Radical Object: the necro-ontology of Dark Enlightenment (Negarestani's philosophy)

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Today, as promised, I will be discussing Reza Negarestani, one of the most fashionable contemporary authors and representatives of speculative realism and contributor to the journal Collapse, an initiative in which some of the most vivid representatives of post-humanism, post-human thinking, post-human philosophy are participating, particularly Nick Land.

For quite some time many thought that Negarestani was a pseudonym of Land, but then he appeared in public and was revealed to be a young thinker of Iranian origin. His Cyclonopedia is currently being translated into Russian, and I also recently gave an interview about Negarestani.

At any rate, for me Negarestani is an extremely interesting thinker. I think he ought to be studied.

When I became acquainted with his work, I had a similar feeling to when in the 1980s-‘90s I encountered the status of geopolitics as a discipline in the international expert community. I discovered geopolitics by way of Karl Haushofer and the works of the Conservative Revolution and I thought that geopolitics is a kind of politically incorrect doctrine which is greatly explanatory and of great use to us, to Russia. In my eyes, I thought that geopolitics has the status of something past, something prohibited, something politically incorrect - and I liked that. But then when open sources became more accessible I gradually discovered to my surprise that geopolitics is not only the German school of Haushofer, “historically cursed and spit upon”, but is also the ideological model upon which American foreign policy strategy is based. It turned out that geopolitics since Mackinder has lived on in America, as the center shifted from England to the US, and ever since Mackinder’s time in the 1920s-30s geopolitics has been developed extensively in America and its status, in the very least in the analysis of international situations, has become a kind of common ground. Any representative of the Western or American elite who deals with strategic issues perfectly knows geopolitics and, moreover, is guided by such.

Thus, two sides formed: non-conformist geopolitics, which insists on the interests of Land, land civilization, and Tradition - as described by Carl Schmitt and the Russian Eurasianists, hence Eurasian geopolitics; and Atlanticist geopolitics, such as that of Brzezinski, which sees the same map, the same chessboard, only through Atlanticist eyes.

These avant-garde upgrades of geopolitics - Eurasian and Atlanticist - are dealing with completely the same reality and are playing against each other. As Brzezinski said when I asked him whether chess - and as follows the chessboard of geopolitics - is a game for two, he said no, it is a game for one - just as he played it for one, for the Atlanticists - with no one, not me, not Russia, nor China on the other side. Globalist geopolitics is when the West begins to win and to make moves with its own hand on the other side of the chessboard.

But this is not even the principal point. No matter whether there is one or two players, there are two opposing sides, black and white, there are the rules of the game, and the geopolitical map is identical.

When I became acquainted with Negarestani’s works, especially in the context of speculative realism, I saw a very interesting symmetry. He and I are describing the same reality. Both speculative realists and Traditionalists, of whom I am one, are dealing with the same map of ontology, being, history, and the philosophical process. Just as how Brzezinski and I spoke about the same thing in the same language, but belonged to and played for different armies, we both agreed that we are playing chess, not hockey or a fist-fight. Chess is chess, not basketball or volleyball.

When you read Negarestani, you understand that this is strictly same reality that Guénon, Eliade, Eranos, Heidegger, Evola, and Traditionalists, or the Russian Orthodox Elders when they speak of the world of the Antichrist, had in mind. Earlier I thought that our descriptions of reality were never on the same end. For instance, those playing against us on the Globalists’ end, they’ll never accept this - they’ll pretend that we are delusional, daydreaming, that our terminologies and descriptions are absolutely inappropriate, that we’ve either gotten lost in the dark Middle Ages or simply gone mad.

Our Traditionalist model sees the world as opened from the bottom. Guénon had the idea that the society of Tradition is the opening of the world egg from above, where the spirit of the transcendental principle penetrates the world. In the era of materialism and modernity, the world egg is closed to these energies. Then the world egg is open to the bottom, and the world is penetrated by the Gogs and Magogs, the sub-corporeal entities which create the civilization of the Antichrist. According to Guénon, the opening of the world egg from the bottom is the final stage of the cycle. Thusly also thought Evola, Russian Orthodox eschatologists, and the Elders - that the coming of the Antichrist is the demonic invasion of the world. This is the position of Traditionalists.

Our opponents who adhere to rationalist science laugh at such a religious or metaphysical analysis of the situation. They will never take us seriously.

Yet now speculative realism, Reza Negarestani and his Cyclonopedia come onto the scene, and we see a map which might as well be our own, describing how modern capitalism, progress, and technology mean the destruction of mankind, the murder of mankind, and the descent into the world of demonic, infernal forces which live off of the extraction of oil, like the blood of the Titans - Ichor, the black substance, the organism that gives birth to objects. For Negarestani, the earth is a sub-human, sub-corporeal object at the center of which is a demon. This demon strives to break out, to attack, and to seize the sun. In order to awake this demon, Negarestani says, our civilization engages in the extraction of oil and the drilling of a tunnel for this demon. Oil is the first manifestation; the second, more terrifying phenomenon is gas. The core, which Negarestani calls the flesh of a dead god, tries to be brought up to the surface. The prototypes of such were the Babylonian plague gods, which strive to enter and to devour humanity, just as humans devour a chicken from the supermarket or a salad. These plague gods, infernal powers which have been dormant for some time underground, are now emerging by means of technology to eat mankind. Just as humans devour others, so do these gods seek to live off of eating humans. They are the beneficiaries of humanity as food.

This is the advanced interpretation of open society of Soros. According to Negarestani, the “open society” is a “butchered society”. It is like a chicken which is gutted for being cooked. This “gutted chicken” is humanity being prepared for the gods of plague in the post-modern era. These plague gods are specific post-human or sub-human entities. Negarestani compares them to Lovecraft’s “idiot gods” in the likes of Nyarlathotep, a figure from one of his dark fantasies.

Here we end up with a picture of what is virtually an Aristotelian world inverted. According to Aristotle, the world under the moon consists of two spheres: fire and air which strive upwards, and the two spheres of the elements of water and earth which are downwards. This pyramid is inverted: on top is earth, then water - the rivers of Hell which Negarestani interprets as streams of oil, then there is gas which is underground air, and in the center is the infernal, devilish fire that is the corpse of god, in Negarestani’s account of Ahriman. The latter strives to reach the surface and move through humanity, through machines and through demonic infiltrations, to capture the sun.

This hyper-mad picture is reminiscent of horror movies or fantasy novels, but nevertheless is extremely consonant with the Traditionalist view. Traditionalists believe that the devil is a metaphysical reality, that the Antichrist will come, and that modern civilization with its materialism, atheism, skepticism, and rationalism serves such demonic ends. Negarestani essentially confirms that this is how things are. Thus, on the end of speculative realism and object-oriented ontology, and for nihilists such as one of the central characters of this speculative ontology, Ray Brassier, there are those who see things the same way as we do. But they stand on the side of this process, they want to accelerate it, such as how Nick Land speaks of accelerationism. This acceleration of the onset of demonic reality is what progress, time, and civilization are heading towards. People will gradually be replaced by post-human entities, machines, cyborgs, and new forms of being and life.

Necrosis as the form of dying will become the only substance of reality. We talked about this in the previous Expertise on object-oriented ontology, where the object lives at the expense of not the death of Dasein, but the dying of Dasein. This is a kind of paraphrase of Heraclitus formula to the effect of “The Gods live by the death of people.” The object lives by the death - or rather dying - of man. In line with this necrosis, Negarestani presents the horrifying example of the “corpse sentence”, in which a living man is sentenced to become a dying man. He dies very slowly; he starts dying while living. And this process of dying during life, this sentence to being a corpse, is presented as being the worst state, as the person loses perception of the differences between death and life. He can’t understand whether he is alive or dead. This is one of the most eerie sentences.

Our humanity or subjectivity is condemned to this corpse. This dying is progress. For Nick Land, this is “dark enlightenment.” It is part of the development of technology, new genetic studies, Silicon Valley, computer technology, and virtual simulation. Welcome to a genuine description of the delightful future of 3D printers and robots which build homes and defend borders! This is the future which delights the technocratic part of the Russian government and Western society.

It is curious that Negarestani is an open Satanist. If he were a Christian Satanist, things would have been more predictable. But he is an Iranian Satanist. In my opinion, this adds a certain credibility. He is a supporter of Ahriman, not Satan as in our cultural understanding. To be a representative of Ahrimanic reality against Ahura Mazda means approaching the archaic roots of the dark element, which is perhaps convincing. Negarestani’s tale itself is very consistent, interesting, and detailed.

Before, I’ve mentioned Petr Lutsik’s film The Outskirts, which shows the demonic role of oil in the Russian economy and how the oil magnates of Russian society have their own form of religion or cult. This is substantiated by Negarestani.

I agree, this is absolute nonsense. On the other hand, if this was some kind of science fiction, it would be only nonsense, only an indirect scenario. But the matter at hand here is philosophy and a philosophical trend. Negarestani has received good assessments of his works from many object-oriented ontologists, because he is genuinely seeking words for the language of objects. These objects, which today in speculative realism are starting to speak for themselves and increasingly manifest themselves alongside the development of artificial intellect, should have their own intellect. This is a very practical matter. The technological studies of Elon Musk or Kurzweil are moving in parallel to object-oriented ontology. Such is the philosophical substantiation of the technological roar in the direction of post-human entities for which death is impossible.

Immortality and artificial intelligence are not technological problems, but philosophical problems. The philosophers of speculative realism are preparing for this knock on our door. Negarestani himself is perhaps pursuing this question of dark enlightenment in its most colorful form. Here we can see how the optimistic agenda of humanists and the Open Society is abandoned. The “open society” is a gutted, eviscerated society, the society of rippers - just as how Soros with his Open Society earlier claimed to represent “humanitarian” operations, i.e., the donating of goods or grants, but today is only a sadist destroying society. It is a representation of the infernal, underground society. Our attitude towards resources, gas, and oil thus move from an economic to a totalitarian, increasingly sinister character.

Dark Enlightenment, based on the active acceptance of nihilism with a view towards destroying and extinguishing what is human, is the new ideology of the most philosophically advanced global elites. It is not an extravagant instance of marginals. It is the mainstream following progressive, liberal, and even post-liberal philosophy.

In my point of view, Negastarani, Nick Land, and Dark Enlightenment as a whole - all of this is the real roadmap of the Globalists.

The Globalists might appear to be looking for some kind of increased living standards and opportunities for people in a world without borders, new destinies for migrants happily moving without documents to foreign territories, but this story, this narrative of the earlier, rosy Open Society and early liberalism is only for the news. The most foundational, responsible, and realistic thinkers of speculative realism have already arrived at a different agenda. Their commentaries, criteria, terms, and projects are much closer to this active demonic nihilism. Here we can recall Friedrich Georg Junger’s words that where there are no gods, there are titans. There is no void. Where there are no angels, there are beasts. If we close the world egg on the top, we open it from the bottom. If we refuse God, the Devil comes. Man doesn’t come, as man can only stand so much in place without God. It turns out that the one who nudged man to kill God was not man himself, not of his own will, but rather the one standing behind him who, according to skepticism and rationalism, isn’t supposed to exist. The Devil pushed man to assert that there is no God, that there is only the material world, and now he is saying: “Greetings, my dear, you have done what I requested. It is I, I am Reza Negarestani, I am object-oriented ontology, I am progress, I am the 3D printer, now I will print you and your offspring, and everything will be well.” Gradually, humanity will be “packaged” in the supermarket of dark enlightenment.

Supporters of object-oriented ontology call for taking satisfaction in this process, re-conceptualizing necrosis, extinguishing Dasein, taking the latter to be a source, albeit temporary, of a certain form of survival. Degradation thus becomes a form of survival, and deformation a form of leveling of the balance between life and death, a new strategy for creating an eternity of decaying. No one has anywhere to go. The future is dark, but their proposal is to make the transition towards this darkness from the final rays of the waning evening into something eternal, or to stretch it out as long as possible. This is the program of modern globalism.

No one will be tempted or intimidated. Rather, everyone will simply be proposed to enjoy the process of eternal dying.