

# The Antipocalypse 1.1

*Man's desire is the desire of the Other.* - **Jacques Lacan**

*Civilization merely hides from itself -- behind a thin static scrim of rationality -- the truth that only desire creates values.* - **Hakim Bey**

"At least I'm not trying to throw us right back into the conditions that got us here in the first place," Johnny replied, "Talk about trying to put out a fire with gasoline."

"Nah. All we'd get is wet ashes. Besides, who said it was gasoline? I'm just saying we need fire to keep warm, but without some stones to make a circle, everyone is standing around scared of burning the forest down again."

"I think you just obliterated that metaphor. I'm just saying use a little historical perspective."

"Are you honestly content with the status quo? Without some kind of reward-based motivation, there won't be any progress. And without some system there to form and capture that reward, we'll end up killing each other. I don't even know why I'm arguing this! It requires no defence. Historical perspective? It is historically proven. It is going to happen with or without you."

"Kill each other...you mean more than we already have or already do? Look, the cycle was the only thing that was proven--hard times leading to 'progress'," Johnny made quotes in the air with his fingers, a huge pet peeve of mine, "leading to consumption, waste, and various cancers--physical, ecological, social or otherwise. The Wars led to Boomers led to Slackers led to Dramas led us here."

Johnny was playing the prevailing blame game played by our generation. Old enough to have heard what things were like before, young enough to have never experienced the technological creature comforts and social mediations taken for granted by our grandparents and ripped from the dying arms of our parents. And still far too much information lying around, crying out "I told you so!" or "It never really happened!" or - and this is the one that gets under my skin a little bit and to which, it is safe to say, Johnny holds to, however loosely - "It's better this way." They all have their labels - the Revelators, the Retros, and who I would call the Anarchists, but they call themselves the New Realists. The irony that back in the day "New Realists" were an actual movement focused on the total embrace of technology as a medium to the beyond is completely lost on them.

Me, I'm a cautious combination of Capitalist and Optimist ideals. I mean, capitalism never really went away, and what choice do we have but to march forward? "March" sounds too draconian and groupthink. I have fantasies about fixing up the old

Explorer, lucking into some gas, and driving east...the western migration, the space race, the Oregon Trail and the Apollo Program, these are my precedents.

"But this time we could do it right! I mean, did you read about that new network they're installing in New Beijing?"

"Beijing is a fiefdom! And you know those Chilaskans--give them one printing press and all they'll produce is propaganda."

"Or the monetary system in the Nordics?"

"What's next? An arms race? 'Language should be angelic, instead it is infected with a virus,'" Johnny was poorly quoting anarchists again, "If we require another Hermes to carry our messages, he'll eventually get bored and kill our cows, leaving us hungry and very pissed off." I assumed he was referring to the bee hive AI inhabiting the sweltering, overgrown technologies of our ancestors. Many of us suffer from a raving curiosity about what it is like down there, the other side of the barricades, as it were. If I ever lose the will to live, I might just make the trip. Most people hope, and I assume, that they've burned themselves out. There was a nuclear station reclaimed late in the game, down in one of the former 'Stans, but the fallout - literally - was bad. It turns out that if you create a technological system that pollutes, it will do exactly that. We were the only ones saving us from ourselves. "I, for one, am willing to learn the lessons of his trickery and move on with my life."

"Ah ha! But we are not God, and without Hermes we wouldn't even know he exists." I considered my reversal of his linguistic veil plucky and couldn't help a silly grin. I was returned a look that communicated either contempt or abdication. For the time being, I had just won or lost the argument. Damned if I could figure out which.

"Anyway, we need to get back to the radio tower." Johnny stood up, again lost in the sincerity of everyday life. He works with me in one of the last vestiges of mediation, a hub in the network of analog transmissions that keep us all connected like ants in a line. We are human routers on a web of waves. Show him a flier from a far-off land and he'll decry the motives of the paper mill workers, but he's able to change history with a simple intonation or subconscious slip of the tongue.

*There is no language without deceit.* - **Italo Calvino**

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