

Another letter from prism for you, John, from the usual suspect on the usual topics.

Yes, the point is to shatter idols, undo projections. Nietzsche is great, sure, but primarily as a critical philosopher who *can* be read so that his work helps a person snap out of the dominant daydream. Can be read this way but usually isn't. Same with other critical philosophers, "empiricists" in my book, who find themselves "transfigured" by a desperation to outsource. "There must be a Father. There must be a guru." But consumers of this father are indeed eaters of the father who settle for a supplementary role.

I realize that I am "unlikeable" in this mode. I trust that you understand my intention, of course, or I would not annoy you with unwelcome words. I also realize that *you already understand what I am saying here*. So I am lifting my golden saxophone to play a tune that is old in its essence for both of us, though ever new in its repetition.

I continue to think about the basis of math, about mathematical platonism as a metonym really for *all* alienated seminary foolosophy. Perhaps you'll agree that "materialism" could mean and even once meant (for some, Feuerbach maybe) something like empiricism. But today the self-proclaimed "materialist" or "physicalist" is just a confused mathematical platonist, trying to figure out what breathes fire into the equations. The map and the territory get their roles reversed. The totality of experience is transformed (in theory if never in practice) into a representational internal illusion, projected some-fucking-how from "the equations." The problem of the external world is a piece of harmless insanity, yet I find myself working ambivalently at the temporal ass of this genre. At the hangover dawn of a looney night. Which was and is again just a masturbation of the jaws, for the most part.

Nietzsche and Heidegger and others, besides their critical breakthroughs, also got drunk on an image of themselves as world-historical. The critical anti-alienation philosophers fucked up, basically, and send a contrary message. The synthesis of genuine critique with a "profound" *style* is a seductive brew. Tediously I repeat it. No one talks about Mach. Or even Feuerbach. But we are drenched with Deleuze, and Zizek is probably rich from all the books he sold. I don't hate Deleuze and I actively like Zizek as a person. The point is that *mystification is the product*. I'd be dishonest if I repressed my own initial motives. We start within the usual mystification, and some of us fools persist in our folly and become uselessly "wise." I'd be dishonest in the other direction if I denied a sense of completion, a sense of untying a knot. Some of the better passages in Nietzsche capture the resulting ambivalence beautifully.

Let me appear to digress by saying that I've never been that clever. I was clever *enough* to "learn some math," and I can write a few programs. But I am aware of far more clever people. I'd like more of this cleverness because it would make it easier for me to pay my bills. But here I'm really trying to make the point that good philosophy isn't clever. And it isn't "good" in some one-size-fits-all sense. To be "empirical" is to face the world without a magic spell, without some platonistic truth-making super-strate sub-strate. Time is the fire in which we burn. I do get the comfort of repeating an autonomous gesture. Emerson, Whitman. What those fucks were ultimately saying. There is a "basic insight" that "liberates." But it's only a "secret" because *people hate it like their own death*. Which is indeed what it is.

Not by you, but by others I run the risk of being misunderstood. "He is being dramatic and self-important, suggesting the possession of a cosmic truth." Self-important, yes, but no cosmic truth. And that's just it. Not the preaching of the absence of a cosmic truth as the cosmic truth after all, but "only" a personal expression of disbelief in the usual incantations. "Seminarians" translate what you say to them into rival pontifications. So the empiricist "must" be offering a Theory Of Knowledge.

For me it happened to be Spengler who helped me consciously grasp the deep presupposition of the podium man, the seminary man. "Obviously" the foolosopher is trying to speak The Universal Truth. "Of course" the foolosopher is trying to mirror Ultimate Reality with the marks and noises that he barks and scratches with his luminous meat. I know that you know that I know that you know that it's just this deep presupposition that "empiricism" finally notices and rejects as confused and sentimental. I still like the word "positivist," though it's subject like any term to misreading, because the usual unwitting platonist thinks that words are labels for platonistic eternal concepts in the theo-metaphysical stratosphere.

What is piously denied is of course the particular empirical "event." This particular toothache, this particular pen-and-paper calculation, graphite on dried wood pulp. The total sound-feel-everything of this music now. The unrepeatable this, which is indeed hard to talk about. Just as "being" is hard to talk about, especially if you presuppose an Eternal Truth that basically rules out the reality of experience by absurd assumption in the first place. Step one : assume your life is unreal. Step two : all the varieties of nonsense that follow, according to the taste of the seminarian. And it's wrong to read this is masochism. This is abasement in pursuit of exaltation. A mystification pyramid scheme. Extremely plugged in to the "fame complex." Incentive structure is that I learn to babble on about what others also babble on about. Let us grant us grant gradations in the quality of the babble. Indeed, I think that I climbed that gradient like the rest, climbed a greasy pole. Is there a pot of gold at the end of this rainbow ? I don't think so. Hence the ambivalence of Nietzsche, if we read him as a self-liberated madman who outlived God. "The best lack all conviction." For these, the best, "the ceremony of innocence" is drowned, in a "blood-dimmed tide."

Sounds sinister, right ? It "is" sinister in the same way that psycho-analysis is sinister. Of course Freud can function as one more mystified father figure. Just like Jung. The Jung subreddit is terrifying. I mean anyone insisting on their own sobriety sees what they repress in themselves, a "black tide" of free-associated cosmic daydreams. It's almost pointless to mention Freud or Nietzsche or Jung, because their names are so clotted with projections that you will come off as a flake or an asshole. One might think, at first, as one realizes all this, that this issue is secondary. Fuck no. This *is* the fucking issue. This is why I love Heidegger, who is tragicomically the (celebrated) "victim" of a phenomenon he decisively analyzed. Chatter, idle talk, the "cloud" of "everybody knows" gossip. Curiosity for triviality. Another wizard daddy figure, who in his best work pointed out this very structure with surgical precision. I still love the

first draft (red and white paperback of *The Concept of Time*, translated by Ingo Farin and some other guy) for its focus on this issue (on Heidegger's part) and quite a few choices on the translation. They don't capitalize "being", for instance.

I know this woman, who is pretty nice really, but guilty of academic pretense when it comes to foolosophers. This is anecdotal, yeah, but I've been obsessed with foolosophy for years at this point, and I would occasionally find someone who seemed to want to talk about this stuff in real life, but quickly I'd be disappointed. Because they were really just playing with signifiers. Names. Now the weight of my claim depends on your own situated judgement of *my* situated judgment. Am I being humble or arrogant ? Maybe I am "better" at philosophy than I think I am ? But I mostly see in myself a "Socratic" arrogance. Having very much been a poser in a formative years without realizing it, I feel less so these days, because I *try* to not say anything that I don't have a grip on. I realize my candor here might be embarrassing. But I'm fascinated by the idea of being embarrassing as a methodological principle. I mean this "loss of control" and "irruption of candor" is not a slip. What I worry about is not so much an onslaught of shame but rather the aggression of others. I "could say more," but "I can't." Cowardice, prudence, tact. A mixture of those things, maybe ? Here self-knowledge becomes less trustworthy. But, yeah, what I'd call "genuine" philosophy is not typically rewarded. Or even understood. Though it is readily misunderstood.

We could also use the metaphor "children." The seminarians are children. To drink the "worm juice" is to become an "adult." But it's a terrible and lonely thing, but also glorious. To deal with the serpent and eat the apple. Eve is a great symbol for this, and Nietzsche is great on this stuff in *The Antichrist*, which is such a mutilated text that I don't know how much is method and how much madness. The "adult" is a sinister-sounding metaphor here, because we don't trust the free. Was Shakespeare evil ? Was Joyce evil ? A simple "No" doesn't sound right to me, but a simple "Yes" is the word of a child. We might say that "genuine" civilization is a transcendence and taming of the vicious and superstitious child. But not a de-clawing of the human predator. The civilized gather for their feasts. What they lack is a fanaticism that can indeed be enabling, which explains its prevalence as a meme. And platonistic fantasies may help a mathematician toward their best work. And that work can be valid beyond its erotic-metaphysical scaffolding. Which is another reason it would be wrong to read my "positivism" as a "would that it were so." As if a world scrubbed of "nonsense" would be a better world. All pompous personality requires a foil.