

I mistrust my understanding

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The following is an edited version of my answers to three questions published in *Pores 2* (2002?)

I wanted, for my own purposes, to return to what I said; and that is what is here. I have taken out the questions, but you can go to *Pores 2* if you want to see them. It flows as one thing, not three related things. Also, in my published original, I spoke of some of the writing I was doing then and appended some examples.

I have removed the examples and a few comments on writing in a political context because my writing moved on as my understanding moved on. With the imminent publication as an e-book of my book **wrack** from *Quarter After*, I would prefer people read that because the texts in **wrack** originated from the same superset of writing but a little time later.

I have given the piece a title by using the first four words of my first answer.

I mistrust my understanding

I mistrust my understanding, because I am aware of being subjected to propaganda and the rolling revision of history for non-historical purposes; and aware that destructive assumptions have been infiltrated and operate within the language that I use. Cultures are being manipulated and politics rendered inoperable.

I have, therefore, little sense of participation except contingently and briefly within friendships and within artistic activities, which are inherently opposed to the procedures imposed to control human beings. In terms of who or what the powers controlling us may be, I am no better informed than an ancestor of four or five thousand years ago. I know there are powers which may hurt me; but they are cunning and camouflaged. I live in a death culture. It kills to continue. It has been modified to do that. It kills in response to killing. It kills in response

to living. It may look pleasing but it stifles. It has been modified to do that. To protect itself, the culture abolishes culture; and the polity prevents politics.

We are encouraged to control a few toys as a thereby avoided destiny. In so doing, we become aware not just of our mortality but of our progress towards its realisation, and render ourselves factors in equations, marks on graphs and so on; anything but ourselves. Instead of being participants within nature, we choose to be operatives within a production process. No choice is offered or made. We do. And then we die.

We are in the hands of those who are scared of dying to the extent that they will kill everyone.

I do not intend to speak for others. I observe that these things appear to me to be so. But without a functioning polity, there is no real first person plural. We are various potentially; and some of us believe we are free to choose how we live; but I witness repetition, not choice.

Suggestions that the concept of a unified self able to say "I am" like a mini-creator might be questionable, that we are not completely free and independent, are resisted by those who do not behave freely - with the exception of those who offer a simplistic version of genetic theories to absolve themselves of inconvenient personal responsibility in the way that others have distorted Darwin for much the same purposes.

We are beginning to understand how we are constructed, in hardware and software; and yet everything that our rulers decide is concerned to use that knowledge to fit a view of the world which it makes untenable, a view of the world in which there is not potential plenty, in which there is not potential peace and good health.

I have wanted to express my sense of connectedness to others in the hopeless hope that it might sway at least some away from murder.

It is tedious. I have found myself screaming, in the belief that it is wisdom. It is impossible effort. I have found myself struggling with muddling modes of expression. I have wasted energy. I have had to learn to find a path to follow rather than forcing a path as if I were a mob; or as if I were running away.

I have sought to listen more carefully, especially to myself. I have clung to friends. I have been less hesitant about telling friends what I am thinking though it means I am more alone than I might have been had I kept silent.

After the spectacular and terrible events now taken to characterise 11 September 2001, on the same afternoon, the television on which I was watching the repetitious images stopped working. That was a relief; I had been entranced.

The necessities I discovered were a shower and food. I could do nothing for the suffering. I was off email and phone and far from home, so that I was prevented from receiving or replying to my peers' and others' immediate responses. I was not surprised that the attack had happened.

I tried, quite successfully, not to think of the horrible deaths. I walked. Some days later, as I had breakfast with friends, fighter bombers went over at hundreds of miles an hour, very low.

The west of Cornwall is a good place to be in time of war. Culdrose Navy airbase is surely a target; one might hope for a quick death.

I wrote and I walked, through a landscape made derelict by market forces.

Had I been in USA in September 2001, and / or had I not known that it is possible to be bombed, I might have seen 11 September 2001 as an historically significant moment. As it is, that now was only one among many, less significant in terms of human suffering than 6 & 9 August 1946.

Some time after 11 September 2001, or possibly a little before that, decisions were taken to exploit the deaths of those murdered; and it is that which changed things.

And yet it was a continuity. The intervention in Afghanistan was a matter of joining one side in a civil war, just as was done in what used to be Yugoslavia.

It is often difficult for me to know what to think about the foreign adventures of our governments. I don't know enough. There is plenty to read, but significant factors are withheld.

In the case of Yugoslavia, I was pretty sure that I knew just how biased UK and US were being. I was so angry that it took me a long time to find a way of handling my own material. I was trying to guide my writing and my writing wasn't having anything to do with it.

I had to learn to listen, to keep trying, to persist. I found it hard. In my immediate writing community, there are many with whom I find little difference of opinion regarding my opposition to USUK foreign policy; but I have been quite distressed at the response of many with whom I share cyberspace post 911. They seem to have learned nothing and they hold to nonsense.

It has made me more committed as a practitioner, I think. I am a socialist. That is... well, maybe that's too ambitious...

I am disenfranchised. My member of parliament, Tom Brake, accepted the fairy story of September 11th. He approved the attack upon Afghanistan. He's a party man, a member of the third largest party. And he's better than most.

There is no opposition. And the whole idea of government and opposition is quite daft.

I am not greatly impressed by the claims made for representative democracy. It isn't very democratic and it isn't representative; and our bosses are so keen on it, there has to be a catch.

Politics in the comforting sense of meeting in the Agora is hardly possible now. I'm not very sure about it anyway. Where is the public/private divide if you live in appalling housing or none at all, if you must submit to social security interrogation to get subsistence money? Electoral reform is a version of the three card trick.

I've been a trade unionist most of my life and for much of that time I have held elected office. Nothing very grand. I was a Health and Safety rep for some years and was able to make real changes which benefited my colleagues although I am not sure they appreciated it. Employers are very good at making the changes demanded by a union in such a way that it makes the union officers unpopular.

I led an unsuccessful campaign against wet floors left by dangerously-rushed privatised cleaners making sure the floors gleamed as if polished. The employers resisted all attempts to make the place safer because it would have been more expensive; and they subsequently had to pay an employee who slipped £50,000 to keep it out of court.

Hardly a success, when the person concerned may have pain for the rest of her life; but it is a lot more than she would have got had it gone to court. But

then much of what the employer was actually doing was socially destructive.

Often union members undermine what is being done for them, by trying to deal for their own benefit; and thereby weakening the union and its ability to help others. It is often the same all the way up within the union. I have twice been elected to a regional position only to find myself isolated because I sought to carry out agreed policy. Or it all gets lost in legal arguments.

I have experienced courts as an unwarranted adversary; and I have no faith in them. They seem corrupt too, as far as I experienced it, with very few exceptions, and usually for the pettiest of venial reasons. 30 pieces of silver would buy a regiment of them. I was acquitted because I had the verbal resources to resist; many go under.

I remain committed to trade union activity, which seems to me less corrupt than party politics. I remain especially committed to union case work. A lot of beneficial work is done which few know about until they need it themselves. I benefited myself when my last employer decided to attack me. Casework provides an otherwise-lacking political space, as with writing, as one builds readership one by one.

I worry about razzmatazz and marketing. Writers should not be engaging in language abuse.

The act of just keeping on writing without lying is political. Helping make readings happen and booklets appear is political, potentially so, as one resists the attempts of a few to control what is presented as Poetry.

More could be done with more money. I am personally in a deep financial mess and no likelihood of getting out of it. All I know to do now is to keep writing.

I could use greater access to digital technology and software. That is the way that much of my practice has led and my desire is distorted by the prohibitive cost, though the cost is falling, while I also resist razamatazz and self-marketing. (I could do with getting away from noise.)

I am not aware of what else I can do politically/aesthetically which would be more effective than what I am able to do now.

The best thing I can think of is to write. It is the only thing I can think of. It is the only thing I can do.

Notes

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