

**The covey,
wherever two or three
flutter together
in my name**

frère dupont

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What do you think of Jesus¹

We do not, and cannot, think of Jesus. All that remains to us is the beginning of our thinking as if from Jesus, and the ending of our thinking, as if towards Jesus. In our thinking we set out from, and we return to, but our fluttering thoughts find no roost. Under present conditions, Jesus is a medium for thinking, not its object. It would not be quite right to say that we think with Jesus, as that would suggest a resonating agreement between the spheres; but where we are thinking from, towards, for or against, we still think, discordantly perhaps, within what is known as the seamless robe. Whoever thinks, thinks for Jesus. But also whoever thinks, cannot think of Jesus.

It is not true to say that atheists are really Christians, but it is true that atheism appears within the frame of Christianity and conforms, by rejection, to its constraints. But what is it that blocks us from thinking directly of Jesus? How is it that we cannot turn our gaze upon him as if from outside of the territory that he defines? It seems that we are condemned to dwell in the house of noise. We are perpetually distracted and because we cannot think of Jesus, we also find that we cannot apprehend any object directly.

We are unable to perceive Jesus because our consciousness is always tripping over into yet another cycle of mediation. If it were possible under present conditions, as it was in previous eras, then the state of thinking of, with Jesus as its object, would follow the line of an uninterrupted gaze. But the state of uninterrupted, the clearing from which we see

clearly, which would culminate from the threefold harmony of image, place, desire is in practice assailed from every direction. The image is distorted. The place occupied. The desire dispersed.

The Jesus lifeworld sets us in motion as beings who desire to turn our gaze directly upon Jesus, as to a solar eclipse, as to the cities of the plain at the moment of their ruin. It is the nature of our desire, chained to affliction, to cast itself into that abyss from which our redeemed form will emerge. And what is Jesus but a weight upon the ankles of those who plumb the depths? But the desire, even if it is embedded from the start, is inoperable. Our gaze slips off the divine as from a polished and inscrutable surface. We do not find what defines us. We are deflected. We shy away. We are averse.

The word, the image, the message (the sign) of Jesus has been transformed into representation. The image, the place, the desire are disrupted, inhibited, diverted. The stuff of consciousness is collapsed into the recycling mediations of exchange. Where all things are broken down into component parts, relations are recommenced as mosaic, as if from the perspective of some external intelligence.

To say that we cannot think of Jesus is to say that we are historically prevented from achieving the devotional attention of previous eras. Where we seem to be rapt, we are really only trapped. The general expulsion of activity from the reproduction of existence has also extended to spiritual practices; we do not crawl across jagged rocks to the divine. The state of fascination implemented by computerised communication inverts the relations of devotion: the devotee becomes inert before the operations of the devotional object.

But devotion is the approach in frenzied irrationality, the shedding of collateral energies, towards the contemplative state that directs itself at the feuerbachian image of the ideal. The ideal object, the face of Jesus, is itself only a vestigial structure of savage consciousness. It is another remnant of the capacity to see directly as preserved at the threshold to real domination. Both immediate perception, and the object of savage consciousness, as captured by the state, become at first 'religious' (that is, a set of images, directed towards the species memory of the exterior) and then, later, they decay further into representations.

Commencing from the state's enclosure of direct perception and

1 https://curiouscat.me/A_Certain_Plume

its objects, the apparatuses of religion began to take on regulatory functions. The highest purpose of religion was a defensive war conducted around barely comprehended relics and images of exterior existence undertaken against any further encroachment from the relentless sub-systems of representation and the parent ur-system of abstract equivalence generating them. Camatte writes of the devoted that they made a 'desperate attempt on the part of the community to check the mercantile mechanism that was undermining it [...] what was being violently rejected was the dynamic that separates people by the most atrocious inequalities: the dynamic of exchange value.'

The progressive collapse in direct thinking before the advance of abstract equivalence is itself a compensational response to the historical failure of the capacity to gaze directly as it is interrupted by the ceaseless approach of representations. In the all-mediation/no-object set of relations contained within the exchange environment, the form of Jesus breaks down but not in the sense of historical decomposition.

By erosive processes, Jesus as a divine image is reduced to a dust that is dispersed through the state-constrained perceptual-conscious apparatus as plastics are broken down and blended into the life-systems of the oceans. Modern humans are sucked into a Jesus swamp of overdeterminations, where the only available definitive paths to seeming significance are the traumatised identities generated by resentment.

If that is what Jesus is now, a purgatorial mode of general consciousness driven by endless aggrievement, this hell of the long spoons, without exit or redemption - precisely, the structural condition of thinking which cannot itself be brought before thought - then, what was he before? What was Jesus when the gaze upon him was not interrupted, when it was still possible to think of him as an attractor of contemplation, as a generator of perspective?

Under Roman despotism Jesus functioned as a cross-roads image: a head impaled on a stake, but still speaking; a crucified body, but still walking. Jesus was a prophet of the condition that is defined by both its belonging to the state and its being set against the state. He was no wayist like Buddha - for Jesus there is neither convergence nor reflection of state and spirit; his is a theology of incommensurability; all things are not 'one', on the contrary, all things are outlined; there is in the environment

of indexed distinctions only the cohabitation of incompatibilities.

Jesus opened no path to enlightenment but set up irreducible paradoxes around the interpenetrating separations of Demiurge (Rome) and Logos. Jesus was all interrupted and ultimately defeated outlines. Whilst he prophesied of the objects that became distinct against the law, he also gestured to the law that was caught, like a city on the hill, on the horizon of the Law: Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.

But what most belonged to Caesar, was Jesus. Only captured thought was capable of thinking *beyond* the state from within the state. And so it came to pass that Nietzsche was the last human to think directly of Jesus and perceive within Him, the ruins of exterior being. Nietzsche was the last person to really think 'of' Jesus, by thinking against him. He was the last to think of him as a worthy opponent, as the author and organising principle of an entire way of life.

After Nietzsche there are only 'social' and 'economic' explanations of historical phenomena. Of course, there were believers and worshippers after Nietzsche but these no longer directed their attention to the images of the divine, and in the place of such images were situated representations, and these could only represent the exchangeability of all things.

The transposition of religious components is to be recognised in terms of a before and an after Nietzsche. This involved a reversal in the flow of investment between believer and believed-in. Before Nietzsche, believers invested in the images and texts of the venerated state. After Nietzsche, representations of religious icons reproduced the masses in the position of believers.

The masses are prevented by the structure of representation of thinking of any object. They attempt, via ideology, to apprehend the objects pertinent to their reproduction, but in vain - the noise of abstraction fills their senses. Their grasp reaches into the virtual. After Nietzsche, the churches have been filled with high maintenance interpellated adherent-replicants. They do not think of Jesus, but rather, Jesus (or the representation of Jesus) thinks of them.

It is from the artefact of Jesus as a being of the state and against the

state that Nietzsche could infer the possible outline of a being *outside* the state and *autonomous* from it. It is the irreducibly contradictory character of Jesus, always of and against (flesh, friendship, rebellion, observance, reason, passion) that refracted Nietzsche's gaze, scattering it beyond the hem of the seamless robe.

Speaking in a parable. A Jesus Christ was possible only in a Jewish landscape. I mean one over which the gloomy and sublime thunder cloud of the wrathful Jehovah was brooding continually. Only here was the rare and sudden piercing of the gruesome and perpetual general day-night by a single ray of the sun experienced as if it were a miracle of "love" and the ray of unmerited "grace." Only here could Jesus dream of his rainbow and his ladder to heaven on which God descended to man. Everywhere else, good weather and sunshine were considered the rule and everyday occurrences.

Communism will presuppose the social capacity to think of Jesus directly, as Nietzsche did, and to gaze unflinchingly upon the face of Jesus without enduring the traumatising effects of the accumulated social relations of the past. What would it be to think of Jesus in circumstances, as Nietzsche almost had it, where a wrathful state is not brooding continually? Communism gives permission for the therapeutic return to the human community of all the past forms of its historical afflictions.

But the eternal recurrence of its past to the community's present functioning, its perpetual abreactive recycling of earlier damage, is not in itself the path out. Endless therapy is another truncation of being, another defence mechanism. The exit from history is inseparable from the endless play of direct relations, even so, the ability to tolerate the recapitulation of past forms still may serve as an adequate indicator, as do the presence of certain lichens, of non-polluted being, of life escaped from the state.

What would it be? What would it be to think of Jesus, to consider Jesus immediately, and then to think of, and also consider and gaze upon, as other modes of Jesus, every past distortion of historical existence stacked together like logs for the hearth; to think and consider, without interruption or mediation, and as if from the outside, as if from outside of history, all the Christs of history, and also to hear every utterance of

all the millions of Christs, as if merged into a single utterance; and to think of, and to consider, as if from an alien position, as if from a position separated from history, the resurrected remains of the entire history of civilisation? What all of this means, the encounter with history without recognition or allegiance, without energy or despair, without repulsion or dismissal, but with tolerance and permission, and after having left it all behind, what this would be is the definition of human community where even that idealisation (*gemeinwesen*) had long ago fallen away.

You can just see a little peep of the passage in Looking-glass House, if you leave the door of our drawing-room wide open: and it's very like our passage as far as you can see, only you know it may be quite different on beyond [...] Then she began looking about, and noticed that what could be seen from the old room was quite common and uninteresting, but that all the rest was as different as possible.





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