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## The Not-So-Mean Streets of Hangzhou, China: Reflecting with Nietzsche, Freud and Marx

### A Commentary on Shaw, D. B. (2017). *Posthuman Urbanism: Mapping Bodies in Contemporary City Space*. Rowman & Littlefield.

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The study of the city is one of the most challenging topics we explore as philosophers, but it is highly rewarding because the city is our most complex cultural artifact and draws in so many aspects of cultural studies. *Posthuman Urbanism: Mapping Bodies in Contemporary City Space* (Shaw, 2017), does not disappoint in this respect of revealing how the city is the locus of so much of our neoliberal, and now neocolonial, culture of privilege in forms of classism, racism and genderism, and how the many “others” to these are relegated to the margins of city spaces so that the city becomes a *de facto* selection tool of sorting these into strata. City spaces are hierarchical, some New York residents, for instance, fit and trim, while away the hours at the ice rink in Rockefeller Center beneath the giant bronze of Prometheus bringing humanity the torch of fire, thus, to signify the divine origins of civilization, whose rise, otherwise inexplicable, is what separates us from animals, as goes the logic. But so many other faceless inhabitants struggle on the margins. Shaw (2017) has written an impressively well researched and nuanced study, approaching the question of the city by contrasting analysis from the many “others” it sets as opposed to itself, which I found very illuminating. The city is revealed by its contrasts to its interpretation of country vacations, for instance, for working and lower middle class but also for the risk takers of adventure, renewing the domination of nature; it is revealed in contrast to cyberspace, of the video game “Grand Theft Auto,” and all those many “others” who, by being “othered,” reveal its non-inclusive and dominance meaning. Apart from the discussion of Darwinism, which I found questionable, the critical side of the book in tracing the ideology behind the stratification in the city is excellent, but I found the book problematic in its dismissal of utopianism and its rejection of the revolutionary subject in the program of the Posthuman City and in its non-developmental conception of the Posthuman.

An earlier study of the culture of the city by Lewis Mumford takes note that our increasing control over the basics of material life at the time of the rise of agriculture and the first cities coincided with a growing anxiety, and that “war and domination...were ingrained in the original structure of the ancient city” (Mumford, 1961, 44). Mumford identified the culture of the earliest cities as the culture of authoritarianism, which is today the culture of patriarchy, genderism, classism, and ultimately became the culture of Empire (under Sargon of Akkad), and it is the basic templet that has replicated itself over and over to today, and very precisely so, it may be noted. But how did the culture of the

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authoritarian city arise? It is a very difficult question to answer, but a very important one. If we assume that the agricultural revolution and the culture of the city evolved gradually in Mesopotamia, it had to have come from the pre-pottery Neolithic, but when we look at the culture of the pre-pottery Neolithic sites in Ancient Eastern Anatolia, there is no indication of authoritarian/patriarchal culture in them at all, and correspondingly, no reference to the pre-pottery Neolithic in southeastern Anatolia in ancient Sumerian artifacts. The Taş Tepeler (“Stone Hills” in Turkish) sites were not settlements, and we are reading our gradualist narrative backwards in thinking so. This leaves the other possibility that authoritarian/patriarchal culture arose suddenly—and it is a recognized possibility that the first Sumerians just took over existing cities, and then likely because of catastrophic change, and that then means that the evolution of the city is not transparent. If we are diligent in our genealogy, as was Mumford, not the least divine.

Exploration of a catastrophe in this time frame has been ongoing, with rival theories back and forth. By some accounts, a solar flare occurred some 14,300 years ago, a Miyake event, and/or as *per* other accounts, a catastrophic comet impact, evidenced in an iridium boundary layer, the YDB (although it is not high in iridium) dates from a few thousand years later at 12,900. There is room for the hypothesis that the people, or peoples, who founded the agricultural revolution leading to the first cities had been imprinted with trauma from a climate catastrophe, a remnant population with changes to DNA expression imprinted and preserved by epigenetic mechanisms. This is by way of a general Lamarckian perspective of searching for catastrophist origins of new intelligences and emergent behaviors seeming to appear from nowhere (Ward, 2018). I think there should be some developmental content to the thought of the Posthuman City to be a philosophical idea. We can think of that content along the lines of evolution and ask: “How is the Posthuman City an evolutionary advance?” and try to connect the dots between that question to the possibility of conserved trauma having a role in the rise of agriculture and the first cities and authoritarian culture and asking how that might be addressed. But any such search for deeper meanings is missing from Shaw’s (2017) book, which winds up identifying the Posthuman City in circular terms. Moreover, in an opening caveat, Shaw (2017) states that the book’s analysis is based on London, which then makes for a limited study and of a piece with the problem of failing to articulate a meaningful conception of the Posthuman City. Shaw (2017) writes:

In this book, London is, more often than not, my exemplary city, not only because it is one of the capitals of modernity and postmodernity but because it is where I live and can write with confidences of first-hand experience. (ix)

Shaw (2017) is quite correct to criticize the city as bizarre in its hierarchizing by space assignment, but the positive idea of what the Posthuman City should look like seems defeatist. Shaw (2017) writes:

My proposition then is anti-utopian. Posthuman urbanism does not prescribe a programme of action towards a specified social reality or the recognition of a revolutionary subject. There is no posthuman phalanstery but there are Posthuman architectures. They are not buildings as such but built space which has been reimagined, repurposed, re-appropriated or hacked in accordance with a politics of being collectively out of place. (185)

I found Shaw’s (2017) dismissal of utopianism as the model for the Posthuman City facile. Also, the revolutionary subject may be general, but it is not evacuated of meaning thereby because it is more than just a socially constructed identity achieved by higher and higher orders of prescinding from meaningful differences, the point at issue after all. As Marx understood it, the revolutionary subject



is an objective historical reality in the dialectics of class struggle. I submit that migrants re-appropriating city streets in New York, street-sleeping in front of the Roosevelt Hotel, should be recognized as revolutionary subjects. Neoliberalism is responsible for the drug-based economies of their home countries and the violence they are fleeing, after all. So, what is wrong with prescribing street sleeping as a program of class struggle?

As Shaw (2017) points out, the city selects by its spaces, even selecting against our ancestors when prompted. They, by reason of their rejected skin color and features are classed among the many “monsters,” as Shaw so titles her Chapter 1, “Darwin’s Monsters,” which the city rejects in favor of bodies with European features. These othered “monsters” in the eyes of the white bourgeoisie live on the margins of the city, as came to light in New York City, where I am from, Brooklyn, in the 1990’s when we began to uncover a vast network of homeless people, the “Mole People,” so called, living in abandoned subway station stops. The lucky ones among the many “others” in marginal city spaces live in less-than nice neighborhoods like, Brownsville, Williamsburg and Red Hook in Brooklyn, or China-Town and Little-Italy and East Harlem in Manhattan. This was back in the day.

Street gangs roam the city’s streets, Shaw takes note of them. Momentarily standing down from their menacing roving to complete a drug transaction in a playground, sometimes stumbling into an incidental game of handball to while away the wait time, gangs have only the spaces they make themselves to be their own. Handball courts are huge outdoor walls that, over time, become stone tablet records of the city’s graffiti. The name “CISCO” was scrawled on this one, the whole width of it, a reminder of the reality of *de facto* property rights. I did actually witness a drug transaction once, but I refused to cooperate with the police inquiry into it “my friends” ratted me out that I witnessed it, very nice! Plucky kid at 13. Two days later, Cisco and his gang came onto the playground looking for me. I was going to run but, after all, I didn’t do anything. “I didn’t tell them anything, I didn’t,” I insisted. Maybe Cisco had had cancer of the larynx because he was using a voice box, and even though he was wearing a high collar, I could still see it. He pressed a button on his throat and started talking but it came out as just a mechanical noise and I couldn’t understand him. “Cisco thanks you,” explained one of his crew, “Cisco says you’re cool.” Such gentility among monsters! I am not Hispanic, so this was an act of class solidarity on my part.

As Shaw (2017) notes, the stratification in cities in the West reflects its Social Darwinist underpinnings, but I think the pseudo-biology that undergirds keeping the orders in place is an idea about the specialness of the white bourgeoisie class as being genetically based, which we first find in the works of August Weismann. He does not come up in Shaw’s (2017) book, but I think he belongs in the broader background of her topic. His Germ Plasma theory, and his infamous “Weismann’s barrier” states that somatic changes cannot get into the germ line, and is specifically targeted against upward social movement. Weismann developed Germ Plasma theory as a theoretical denial of valid upward class movement based on the possible evolution of traits in marginalized groups that could match the *bourgeoisie*, and which would then rival the *bourgeoisie* class to make them equal in it. The theory holds that when any such “superior” traits appear where they are not supposed to in the lower layers of stratification, they do so anomalously because the specialness of the germ plasma for such is lacking there. So, Cisco’s gentility dies with him. Weismann’s barrier has been discredited today.<sup>2</sup> This is unmistakably authoritarian thinking, and it would seem to be a clearer match to the thinking of the hierarchical city than what one finds in Darwin, who was not a Social Darwinist in any case. But this history does not exist outside the West,

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<sup>2</sup> See Jablonka and Lamb (2020). Chapter 3 - The Evolutionary Implications of Non-Genetic Inheritance.

and one must ask how Shaw can be writing about the Posthuman City when writing only about the history of the city in the West. The city in which I have lived for the past 13 years in China, Hangzhou City, is, in my opinion, a case in point of an arguably utopian city in its communitarianism. My review of Shaw's (2017) book is by way of producing this counter-example to its anti-utopianism.

In recent years, my neighborhood in Hangzhou has been transformed into a model gated community. There are CCTV monitors everywhere, magnetic gates, face recognition scanners, guard posts at entryways, flower boxes running up and down streets shepherding traffic into a near single file: all the characteristics of GC. But the change in life here in my neighborhood of Xiaoheshan, nearby to several universities, is not as it would be in a Western City because in these years of upscale transformation, the population makeup has remained the same. Xiaoheshan was and still is a mixed community with students from many diverse backgrounds, mostly from Africa, then from the Middle East, then Germany, South America, Russia and Indonesia, and all are still living here side by side with Chinese families, some of them very traditional. Although renovated apartments are opening up at higher rents and drawing in more affluent students, apartments not being renovated are the same rent as ever. My rent has been the same for six now: three bedrooms, two baths and a balcony with Southern exposure for 2,700 RMB each month, plus 300 RMB utilities; 7 RMB = 1 USD. I often dine on lamb kabob at the Muslim restaurant for just 35 RMB, where on Wednesday evenings I make my return social contribution by teaching Nietzsche's positive view of Islam. If anything, towards those whom one would expect to be increasingly marginalized in an upscale gated community, my neighborhood has become more paternalistic. My landlord gets reports from the local pharmacy on what medications I buy there: "Do you have high blood pressure?" he asked me one day, concernedly, (I am 74). Expats are always getting physical examinations for one reason or another, and my neighborhood pharmacist will look over pages and pages of detailed results of my bloodwork, urine analysis, ultrasound and so on and make TCM and Western suggestions, no charge. *Post hoc ergo propter hoc* to one side, I am in terrific health.

Certain facts simply need to be heard in the West about what communitarianism means in practice, which, I admit, I did not fully appreciate myself until I lived through COVID here. The West has nothing like what I saw in the dedication of our health care workers: nucleic acid testing every 72 hours—the entire country—and what they get is what we all get: common prosperity as we are not savaging one another, dog eat dog. Yes, there are some very rich people here who have yet to take Peter Singer to heart, but I am not concerned that Jack Ma is going to buy up the properties in my community and rent them out at highly inflated prices. John Rawls is very widely studied here; the foremost Chinese language translator of Rawls teaches university in Hangzhou. Increasingly, vending machines operate on a "Conscientious Payment" system: I first open the door of the cooler and take out my chosen product and only then do I scan the QR code with my phone and the vendor is paid automatically through Alipay. If I elect to just walk off with the product without paying, I can do so. I never have, and no one ever does. We have a beautiful Flower Path winding all around the city and the utility boxes along the way, just gray and drab but totally inoffensive, have been hand painted by street artists with complementary pictures of flowers of traditional Chinese themes, and no one ever defaces them. I cannot think of a time in my life in New York City when that would have been possible. The new subway is spotless and there is no graffiti on the sides of the subway cars: Is it because there is no "TRUMP TOWER" logo on any buildings to be satirically counterpointed? There are no homeless people living in the subway stations. No one is going to snatch my phone and run out of the car at a stop before I can catch them. It just isn't done. The story is pretty much the same in cities everywhere in China. Collectivism is the heart and soul



of the world here; it can be a bit all-devouring yes, but it is a thing of great pride to the Chinese people, and rightly so.

Shaw (2017) is against recognizing a revolutionary subject, but it seems to me that in the neoliberal/neocolonial center of the world, America, the revolutionary subject is alive and kicking hard. As I am writing, it is one year out from the US presidential election of 2024, and former President Donald Trump is performing stunningly well with African American and Hispanic voters, which is a defiant rejection on their part of white liberal woke politics. African Americans are turning their backs on the identity politics of woke-ism that has so long courted them by sheltering them, evidently in possession of defensive resources of their own. They are turning away from woke-ism's politics of identity and equal entitlement and towards a politics of liberation, and they do not see Trump from the viewpoint of the wokes.

At the *avant garde* of African Americans' rejection of woke-ism's politics are its rap artists turning out in support of Donald Trump. This has been ongoing since Lil Wayne's support for Trump in 2020. It is a highly controversial topic. Sexy Red is another, and also see Nicki Minaj's scandalous pro-Trump homage in her re-take on the "MAGA" acronym in *Endless Fashion* (2023). Wocka Floka Flame has just recently endorsed Donald Trump for president in 2024 (Smith, 2023). To the wokes' dismay, many African Americans are seeing Trump as defiant of an order they have come to hate: "How can Trump be the all-white, white guy he is being made out to be and still be taking such a shellacking from the white liberal establishment trying to take away all his money?"

In the music videos of these artists, we are witness to an anti-authoritarian, anti-patriarchal defiance, and, *apropos* the subject of Shaw's (2017) book on the issue of the locus of the body in contemporary city space, that defiance is being asserted precisely by and among the othered bodies of African Americans, the most marginalized of all othered groups by their "deformed" shapes and dark color shades *vis á vis* the "clean, white and good enough-ness," of the white *bourgeoisie* class. They are claiming the place of the othered body in the city as the revolutionary subject, a being for which Shaw's position makes no provision.

In the artistry of these music videos, the body is asserted defiantly as a *res sexualem*. Sexuality is presented as anti-patriarchal family; one thinks of Khia's hit single from *Thug Misses*, "My Neck, My Back." Marginalized to life on the mean streets, become thuggish in them but an elegant Miss nevertheless, Khia asserts women's sexuality defiant of domination by white, *bourgeois*, cisgendered patriarchal males, trolling them in her video.<sup>3</sup> The "othered" bodies of African Americans are fighting the way of the non-Vitruvian body back into the city as revolutionary subjects.

Note that Miley Cyrus's re-make of Khia's "My Neck, My Back," falls flat. Miley Cyrus is very much *not* the out-of-place othered body but has the exactly idealized European body, and the reason why her performance of "My Neck, My Back" fails is because it lacks defiance. No thug Miss she, her performance reduces to blaxploitation, and has no redeeming social value. There is a reason why another othered body, a very overweight, 60 years aged and quite hirsute porn star Ron Jeremy, did a parody video of Miley's Cyrus music video "Wrecking Ball."<sup>4</sup> Again, an othered body, mockingly defying European standards. These are surely the bodies that the city excludes and that in its view stand in need of control to which Shaw (2017, p.182) is referring. These videos proclaim the right

<sup>3</sup> "A 'thug Miss' is a female who is thuggish yet still lady-like and carries herself with balance and knowledge of the streets and home area," <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Thug%20Misses>.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xlijAzln4l>, 2014

of belonging for othered bodies, trolling remorselessly the “clean, white and good enough.” “Is this what I’m not supposed to look like?” they say.

Actually, sexual anonymity as anti-familial defiance is nothing new. Recall that another anti-familial figure, although, to be sure, troubled on his own, is the subject of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*. And recall the rage aroused against him, which he, as we do too, finds inexplicable, hunted by the mob of Masetto and Don Ottavio and Donna Anna under the leadership of the Commendatore. “You will find husband and father in me” « *Hai sposo e padre in me* » (Act I, Scene I), declaims Don Octavio to Donna Anna, and surely, we are meant to suspect that at some level she is not thrilled to hear that, and that the mocking Don, who knows the drill, is laughing at such an ego-centering around some sort of protective masculinism, instead approaching Donna Anna masked. “Who I am, you’ll never know,” « *chi son io tu non saprai,* » he says (Act I Scene I). A sense of rising violence against him may have been part of a streetwise resort to urban evasion. Disguised as Leporello, Don Giovanni encounters Masetto who declares that he wants to kill him. “Wouldn’t it be sufficient to break his bones, smash his shoulders”? « *e non ti basteria rompergli l’ossa, fracassargli le spalle?* » asks the disbelieving Don. “No, no” says Masetto, “I want to kill him, I want to cut him into a hundred pieces”; « *no, no, voglio ammazzarlo, vo’farlo in cento brani,* » (Act II, Scene I).<sup>5</sup> Defiance of the patriarchal family order arouses a terrible and inexplicable violence. Don Giovanni’s steadfast post-theistic mockery of the Divine Order was based on his recognition that it had chosen the patriarchal Commendatore as its materialized symbol.

In the music videos of rap Black artists, Sexy Red, Nicki Minja, Khia and other such elegant street Misses, we encounter the female body-sexual as resisting the patriarchal family role and defiantly asserting an anonymous sexuality as belonging wherever it chooses to belong. By contrast, sex in a dominance/subordinance relationship is always identity referenced; *bourgeois* sex as found in the household is never anonymous. Think of Stanley Kowalski and Blanche Dubois in Tennessee Williams’s (1947/1984). *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Stanley is deeply set in his social identity as “Stanley-Head-Household-*per*-Napoleonic Code-Stanley,” and newly immiserated Blanche Dubois is, in his view, deep set in her social identity of having fallen from being the “Self-of-Belle-Reve.” But the problem is that Blanche persists in declaring herself a “Self-of-Inner-Value,” possessor of a cultivated free mind that is on a developmental pathway to our future being: “You must not hang back with the brutes” she sternly lectures sister Stella, (Scene IV). To Stanley she is a deluded and refractory egoist who needs to be pulled down from atop Belle Reve’s lofty columns as he had Stella before her—so that was rape sex too, just less evidently so as Stella “consented”—and recognize who she “really” is. Blanche squaring off against WWII vet Stanley with a broken beer bottle was surely the right idea as she was not “trying to be” but conscious of herself as evolutionary being—no such thing according to Stanley—but it was too little, too late. Poor Blanche was well brought up and did not know the terrible wages of defiance of patriarchy; not streetwise, she got caught working without a bounce.

Defiance is the core value of class struggle, but it is not part of identity politics, and that is why identity politics is being rejected by Black Americans. To that extent, identity politics actually maintains precarity. An identity of a recovered and now equal self is the self-aggrieved, not the self-defiant. That is why woke-ism has alienated so many from the lower socio-economic classes where the break-through to class consciousness is always happening. America’s Trump-supporting dissident Black rap artists know that class identification can and does exist; indeed, all know it in

<sup>5</sup> *Don Giovanni*, Vienna Philharmonic, Riccardo Muti, EMI Records, Ltd. 1991. Translation by William Murry, Capitol Records, 1961.



the lower socio-economic classes and form up class consciousness locally and globally all the time. Black American solidarity with Gazans is very strong, and Palestinian solidarity has been supported by the Black leadership in America for a long while.

The stratification of bodies in cities in the West into spaces as *per* the ordering of patriarchal domination, classism, racism and genderism, is actually being held in place by the wokes' preoccupation with identity and a politics of identity, each such self-identifying within its own marginalized group. What is needed for the Posthuman City to emerge is a communalistic sensibility, and that means revolution. Shaw's (2017) book antedates the ascendant rise of woke-ism in US, UK and Canada, but this updated context is relevant as it is a critical point against the book that identity politics is failing as its failure means that the revolutionary subject is asserting itself to be recognized.

We can draw on Nietzsche's deservedly famous critique of the morality equality to locate in what way and how identity politics has failed as a politics of liberation.<sup>6</sup> Because I am working in the context of a philosophical synthesis, some thinking will emerge that cannot be readily squared with some aspects of his thought, and the same must be said of needed concessions from Freud and Marx as well.

Nietzsche discovered a new type of psychological analysis, "evolutionary psychoanalysis," we may call it as it is unnamed. It is the study of an original reactive vengeful alienation from will to power evolution in ourselves for its exactions upon us as *per* its development, which then becomes an abusive and revengeful assault on *will to power* in others in the disguise of imaginary moral categories. A case in point is moral aggrievement at wronging as "imaginary psychology" that belongs to the "spiritualization of revenge."<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche uses the term "decadence" to refer to alienation from will to power evolution in ourselves and having a revenge reaction against it for the exactions it requires.

"Wrong lies not in unequal rights but in the assertion of equal rights," wrote Nietzsche (2021, 200) in *The Antichrist* in criticism of the politics of the Christian/anarchist of his time. Nietzsche's idea is that privilege in order of rank is will to power evolution, and that its exercise, although it creates suffering, is not immoral action but merely amoral. Nevertheless, Christians/anarchists treat the suffering of oppression as wrongful subjugation, "evil," and assert themselves as equally entitled not to be wronged (Nietzsche, 2014, 217-245). Another, naturalistic, response to suffering would be to treat it as an opportunity to strengthen oneself against it. This is what Nietzsche says he does when he is suffering from "wrongdoing"; he becomes stronger against the suffering in the wronging, and so much so even that he is grateful to the "wrongdoer." Gratitude is an outpouring expression of the fuller/stronger life evolved as *per* the engagement of the suffering by will to power.<sup>8</sup>

What he decidedly does not do is consider suffering a wrong to himself; he does not moralize the suffering as a wrongdoing to himself that he, as equally entitled not to be wronged, should not have had to endure. The idea of retaliating against someone, he says, is as far from him and beyond his reach as is the idea of equal rights, "*so unzugänglich ist*" (Nietzsche, 1980, 271). His point is that the idea of equal rights not to be wronged is of a piece with retaliation psychologically and just as to be

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<sup>6</sup> The following pages from Nietzsche's *Nachlaß* with the title «*Die neue Rangordnung, Vorrede zur Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr*» articulate his opposition to the morality of equality that relate inequality to his Philosophy of Eternal Recurrence: CWFN 15 SUP, (pp. 195-197). It is a new order of ranking unlike any that has come before.

<sup>7</sup> See Nietzsche's analysis of imaginary causation in decadent psychology in *The Antichrist*, § 15, CWFN 9 SUP (p. 145f).

<sup>8</sup> *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am So Wise" § 5, CWFN 9 SUP (p. 224). I am using EH/Wise/5 exegetically as the autobiographical introduction to AC/57. It is not in dispute at this point in the scholarship that Nietzsche wrote *Ecce Homo* to be his introduction to the planned four volume work *Revaluation of All Values*, of which *The Antichrist* is volume one. See Brobjer, T. H. (2021). *Nietzsche's Ecce Homo and The Revaluation of All Values: Dionysian Versus Christian Values*. Bloomsbury Academic.

disdained. His point in not doing so is to remain master of the psychology of aggrievement and retaliation for the suffering, as these take him in the opposite direction to evolution of life in himself, as the opposite tendency to will to power. Decadent retaliation is against suffering as a stimulus to life. His reevaluation does not so much point up a new value as it does identify the path of evolution in ourselves, and it is amoral, not moral in a new way. He pushes his new amoralism: he says that he is thankful to the wrongdoer and sometimes “even” to the wrongdoing (Nietzsche, 1980, 271). The progressive form in the line is deliberate: it is harder to be thankful to the wrongdoing because there one faces the serious consequences to oneself of it, but he can sometimes be thankful for it if the resistance posed by affirming that extended suffering is equal to his strength of will to power and he is not over-matched by the suffering into lapsing into *ressentiment* and becoming aggrieved over it. “It is nobler to declare oneself in the wrong than in the right, especially when in the right,” writes Nietzsche (1976, 180) in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, meaning that it is on the path of self-overcoming of the reaction of vengefulness against will to power evolution in oneself to blame oneself even if, and especially if, “unjustly wronged.” The idea in self-overcoming of “moral aggrievement” is to engage with will to power evolution to strengthen life against the new suffering instead of just repeating the original *ressentiment* reaction against the will to power’s exaction of evolution. There are disciplines for it.<sup>9</sup>

Revenge against will to power evolution for its exactions turns outward against will to power in others. The decadent/anarchist reacts vengefully to will to power evolution in others by trying to thwart it in them as a part of a generalized vengefulness against will to power in our species. The Christian/anarchist seeks to duplicate their own psychology in the minds of those marginalized by oppression. They keep themselves unaware of their actual intent in so engaging others, concealing it in the spiritualization of revenge by equating suffering in oppression with wrongful inequality and promoting self-identification as an aggrieved self-asserting equality. Whence emerges the identity politics of the self-of-equal-entitlement justly recovered from oppression. To extend Nietzsche’s analysis, constructing the identity of the aggrieved self in marginalized groups as the self-of-equal-entitlement-now-justly-recovered undercuts the revolutionary subject. It apprehends oppression in terms coordinate to itself, as wronging, so moralistically, and not naturalistically as the oppression of domination and driven by the stasis which domination tries imposes on evolution as its own pathology. The decadent opportunizes the suffering of those in marginalized groups for his/her/their own purpose of misdirecting the meaning of suffering in oppression as wrongful inequality just in order to mislead them regarding the true meaning and value of suffering in our species. It is not just any random suffering being transposed into the moral order by the decadent but suffering as *per* its utility for will to power evolution, which will to power sets before itself. It is this suffering that is the intended object of the misdirection of meaning to be wronging about which we should feel *ressentiment* and not take it as stimulus to will to power to «*Mehrleben*». The wokes’ obsession with equally entitled selfhood and wrongful suffering moralized as unjust oppression by the powerful fits the bill of Nietzsche’s idea of the spiritualization of revenge. This is the innovative perspective his thinking brings to our current situation. As I shall argue, the failure of woke-ism to develop a scientific understanding of patriarchy and domination and not supporting defiance against it is for the reason that, inasmuch as defiance is evolutionary, the revolutionary subject has a path

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<sup>9</sup> *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part I, Chapter 19, “The Adder’s Bite.” There it is recommended that a wrong shared is “half-right.” The point is that aggrievement and the desire to retaliate is half-mastered by taking comfort in the related similar suffering of another or others (*schadenfreude*) suffering from the wronging. He also recommends that when done a great wrong we should immediately add five little ones, again as a strategy to enable ourselves as will to power to master merely reproducing original decadent *ressentiment* at suffering and the ill will of moralizing wrongdoing, as these are *lebensfeindlich* and vengeful against will to power.





of strengthened life that can engage suffering by will to power and will reject social identification of equal entitlement in grievement as a static conception of selfhood.

Nietzsche is often caricatured to be saying that oppression is will to power and that evolution requires the exercise of power in oppression, but that is a misunderstanding of the meaning of will to power. Nietzsche did not make a systematic study of the psychology of domination and the meaning of defiance as evolutionary as we have had it in the West. Domination culture is psychopathological, similar in being alienated from evolutionary consciousness to the *lebensfeindlich* culture of spiritualized revenge, and in the broad synthetic understanding of his thinking I am attempting, it should be just as opposed.

It can be noted as a caveat that identity can be over an issue of respect. This sentence: “Thank you for the Christmas gifts but I do not celebrate Christmas since converting to Islam” is, or can be, the response of a self of defiant assertion against abusive domination and not an expression of grievement at unfairness: the case of Muhammad Ali defiant in the boxing ring against Ernie Terrell for instance. But it is identity as equal-self-grievement because of wrongdoing and wrongful suffering that is here under study.

Nietzsche’s (2021) study of revenge against will to power evolution is his great and exceptional knowledge that “sets him apart from the whole rest of humanity, that he *discovered* Christian morality” (his emphasis) to have this meaning. It is knowledge and not just apropos of his life, as would be so were he writing memoir in *Ecce Homo* (Nietzsche, 2021, 310). He refers to the genesis of his knowledge in mythic allusion as “finding an Ariadne’s thread into the labyrinth,” and says that of all the risks he faces being in the labyrinth, the greatest is the risk of losing himself, of losing who he is.<sup>10</sup> His *agon* in the labyrinth is against others’ reduction of his will to power evolution to social identity. It is a risk, but he upheld against it, and he came away with a great and exceptional knowledge of human psychology in its vengeful alienation from will to power evolution. The self that endures in the labyrinth is who he is, and his knowledge is both of himself as well as of the vengeful hostility against will to power evolution in those who would reductively counter him. It is Nietzsche’s (2021, 212) stated purpose in *Ecce Homo* to say who he is to be in the position to demand the revaluation of all values, tried and tested in the labyrinth. Following Nietzsche’s analysis, to convince someone in a marginalized group to adopt a self-identity of grievement at being wronged is an achievement of the spiritualization of revenge. Nietzsche’s contribution to this discussion is *exposé* that the people meddling in the affairs of marginalized groups today, white liberals, are operating out of a vengeful reaction against will to power evolution in that by inflaming the desire for retaliation against wronging and heightened entitlement in marginalized groups, they undercut will to power evolution in them. They react to their own suffering by repeating an original vengeful response instead of engaging it as a stimulus to will to power evolution (to the extent that it may

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<sup>10</sup> *Ecce Homo*/Books/*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, § 5, variant, at CWFN 9 SUP, (p. 602); *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Volume 14, (p. 497). The knowledge he is writing about comes only from pain, which he does not hold as an “objection” (*Einwand*) but as the opposite, as a “holy” agony (*dünkt er mich beinahe heilig*) because knowledge comes of it, and he signs his letter to Meta von Salis of January 3, 1889 “The Crucified.” On the same day in a letter to Cosima Wagner he repeats the same idea, stating that he too has “hung on the cross,” *Kritische Studienausgabe Briefe* 8, 1229; 1241. His suffering yields knowledge of the path to new culture of self-overcome humanity, the path of the revaluation, that has mastered its revengfulness against will to power evolution. The existence of that knowledge is an occasion for a message of joy, and he instructs Cosima Wagner to send his letter to her to all humanity from Bayreuth with the title: “*Die frohe Botschaft*,” 1242. Also, see *Ecce Homo*/Books/*Twilight of the Idols* § 2, CWFN 9 SUP, (p. 296). On the metaphor of the labyrinth, also see *Dionysus Dithyrambs, Ariadne’s Lament*, CWFN 9 SUP, (pp. 360-367) and the several interesting accounts of it in *The Antichrist*, at “Preface,” §1, and §57 in CWFN 9 SUP.

become so *per* utility to will to power), and they seek to duplicate their psychology in others as revenge against will to power evolution in our species.

A politics of moral equality is double sided because it is subject to moral legalism in expression. The other side of the wokes' offer of equally entitled self-hood is that one can *only* be equal; inequality is not tolerated. But African Americans are rejecting this arrangement for a more Nietzschean singularism of "equal to equals, unequal to unequals" philosophy that is non-inclusive. "Equal to equals" here means equal in evolutionary development, and that equality is objective and not a constructed identity as an equality *per* entitlement against wrongful suffering, which is second order and ego-preoccupied. Woke-ism assumes that unequal treatment is *eo ipso* wrongdoing, but even if unequal treatment of the lesser will to defiance is wronging in a moral sense of some sort, if evolution is supported thereby, that value should be revalued. Woke-ism falsely but intentionally associates inequality to wronging of oppression and seeks to suppress inequality as consciousness of evolutionary development, but sometimes it is.

Liberation politics' defiance does not focus so exclusively on moral identity as equally entitled self, and is open to recognizing defiant resistance and order of rank in evolution. We are seeing this thinking taking over in the American Black community as identity solidarity is splintering and hierarchy *intra alia* is emerging. This turn away from moralizing identity equality brings Nietzsche's evolutionary concept of the Overhuman and Marx's revolutionary subject in a material dialectical class struggle to a common point of intersection in a theory of developmentalism.<sup>11</sup> This is a self of objectivity.

The solution to the problem of city spaces being used to segregate and hierarchize lies in creating revolutionary solidarity between the homeless in abandoned subway stations and the migrants street-sleeping on the sidewalks, between generations of immigrants in ghettos and roving street gangs, a Posthuman City, if you will, based on collective, communalistic consciousness in which such hierarchies are not recognized. Where are those power relationships then? Collectivism is nothing more than defiance of the authority that nominated those groupings in dominance hierarchies to begin with. Defiance is achieved by collective revolution in class consciousness, not by splintering identity and fostering an agenda of each vying for their share of equality. Woke-ism in practice does not engage patriarchy as domination based on a scientific study of its psychology, or as a historical phenomenon to be addressed dialectically in material class struggle.<sup>12</sup>

Domination makes a threat: "Do what you're told... or else." For Freud, the patriarchal threat was castration and it was the punishment for incest, but fear of the involuntary in evolution would seem to be fundamental and incest can be regarded as a psychological shelter, and that it is for that reason that it comes under threat of authority.<sup>13</sup> Domination invades another mind to make it to be for

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<sup>11</sup> In his recent book on Nietzsche, *Nietzsche On Human Emotions*, Yunus Tuncel (2022) has argued, rightly in my view, that Nietzsche's idea of the Overhuman must cash out in terms of emotional development in some way, and that his (Tuncel's) conception of the Posthuman has this in common with Nietzsche's Overhuman as he conceives him as expecting emotional development and maturing. The connection to Marxism is my own.

<sup>12</sup> Freud, and especially Wilhelm Reich, attempted a scientific study of authoritarian patriarchy, and the Frankfurt School was founded devoted to this purpose. See Reich (1980[1933]).

<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche famously declared his incestuous relationship with his sister Elizabeth in the work *My Sister and I*, but that work has long been considered a forgery, although Walter Stewart (2007) has lately challenged that opinion and made the question into a debate. In *Ecce Homo*, chapter one, "Why I am So Wise," variant to § 3, the idea of brother/sister incest is referenced in just this way in a context of sheltering against precarity and the emergence of psychological reductivity, CWFN 9 SUP, p. 568. The language used in *My Sister and I* matches the language in *Wise/3* variant, and that text was not discovered until 1969, but the work appeared in 1951, and



itself as if a second womb in fearful escape. But the threat of patriarchy of oppression as obedience and invasive domination is not countered by woke-ism, which would even seem to seek to undermine a collective and singular defiance against it. Given the analysis of woke-ism's moral egalitarianism as spiritualized revenge, following Nietzsche, one must ask if woke-ism is creating splintering into identities of aggrievement just in order to undermine defiant assertiveness and support domination. This would be as follows. Defiance of authority is evolutionary; its terrible demeaning threat must be stood up to. The strengthened aliveness from defiant class consciousness by those in marginalized groups makes them less susceptible to being inculcated with aggrievement politics. Evolution is furthered by their defiance against the threat of domination and life has become stronger, and now will to power evolution will ensue, counter to the wokes revenge agenda. I suggest that woke-ism does not study the threat of domination to "do as told" and develop revolutionary sentiment against it just so that the psychological state of marginalized groups remains cowed by its terrible threat (in whatever form it is presented). Black Americans would seem to be catching on.

Defiance assumes inequality, inasmuch as it is developmental. It is inequality that is being defiantly asserted against domination in the case of Blanche Dubois, she is asserting self-worth against domination into the self-*manqué* imputed by Stanley. But defiance as asserting a superior individual value presents a problem for woke-ism. Woke-ism adopts the attitude of domination towards the sensibility of inequality, defending itself in doing so by the idea that inequality is *eo ipso* wronging and becoming "justly aggrieved" on behalf of those supposed to suffer wrongfully by it, demanding that inequality see itself as it is seen by them, namely, as susceptible to oppression by an even higher inequality, thus, to produce *ressentiment* psychology. Of a piece with domination, it will try to subordinate inequality and will not hesitate to impose obedience by threatening precarity. Inequality in ranking of will to power, amoral, is not susceptible to spiritualized revenge, and so stops short the decedent's revengefulness against will to power.

The subject who should lead in the Posthuman City is a revolutionary/developmental one. On this point of the understanding of the Posthuman and Posthuman politics, I disagree with Shaw (2017), who writes:

I do not subscribe to the idea that the Posthuman is a condition that emerges from or comes after the human. As a political position, post humanism is a challenge to the exclusionary practices that have produced "the human" as a category and an object of study. (10)

My response to this is to ask: "Why should exclusion be challenged?" We have just seen that Nietzsche's critique of the morality of equality calls it sharply into question. Also, unless we antecedently define non-exclusionary thinking as being post-human, how do we determine that it is not humanist thinking? <sup>14</sup> We must ground the idea of the Posthuman in a developmental way. As regards the city, its original patriarchal authoritarianism, noted by Mumford (1961), is the basis of its organization by domineering space assignments. Domination is *apropos* of space, spaces are liable to being invaded at any time, aggravating precarity. Stanley invaded Blanche's curtained off bedroom

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no forger could have known of it. See Stewart (2007, 119-121). For my reconstruction of EH/Wise/3 final version against the charge of its being a *Wahnsinnschrift*, see Steinbuch (2023).

<sup>14</sup> Obviously, the point depends on how we define "Humanism." That there were exclusionary humanists is beyond doubt but note that the Renaissance sculptors who crafted their art in gleaming white marble were not emulating the ancient Greco-Roman humanist culture as faithfully as they thought, as all the Roman ancient art was painted, and no one was "white." So, to follow Shaw (2017) they were already Posthumanists. What is needed is a developmental definition rather than an extensional one.

as this. If the city's authoritarianism has its origin in a history of reaction to the involuntary element in evolving life, imprinted and conserved as trauma on the epigenome by epigenetic mechanisms as we went through the several near-extinction events in our ancestral past (or maybe just one in particular), then revolutionary change in the city becomes evolutionary, as assertion of the distinctive freedom in evolution that is under domination's fearsome threat takes sway.

The Posthuman City then may be conceived in both evolutionary terms and dialectical terms as resetting the trajectory that the city has been on all along in its beginnings in a sudden and abrupt break with what had come before. I do not support post-urbanism and scouring the city for opportunities for novel expressions that queer space to make room for ourselves to elude its hierarchizing into loci of race, gender, and class. That seems to me to reflect an attitude of resignation and is not a meaningful solution to the problem of the abusive domination of space, which comes from a deep-seated anxiety. I believe we need to reset the city on a new path entirely.

Nietzsche called for a "great war" against the "good and the just." His call was based on his belief, which he thought he *knew* it to be true (and one must take consideration of that) that spiritualized revenge against will to power evolution emerges from an unconscious hostility against evolutionary function in our species. Nietzsche's revaluation agenda must play a role in liberation politics because the Christian/anarchist will attempt to impose obedience on liberation politics to thwart its new amoral ordering of equality by individual rank in resistance instead of equality by identity in a social construction, ignoring that is evolutionary development, so as to access vengeful hurt to will to power.

Nietzsche's self-study as being a self-of-evolutionary-development was very well advanced. It was a scientific self-study of how he came to be, locally and generally: locally in terms of epigenetic inheritance from his father and more generally in terms of evolution off the main line of succession<sup>15</sup>. He achieved evolutionary development by his identification with suffering as being a requirement of will to power evolution, engaging with it as a necessity and not as a "misfortune" (*Unglück*) so as to enable that evolution.<sup>16</sup> The most effective way to conquer the inclination to want to take revenge against will to power evolution in others is to will the *Eternal Recurrence* of one's own past suffering in oneself, to the degree to which will to power is able to strengthen aliveness in re-experiencing and recovering that suffering. Nietzsche's idea of evolutionary development signified inequality of individual to individual: one who affirms the law of will to power evolution and is on the path to stronger aliveness, the other who is revengeful against will to power for its exactions. Note that Nietzsche is quite clear that his individuals of value are individuals properly so called and do not fall along the lines of race, nation or class.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, there is no such thing as a "right" to choose against will to power evolution in our species and continue on with the spiritualization of revenge, and that then means that the revaluation will have to be imposed. Such a program might mimic the upward tending incline of willing the *Eternal Recurrence* with a reprogramming of our epigenome by molecular machines. This would have to be done with the help of AI as it is too complicated and fallible otherwise, and to that degree the developed Posthuman will emerge as a human/AI hybrid. We need to critically deconstruct the

<sup>15</sup> In *Twilight of the Idols*, § 44 Nietzsche writes of evolutionary development as coming from a past of collecting, saving and hoarding up, CWFN 9 SUP, (pp. 116-118), and this language is repeated in *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am So Wise," § 3, (*Ibid.*, p. 221f), and there it is opposed to heritability in succession.

<sup>16</sup> For my defense of the thesis that the *Eternal Recurrence* relates Time and Evolution, see Steinbuch (2021/2022).

<sup>17</sup> See Nietzsche's letter in draft to Georg Brandes of December, 1888, *Kritische Studienausgabe Briefe*, 8, 1170. L. 85-88.



morality of equality and impose the revaluation to secure the appearance of the revolutionary subject, as well as for reasons native to it.

## Postscript

The place of museums in cities is a recurring theme in Shaw's (2017) book, and art museums too have been part of our gated community upgrade here in Hangzhou, but they are not the celebrity escapes of neoliberal culture they are in the West. In our newly opened "Meet You" museum, we have had an exhibition of the French Impressionists, the Bruegel Family and an exhibition of the works of Van Gogh is on deck. There will always be museum goers who come to watch themselves being watched, but in fact, art exhibitions are whatever their art invites them to be. Reflecting with Karl Jaspers' (1922/1977) on *Existenzphilosophie* in relation to Van Gogh's art as *per* his schizophrenia in his book *Strindberg and Van Gogh*, with its narrative about "mental illness" as a value on the margins of collective consciousness, surely takes us beyond all totalitarianism, and all inauthenticity as well. That is what I teach my students, and I have not been told to stop.

We left the museum sporting our "The Met" caps purchased at The Museum Store my student and I, Miss Yulin Tang, who is a street artist, effervescent cosmopolites chatting away, blithesome each in their own mood (for now, all remembering of the precarity in wait in the labyrinth below shoved behind me), cultivating the free mind as one can only in a well-managed city.

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