

## **“How not to be too mistaken about Trump?”**

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The tragic election of Trump has the advantage of clarifying the broader political situation. Brexit was not an anomaly. We should acknowledge as much and prepare ourselves accordingly for what is to come. One after another, each of the big nations that initiated the project of the global market is now withdrawing from it.

The ongoing pattern of voluntary resignations is now terribly clear: first England; six months later the United States, which aspires to the grandeur of the 1950s. What next? If we heed the lessons of history, it is alas now probably France's turn, and then Germany's. The little nations have already rushed backwards: Poland, Hungary, and even the Netherlands, that pioneering nation of global empire.

The prodigious montage of United Europe, invented after the war in order to overcome the old sovereignties, now finds itself set on the opposite course. A veritable return to the time of war: “It's every man for himself!” It hardly matters how tiny one's domain becomes, so long as the borders are kept airtight. Each of the countries that contributed to the universal horizon of conquest and emancipation will now withdraw from institutions invented two centuries ago. The Occident finally earns its name, having become the empire of the setting sun...

Perfect—we have been warned and might avoid being so surprised moving forward. Indeed, our incapacity to foresee has been the main lesson of this cataclysm: how could we have been so wrong? All the polls, all the newspapers, all the commentators, the whole intelligentsia. It is as if we had completely lacked any means of encountering those whom we struggled even to name: the “uneducated white men,” the ones that “globalization left behind”—some even tried calling them “deplorables.”

There's no question that those people are out there, but we have utterly failed to hear their voices, let alone represent them. Despite having spent the past six weeks at American universities, I have yet to hear a single account of those “other people” that is realistic enough to truly unsettle us. They are, it seems, just as invisible, inaudible, and incomprehensible as the Barbarians outside the gates of Athens. We, the “intellectuals,” live in a bubble—or, perhaps better, on an archipelago amid a sea of discontents.

**Two Bubbles of Unrealism**

The real tragedy is that the others too live in a bubble: a world of the past completely unmoved by ecological mutation, a world that no fact, study, or science can shake. After all, they swallowed all the lies of the calls to restore an old order with perfect enthusiasm, while the alarm bells of the “fact-checkers” went on ringing unheard. A Trump goes on lying and cheating without remorse, and what a pleasure it is to be misled. We can’t expect them to play the roles of good, common-sense people, with feet planted firmly on the ground. Their ideals are even more ethereal than ours.

We thus find ourselves with countries split in two, each half becoming ever less capable of grasping its own reality, let alone the other’s. The first half, let us call them the globalized, believe that the horizon of emancipation and modernity (often confused with the reign of finance) can still expand to embrace the whole planet.

Meanwhile, the second half has decided to retreat to the Aventine hill, dreaming of a return to a past world. Thus two utopias: that of the future confronting that of the past. The opposition Clinton-Trump illustrated this rather well—two bubbles of unrealism. For now, the utopia of the past has won out. There’s little reason to think that the situation would be much better and more sustainable had the utopia of the future triumphed instead.

Something has happened in the past twenty years that accounts for the frenzy of retreats and surrenders. If the horizon of the Globe can no longer attract the masses, it is because everyone now understands more or less clearly that there is no planet—I mean real, material life—corresponding to that vision of a promised land. Just one year ago, the COP21 served as a solemn declaration of this impossibility: the Globe is simply too vast for the Earth.

Beyond earthly limits, our tickets are invalid. Nor can we count any longer on returning to the Lands of the old countries—they have all vanished. In any case, they were always too tiny to contend with the new Earth. The ecological mutation has arrived. No wonder both parties are dealing in unrealisms.

### **The Elephant in the Room**

The question is whether the tragedy of November 8, following that of Brexit, can help us to avoid what comes next. In other words, can we get away from both utopias, that of the Globe as well as that of a return to the Old Soil? What we need instead is to land on an Earth that is a little more solid, realistic, and durable. Alas, at present the ecological crisis is the elephant in the room, and yet it is as if nothing has happened, as if the choice were still between marching bravely into the future or clinging dearly to the past. Trump and his followers have gone so far as to deny the very existence of this crisis.

And yet, to my knowledge no one has explained clearly enough that globalization is over and that we urgently need to reestablish ourselves on an earth that does not resemble the protective borders of nation-states any more than the infinite horizon of globalization. The conflict between the utopias of the past and the future must not occupy us any longer.

What matters now is finding a way to bring together two kinds of migrants: those forced by the ecological mutation to find a new world by crossing borders and those forced to do the same without having even moved—and whom borders can no longer protect.

If we fail to give shape to this new earth and to reassure those migrating to it, it will never be attractive enough to counterbalance the opposing forces of those still dreaming of the ancient Globe or of the ancient Nation. In which case, one thing is certain: in 2017, it will be France's turn to throw in the towel.