

Literature Review: “It’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism” by Mark Fisher

In this essay, that is the first chapter of Mark Fisher’s “Capitalist Realism” he introduces the idea of capitalism being a system with seemingly no alternative to it. He even echoes the idea of Fredric Jameson that “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism”^[1]. He illustrates this idea on the example of the movie “Children of men”, in which humanity is haunted by a plague of infertility. He argues, that this metaphor should be taken literally and points to the theory, that there nothing new is being invented in culture.

After that he introduces the idea of Capitalist Realism. He identifies its power in the fact, that it consumes all of history that came before it. Fisher believes that capitalism exists in a post-ideological space. In his opinion after the fall of communism, capitalism was marketed as a kind of shield protecting us from the seduction of fanaticism by desacralization of culture. Anything connected to the ritual, spiritual or religious side of human nature has been discarded in favour of egotistical calculation and the power of monetary value. When observing the fall of traditional definition of culture Fisher believes, that its new place is in the aesthetic.

A good example of this would be the existence of t-shirts with a communist idol Che Guavera or the use of communist imagery in modern fashion lines. Even though this inclusion in our consumer culture would seem contradictory, in a world devoid of ideological meaning behind anything it is possible and even encouraged as a new path for aesthetic exploration.

The most important parts of the new reality are spectatorship and spectacle. This is shown as a price that is paid to be spared from totalitarianism, which exemplifies the importance of ideological war between the United States and Soviet Union in the creation of this new reality.

I would theorize, that neoliberal countries also are ruled by a fanatic leadership like Soviet Union was, but it’s harder to notice that when we have no other system to compare it with. Since the 80s western countries’ policies went in the literally opposite direction then anything connected to the Soviet Union and communism, which would mean that we live in fanatically driven countries, whose fanaticism is defined by the rejection of any ideology other than the Free Trade.

He believes that capitalism doesn’t hide its flaws but presents them as a necessary price to pay for a safe life far away from ideologies. One could argue that the widespread belief that famine, war and exploitation are the necessary condition of human existence is one of the biggest successes of capitalist propaganda.

[1] “Future City” Fredric Jameson 21 may 2003

Coming back to the loss of future in capitalist realism, Fisher believes that we no longer participate in the struggle between the subversion and incorporation of new ideas. He writes, that nowadays the alternative and independent don't exist outside the mainstream culture, but are the dominant aesthetics of the mainstream. We could look for the reflections of this opinion in the popularity of anti-establishment statements from celebrities and influencers in today's world. It's a safe thing for them to do as no one expects that anything will change.

Bibliography:

- "Future City" Fredric Jameson 21 may 2003
- "Capitalism Realism" Mark Fisher