

Terroir, Globe, Earth – A New Political Triangle*

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Formerly, we used to enjoy ‘splendid weather’ or put up with a ‘lousy climate’. But in recent months we’ve found ourselves on the receiving end of some ‘awfully splendid’ weather. What is true of the weather is also true of politics. The present moment is both awful and tremendous: thanks to the concurrence of terrorist actions, the rise of the so-called ‘national’ Front, and the conclusion of COP21, it is possible that we might finally be coming to appreciate where we are and what kind of politics we have to pursue.

Up to now, most of the points of reference for assessing whether one’s position was ‘progressive’ or ‘reactionary’ have been situated along the length of a single, unique vector—either you were lamenting the old *terroir* or you were committed to globalisation. Between those two extremes there was a continuous line incorporating us all: the only thing that could vary was the position of the cursor. At the forefront of this modernisation front were those advocating ‘progress’—behind them, all those who were backward.

This entailed a contradiction, one that was well-known, depending on whether the vector concerned morality or markets. One could care about the emancipation of morality to the exclusion of economic globalisation (more or less the position of the traditional left); or one could desire the liberalisation of markets and oppose the emancipation of morality (let’s say the position of the moderate right). Alternatively, one could also wish for the joint emancipation of both morality and markets (the frenetic ideal of modernisation espoused by the ‘advanced’ sectors of left and right). Or, finally, one could fight against both.

For all that to function as a frame of reference, the elites themselves also had to believe in the existence of a world, of a globe, that had the potential to become a universally modernised planet, if only they were able to bring it about.

It’s at this point that we have to combine commonplace analysis of the political sphere with that of another sphere entirely: the planet that has made its entrance into politics. The historic importance of COP21 was that it enabled us to become cognisant of an entirely different way of proceeding: this planet Earth does not in any way resemble the globe of globalisation. To put it bluntly: there is no planet corresponding to the Promised Land of globalisation. There has been a signalling error! And so those positions no longer need to take their bearings solely by means of the classical polarisation that ranges from local to global, from national to universal, from identity to the ‘wide open spaces’ of the global market.

This classical politics was able to function only as long as the elites led us to believe that the world towards which we were modernising really existed. However, for thirty years now they have ceased to believe this. Those who

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recognised this first were not only the ecologists, but also those we call climate-sceptics. Contrary to what we often suppose, their denialism has nothing to do with archaism or with a lack of understanding. In fact, what they'd seen only too well was that if there was no planet corresponding to the world towards which we were supposedly modernising, then we'd have to defend ourselves by shutting ourselves away in a fortress of inequalities. The enormous shift that has seen the richest 10% become the richest 1%, and then 0.1%, cannot be understood until we appreciate that the elites have abandoned all hope of ever sharing their territory with those they had asked to modernise—or perish.

To understand quite how the times have changed, all we have to do is compare the scowl of Donald Trump ('you're fired!') with the Hollywood smile of Ronald Reagan. It is no longer possible to allow ourselves to be hoodwinked as it was in the 1980s: previously optimists, the elites have now become sinister; where previously they led the way, now they have become defensive. If America is to continue to map out our future, the one proposed by the Republican Party, among others, sends chills down the spine.

All the more so as the masses have most certainly understood that, if the elites themselves no longer believe in modernisation, they will have to fall back in double quick time on the crumbs of identity that are still available to them. From Hungary to France, from Italy to England, from Russia to the United States, large numbers of people are acting as if to say: 'if not the globe, at least let us have our *terroirs*!' The white race, pork meat, nation, flag, caliphate, family, it really doesn't matter what—as long as we're not left with nothing. Everyone to the lifeboats! Of course, these communities are imaginary; not a patch remains of those former lands, now obliterated by globalisation. But one utopia for another: it is understandable that we should cling to the one that seems the least up-in-the-air.

Here is the turning-point at which we find ourselves, a fatal and decisive moment: is there an alternative definition of what it means to be attached to a ground, other than those provided by the 'territory-terroir' or the 'territory-globe'? Could we postulate a third point that would allow us to redistribute all those positions and avoid the contemporary tragedy of a battle between the utopia provided by modernisation and that provided by national identities?

Such a triangle has not yet been mapped out, I know very well, but to the line that joins the 'territory-terroir' to the 'territory-globe' it now seems legitimate to add two lines linking those two traditional attractors to the third apex: this would be the 'territory-Earth' (we might call it the planet, or *Gè*, or *Gaïa*—the name matters little). This is what I've called the 'New Climatic Regime'. It is clear that the planet that was assembled at the astonishing climate conference in Paris, the COP21, has very few traits in common with the space towards which globalisation was supposed to be leading us, which was as undifferentiated as it was boundless. That planet possesses a climate, a ground, boundaries, front-lines,

an entire geopolitics, with as little resemblance to the old maps of national identity as it does to the globe of the former world known as 'natural'.

This third attractor is not opening a 'third way' between identity and universality (nor between 'socialism' and 'capitalism' of course, which are two projects without a ground). But its presence, its weight, its novelty are capable of radically transforming the political spectrum. It requires us to redefine the very soil to which we belong, and to reconfigure who is to be deemed reactionary and who progressive. In any case, if we don't manage to re-territorialise ourselves on this earth very quickly, unfortunately it's a war of the national identities that will soon confront us.

I can't recall a New Year's Eve where the weather has been so 'awfully fine', nor a new year that leaves us with as little time between a decisive presidential election and the urgent requirement to claim back the climate in such a political manner.