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# POMO AFFS

### Lines of Flight DA

#### LINES OF FLIGHT DA: Framework is an instance of political narcissism that destroys radical potentialities and lines of flight from the debate space

Evans and Reid 14 (Brad Evans \*Senior Lecturer in International Studies at the University of Bristol, \*\* and Julian Reid, The Art of Living Dangerously, 194-8, 2014)

Liberal regimes have moved way beyond the security imperative so foundational to their origins, centuries ago, as the promise of security which once appeared to legitimate them back then has been disintegrated by a catastrophic imaginary that promotes what we have called insecurity by design. What once appeared to be the promise of progress and worldly transformation has given way to a full life crisis that offers us no means for escape. This way of treating liberalism, as a regime founded on catastrophic promises and ruinous images, does not mean we are in denial of the reality of the disastrous nature of the world we now inhabit and which liberal regimes understand themselves as responding to. But it would be wrong to think we can distinguish between the real and the imaginary. There is no hard and fast distinction, even though the fact that we speak of the real and the imaginary indicates that they are different. We perceive and make sense of the real through images. We are continuously interpellated within ‘regimes of signs’ that profoundly influence our affective registries and hence our sense of any given situation as it unfolds before us. And so the maps we construct to navigate the real are composed only of images. Liberalism itself, including its contemporary idea of the resilient subject, is a product of the imaginary. And so now we inhabit its nightmarish effects. Nor are the images through which we make sense of and give representation to the real simply dependent on the real. If anything, the images precede the real, making and shaping it into what we come to name and know as the real, producing it, fabricating it, into the worlds we come to inhabit. The catastrophic nature of the world we now do not so much possess as find ourselves exposed and vulnerable to is of our own creation. It is a world which appears every bit as much in our heads as much as our heads are in this world, drowning in its images of impending disaster, species extinction, tipping points and catastrophe effects. The image and reality of catastrophe are ceaselessly interchanging such that the two are forever interfused. What we have learnt to call ‘the world’ is the manifestation of that interfusion. Politics is an art of worldly transformation, and transformation demands, [p. 195] first of all and fundamentally, a subject capable of conceiving the possibility of worldly transformation. A subject that sees the intolerability of the world as it is presently imagined and demands the seemingly impossible; the creation of a new one. A subject which affirms and follows the paths opened up to it by the visions of other worlds which the play of images creates for it. And a subject which affirms the reality of the existence of different worlds, their antagonisms, as well as tangibility and reachability, so to say. What we call the poetic subject therefore seeks to have a faith beyond that which arises simply from endangerment, as well as rekindling long diminished understandings of political subjectivity. Its diminishment owes everything not to the realities of a world which demand an evacuation of the political, but to the overwrought influence of liberalism over our own self-understandings of the limits of this world, its planetary boundaries, the weight of finitude, and the dangers which liberalism believes, and has preached for some time, that the imagination poses to a species equipped more than any other to transcend each and every boundary, each and every limit, and lose all sense of its own finitude and that of the world itself; the human. We are now governed by Ministries of Anxiety of multiple kinds, whose dominant strategic mantra of resilience stems from the catastrophic imaginary of late liberal rule. We only have to step back ever so slightly from this blackmail, however, to see the political narcissism at work here. If we take, for instance, the idea of the full life crises seriously, how might we conceive of the governance of the subject such that it may once again conceive of better worlds to come? Instead of demanding, for example, that impoverished children, who are increasingly subjected to surveillance and lockdown conditions far beyond the reaches of earlier penitentiary systems, accept the vulnerabilities of their fate; what if they were instructed on the virtues of critical pedagogy such that the confidence and the poetic freedom to radically transform their lived [p. 196] condition was merited? That is a situation which begins at the earliest stages of development, wherein the transformative and critical power of imagination is welcomed, and the quality of lives assessed in terms of its poetic contributions. Pablo Picasso stated that ‘all children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up’. This was not only a reflection on the power of the imagination. It is also acknowledgement of the power of a critical subjectivity which, as anybody who has a young child will testify, overwhelmingly appears when the former is suffocated such that the latter is expressed as a form of discontent for otherwise affirmative performances. But it also needs to be more than this. That is why exhaustion is fundamental to thinking about the poetic, for it allows us to take it out of the realms of fleeting abstraction. The art for living poetically needs to be crafted as a lifetime work. It must not be reduced to some Warholian commodifiable chancery that lasts but 15 minutes. In this sense, the diagnosis of the contemporary degradations of human experience, which we have sought to provide here, remains an argument with the legacies of Immanuel Kant. The Kantian enlightenment, if we want to give it that absurdly paradoxical name, gave licence to human beings to speculate on the possibility of other worlds but always with the insistence that this world, as it is supposedly known, is the only world that can be. The possibility of another world is thinkable only within this world we inhabit, Kant said, and thus the possible has to always be suborned to the actual. The corollary of the possibility of us conceiving another world is the impossibility of us moving beyond this world, the world, as it is known and said to be. Thus understood, it was and still is a powerful and demeaning discourse on limits, one which forces us to accept our sense of the limits of this world as an imperious necessity without which we cannot think or act or indeed, imagine. Its influence goes some way to explaining why the world we live in has becomes so depoliticized, so absent of any sense of tangible [p. 197] alternatives, and crucially, subjects capable of creating and establishing them. When one reads back through the history of liberal thought, what’s striking is the extent to which this project of constituting a subject of limits required a wholesale pathologization of the human imagination. Kant was a very sober man, for a reason. What existence beyond the harmonious regulation of the faculty of reason was to be feared; its abilities to incite the imagination, the wildness of what we see and feel, the freedom it gives us, and sense of increased vital force which leads us to follow the trajectories it opens up for us. We all know, or should know, the experience that arises from freeing ourselves and welcoming new experiences, and the ways in which it enables us to see the world differently, as well as act and speak differently, on account of the images it induces in us. There has to be an art to these imaginaries, and we have to be able to discern the differences between the subjective states we encounter in ourselves and each other under their influence. The war on the imagination Kant and his disciplines inaugurated was also an attempt to govern truth, practices of truth-telling, and human relations to truth. It is not that the Enlightenment forbids us to tell truth, but that it sought to govern its production, and to subject it to a new regime of biopolitical power relations. For truth to be truth, Kant said, it had to be allied not simply to the world, but to the life of the world, or better understood, a world which itself is finite and living, requiring care and protection, vulnerable to the destructive potential of the maps and trajectories human beings impose on it on account of the power of their visions of what it can become. Today it is apparent, and we have sought to reveal, that the name we give to that Kantian conception of the world as a living being is the biosphere. Biospheric life is the vulnerable guide of the Kantian subject of liberal modernity. As living beings, so the story goes, our time cannot be indifferently dispersed and scattered. We have not just a path to follow, but a movement by which we might learn to follow life [p. 198] along that path, by accepting the reality that we owe our life, its sustenance and survival, finitely, to the world on which our paths are inscribed. Sustainable development is the name we give, today, to the Kantian conception of truth. The discourse on worldliness, and the prescription of the limits of the human imagination, is underwritten by a claim as to the infinite debt of all finite beings to the biosphere. The truths we can tell of this world and those to come have to be said in recognition of our debt and responsibility to it in all its finitude, vulnerability and limits. Now it seems to us that this original investment of Kant and others in biospheric life is what accounts for the fundamental antinomy between political and liberal subjectivity. An antinomy which continues to shape the antagonism between the neoliberalism analysed here in this book, the subject it calls into being globally today, and the erstwhile political subject of modernity that we have attempted to recover the lost signs of in this text.