

An Introduction to Anti-Politics - Postliterate - Medium

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1 — Alienated Science

One of the greatest successes of neoliberalism in dominating the minds of its subjects has been its ability to separate politics from everyday life. The causes of this phenomenon may have something to do with the extreme specialization of labor under capitalism — as labor exists to create profit — which can be seen in other fields as well, most notably in academia. Capitalism has succeeded in dividing up the sciences such that no single scientist is able to see the whole of science — just their subset of a field — and as such is unable to truly discuss how all of the sciences form the whole social force we live in.

“The fragmentation of existence together with the partial and one-sided character of socialization under capitalism have inclined people to focus on the particulars that enter their lives — an individual, a job, a place — but to ignore the ways they are related, and thus to miss the patterns ... that emerge from these relations. More recently, the social sciences have reinforced this tendency by breaking up the whole of human knowledge into the specialized learning of competing disciplines, each with its own distinctive language, and then by studying almost exclusively those bits that permit statistical manipulation. In the

process, capitalism, the biggest pattern of all and one whose effect on people's lives is constantly growing, has become virtually invisible.” [1]

Only minds who were rejected from academia and were thus able to work outside of it — namely Marx and Nietzsche — could successfully offer the most radical critiques of the powers that be. Nietzsche would lambaste the alienated and divided state of the sciences, of art, and even of law in a way not dissimilar to Marx:

“...when artistic energies and the practical wisdom of life join with scientific thought so that a higher organic system will develop in relation to which the scholar, the physician, the artist, and the lawmaker, as we now know them would have to appear as paltry antiquities!” [2]

In this way, we have been convinced that science, philosophy, and politics on the whole is primarily the work of men in labcoats or men in suits, and not the business of ordinary people. Little would they know that even those men in labcoats and suits feel the same stifling energy whilst they are told to remain in their field and do nothing *too* radical...

2 — “I’m Not Political”

This view of politics — as being primarily the job of those in the halls of congress — is not merely a natural outcome of capitalist relations. It is also intentionally created and sustained because of its ability to retain the status quo; i.e., those with power and privilege have a serious vested interest in utilizing it. It is able to prevent many from challenging the status quo because of a general sentiment that politics is annoying and really not their problem.

However, the result is not necessarily a feeling that “the politicians know better than me,” or a feeling that it’s not your place to speak of politics. Most people today of any substantial political inclination could rant

with total confidence for hours about the utter incompetency of many politicians today. This is not what has changed; what has changed is the idea that it is both possible or even desirable to be non-political. In other words, that it is at all possible to give politics up completely to the hands of the men in congress.

Anti-politics is not a desire to kill politics per se, but the desire to kill the idea that politics can at all be killed. Anti-politics is the movement towards emphasizing politics in everyday life, in every moment of our lives, and as something that will always be there whether we care about it or not. Anti-politics exclaims that all men and all of their actions are political, and as such, politics are very much their problem. Anti-politics vehemently rejects the possibility of “not being political” by asserting that not only is this not logically possible, as all everyday life is political, but that even attempting to become non-political is itself a very political act.

Furthermore, anti-politics is a desire to kill the gap between political decision-making and everyday life. Liberal democracy is set up in an alienated fashion whereby political decisions are not only merely the stuff of elections, but ultimately are only the responsibility of politicians. Anti-politics embraces the political nature of everyday life and of the way in which we constantly make political decisions anyway. This goal is achieved not just by means of voluntary political organization and decision-making, or local governance, or radical democracy, or any of those wonderful ideas espoused by Abdullah Öcalan (i.e., by means of direct political participation of all members of a society), but also by means of a change in the overarching sentiment towards politics.

Political decision-making is often seen as boring and tedious; anti-politics is about creating a politics of passion and enjoyment for all members. Anti-politics is the total subsumption of politics, political decision-making, and political participation into the realm of everyday life, exactly like the way Marx dreamed of a future in which labor was seen as the joy of everyday life rather than a necessary evil for an alienated class.

Politics is your life and you should control it!

[1] Bertell Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic*, pg. 3

[2] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, #113