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Scenarios Of Disaster, Visions of Liberation

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As the planet spirals ever deeper into social and natural disaster, with all things becoming ever more tightly knit into the tentacles of global capitalism, there is an urgent need for new maps and compasses to help steer us into a viable mode of existence. Karl Marx's 1843 call for a "ruthless criticism of everything existing" has never been more urgent and appropriate, but all too often today critique is merely academic, stratospheres away from concrete action and progressive social policies. Yet, social critique and change in the slaughterhouse of capitalism needs to be guided and informed by powerful descriptions of what is -- the degraded forfeiture of human potential in a world where over a billion people struggle for mere existence -- but also by bold new visions of what can be, imaginative projections of how human beings might harmoniously relate to one another and the living/dying earth.

Where some people concede defeat, some declare this the best of all possible worlds (I'd hate to see the worst), others announce the end of history (Fukuyama and Baudrillard), and others still continually settle for lesser evils (supporters of neoliberalism), one of the first conditions of change is the realization that things could be otherwise, that humanity has choices, and, indeed, that we are currently at a crucial crossroads in the history of the earth where what we do or fail to do in the next few decades might decide the ultimate outcome of all advanced life. One of the major crises today is a crisis of the imagination. In the tradition of neo-Marxism, and the work of thinkers like Murray Bookchin, it has been recognized that so-called "utopian" visions are not, when authentic, starry-eyed dreams of abstract ideals, but rather are empirically grounded in actual social tendencies and potential for a rational, egalitarian, ecological, and compassionate mode of life. For such utopians, the "ought" can become an "is."

One particularly vivid way to raise these issues is through a confrontation of three different perspectives -- the neoliberal position, a socialdemocratic-Green and a Libertarian Left approach respectively. To begin with the former, Allen Hammond's book, *"Which World? Scenarios for the 21st Century, Global Destinies, Regional Choices"* (Island Press, 1998) attempts to offer some significant visions of possible futures. Hammond is a senior scientist and director of Strategic Analysis for the World Resources Institute, which bills itself as a non-profit and non-partisan policy studies center based in Washington, D.C. A prolific writer of books and scientific articles, Hammond received a Ph.D. in mathematics from Harvard. For such a quantitatively trained thinker, he is to be commended for his ability to integrate science and theory, facts and politics, and analytical and visionary thinking, yet there are clear limits in diagnostic abilities.

"Which World?" stems from Hammond's involvement in a the "2050 project," a five year long research program of ecology and sustainability organized by the Brookings Institute, the World Resources Institute, and the Santa Fe Institute, involving dozens of scholars from around the world. The project advanced a "systems theory" view which sees societies as systems that interact with one another and the earth in complex ways, the effects of which ultimately are unpredictable. The project attempted, in physicist Murray Gell-Mann's phrase, "a crude look at the whole," studying the interactions of numerous factors -- demographic, technological, political, cultural, and environmental -- that constitute societies and shape their future outcomes.

Drawing from this project, *"Which World?"* attempts to map how such dynamics currently operate in various regions of the planet, and how they interact in the global economy, as it seeks to project various possible outcomes of current social processes. The emphasis here is on possible because, in line with his systems theory approach and the postmodern science known as "chaos theory," Hammond insists that while current trends may predispose societies to certain outcomes, these futures are too complex and contingent on uncertain variables for exact prediction.

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This means that however things are presently constructed, they can be deconstructed and reconstructed by human beings in different ways. It means, moreover, that whatever futures might be likely or probable, such as one of global social and environmental collapse, they can be anticipated and prevented in favor of quite different results. The important point is that unless we first imagine various futures, both good and bad, and utilize socially progressive and ecological visions as ethical and institutional maps, we will have nothing to guide us in the constitution of a viable world, and we will travel in time like lost seafarers. To begin marking the signposts, Hammond argues, our first task is to examine long term trends in various regions and the globe as a whole.

Hammond is a sharp dialectical thinker able to hold simultaneously in his mind both the negative and the positive, seeing how we are barreling down the road to hell, but also how other paths open at our current developmental crossroads. Specifically, Hammond envisages three main possibilities for humanity: we can journey into the Market World of untrammelled capitalism, the Fortress World of social collapse and authoritarian control, or the Transformed World of benign capitalism that prioritizes social justice and establishes a rapprochement with nature. If the menu of options seems slightly limited, something like what a steakhouse offers a vegetarian, indeed it is, for Hammond fails to consider a Left or anarchist vision of a revitalized socialist economics and municipal confederations.

In its interesting design, Hammond's book begins with the importance of constructing stories or "scenarios" as critical maps of the present and guideposts for the future. He then broadly describes the nature of the three worlds/roads he believes face us in the current crossroads of social evolution. Finally, he applies each scenario to various regions of the world, always with a close eye on how each region interacts with the global economy as a whole, and how social development is inextricably bound to the ecological systems of the earth. Specifically, Hammond studies crucial regions such as Latin America, China and Southeast Asia, India, Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, Russia and Eastern Europe, North America, Europe, and Japan.

Thus, the regional and the global, the social and natural worlds, are theorized together as one system, but with different outcomes available to society and nature, depending on the wisdom and effects of human choices. In each region, Hammond advances an empirical analysis of current trends relating to issues such as population, economics, and technology, and from there imagines three possible futures such trends could foster. The scenarios are highlighted in italics and read with the vividness and realistic effect of the morning paper. In confronting Hammond's projected outcomes, one can easily imagine being in a different future, with all the repulsion, joy, or skepticism this experience may bring. The first scenario Hammond investigates as one possible future is the Market World. As championed by entrepreneurs, corporate leaders, and political conservatives and liberals alike, this world is an extension of current capitalist globalization dynamics. The idea here, as trumpeted ubiquitously in the media, is that free markets and technological innovation can bring peace, prosperity, and stability to nations around the globe. With the development of NAFTA, the loans of the IMF, and the computerization of the planet by IBM and Microsoft, this capitalist utopia will bring the dream to as many people as possible.

This scenario asks us to believe in trickle-down economics theory on a global scale, even though so far it has not worked in any single country. Conspicuously absent from the Market World vision is a keen appreciation of the environmental toll global consumerism and prosperity would involve. To the extent such problems may be anticipated, thinkers from this paradigm hold they will disappear with a wave of the magic technofix wand, whereby some technology or "revolution" or other (like the celebrated "Green Revolution") will save the day -- and hopefully the whales too.

Should this future fail to materialize, should its technofixes, tepid reforms, and free market voodoo prove unable to solve the world's problems, Hammond voices the fear of many others that something like a Fortress World will come about instead of the Happyville of the Market World.

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On this scenario, tracing another possible outcome of contemporary dynamics, Hammond projects how the growth of the market might fail to bring greater prosperity to anyone but the elite, such that the intensified class differences and social insecurities could bring a Hobbsean war-of-all-against-all. This would be an inverted Market World characterized by "islands of prosperity, oceans of poverty" (Madhav Gadgil). As social insecurities advance, armies of the disaffected would arise. Here, as Hammond describes, the dark side of global capitalism would emerge, leading to greater worldwide poverty, a growth in social instabilities and violence, and environmental ruination and collapse. In such a volatile state, society may become militarized, where the elite use whatever means necessary to defend their property and privileges. Looking at countries such as China and India, Hammond finds that current trends make this scenario possible (42-43).

But if, for Hammond, the PR of the Market World is too optimistic, the autopsy on the Fortress World is too pessimistic. Hammond believes that current trends could lead to still another possible future -- the Transformed World. Here too, capitalism makes good on its promises for greater peace, prosperity, stability, and environmental protection. The main difference between the Market World and the Transformed World is that this third future is created out of the realization that an unfettered marketplace and unregulated technological innovation alone cannot bring social and environmental progress. Rather, on this vision, progress requires some form of deliberative and democratic shaping of economics and technology, more participation from citizens, and a different set of values that overcomes the pathologies of competition, individualism, and greed in favor of more communal, cooperative, and "spiritual" outlooks. Sheer quantitative change alone -- more production and more technology -- cannot bring about the kinds of qualitative changes Hammond thinks are necessary for a truly Transformed World.

Looking at current trends, Hammond finds evidence that present tendencies could evolve into the Transformed World. Among other things, he cites the emergence of a variety of local democratic cooperatives and grass roots organizations, numerous projects for urban renewal, a peaceful transition of power from whites to blacks in South Africa, the spread of the Internet and new possibilities for communication, new partnerships between environmental organizations and corporations, a new concern for "sustainable development" and the environment in the corporate sector, increased philanthropy, world environmental conferences such as occurred in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997, and a more effective Environmental Protection Agency.

Hammond makes it clear that he intends these three possible futures to be ideal types. "In reality," he argues, "the world in 2050 is likely to contain elements of all three scenarios ... [b]ut the scenarios nonetheless provide a convenient shorthand for widely held but contrasting visions of human destiny" (24). While the future is yet to be invented, Hammond usefully underlines the available resources for progressive social change, for a world in relative harmony with itself and its natural surroundings. Whatever happens in any country or region, Hammond is quite clear that different national and regional fates are intertwined; in the world of NAFTA and the WTO, the economic and political systems of all countries is so interlocked that "global destiny depends on regional choices" (178).

Hammond is well aware that current dynamics could unfold in catastrophic ways. He points, for example, to gradual destruction of the rainforests, the reality of global warming, the impending doubling of the human population, the growing diminishment of useable land and water supplies, the aging and economic strain of advanced industrial societies, in addition to the rise in crime rates, the global arms market, and the number of diseases afflicting human beings. To Hammond's list we could add the resurgence of fascist ideologies in the U.S. and Europe, the technocratic takeover of universities and resulting instrumentalist myopia, ecological troubles in China (as a fifth of the world's population begins trading in its bicycles for cars, its rice paddies for hamburger patties), a portentous economic unravelling of Russia, attacks and counter-attacks in the "new war" of terrorism, nuclear saber rattling between India and Pakistan, and the worldwide rise in meat consumption that exacts a huge toll on animal life, human health, and the environment.

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Most likely, I am not alone in being unconvinced that the current global dynamics will not carry us very far toward anything but the Fortress World, and that our salvation does not lie in "green capitalism," the "green revolutions" of mechanized agriculture, genetic engineering, or Bill Gates' "road ahead." Despite the useful empirical analyses and the value of his scenarios, Hammond's book ultimately represents a massive collapse of critical thinking and a stupendous failure of the utopian imagination.

It is outrageous, for example, to see progressive value in alliances between McDonalds and the Environmental Defense Fund in order to achieve better waste recycling (55), while saying nothing about the relation between cattle grazing, rainforest destruction, and global warming, all of which dwarf the ludicrous insignificance of better packaged Happy Meals. Such alliances do more harm than good, and this particular relation is symptomatic of a new stage in the history of American environmental movements, a "third wave" premised on forming close ties with corporations and the subsequent cooptation of mainstream environmental movements (see Mark Dowie, *"Losing Ground"*). Similarly, the world environmental conferences in Rio de Janeiro (1992) and Kyoto, Japan, accomplished very little except to provide vehicles for corporate propaganda. In general, Hammond is totally blind to the phenomenon of greenwashing (see below) and takes the environmental propaganda of Shell Oil and the like as facts rather than lies and disinformation. He offers no critical analysis of institutions like the EPA, which is notorious for its ineptitude and corporate-friendly policies. The EPA protects our environment about as well as the USDA protects workers, animal welfare, and the health of consumers (see Gail Eisnitz, *"Slaughterhouse"*).

Hammond's blindness to institutionalized exploitation of human beings and the earth, to the blatant lies of corporate PR industries, to the failures of government reform and monitoring agencies, as well as to the inadequacies of mainstream environmental movements, is very clear if we turn to Tom Athanasiou's *"Divided Plant: The Ecology of Rich and Poor"* (Little, Brown and Company, 1996) and, especially, Takis Fotopoulos' *"Toward an Inclusive Democracy: The Crisis of the Growth Economy and the Need for a New Liberatory Project"*, (Cassell, 1997) from, respectively, socialdemocratic-Green and libertarian Left-oriented perspectives, both writers offer a far sharper analysis of our social and environmental problems, but Fotopoulos alone goes beyond rhetoric to project concrete possibilities for a postcapitalist world and revitalized radical ("inclusive") democracy. Like Hammond, Athanasiou and Fotopoulos offer empirical and political analysis of both social and environmental problems, but they cover a wide body of literature and issues outside of Hammond's limited scope. Both effectively demolish the naive optimism of the Market World future, the "ecorealism" of Gregg Easterbrook (*A Moment on the Earth*) and others that assure us environmental problems are fixable, and even Hammond's Transformed World vision, which itself proves far too optimistic under critical scrutiny.

Athanasiou's key premise is that the "environmental movement" (to use that abstraction) is itself experiencing a crisis, and is in a key transition between the past and the future. Something clearly is wrong if, despite all the efforts of the last four decades, the overall environmental situation is rapidly worsening. To use Mark Dowie's typology in his book, *"Losing Ground"*, Athanasiou sees contemporary environmental politics to be beyond the "first wave" of nineteenth century preservation and conservation movements, past the "second wave" that institutionalized the environmental movement during the 1960s and 1970s, and over the "third wave" that tried to harmonize environmentalism with free markets during the 1980s, to form a "fourth wave." This new form of environmental politics is comprised of grass roots movements that renounce alliances with corporations and, often, mainstream environment groups, to pursue a more radical anti-bureaucratic and anti-capitalist politics, such as do many "environmental justice" groups. "The old environmentalism has hit its limits," Athanasiou argues, and he calls for a "new ecology" that seeks to link social and environmental problems -- a move clearly inspired by Murray Bookchin's work, while leaving behind Bookchin's radical politics.

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Athanasίου's book is far-ranging, covering environmental issues and debates in the industrialized "West" and "North," the developing "South," and the communist and postcommunist countries in the "East." Eschewing the ecorealism of Easterbrook, Athanasίου advances a qualifiably "apocalyptic" position which insists, against Easterbrook, that the ecological crisis is all-too-real, as apparent with global warming, rainforest destruction, species extinction, overpopulation, and other grave problems. Athanasίου argues that such change will not come until forceful and direct links are made between environmental and social issues. Among other things, Athanasίου sharply rejects Malthusian positions that reduce the social dynamics behind overpopulation to a mere biological problem of overbreeding, targeting the world's poor instead of the consumption habits of the middle and upper classes. In addition, he vituperates against the misanthropic positions of Earth First! (known to chant "Four Legs Good! Two Legs Bad!"), and any apolitical deep ecology position that absurdly claims to be "neither Left nor Right, but Forward."

For Athanasίου, new articulations have to be made between traditional Left issues and environmental problems, without succumbing to the flawed legacy of Left politics, such as factionalism and bureaucracy. This means we cannot adequately solve or even formulate environmental problems until we draw the connections to issues of social justice, class, redistribution of wealth, land reform, poverty, unemployment, corporate hegemony, and so on. As Athanasίου argues, "It is folly to believe that a realistic environmental and development agenda, one that seeks peace rather than new kinds of war, will not be compelled to take up the unfinished business of the old left movement" (52).

Athanasίου's book is rich in empirical analysis and statistics, and it is worth examining some of this to underscore his point that socioeconomic conditions today are worse than ever, and that high levels of consumption and poverty alike take a huge toll on the environment. According to Athanasίου's figures, the gap between the world's rich and poor doubled between 1960 and 1989, "by which time the richest fifth of the world's people received 82.7 percent of the world's total income and the poorest fifth received only 1.4 percent -- a ratio of 60 to 1!" (53). In addition, "the North, with a fourth of the world's people, consumes 70 percent of the world's energy, 75 percent of its metals, 85 percent of its wood, and 60 percent of its food" (ibid). Between 1981 and 1987, wages throughout Latin America fell 41 percent. "By 1990 over 1.3 billion people lacked access to safe drinking water, 880 million adults could not read or write, 770 million had insufficient food for an active working life, and over a billion lacked even the most rudimentary necessities. Today, as then, an estimated 13-18 million people, mostly children, die from hunger and poverty each year. That is about 40,000 people per day, or about 1,700 people an hour" (ibid).

Given these shocking statistics, Athanasίου hinges the fate of the earth on whether or not the ever-widening gap between the world's rich and poor can be bridged in a politics of social justice. For Athanasίου, the environmental crisis stems from a crisis in democracy that allows an privileged elite to control the world's resources and devour them in their insatiable consumer appetites, while the poor languish and die in droves. Hence, as the title of his book suggests, one needs to study the ecological problems that stem from an economically "divided planet." In addition, new definitions of "progress" and "development" have to be articulated that break with the unlimited logic of growth and competition, and measure these terms according to advances in overall human and ecological well-being.

An important chapter of Athanasίου's book thoroughly examines "greenwashing" and its "professionally organized systems of appearance management" (228). Greenwashing techniques substitute image management for crisis management, involving the corporate world's various attempts to present itself as environmentally friendly, while in fact they are hastening ecological collapse. Corporations like Exxon, Du Pont, Chevron, and Waste Management are notorious for their "green" advertisements, but perhaps the most sustained propaganda barrage is the ads that Mobil Oil regularly place in the *New York Times* editorial page. Greenwashing is a multi-billion dollar industry that involves not only images and PR onslaughts, but also powerful lobbying forces that dominate the political process, and the use of "junk science" that disseminates disinformation about environmental problems (as groups like the Cato Institute try to assure us that the chances for global warming are "ludicrously small").

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Unfortunately, Athanasiou claims, "even crude greenwashing works surprisingly well" (282), not only in its Orwellian logic that transforms the rape of the earth into a lovefest, but also in its demonization of environmental groups and activists as "anti-progress" or even as "terrorists." Athanasiou sees greenwashing as here to stay, and as a major obstacle to social and environmental regeneration.

"Divided Planet" is written on the cusp of a paradigm shift in social-environmental thinking in relation to which Hammond's book lags far behind. The book smashes various myths, such as the poor are the problem, markets or technology alone can save us, more aid will end the crisis in the South, or that "sustainable development" (vague enough to be caught in any greenwashing net) is the way forward. Like Hammond, Athanasiou argues that the various modes of Panglossian optimism that envisage only win-win scenarios obscure the fact that humanity now faces some tough choices and problems. After a read of Athanasiou's critique of corporations and mainstream environmentalism, however, Hammond's vision of a Transformed World looks timid and implausible. But Athanasiou utterly fails to offer concrete alternatives to the various capitalist models he assails, and on this point Hammond's visionary approach is superior, however limited.

At best, Athanasiou has a vague, utopian notion of a global "New Deal" that involves a massive redistribution of wealth within nations and across hemispheres. In the end, despite his glimmer of hope for change, Athanasiou offers a variation on the Fortress World scenario, a vision of a Tragic World that cannot come to grips with the enormity of its problems and enact viable solutions:

Our tragedy lies in the richness of the available alternatives, and in the fact that so few of them are ever seriously explored. It lies in the rigidity of the war machines, the legacies of colonialism, the inflexibilities of the industrial tradition, the solaces of consumerism, the cynicism born of long disappointment, the habits of power. No wonder, given this, that our age seems not merely tragic, but tragic in the classical sense, that despite all possibility, we seem trapped in the that remorseless 'working of things' that the Greeks saw as the core of tragedy" (307).

It is quite possible that the Tragic World is our future, that homo sapiens may follow the Cro-Magnons and Neanderthals into oblivion, taking other advanced life forms with us. But, as Hammond and others are trying to rise the third wave, the fourth wave emerges as a hope for more substantive change, for a social ecology that challenges capitalist logic and institutions on all fronts, advancing a new alliance politics among, say, social justice, environmental, animal rights, and health groups.

Immensely informed by recent developments in history, politics, and social theory, Fotopoulos rides this fourth wave of thinking past the limitations of both Hammond and Athanasiou, into a Left libertarian, radical democracy framework. Fotopoulos succeeds where they fail by offering substantive critiques of global capitalism, detailed empirical analyses of social and ecological problems (with plenty of alarming statistics of his own [e.g., see 142 and 158 for data on unequal global income distribution]), and sketching concrete institutional alternatives to the twin evils of modernity, the two faces of the same bad coin -- the bureaucratic, growth-oriented, ecologically-devastating economies of capitalism and "socialism." Fotopoulos broadly diagnoses the fatal flaws of neoliberalism, socialist statism, and social democracy to project concrete visions of a revitalized liberatory project. Fotopoulos picks up where Athanasiou leaves off and paints a most suggestive picture of an alternative politics and economics that could provide the beginnings for a stateless, moneyless, marketless society that is the foundation for an "inclusive democracy." Crucially, Fotopoulos not only diagnoses the multidimensional crisis of advanced capitalism, he shows achievable ways out of it.

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Beginning with the radical premise that capitalism is a grow-or-die system antithetical to democracy, human needs, and ecological sustainability, Fotopoulos provides a valuable overview of the restructuring of global capitalism. In his genealogy of the modern state and economy, he traces the capitalist marketization process (that transforms all goods and services into commodities as it transmogrifies the citizen into the consumer) through three phases: liberal, statist, and neoliberal. In the classic liberal stage, the market became separated from society for the first time in history, as competition within capitalist nations played out with little or no social control. In the statist stage, which in the U.S. emerged after the depression of the 1930s, the economy is partially managed by the state as social welfare institutions are set in place. Finally, in the current neoliberal stage, which unfolded rapidly since the conservative revolutions in Britain and the U.S. in the 1980s, marketization processes are universalized and the long-sought goal of the maximal role of the market and minimal role of the state is attained.

On Fotopoulos's reading, because of the growing globalization of the market economy and triumph of commodity logic, capitalism has already passed through its "statist" phase of organization, where nation states intervened in the market in order to control its crisis tendencies and fashion a social welfare state designed to secure full employment and allocate resources to those most in need. Forebodingly, he argues that the neoliberal stage is not merely "a temporary phenomena," rather it represents "the political consequence of structural changes in the market economy system that could lead to the completion of the market -- a historical process that was merely interrupted by the statist phase" (145). Marketization processes have knitted capitalist nations into a global system dominated by acronyms like NAFTA, the European Union (EU), the Association of South-East Asian nations (ASEAN), the Southern Cone Common Market, in Latin America (MERCOSUR), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Nations still have a role to play in managing their own affairs and protecting society from the market, Fotopoulos insists, but in a global competition among various economic blocs, this role is diminishing, as politics, citizenship, and democracy themselves decline.

The implications of the neoliberal stage of capitalist marketization are enormous as capitalism defeats its enemies, and purifies and internationalizes itself. "A neoliberal consensus has swept over the advanced capitalist world and has replaced the social-democratic consensus of the early post-war period" (39). Not only have "existing socialist societies" been negated in the global triumph of capitalism (and Fotopoulos provides a lengthy and acute analysis of how socialist statism mirrored its capitalist other and dissolved through its own contradictions), but also social democratic movements. National governments such as Sweden increasingly have abandoned government regulation of the economy and attempts to provide social services, as social democratic parties themselves ignore or parody the social dimensions of their tradition in favor of neoliberal policies. If statism is now obsolete, the social democratic project becomes unrealizable. Indeed, Fotopoulos argues, nations find it difficult to maintain social policies in the new competitive environment. "[N]o national government today may follow economic policies that are disapproved by the capital markets, which have the power to create an intolerable economic pressure on the respective country's borrowing ability, currency value and investment flows" (42).

Thus, Fotopoulos diagnoses troubled conditions where both bureaucratic socialist countries and social democracies have failed to overturn capitalism or to reform it in any enduring and substantive way. Fotopoulos shows how Marx himself fetishized growth, industrialism, and science and technology (which when fully developed would almost automatically bring human liberation), and how Marxists and dependency theorists alike fail to challenge the socially and ecologically destructive logic of a growth-oriented economy. These consequences become staggeringly clear when Fotopoulos takes the reader on a tour of Southern nations (110-139), where the juggernaut of capitalist development leaves in its wake poverty, hunger, disease, overpopulation, environmental degradation, and a growing economic gap with the North as the main export of overdevelopment is underdevelopment.

Either the vision of a radical democracy must die, and we acquiesce to something like Fukuyama's notion of the "end of history" (i.e., the triumph of capitalism at the endgame of human moral and political evolution), or we radically reconstruct the project of democracy.

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Fotopoulos takes the latter path. But given the power of liberal and neoliberal ideologies, much debris has to be cleared out of the way, and Fotopoulos powerfully diagnoses problems with communitarianism, deep ecology, postmodernism, Greens (like Athanasiou), and "appropriate development" and "sustainable development" approaches. In each case, he finds these approaches both "ahistorical and utopian": ahistorical in that they fail to recognize the enormity of the neoliberal restructuring of capital (and typically replicate its individualist and market-based ideologies); utopian because they ignore the grow-or-die logic of the market economy, the universalization of this process, and the irreversibility of the poststatist phase of capitalist reconstruction which nullifies any attempt to return to social democracy policies for state protection of labor, various social groups, and the environment.

Drawing inspiration from classical Greece, major social movements for change in the modern world, Bookchin, Castoriadis, and radical Green, libertarian, and feminist traditions, Fotopoulos projects a new liberation project in the form of an "inclusive democracy." On the hypothesis (argued throughout the entire first part of the book) that inequality and hierarchy are the sources of crises in culture, politics, economics, and ecology, Fotopoulos seeks the abolition of the unequal distribution of political and economic power, as well as the elimination of all hierarchical relations in society. It is imperative to emphasize that this is no mere utopian "vision"; rather, Fotopoulos shows, the new democracy is necessary, given the multidimensional nature of the crisis which stems from the concentration of economic power that inevitably results from a market economy and attendant "representative democracy," and it is possible, as he demonstrates institutional preconditions that can be constructed to abolish concentrated systems of power. Only in local, decentralized, self-governing, interconnected communities can individuals realize the necessary and sufficient conditions of democracy (which Fotopoulos notes never have been realized historically), since only on a local scale can people participate meaningfully in society as citizens and attain "demotic" (or, community) ownership of productive resources and their confederal allocation. The new society, sprung from the political and cultural organization for a new economy, begins with the transformation of city governments into inclusive democracies and their linkage into confederations.

Since political democracy requires economic democracy (or money creates hierarchies and controls votes), the new liberation project must be rooted in economic democracy. Key to Fotopoulos's vision is the assertion that "the objective of a new liberatory project should not merely be the abolition of capitalist property relations but that of the market economy itself" (6). Thus, Fotopoulos rejects attempts to reconcile capitalism and socialism by creating a "mixed economy" or a market consciously and democratically governed; for Fotopoulos, a "socialist market" is an oxymoron, since markets are growth mechanisms and commodity logic breeds uncontrollably. Seeking to meet basic human aims and secure freedom of choice, and to synthesize collective and individual decision making, Fotopoulos roots his vision of a decommodified economy in a voucher system designed to meet both essential and non-essential needs (257-262). There would be a social allocation of work, along with rotating functions (262-6). By placing heavy emphasis on freedom of choice and localized institutions, this theory differs significantly from socialist views of "economic democracy" that fail to minimize the dangers of a new bureaucratic system of planning emerging, as well as Bookchin's notion of a "post-scarcity" anarchism, which Fotopoulos criticizes for lacking specifics on alternative economics and how to allocate resources in the new society, talking instead in vague terms about a different "moral economy." Breaking with Marx and Bookchin alike, Fotopoulos advances a provocative argument that freedom and autonomy do not require any material preconditions, and he argues that the notion of "objective conditions" of freedom (laid down through advanced science and technology) entail an ecological burden the earth cannot bear (see 198-9), as it also obscures the vital role of freedom of choice in radical democracy. Whereas emphasis on confederalism is common among social anarchists and left libertarians, what distinguishes Fotopoulos' analysis is his concrete emphasis on producing and exchanging goods in a nonmarket economy and allocating scarce resources in a way that reconciles the social and individual dimensions of community life.

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Throughout the book, Fotopoulos states his main point forcefully: "all the proposed strategies for political and economic change and the transitional projects involved are useless unless they are part of a comprehensive programme for social transformation that explicitly aims at replacing the market economy and statist democracy by an inclusive democracy" (275). Acutely aware of the difficulties of revolutionizing global capitalism along the lines of inclusive democracy, Fotopoulos nevertheless feels a revolutionary project is "realistic" to the extent local economic and political bases of inclusive democracy can take root, interconnect, and nourish new cultures and subjectivities and win over a majority of the population, such that "an alternative social paradigm will have become hegemonic and the break in the socialization process ... will have occurred" (285). As for the ever-present threat of violence, Fotopoulos claims it will be a real threat only when it is too late, already after new institutions and sensibilities securely are in place. Debates over whether such views are "utopian" or not seem academic in comparison to the real task of beginning to implement practical means to achieve a viable inclusive democracy in as many local bases as possible.

Fotopoulos's vision, then, is creating and securing a counterhegemonic inclusive democratic culture, stage-by-stage, until a new global economic, political, and cultural order is achieved. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the book is the resolute, militant, holistic insistence on the need to negate hierarchies and power structures in order to comprehensively rebuild society from below: "Town by town, city by city, region by region will be taken away from the effective control of the market economy and the nation-state, their political and economic structures being replaced by the confederations of democratically run communities" (285).

Of the three books reviewed here, Fotopoulos' alone offers the kind of radical insights to be truly visionary, to be utopian in the best sense of the term which means to identify existing potentialities for systemic change (thereby not being the u-topos of a nonsociety that cannot possibly exist, but rather the eu-topos of a good society existing in potentia). "*Toward an Inclusive Democracy*" is a richly researched, clearly written, well-argued, historically-grounded thesis that humankind must find a way beyond the Charybdis of an internationalized capitalism and the Scylla of socialist statism. There is a third way, one most promising yet insufficiently explored in historical struggles, predicated on building a federation of inclusively democratic political and economic institutions at local levels. Whatever choices human beings make, they are not capricious; steering clear of the false dilemma of objectivism and relativism, Fotopoulos brings into play some elaborate philosophical machinery (Chapter 8) to demonstrate that while human choices cannot be justified or "proved" through appeal to Divine or historical "laws," neither are they arbitrary or of equal value. Laying claim to freedom as the highest human value, the task becomes to justify it as such, work through its implications (such as lead to inclusive democracy), and find and struggle for the institutional mechanisms best able to realize it.

Hopefully, the fourth wave of social and ecological struggle that is emerging will rock this world, but we still need the vision, maps, and compasses of a new world, one that begins by saying "ya basta!" to statist socialism, moribund social democracy, individualist "lifestyle" strategies that fail to build an alternative power base, and the tired, oxymoronic illusion of a "green capitalism." We need visions of and struggles for a Postcapitalist Green World that rebuilds political and economic institutions for participatory democracy, as it harmonizes social and natural evolution. All three books contribute to this project, and, read together, they delineate urgent crises and roads that lie ahead.