



Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative?

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Capitalism has become strange. Ironically, while the ‘age of work’ seems to have come to an end, working has assumed a total presence – a ‘worker’s society’ in the worst sense of the term – where everyone finds themselves obsessed with it. So what does the worker tell us today? "I feel drained, empty... dead." This book tells the story of the dead man working. It follows this figure through the daily tedium of the office, to the humiliating mandatory team building exercise, to awkward encounters with the funky boss who pretends to hate capitalism and tells you to be authentic. In this society, the experience of work is not of dying...but neither of living. It is one of a living death. And yet, the dead man working is nevertheless compelled to wear the exterior signs of life, to throw a pretty smile, feign enthusiasm and make a half-baked joke. When the corporation has colonized life itself, even our dreams, the question of escape becomes ever more pressing, ever more desperate.

Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative? Details

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Malcolm says

So, what do you do about capitalism if you live in a world where, as both Jameson & Žižek have noted, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism, or as Fisher puts it in the short, engaging, and entertaining book, if there is a "widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it"?

First up, disagree: I can imagine a viable alternative to capitalism (Alain Badiou's *The Communist Hypothesis* helped me there). I like to think I am helping to build a viable alternative to capitalism, but I am aware that there are not many people on the construction site with me, and it is I admit really hard to envisage exactly what my imaginary alternative looks like – except it is collectivist, social, equal, democratic (and I don't mean there are electoral rituals that perpetuate the power of a small group, but participatory) and does not require the alienation of humans from their being to work in the service of someone else.

Then, to agree: I don't see my imaginary viable alternative as all that likely, and am acutely aware that Fisher is correct when he argues that the 'reality' of capitalism hides the Real, its actual form, so that the accept capitalism's reality is to miss its essential form and character (he does get a little Lacanian at one stage, I suspect his debt to Žižek). More notably, I am also aware that in my everyday work as an academic and as a university manager I am not only complicit in but actively perpetuate late capitalism's surveillance culture where we control and discipline ourselves.

The analysis here, of mental health as a social disease, of the dyslexia epidemic as post-lexia (the condition of life in a world where reading is unnecessary), of neo-liberalism's love of a specific type of big state – the surveillance state – but hatred of the welfare state as not a paradox but as essential to late capitalism, packs an awful lot into 81 pages. What he doesn't do, and where Fisher shows how bad we have got at imagining not only an alternative to capitalism but also ways to resist it, is suggest anything more meaningful than a call to stop bickering over the past and find ways to, as much as possible, withdraw from doing capitalism's surveillance work for it.

In short, this is a fabulous analysis – but we have plenty of them (notably Jodi Dean's *Democracy and Other Neo-Liberal Fantasies*, Ellen Meiksins Wood's *Empire of Capital*, Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*): by all means read this and those three titles, but look also for ways to move beyond the analysis – and for me you can't go far past Marta Harnecker's *Rebuilding the Left*, or in the UK the political project best represented by *Red Pepper* magazine.

and says

read artuad- 'all writing is pigshit.' this is nothing new, he's just re-naming age old concepts, he can hardly go a sentence without referencing zizekbadioulacanjamesonblahblahblah boring!

Philipp says

Such an interesting book - in spite of its 80 pages it took me three days to read it, there is a lot to digest and think about. I'm pretty sure I underlined half the book, and what's the point of underlining so much?

Living in 2018 it is hard, if not impossible, to imagine an alternative system to capitalism. This feeling, this sense, is what the term 'capitalist realism' is about. Capitalism engulfs anything and makes it its own ('*Witness, for instance, the establishment of settled 'alternative' or 'independent' cultural zones, which endlessly repeat older gestures of rebellion and contestation as if for the first time. 'Alternative' and 'independent' don't designate something outside mainstream culture; rather, they are styles, in fact the dominant styles, within the mainstream.*'), so how are you supposed to protest this?

Antagonism is not now located externally, in the face-off between class blocs, but internally, in the psychology of the worker, who, as a worker, is interested in old-style class conflict, but, as someone with a pension fund, is also interested in maximizing the yield from his or her investments. There is no longer an identifiable external enemy. The consequence is, Marazzi argues, that post-Fordist workers are like the Old Testament Jews after they left the 'house of slavery': liberated from a bondage to which they have no wish to return but also abandoned, stranded in the desert, confused about the way forward.

Fisher learned from Zizek to use items of current pop culture, especially movies, to make his points., which makes this so readable.

He doesn't stop at a 'simple' critique of capitalism, he delves into mental illness (I'm *again* reminded of Fromm's The Sane Society, which Fisher doesn't cite - was he aware of it? Likely!), Fisher suffered from depression so it makes sense that he looks at late capitalism as a causative agent of mental illness (to him, the chemical and structural changes in the brain are (of course) real and can be 'solved' with medication, but does having to live in an insane system cause these changes? Fromm again!)

Fisher looks at the counter-intuitive proliferation of bureaucracy in organisations and how almost magical it seems. Nobody knows what is required, the directives make no sense, so entirely new structures come into being, there is no final authority to appeal to anymore, workers have to become their own auditors and stress increases manifold, while nobody 'outside' cares about the auditing results.

This thought of a visible system, impossible to understand, with nebulous interests, with no overall controllers or rules, that's what makes this book so interesting to read, the 'centerlessness of global capitalism'. Fisher has this neat example where, during the 2008 bank crisis, people complained about the privatising government but not about the bungling companies, he interprets that as a coping mechanism. It's easier to blame a few politicians than an incredibly complex system nobody has oversight over, and nobody understands, and nobody can map. *The disavowal [of the government] happens in part because the centerlessness of global capitalism is radically unthinkable.*

Here comes my favorite quote in this context:

The closest that most of us come to a direct experience of the centerlessness of capitalism is an encounter with the call center. As a consumer in late capitalism, you increasingly exist in two,

distinct realities: the one in which the services are provided without hitch, and another reality entirely, the crazed Kafkaesque labyrinth of call centers, a world without memory, where cause and effect connect together in mysterious, unfathomable ways, where it is a miracle that anything ever happens, and you lose hope of ever passing back over to the other side, where things seem to function smoothly. What exemplifies the failure of the neoliberal world to live up to its own PR better than the call center? Even so, the universality of bad experiences with call centers does nothing to unsettle the operating assumption that capitalism is inherently efficient, as if the problems with call centers weren't the systemic consequences of a logic of Capital which means organizations are so fixated on making profits that they can't actually sell you anything.

At the end Fisher begins to map out how a 'new left' could react to and work with late capitalism. New asceticism could be needed, since unlimited freedom breeds only misery. The bank crisis has discredited neoliberalism so now there is an ideological hole that can be filled. Bring back the idea of the 'general will' and take back the public space from the state. The 'new left' can start by working with the desires that neoliberalism has generated, such as a reduced bureaucracy, by starting a 'new struggle over work and who controls it'. Mental illnesses should be transformed 'outward', into antagonisms against Capital.

Overall extremely interesting, lots of food for thought, *highly* recommended if you like to think about our entire system of being.

Sadly Fisher never got to develop these ideas into a full framework, he took his own life one year ago.

P.S.:

The way value is generated on the stock exchange depends of course less on what a company 'really does', and more on perceptions of, and beliefs about, its (future) performance. In capitalism, that is to say, all that is solid melts into PR, and late capitalism is defined at least as much by this ubiquitous tendency towards PR-production as it is by the imposition of market mechanisms.

Now this book is a little bit older, by now Elon Musk's Tesla has *perfected* this approach: make a ton of PR, sell very little, miss production targets. His popularity alone somehow makes everyone ignore horrible working conditions as well as firing workers for trying to unionize. Edit 8th Feb 2018: Musk shot a car into space to the great elation of everybody, it was mostly ignored that his company quietly announced its biggest quarterly loss ever a day later.

P.P.S.:

It wouldn't be surprising if profound social and economic instability resulted in a craving for familiar cultural forms, to which we return in the same way that Bourne reverts to his core reflexes.

Does he predict the rise of the current garbage neo-reactionaries/alt-right? Maybe, but it also goes without saying that uncertain times breed nationalism and xenophobia, we've had that a few times in history now.

Sarah says

Short, insightful book on the effects of capitalism.

Capitalism has been so successful that it is now considered the only realistic political system. In the US and the UK, the main parties are both neoliberal, differing on some issues but sharing a consensus that There Is No Alternative to neoliberalism. Now it is “easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism”.

I'm going to break this review up into summaries of several topics which I found interesting.

-The depoliticization of mental illness-

Rates of depression and anxiety are increasing, and suicide among older men is rising. We treat these problems as purely individual cases of unbalanced brain chemistry, deflecting from contributing societal factors.

Mark Fisher wrote more on this for the Guardian: “Why mental health is a political issue”

The focus on "individual responsibility" for our mental health allows politicians to treat cutting healthcare services and rising suicides as though they have no connection.

-Anti-Capitalist Messages in the Media-

Capitalist media repackages anti-capitalist sentiment as a commodity to be sold. Just consider how often Hollywood movies feature “evil corporations” or ruthless CEOs as villains.

Rather than truly challenging capitalism, corporate “Anti-capitalist” messages often serves to reinforce it, serving as an outlet without creating actual change. In general, capitalist ideology overvalues beliefs over behavior, so we can believe capitalism is harmful whilst keeping our behaviour unchanged.

-Consumer vs Citizen-

Corporate interests are controlling the political landscape, yet when private companies make mistakes voters blame the government for giving power away rather than companies for misusing their power.

Regarding the bank crisis of 2008:

“The media focus was on the excesses of individual bankers and on the government’s handling of the crisis, not on the systemic causes of the crisis.

I don't for a moment want to excuse New Labour for its part in such disasters, but it has to be recognized that focus on government, like the focus on immoral individuals, is an act of deflection. Scapegoating an impotent government (running around to clean up the messes made by its business friends) arises from bad faith, from a continuing hostility to the Nanny State that nevertheless goes alongside a refusal to accept the consequences of the sidelining of government in global capitalism – a sign, perhaps, that, at the level of the

political unconscious, it is impossible to accept that there are no overall controllers, that the closest thing we have to ruling powers now are nebulous, unaccountable interests exercising corporate irresponsibility.”

Antonomasia says

I don't read many books about politics these days: it doesn't change things, I'd rather use reading for distraction and I've enough *tsundoku*. Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism*, however, is only 100 pages and had been well reviewed by a number of people online whose opinions I respect. Some are on Goodreads; another is in this blog post. Moreover, it was on Scribd, and in the aftermath of the election, I was particularly gloomy about being caught between necessary polite small talk with Tories and UKIPpers IRL, and the effort of refraining from argument about minutiae with online social justice warriors on the computer [love this], with only a handful of like-minded friends in between.

I must have highlighted about a fifth of the book. Going through the notes would have made an arduously long review, so I've ignored them and am writing this off the top of my head a week later.

The starting point (courtesy of Slavoj Zizek & Frederic Jameson) is that in Britain and many other countries, it's nowadays almost impossible to imagine any alternatives to capitalist neoliberalism. The obviousness of this and the rarity with which it's stated - at least anywhere I look at - is what interested me in the book. I have a pessimistically adaptive side, and if it hadn't been for two or three friends who have regularly reminded me of other ways - believers in the Citizen's Income, and someone living in a Scandinavian social democracy - I too would now probably be somewhat bewildered by trying to imagine anything else. Fisher does a lot of stating the obvious, but as above, it's an obvious that isn't heard enough, and about the big things like how the economy and the country run (not the rabid twitterstorms about some minor celebrity's accidental possibly slightly racist utterance that too often pass for left wing discussion on the internet), and it was good to hear as reinforcement.

Fisher is a lecturer in FE colleges and many of his examples come from his observations at work. About targets culture and the time-wasting and pointless treadmill it puts people on. About capitalism and the effects of its demands on mental health, via impossible demands for productivity and ever greater availability, increased debt for education and consumer goods without which life is made increasingly inconvenient, and a culture of job insecurity increasing depression and anxiety. There are more ostensibly conservative points about declining educational standards among disadvantaged young people who've been left to bring themselves up using the internet, and the concept of the 'hedonic treadmill' of easy screen-based distractions - which are likely to rattle with those of the relevant age group (NB he's not talking about the sort of teenagers who use Goodreads or who fret about narrowly missing an A*) yet which even slightly older generations will recognise. (The 2011 riots would have been worth citing re. some of the points about consumer culture, but they hadn't happened yet.)

I was glad to find the book never hints at the violent revolutionary angle. I've occasionally been made to feel quite conservative around far left types, because I'm opposed to the disruption and damage of full on revolutions and smashing shit up: for one, that sort of thing makes life even more difficult for vulnerable people whom they say they want to help by disrupting food, medicine, care etc. And it makes life more difficult for all the ordinary people who have to clear things up.

Down sides:

- I'm not sure Fisher is always sufficiently critical of mental health criteria when looking at increased numbers of sufferers. One survey cited looks at reported symptoms over decades and looks highly valid and relevant, but there may be other instances where criteria created for the American health insurance industry are labelling people as having problems who wouldn't have been 20-40 years ago.

- There are intimations of a socially (rather than economically) collectivist ideal of society. This sort of thing is always a turn-off to me as there are a lot of circumstances where I consider individualism a good thing. However, one of the rallying cries at the end is that the left needs to formulate and push for a *less* bureaucratic society, which sounds promising and definitely not like the New Labour 'database state'. Nor like the talking-to-no-end that has characterised the handful of political meetings (from New Labour to Green to Trots) I've attended in the past with friends who were heavily involved in these things. One of Fisher's suggestions is for strikes in which workers do the actual substance of their work but reject target monitoring and similar bureaucratic form filling tasks. This sounds like something that the public and priggishly productive workers would approve of. (I once worked somewhere that held a couple of strikes, but had no respect for the action as most of the strikers routinely spent half their working days on personal calls, whilst temps like myself did the actual work and didn't racially discriminate against certain service users either.)

The BIG problem with this book isn't its fault, it's just out of date. It was written in 2009. Just after the crash (so it acknowledges how neoliberal capitalism suddenly becomes a fan the state when it's useful - i.e. to prop up the banks.) But before the Tory coalition, before austerity and death by a thousand cuts; before even fewer people had anywhere near enough to live on; before dying and severely disabled people were routinely found "fit for work"; before the massive increases in food bank usage; before rapid increases in the gap between rich and poor and a London increasingly stuffed with international super rich who can toss away a spare million on hideous tacky jewellery as fast as blinking; and before a lot of reasonable people started saying that the 1970s were pretty damn good actually, and not the decade that time forgot, because society was at its most equal then*. There's not a great deal wrong with what's in this little book, it just doesn't go so much into the issues of poverty and inequality, for some life-and-death issues, which are the most urgent now.

*[The last two bits are from a BBC documentary season on the super-rich shown earlier this year.]

Liz says

I could've done without the "the wired society is killing us, get off my lawn" vibe of the chapter on young people and depression -- fisher basically needs to not talk about hip-hop ever, my god, that was cringeworthy. but overall it was good: succinct, super readable, thought-provoking, helpful in organising my thought around a lot of other stuff, and convincing w/r/t its key thesis (though I retain significant reservations about the specifics of fisher's revolutionary program). thanks, max!

Phakin says

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Eadweard says

"The power of capitalist realism derives in part from the way that capitalism subsumes and consumes all of previous history: one effect of its 'system of equivalence' which can assign all cultural objects, whether they are religious iconography, pornography, or *Das Kapital*, a monetary value. Walk around the British Museum, where you see objects torn from their lifeworlds and assembled as if on the deck of some Predator spacecraft, and you have a powerful image of this process at work. In the conversion of practices and rituals into merely aesthetic objects, the beliefs of previous cultures are objectively ironized, transformed into artifacts. Capitalist realism is therefore not a particular type of realism; it is more like realism in itself."

"Ask students to read for more than a couple of sentences and many – and these are A-level students mind you – will protest that they can't do it. The most frequent complaint teachers hear is that it's boring. It is not so much the content of the written material that is at issue here; it is the act of reading itself that is deemed to be 'boring'. What we are facing here is not just time-honored teenage torpor, but the mismatch between a post-literate 'New Flesh' that is 'too wired to concentrate' and the confining, concentrational logics of decaying disciplinary systems. To be bored simply means to be removed from the communicative sensation-stimulus matrix of texting, YouTube and fast food; to be denied, for a moment, the constant flow of sugary gratification on demand. Some students want Nietzsche in the same way that they want a hamburger; they fail to grasp – and the logic of the consumer system encourages this misapprehension – that the indigestibility, the difficulty is Nietzsche.

[...]

Teachers are now put under intolerable pressure to mediate between the post-literate subjectivity of the late capitalist consumer and the demands of the disciplinary regime (to pass examinations etc). This is one way in which education, far from being in some ivory tower safely inured from the 'real world', is the engine room of the reproduction of social reality, directly confronting the inconsistencies of the capitalist social field. Teachers are caught between being facilitator-entertainers and disciplinarian-authoritarians. Teachers want to help students to pass the exams; they want us to be authority figures who tell them what to do. Teachers being interpellated by students as authority figures exacerbates the 'boredom' problem, since isn't anything that comes from the place of authority *a priori* boring? Ironically, the role of disciplinarian is demanded of educators more than ever at precisely the time when disciplinary structures are breaking down in institutions. With families buckling under the pressure of a capitalism which requires both parents to work, teachers are now increasingly required to act as surrogate parents, instilling the most basic behavioral protocols in students and providing pastoral and emotional support for teenagers who are in some cases only minimally socialized."

"The closest that most of us come to a direct experience of the centerlessness of capitalism is an encounter with the call center. As a consumer in late capitalism, you increasingly exist in two, distinct realities: the one in which the services are provided without hitch, and another reality entirely, the crazed Kafkaesque labyrinth of call centers, a world without memory, where cause and effect connect together in mysterious, unfathomable ways, where it is a miracle that anything ever happens, and you lose hope of ever passing back over to the other side, where things seem to function smoothly. What exemplifies the failure of the neoliberal world to live up to its own PR better than the call center? Even so, the universality of bad experiences with call centers does nothing to unsettle the operating assumption that capitalism is inherently efficient, as if the problems with call centers weren't the systemic consequences of a logic of Capital which means organizations are so fixated on making profits that they can't actually sell you anything.

The call center experience distills the political phenomenology of late capitalism: the boredom and frustration punctuated by cheerily piped PR, the repeating of the same dreary details many times to different poorly trained and badly informed operatives, the building rage that must remain impotent because it can have no legitimate object, since – as is very quickly clear to the caller – there is no-one who knows, and no-one who could do anything even if they could. Anger can only be a matter of venting; it is aggression in a vacuum, directed at someone who is a fellow victim of the system but with whom there is no possibility of communal. Just as the anger has no proper object, it will have no effect. In this experience of a system that is unresponsive, impersonal, centerless, abstract and fragmentary, you are as close as you can be to confronting the artificial stupidity of Capital in itself."

Anna says

I've been meaning to read 'Capitalist Realism' for years, but only now that I've moved to Scotland do I find a library that has a copy. The University Library in Cambridge did not, outrageously enough. I've come across references to it in various other books criticising capitalism, plus it is only 81 pages long, so inevitably there wasn't a great deal in it that felt new to me. Instead, I'd call it an impressively concise synthesis. Fisher picks certain bits of Žižek to interpret (ie make comprehensible), as well as drawing on Jameson and various older theorists. His discussion of bureaucracy brought to mind The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy, which examines a similar thesis in considerably greater depth, and Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now, which focuses on the eternal now in which we find ourselves. The personal anecdotes about working in higher education made me think that perhaps I was too harsh on Deschooling Society.

In short, I was reminded of many things I'd already read without necessarily coming across anything strikingly novel. The nearest to that was the chapter titled 'All that is solid melts into PR', which talks about corporate language and the 'hidden expectations behind official standards'. These certainly seem to be prevalent in academia: a clear expectation that you should work unpaid overtime, in pursuit of a more senior job that will require even more unpaid overtime. Ugh, why should I bother. The mere prospect leaches any career ambition out of my body (cf How to Be Idle and The Freedom Manifesto).

Fisher shares Žižek's habit of referencing a fairly eclectic set of films, novels, and TV, which made for an enjoyable, readable non-fiction-equivalent-of-a-novella on anticapitalist critical theory. However, such eclecticism tends to result in somewhat uninspiring concluding chapters, and so it was here. Fisher suggests revitalising the Left by fighting bureaucracy, without articulating this nearly as well as Graeber in The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy. I'm also unsure what he can mean by, 'We must convert widespread mental health problems from medicalised conditions into effective

antagonisms'. I'm all for carbon rationing, though, which is also mentioned. Although it was worth reading, 'Capitalist Realism' already feels slightly dated to me. The book I think best captures the systemic weakness of current capitalism is still Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future.

David M says

We are not living in an age of unbridled innovation. The sad fact is it's becoming increasingly difficult to even create new humans

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2...>

RIP Mark Fisher.

The task of repoliticizing mental illness is an urgent one if the left wants to challenge capitalist realism

John says

This is a hard book to stomach, but it has definitely had an effect, and while I'm not won over by Fisher he has given me a completely new lens I can now flip down when needed through which to view my own urges and emotions, and the state of the world.

Again, the book is incredibly depressing. The five star rating is due to the short length and its upheaval of my previous worldview which however patched back together will now have Capitalist Realism roiling underneath.

Emma Sea says

Excellent. This is 8 years old now so I'd love to see an updated version with an essay reflecting on the exacerbation since original publication.

Highly recommended.

Sian Lile-Pastore says

This is a short and super readable book. I was interested in lots of the things discussed, in particular about depression - which is a political rather than a personal/individual issue?, management, job reviews in work - where 'satisfactory' isn't actually satisfactory And other stuff too.

So it's interesting, it got me thinking, but alongside this, it felt like this wasn't the book for me. It has a very male narrative - pretty much all the references are from men - lots of Zizek, Deleuze and Guattari and many other male theorists - mixed in with (also very male) pop culture references - The Jason Bourne novels and films, Heat, Goodfellas, Reservoir Dogs, James Ellroy and so on and so on. It ended up with me just waiting desperately for him to mention a woman - and he eventually did with Ursula Le Guin (often the male go to woman writer along with Virginia Woolf?) and the TV programme Supernanny (hmm). There is no consideration of feminism at all.

This book was written in 2008 (so about ten years old on writing this review), but to me feels extremely dated. Not necessarily because of the pop culture references (which do date a book, but often in a nice way) but more in the way it was written. In fact, it actually feels very 90s.

So there ya go. I'm happy to put this into the not really written for me category. But I do hope that similar books written today would acknowledge women and feminist theory and just generally be way more inclusive.

Miguel says

Mark Fisher's Capitalist Realism (2009) is a curmudgeonly and over-determined analysis of late capitalism with little theoretical value. His utter and complete assimilation into the ideological machine of Žižek's New Left does him an enormous disservice. Because of this, Fisher is precluded from approaching the issues present in late capitalism with the necessary finesse. Rather, for every moment of insight (of which there are a few), there are ten face palm inducing misrepresentations of contemporary culture or sanctimonious condemnations of identity politics.

Beyond the book's inherent failure as a consequence of Žižek boot-licking, Fisher places a lot of bets that haven't paid off in the post-2008 political landscape. As Fisher sketches his ideal, vaguely racist and culturally elitist, image of a post-financial crisis progressivism, Fisher dismisses the tendencies that have expanded to the left's zeitgeist?—?most crucially the self-determining identity.

Fisher's text occasionally brings to bear prescient points, but some are borrowed?—?such as Robert Pfaller's 'interpassivity,' the media's performance of anti-capitalism which creates a bystander effect in viewers and results in their atrophy. Fisher generates one useful chapter, the fifth, which provides a fruitful analysis of the relationship between mental illness and capitalism. Fisher writes, "the current ruling ontology denies any possibility of a social causation of mental illness. The chemico-biologization of mental illness is of course strictly commensurate with its de-politicization." He continues, "all mental illnesses are neurologically instantiated, but this says nothing about their causation." To continue down Fisher's avenue of inquiry about the relationship between capitalism and mental illness would be enormously fruitful. However, this is the only meaningful contribution Fisher can offer in this text.

The text's failings are far more numerous. Whether it's the patronizing pop-culture references that are superfluous and are belied by Fisher's cultural elitism, his contempt for youth culture, or his attempt to de-emphasize the importance of individual identity, these faults can be attributed to the frequent drawing from the poisoned well of Žižek and Jameson. The most frustrating thing about Fisher's text is that in a short 81 pages he still manages to pack in criticisms of the priorities and processes of modern post-colonialism. It is baffling how proponents of Neo-Marxism (which departs from Marx on almost every significant point) can miss how self-defeating paternalistic lecturing about tactics and priorities. The New Left conceives of

“radical energy” as something finite and thus embarks on a patronizing crusade of telling others how to spend it. If one accepts their premise, how is a leftist condescending to another a good use of said energy? But, the New Left is wrong on both counts. One can be incredibly invested in the analysis of individual experience and cultural epistemology but also be concerned about the greater structures of capitalism. In fact, both interests are necessary rather than mutually exclusive as Fisher would claim.

Reading Fisher’s text, it feels irrelevant. It is a work of political and ideological speculation that is almost uniformly wrong, hampered by bad reasoning and a fractured ideological foundation. The trajectory of post-financial crisis progressivism that Fisher outlines is correct only insofar as the financial crisis represented a sea change. That change, rather than moving outwardly and anonymizing the individual, has shattered the barriers of entry to epistemology and allowed for the inclusion of individual experience. In that tradition, Fisher’s concerns about mental illness and their relationship to capitalism actually fit quite nicely. Fisher is at his best when he discusses these issues and takes aim at Neoliberalism, and his worst when he channels the self-importance of Žižek that includes shades of a bourgeoisie cultural elitism and white supremacy.

Ariya says

It's unexpectedly *fun* to read in the voice of the sarcastic and sneering. The good analogies are the bonus.
