern blend of philosophy he unleashed with the help of an analysis of the correlation existing between industrialism and war.

Keywords: Alfred North Whitehead, William James, Lewis Mumford, George Orwell, Bertrand Russell, Process philosophy, Politics, Global systemic crisis, War.

Assessing together the notions of society and process, both theoretically and practically, could not be more timely. It should be clear indeed that "this crisis [...] is unprecedented, given its magnitude, its global reach, the extent of ecological degradation and social deterioration,

and the scale of the means of violence. We truly face a crisis of humanity." (Robinson 2013) In such a dramatic context, what is the political use of Whitehead's own worldview and how far should it be distinguished from Whiteheadian process thought? Most Whitehead's scholars

claim that the “Philosophy of Organism” (PR, *passim*) offers the best conceptual approach to reform our contemporary civilisational trend and to avert totalitarianism. This could be the case but one should specify first what Whitehead had to say about socio-political issues and second what his own actual commitment was. The conclusion highlights the personal vacuity of Whitehead on political issues and the power of the post-modern blend of philosophy he unleashed with the help of an analysis of the correlation existing between industrialism and war.

1. Socio-political contextualization

By means of introduction, let us clarify the nature of the crisis.

1.1. Financial crisis

We are told that the crisis is only financial—actually, that it was only financial, the matter having been settled since with bold political measures. The collapse of Lehman Brothers (September 15, 2008), that was threatening the entire financial world through their embeddedness in Wall Street and interconnectedness with the City of London, has been successfully averted thanks to the bailout of banks by national governments, in the USA first, and then everywhere else when expedient. If the downturns in stock markets has been contained, the economy itself is now crippled with “negative” growth while the banks are still in a zombie state.

1.2. Global systemic crisis

Although mainstream medias relay the “information” that the crisis is over and that recovery is impending, the real economy shows no such positive sign. The very idea of a “negative” growth (an obvious oxymoron) actually manifests a depression. Financial speculation has never been restrained: it still rules while the industrial overproduction (the “knots and bolts” economy) finds less and less prospects. Also, the socio-political situation is unsurprisingly catastrophic, with an actual unemployment rate of 25 pc (just like in 1933) and political turmoil leading towards the emergence of totalitarian regimes and (world) wars.

In sum, the financial crisis, together with its economical, socio-political and energetical dimensions—peak of uranium (1980), peak of conventional oil (2004), peak of gas (2010)—, define a global systemic crisis far worse than the two previous global crises that have crippled modern societies: 1870 and 1929. To repeat: the crisis is not only financial and economical, with a casino economy still plundering the world depression and fighting the energetic conundrum, the crisis is also socio-political, with alarming unemployment rates, the rise of extremisms, the moral bankruptcy of liberalism. In sum, we face a cultural collapse, as announced by Tocqueville in 1835, Emerson in 1836 and Thoreau in 1849. The forerunners of political ecology understood that generalization of technique through technoscience is biocidal and, eventually, genocidal.

1.3. Terminal crisis

All this constitutes only two thirds of the story and we actually have to contemplate a terminal crisis, i.e., near-term human extinction. In the past, socio-political entities have vanished out of history but humans managed to survive the collapse and to start anew. One suspects that this will not be possible anymore. In truth, the crisis is above all ecological, with a massive extinction of species: due to human activities (pollution, deforestation,...), the death of oceanic life and the depletion of agricultural land make it impossible to contemplate dispassionately the expected demographic evolution (9 billion humans are due in 2050).

Some claim that the peak of water (in 2025, two billion people will be living with absolute water scarcity) could be averted, that the geopolitical stakes are still manageable (the race for what’s left (Klare 2012) that has been codenamed “responsibility to protect”), but if climate change is running as fast as it seems [1], the human habitat will not have the time to adapt and with the death of the species upon which we feed will come ours. It is thus fully justified to speak of a terminal crisis in order to foster the awareness of the collapse of cultural and natural systems and especially the probability of near term human extinction (by 2030).



Scholars analysing this nefarious state of affairs argue that we are dealing with brute facts and hard-core science, so the possible solutions are limited to the reduction of the production of greenhouse gases or the scaling down of their actual effect on the climate. In the first case, one speaks of a political decision but, if implemented, it would actually be a technical decision coupled with economical incentives (the carbon market etc.). In the second case, it is a technological decision that would “engineer” the climate on an unprecedented scale (i.e., with unknown consequences on the actual biosphere).

Who—if anyone—is responsible? In so far as he or she is taking part in the system, something that is (almost) totally unavoidable, every citizen is. Of course, some are more involved than others and the oligarchy carries a huge responsibility. (Please note that while “the market” is an abstract entity, most oligarchs are easy to identify [2]) From the perspective of our present discussion, it is important to acknowledge that academic scholars are the main responsables of our cultural collapse. Given the lack of vision and the atavistic greed of most humans, scholars—and especially those who teach—are supposed to be their “brother’s keepers.” This constitutes the old ideal of university, that was still alive in Humboldt (1792), Newman (1852)... and in Whitehead’s *Organisation of Thought, Educational and Scientific* (1917). One should not forget Klemperer, who argued boldly for the responsibility of the Germans academics in the rise of Nazism: it was their duty to denounce the emergence of war fascism, something that was pretty obvious already in the early thirties (Klemperer 1947).

Interestingly enough, the stakes are pretty similar now. The expected end of “market democracy” will seal the return of totalitarianism, not the disposal of the capitalist oligarchy. Hence, what we need to realize is that climate change is a political problem and that it requires a political solution. This is not only a matter of mobilizing people, but also of allowing ourselves to understand our predicament.

2. Whitehead on political matters

In light of Klemperer’s bold claim, it is striking to remember that Whitehead considered education as the field of “duty and reverence” above all else. According to the philosopher, the intimate nature of the process of acquisition of the art of the utilisation of knowledge is to be a religious art. The quote is well-known: “The essence of education is that it be religious. [...] A religious education is an education which inculcates duty and reverence.” (OT 28 = AE 14) The interpretation of the quote is more tricky than it might seem. Whitehead is here clearly shouldering a Christian imperative of Roman origin, both in the sense that the religion of the Roman Empire is involved and in the sense that Roman Catholicism is lurking here. Duty is a matter of obedience to the authority of one’s own consciousness and, when expedient, to (religious) authority full stop. It is a lure for moral action that sounds both a priori (follow the imperative whatever the consequences are) and a posteriori (consequences do actually matter in the ethical equation). Of course, such a dual constraint reflects the difficulty of implementing a moral choice in everyday life, with often a very limited awareness of the stakes and the likely consequences of one’s action. The road to hell is too often paved with good intentions...

2.1. Practical commitment : conservative, Victorian, imperialist

Now, what was Whitehead’s actual political commitment? Reading the brief biographical material he published, together with his bibliography, leads us to acknowledge that he was not as radical as one could think or even hope. Although Whitehead claims that his “political opinions were, and are, on the liberal side, as against the conservatives”[3] there are not much signs left of the outcome of his political meetings in Granchester (in the years 1899–1907, when he was living in the Old Mill House) (Lowe 1985, 204) or significant traces of his pro-Irish and pro-Boers stance at the time he was Chairman of the Cambridge branch of the Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage (1907–circa 1910) (Lowe 1985, 304).

To be more straightforward, we have to acknowledge that Whitehead was actually a

conservative in actu exercitu. He wrote himself that he was “a typical example of the Victorian Englishman”[4]—something which explains why he was apparently unmoved by the fate of the colonies, where his brother Charles was a dutiful bishop. With that regard, some passages on indigenous religions in *Religion in the Making* are especially appalling. Whitehead utters in that work a few unforgivable Eurocentric and colonial judgements on the alledged “primitive barbarism” (RM 28) of traditional modes of religiosity and on the techno-scientific idiocy of foreign cultures. A first answer to these two unfortunate blunders will come, respectively, from authors such as Hodgson (1974) and Said (1978) and, interestingly enough, from Mumford (1934)—who was an avid reader of Whitehead (Van Wyk and Weber 2004). One should also note Whitehead’s ambivalence on the question of religious emotion and the straightforward gender overtone of his remarks. On the one hand, tribal emotion of “primitive races” and “savage tribes” soils man’s pure religiosity and is negatively assessed [5]. “In this primitive phase of religion—Whitehead writes—, dominated by ritual and emotion, we are dealing with essentially social phenomena.” (RM 22) Religion requires thus “a metaphysical backing; for its authority is endangered by the intensity of the emotions which it generates. Such emotions are evidence of some vivid experience; but they are a very poor guarantee for its correct interpretation.” (RM 81) Exactly, on the other hand, the personal emotion that is purified by solitariness and accompanies the contemplation of the universal is positively valued (cf. RM 54). Reason and dispassionate criticism are shielding civilized man from hysteria [6]. Whitehead might shoulder James’s thesis on the primordial subjectivity of religion but first-hand and original form of experience is for him less a tormenting fever than a sober rational epiphany. This is clarified as soon as one indigates his ontology, that champions the equation private actuality / intrinsic value / emotional tone: the value of actuality is indeed correlated to the private enjoyment of its creative experience of the world [7].

Also, how did Whitehead really see the fate of the Irish, who suffered in the years 1845–1852, during Victoria’s reign, the Great Famine (“Gorta Mor”), that was engineered a posteriori to maximize the suffering of the Irish people and the empowerment of the British occupying forces? The main problem is obviously Whitehead’s cultural imperialism that is expressed in the expression “civilization through coordination” that emerges in *Adventures of Ideas* (1933) [8] and flourishes in the “Appeal to Sanity” (1939). Whitehead publishes on philosophical issues between the years 1917 and 1941. Before 1917, he only writes books and research papers on algebra, geometry and logic—with the notable exception of a two-page note on the admission of women to (Cambridge) university in May 1896—; after 1941, he stops publishing altogether. During the period covering the two world wars, with such momentous events as the Bolshevik Revolution (1917; OT), the publication of *Mein Kampf* (1925; SMW), the Octoberkrach (1929; AE, PR, FR); Roosevelt’s New Deal while Hitler becomes Reichskanzler and Fuhrer thanks to the Reichtag’s arson (1933; AI) and the Anshlu? (1938; MT). None of these events seem to exist in Whitehead’s corpus before 1939: Poland is invaded on Sept 1st and “An Appeal to Sanity” is published in March. . .

Granted, PNK was dedicated to his son Eric Alfred (1898–1918), who was “Killed in action over the Foret de Gobain giving himself that the city of his vision may not perish. The music of his life was without discord, perfect in its beauty,” and some essays in OT allude to the war, with “A Polytechnic in War Time” (1917) treating the subject with some depth—but only “Appeal to Sanity” addresses the political states of his time. It does so, however, with concepts that are rather old-fashioned and with an argument that is caricatured.

2.2. Appeal to sanity, 1939: coordination, war, Hebrew National Settlement

“An Appeal to Sanity” makes three main claims. First, England stands out as the rational steward of European culture while Germany and Russia are veering towards barbary. Conceptually, Whitehead sets coordination

(England) against emotion (Germany and Russia), the shaping ideals, reason, civilization and police control against vivid, contagious, barbarized and inflamed emotions.

Second, he ponders over the virtues of isolation and those of war. On the one hand, self-restrained, civilized values argue for ataraxia and against belligerency. On the other hand, somebody has to guard world civilization, to confront barbarism, to rectify evil. Britannia should benevolently confound the enemy's politics and frustrate their knavish tricks... "War may be necessary to guard world civilization." (ESP 56) Whitehead asks how is this British imperial influence to be characterized? The naivety of his answer is mind-boggling: "The chief feature is the general absence of direct military compulsion, except so far as it is supplied by the active assistance and the passive support of the populations directly concerned. [...] The British Empire in Asia and parts of North Africa is now a coordinating agency, actively supported or passively accepted by the populations concerned." (ESP 68-69) Orwell, who was policing in Burma in 1922–1927 acquired promptly quite a different outlook on the matter.

Third, Whitehead meditates the consequences of the Hebrew National Settlement for the English Interests.

2.3. Russell

In sum, although one could argue that nothing here really falsifies the contrast, championed in *Adventures of Idea*, between persuasion towards common adventure and coercion leading to individual and social sclerosis—i.e., the idea that the creation of the world is the victory of persuasion over force [9]—we find nothing in Whitehead that made Russell such an important liberal, socialist and pacifist figure of the 20th century.

Whitehead's bibliography as well as his actual political commitment displays five major tensions with Russell's. It is well known that Whitehead considered a matter of intellectual honesty to denounce Russell's attitude with regard to the concepts created in *PNK* and to furthermore refuse his careless remarks on the subject [10]. Epistemologically, there was a gap

between the two philosophers, as exemplified in the well-known quote "You think the world is what it looks in fine weather at noon day ; I think it is what it seems like in the early morning when one first wakes from deep sleep." (Russell 1956, 39) On religious matters also, the two men were at odds: "Whitehead's theological opinions were not orthodox, but something of the vicarage atmosphere remained in his ways of feeling and came out in his later philosophical writings." (Russell 1961, 189) Politically, Russell was a Republican of sorts and Whitehead obviously happy with monarchy. Last but not the least, pacifism was taken very seriously by Russell, who was dismissed from Trinity in 1916 and suffered six months of imprisonment in 1918, while Whitehead chanted the virtues of the just war. (Russell 1961, 188) But what happens if we apply the (Whiteheadian) process organic vision to the realities of war?

3. Why war?

Hagiography has nothing to do with philosophy and Whiteheadian scholars should be fully aware of the conservatism of the philosopher who is close to their minds if not to their hearts. A critical stance allows to frame arguments that benefit from the process organic worldview launched by Whitehead while acknowledging that the philosopher was far more reserved on these shores.

One main exemplification can be provided in line with our discussion of the political relevance of Whitehead's corpus: an analysis of the meaning and significance of war. Unless one dives into theological considerations or refer to Marx and Lenin, philosophers prefer to address the morality of war and especially the "just war" issue. In 1904, James proposed a different diagnosis: "Our permanent enemy is the noted bellicosity of human nature. [...] The plain truth is that people want war" [11]. Three complementary functions of the art of war can then be introduced, the more obvious coming first and the more concealed last [12]. We will rely upon the lead of James, Mumford and Orwell.

3.1. Visible functions

The most visible, obvious, military business is self-defence: military action is said to be justified when a country has to respond to an unjust aggression by a third party. This means to assume the defence of one's own territory, including air defence as well as securing the territorial waters that are sometimes extended to the Exclusive Economic Zone (370 km). In most cases, the security perimeter of a nation is sharply defined: the territory itself, the 22,2 km of territorial waters, and the airspace. Hence the mission of the army, navy and air force is unequivocal. Unfortunately, this comfortable clarity has always been blurred by "diplomatic" issues (remember Clausewitz's argument according to which "war is diplomacy by other means").

First, military business is not only about self-defence per se, but about defending one's strategic interests. From that perspective, it is possible, indeed advisable, to control many military remote territories that appear essential to preserve one's "way of life."

Second, wars of pre-emption are said to be justified when they involve responding to an imminent threat of an (unjust) aggression. One should not wait until aggressors actually initiate their attacks before self-defence becomes permissible. Preventive wars are more controversial because they involve military attack in the absence of both self-defence and so-called pre-emption. But if the threat is totally uncertain, why should be the preventive action so sure?

Third, (even) more eccentric arguments have been built lately: war on drugs, humanitarian wars and war against terrorism allow the "international community," i.e., the NATO countries, to dispose of any regime refusing their diktat. A sure sign of the pure rhetorics at work is the fact that it is ipso facto invalidated if a non-NATO country attempts to use it: how does the "international community" react when Russia claims to salvage democracy in Afghanistan or China to prevent a massacre in Libya? Would Iran be allowed to settle religious wars in Africa?

3.2. Liminal functions

The next functions are liminal, which means that they still remain partly lit by the official narratives.

First, the religious dimension of war needs to be underlined. War is a sort of sacrament; "war is the strong life; it is life in extremis." (James 1911, 269); it brings us our first—and often last—"glimpse of effective life" (Mumford [13]); it puts us in contact with the Ultimate (Eliade 1965, 176). The path of the warrior amounts to the glorification of the tragic sacrifice of the one who puts his own life in danger in order to bring death to his enemy. War is a neolithic innovation that is to be correlated with the obliteration of matriarchy and the seizure of the society by the males. No one doubts that the experience of death, accepted, feared or given, is a religious experience, as the rituals and especially the initiations of the indigenous (or "first nations") testify—but here it is a typically patriarchal experience that is systematized. "The death or maiming of the body give the drama the element of a tragic sacrifice like that which underlies so many primitive religious rituals: the effort is sanctified and intensified by the scale of the holocaust." (Mumford 1962, 309)

Second, in war also dwells a moral theory. Martial virtues provide the behavioural metrics: intrepidity, contempt of softness, surrender of private interest, obedience to command, must remain the rock upon which states are built (James 1911, 287-288). According to Mumford,

"As long as the machine remains an absolute, war will represent for this society the sum of its values and compensations: for war brings people back to the earth, makes them face the battle with the elements, unleashes the brute forces of their own nature, releases the normal restraints of social life, and sanctions a return to the primitive in thought and feeling, even as it further sanctions infantility in the blind personal obedience it exacts, like that of the archetypal father with the archetypal son, which divests the latter of the need of behaving like a responsible and autonomous personality." (Mumford 1962, 310-311)

Third, no less impressive are the sociological consequences of war. Martial virtues are also



the enduring cement of society, they provide social coherence (Girard [14]), drill and regimentation (Mumford), “order and discipline, the tradition of service and devotion, of physical fitness, unstinted exertion, and universal responsibility” (James 1911, 292-295). Furthermore, war bridles twice Malthusian threat: at home it enforces eugenism both in the sense of raising the more apt to war and to dispose of the weaker; abroad, it secures the superiority of one group, ideally through slavery and genocide if need be.

3.3. Invisible functions

The last set of functions are “invisible” in so far as the cultural narrative seeks to prevent the awareness thereof. Here dwells the purely ideological function of war: the deep foundation, control and stabilization of society.

First, politically. War not only keeps inequalities intact, it fortifies subordination in front external menace. War creates unanimity and so much distractions that all forms of dissensus become unlikely and, if they arise, extremely difficult to spread.

Second, economically. The economical stakes are extremely high; they can be sorted in three sets. Primo, military interventions enable a nation to loot raw materials needed by its industry and to open new markets when need be. As far as we can tell, all the wars since 1945 have been predation wars (essentially for oil), accompanied with the necessity to open new markets (the archetype remaining the Opium wars of 1839–1860). Secundo, even in the absence of war, the military itself constitutes a very efficient device to steer clear of overproduction without indulging in social welfare. Orwell writes: “The primary aim of modern warfare [...] is to use up the products of the machine without raising the general standard of living.” (Orwell 2003, 218) More precisely :

“An all-round increase in wealth threatened the destruction—indeed, in some sense was the destruction—of a hierarchical society. [...] If leisure and security were enjoyed by all alike, the great mass of human beings who are normally stupefied by poverty would become literate and would learn to think for themselves;

and when once they had done this, they would sooner or later realise that the privileged minority had no function, and they would sweep it away. In the long run, a hierarchical society was only possible on a basis of poverty and ignorance.” (Orwell 2003, 219)

War is an extraordinary waste management device to the benefit of power. Huge budgets are spent on projects that are socially completely useless. The orders are payed by the State, i.e., financed by taxation of the poors and by loans provided by rich. Who is the best customer, the ideal consumer? Burroughs claims that it is the addict because “the junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to his product,” [15] the very same is true of the military but the scale of the sale is unprecedented and the industrial involvement unmatched. Mumford makes this plain: “An army is a body of pure consumers. [...] The most wanton and luxurious household cannot compete with a battlefield in rapid consumption. War is the chief instrument by means of which the ruling classes create the state and fix their hold upon the state.” (Mumford 1962, 86-106)

Tertio, the military is also the main stimulus for technological innovation. Research and development are more often than one thinks funded because of its military potentialities. One should not indeed focus on the immediate return of some disciplines, such as space exploration and rocket science. Chomsky reminds us that when started to teach at the MIT, in 1955, the philosophy department was entirely funded (directly and indirectly) by the military. Researching generative linguistics and analytic philosophy do constitute a strategic field. It is not only a matter of conformism of thought, both socially and technologically: computer science, image processing, control systems engineering AI, robotics etc. rely upon such basic disciplines [16]. In a nutshell, we obtain what is called military Keynesianism in Academia or the “Pentagon System” by Chomsky.

Third, the key-vault is psychological. Primo, the capitalistic ethos of industrial nations is a culture of predation, aggression, violence, of making demolition necessary and pleasurable

[17]. Its typical organs, writes Mumford, are at the service of death, which means that, on the one hand, they desire domination upon others and, on the other, they fear annihilation from others. All these paranoid characteristics are deeply ingrained in the social tissue, but remain collectively unconscious unless war erupts. When war comes, it is welcomed with open arms, for it relieves the intolerable suspense: the shock of reality is more bearable than the constant menace of spectres [18]. War breaks the tedium of a mechanized society but, paradoxically, it involves more conformism, more technique, more drill and regimentation, more alienation [19]. In sum, “war is the supreme drama of a completely mechanized society.” [20]

Secundo, as a result of all this, war is absolutely necessary: “If no enemy really existed, it would be necessary to create him, in order to further this development.” (Mumford 1962, 309-310) This is exactly what Orwell meant by “war is peace.”

Tertio, war is the core of a class struggle of an unknown nature and magnitude. It is not just a matter of keeping factories busy, boosting employment and muzzling the opponents. Or of sanctioning infantilism in the blind personal obedience required of “citizens.” War unleashes the sadism of the oligarchs. Three points of importance here. First of all, war is not directed outwards anymore but inwards: “war is waged by each ruling group against its own subjects, and the object of the war is not to make or prevent conquests of territory, but to keep the structure of society intact.” (Orwell 2003, 228)

The *modus operandi* is terror, which means that anxiety is created and nurtured as against fear or phobia. Fear is actually a positive feeling, it mobilizes you toward action (basically to fight or to flight). Anxiety is immobilizing: the subject is aware of a threat but cannot pin-point it. Phobia is intermediate: the fear of a specific object, place, action, is generalized and it is always projected on irrelevant contexts. Why anxiety? Because it brings total power on individuals. Whereas most people tend to think that the oligarchs are ruling over us for our own good—because there is no way people could manage

their own lives by themselves—Orwell adamantly claims that the inner party actually seeks power entirely for its own sake.^[21]

The quest of power for the sake of power necessarily translates into the motto of totalitarianism: terror is an end in itself. (Arendt 1958) Terror is less how you rule than why you rule. O’Brien is very straightforward about this when he lists the four ignoble truths of totalitarianism: power is not a means but an end; power is collective, it is power over human beings; power seeks total control of the mind in order to totally control matter (and the body); power necessarily consists in the capacity to impose suffering and, ultimately, to torture: “How does one man assert his power over another?”—“By making him suffer. Obedience is not enough. Unless he is suffering, how can you be sure that he is obeying your will and not his own? Power is in inflicting pain and humiliation. Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing.” (Orwell 2003, 305-307)

To flesh this thesis out, one needs to consider the resources of nosology, and to acknowledge that the pathology that is the quest of power is worthy of the name sociopathy or perversion. All this is perhaps already too abstract for most readers, so let us try to exemplify what happens when one gets addicted to power. In everyday life, it is impossible to avoid power games. Life is a robbery (PR 105). The newborn has a social horizon that barely extends to include his or her mother. Total selfishness is the rule for survival at that stage. There are however two forms of power that are theoretically innocuous: the quest of power that seeks to endow one individual with the curative potentialities required by therapy (especially psychotherapy: it all started with shamanism); and the dance of power that takes place in a community where all individuals are co-developing cultural bounds.

The individual who realizes that his or her social status allows him or her to inflict suffering, in whatever way (mild humiliation, instrumentalization, infantilization, ...) has beaten the bait of power. Depending on the circumstances, that person will, or will not, start



the long journey that leads to become a priest (or a priestess) of power, as Orwell says. It is difficult to obtain a picture that would match all idiosyncrasies, but the main pattern is easy to visualize with the help of the experience gained in psychotherapy.

If you aim at more power, you try to become able to inflict more suffering on living beings: a car or a watch do not suffer when misused but a dog or a colleague do. If you have little resources yourself, you will probably seek power only over animals and ill-treat them. Most scenarios involve nevertheless domestic violence over children and women. But some individuals cannot quench their thirst for power that way either. Raping women or men (undoubtedly a form of torture) could be the next step—but this is hardly the last one since the victim can still survive and usually make sure to keep appearances together (denial is one of the surest sign of PTSD). Then comes the epiphany of the need to torture itself, that can still accommodate rape and finally necessitates murder. The cycle is however not complete until the power seeker attacks the weakest human beings: sometimes elderly, often children, and eventually infants or even newborn.

The abduction, torture, rape and murder of children is the ultimate form of the quest of power. It is the truth of the inner party. It is the truth that Goya was trying to picture and that Sade made plain. It is likely to be truth of the own tormented childhoods of these individuals. It is the very reality that citizens cannot confront for obvious emotional and rational reasons.

Conclusion

These three functional layers are anchored in different psycho-social realities but they are de facto interconnected. The visible functions can be found, *mutatis mutandis*, in most, if not all, neolithic cultures. The liminal functions are more universal: even indigenous communities do possess some of its traits, if only in their initiation rituals. For their parts, the invisible functions are typical of industrial societies.

Can we now define why would “oldthinkers unbellyfeel Whiteheadian socialism”? Because there is no such a thing as Whiteheadian socialism? Because oldthinkers, by definition,

are conservative? Or because the ideological revolution that we need is far more demanding than the old? The reader will decide.

Footnotes

1. According to a Stanford University report published in the August 2013 issue of *Science*, Earth’s climate will change in the near-term 10 times faster than at any other moment in the last 65 million years. According to David Wasdel, we are experiencing change 200 to 300 times faster than any of the previous major extinction events.

2. Official rankings do exist (*Forbes*, *Washington Post*, *Fortune*...) while some sociologists have brought interesting conclusions to the fore. Cf. Geuens 2011.

3. Whitehead, “Autobiographical Notes”, 1941 in ESP 13.

4. “Process and Reality”, 1932 in ESP 115.

5. “All collective emotions leave untouched the awful ultimate fact, which is the human being, consciously alone with itself, for its own sake”. (RM 16).

6. “But reason is the safeguard of the objectivity of religion: it secures for it the general coherence denied to hysteria.” (RM 63).

7. “Value is inherent in actuality itself. To be an actual entity is to have a self-interest. This self-interest is a feeling of self-valuation; it is an emotional tone.” (RM 97).

8. “The problem of social life is the problem of the coordination of activities, including the limits of such coordination.” (AI 28).

9. See AI 25, 42 & 83 (citing *Timaeus* 48a); cf. “[...] the persuasion towards Adventure beyond achieved perfection [...]” (AI 294-295).

10. “Before the war started, Whitehead had made some notes on our knowledge of the external world and I had written a book on this subject in which I made use with due acknowledgement of ideas that Whitehead had passed on to me. The above letter shows that it had vexed him. In fact, it put an end to our collaboration.” (Russell 1968, 78) At a more existential level, Russell was struck by the Bloomsbury spirit—so much so that he was likely to have started a love affair with Evelyn

Whitehead. For his part, Whitehead was far more conventional in his marital commitment.

11. William James, « Remarks at the Peace Banquet », 1904, re-printed in James 1911, 300-304.

12. A first exploration can be found in Weber 2011.

13. “In view of its end products—the dead, the crippled, the insane, the devastated regions, the shattered resources, the moral corruption, the anti-social hates and hoodlumisms—war is the most disastrous outlet for the repressed impulses of society that has been devised. [...] But it is in death that these repressed and regimented populations have their first glimpse of effective life; and the cult of death is a sign of their throwback to the corrupt primitive.” (Mumford 1962, 310).

14. Girard, Rene, *Mensonge romantique et verite romanesque*, Paris, Editions Bernard Grasset, 1961.

15. William S. Burroughs, *The Naked Lunch* [1959], New York, Grove Press, 1991, p. xxxvii).

16. In addition, analytic philosophy can be seen as part of the reframing of human minds of the Technetronic Era; see M. Weber, “Much Ado About Duckspeak,” *Balkan Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 3, Issue 1, 2011, pp. 135-142.

17. “The European race’s last three hundred years of evolutionary progress have all come down to nothing but four words : selfishness, slaughter, shamelessness and corruption.” (Yan Fu, *Complete Works Vol. 3*, Zhonghua Book Company, 1986, p. 629).

18. “The state of the paleotechnic society may be described, ideally, as one of wardom. Its typical organs, from mine to factory, from blast-furnace to slum, from slum to battlefield, were at the service of death. Competition: struggle for existence: domination and submission: extinction. With war at once the main stimulus, the underlying basis, and the direct destination of this society, the normal motives and reactions of human beings were narrowed down to the desire for domination and to the fear of annihilation—the fear of poverty, the fear of unemployment, the fear of losing class status, the fear of starvation, the fear of mutilation and death. When

war finally came, it was welcomed with open arms, for it relieved the intolerable suspense: the shock of reality, however grim, was more bearable than the constant menace of spectres, worked up and paraded forth by the journalist and the politician.” (Mumford 1962, 195).

19. “The preparation of the soldier, the parade, the smartness and polish of the equipment and uniform, the precise movement of large bodies of men, the blare of bugles, the punctuation of drums, the rhythm of the march, and then, in actual battle itself, the final explosion of effort in the bombardment and the charge, lend an esthetic and moral grandeur to the whole performance.” (Mumford 1962, 309).

20. “War is the supreme drama of a completely mechanized society; and it has an element of advantage that puts it high above all the other preparatory forms of mass-sport in which the attitudes of war are mimicked: war is real, while in all the other mass-sports there is an element of make-believe: apart from the excitements of the game and the gains or losses from gambling, it does not really matter who is victorious. [...] But war, for those actually engaged in combat, likewise brings a release from the sordid motives of profit-making and self-seeking that govern the prevailing forms of business enterprise, including sport: the action has the significance of high drama.” (Mumford 1962, 309).

21. “You are ruling over us for our own good. [...] The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake.” (Orwell 2003, 301).

Abbreviations of Whitehead’s works

AE—The Aims of Education and Other Essays [1929], New York, The Free Press, 1967.

AI—Adventures of Ideas [1933], New York, The Free Press, 1969.

ESP—Essays in Science and Philosophy, New York, Philosophical Library, Inc., 1947.

OT—The Organisation of Thought, Educational and Scientific, London, Williams and Norgate, 1917.

PR—Process and Reality. An Essay in Cosmology. Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Edinburgh During the Session



1927–28 [1929], Corrected Edition. Edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, New York, The Free Press, 1978.

RM—Religion in the Making, New York, Macmillan, 1926.

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16. Weber, Michel, "Much Ado About Duckspeak," *Balkan Journal of Philosophy*, 3/1 (2011): 135-142.
17. Weber, Michel, "On a Certain Blindness in Political Matters," *Cosmos and History*, 7/2 (2011), www.cosmosandhistory.org.
18. Yan Fu, *Complete Works Vol. 3*, (Zhonghua Book Company, 1986).

