

# Love, Western Nihilism and Revolutionary Optimism

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*How dreadfully depressing life has become in almost all of the Western cities! How awful and sad.*

It is not that these cities are not rich; they are. Of course things are deteriorating there, the infrastructure is crumbling and there are signs of social inequality, even misery, at every corner. But if compared to almost all other parts of the world, the wealth of the Western cities still appears to be shocking, almost grotesque.

The affluence does not guarantee contentment, happiness or optimism. Spend an entire day strolling through London or Paris, and pay close attention to people. You will repeatedly stumble over passive aggressive behavior, over frustration and desperate downcast glances, over omnipresent sadness.

In all those once great [imperialist] cities, what is missing is life. Euphoria, warmth, poetry and yes – love – are all in extremely short supply there.

Wherever you walk, all around, the buildings are monumental, and boutiques are overflowing with elegant merchandise. At night, bright lights shine brilliantly. Yet the faces of people are gray. Even when forming couples, even when in groups, human beings appear to be thoroughly atomized, like the sculptures of Giacometti.

Talk to people, and you'll most likely encounter confusion, depression, and uncertainty. 'Refined' sarcasm, and sometimes abogus urban politeness are like thin bandages that are trying to conceal the most horrifying anxieties and thoroughly unbearable loneliness of those 'lost' human souls.

Purposelessness is intertwined with passivity. In the West, it is increasingly hard to find someone that is truly committed: politically, intellectually or even emotionally. Big feelings are now seen as frightening; both men and women reject them. Grand gestures are increasingly looked down upon, or even ridiculed. Dreams are becoming tiny, shy and always 'down to earth', and even those are lately extremely well concealed. Even to daydream is seen as something 'irrational' and outdated.

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To a stranger who comes from afar, it appears to be a sad, unnatural, brutally restrained and to a great extent, a pitiful world.

Tens of millions of adult men and women, some well educated, 'do not know what to do with their lives'. They take courses or go 'back to school' in order to fill the void, and to 'discover what they want to do' with their lives. It is all self-serving, as there appear to be no greater

aspirations. Most of the efforts begin and end with each particular individual.

Nobody sacrifices himself or herself for others, for society, for humanity, for the cause, or even for the 'other half', anymore. In fact, even the concept of the 'other half' is disappearing. Relationships are increasingly 'distant', each person searching for his or her 'space', demanding independence even in togetherness. There are no 'two halves'; instead there are 'two fully independent individuals', co-existing in a relative proximity, sometimes physically touching, sometimes not, but mostly on their own.

In the Western capitals, the egocentricity, even total obsession with one's personal needs, is brought to a surreal extreme.

Psychologically, it can only be described as a twisted and pathological world.

Surrounded by this bizarre pseudo reality, many otherwise healthy individuals eventually feel, or even become, mentally ill. Then, paradoxically, they embark on seeking 'professional help', so they can re-join the ranks of the 'normal', read 'thoroughly subdued' citizens. In most cases, instead of continuously rebelling, instead of waging personal wars against the state of things, the individuals who are still at least to some extent different, get so frightened by being in the minority that they give up, surrender voluntarily, and identify themselves as 'abnormal'.

Short sparks of freedom experienced by those who are still capable of at least some imagination, of dreaming about a true and natural world, get rapidly extinguished.

Then, in a short instant, everything gets irreversibly lost. It may appear as some horror film, but it is not, it is the true reality of life in the West.

I cannot function in such an environment for more than a few days. If forced, I could last in London or Paris for two weeks at most, but only while operating on some 'emergency mode', unable to write, to create and to function 'normally'. I cannot imagine 'being in love' in a place like that. I cannot imagine writing a revolutionary essay there. I cannot imagine laughing, loudly, happily, freely.

While briefly working in London, Paris or New York, the coldness, purposelessness, and chronic lack of passion and of all basic human emotions, is having a tremendously exhausting effect on me, derailing my creativity and drowning me in useless, pathetic existentialist dilemmas.

After one week there, I'm simply beginning to get influenced by that terrible environment: I'm starting to think about myself excessively, 'listening to *my feelings*', instead of considering the feelings of the others. My duties towards humanity get neglected. I put on hold everything that I otherwise consider essential. My revolutionary edge loses its sharpness. My optimism begins to evaporate. My determination to struggle for a better world begins to weaken.

This is when I know: it is time to run, to run away. Fast, very fast! It is time to pull myself from the stale emotional swamp, to slam the door behind the intellectual bordello, and to escape from the terrifying meaninglessness that is dotted with injured, even wasted lives.

I cannot fight for those people from within, only from outside. Our way of thinking and feeling do not match. When they get out and visit 'my universe', they bring with them

resilient prejudices: they do not register what they see and hear, they stick to what they were indoctrinated with, for years and decades.

For me personally there are not many significant things that I can do in Western cities. Periodically, I come to sign one or two book contracts, to open my films, or to speak briefly at some university, but I don't see any point of doing much more. In the West, it is hard to find any meaningful struggle. Most struggles there are not internationalist; instead they are selfish, West-oriented in nature. Almost no true courage, no ability to love, no passion, and no rebellion remain. On closer examination, there is actually no life there; no life as we human beings used to perceive it, and as we still understand it in many other parts of the world.

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Nihilism rules. Was this mental state, this collective illness something that has been inflicted on purpose by the regime? I don't know. I cannot yet answer this question. But it is essential to ask, and to try to understand.

Whatever it is, it is extremely effective - negatively effective but effective nevertheless.

Carl Gustav Jung, a renowned Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist, diagnosed Western culture as 'pathological', right after WWII. But instead of trying to comprehend its own abysmal condition, instead of trying to get better, even well, Western culture is actually made to expand, to rapidly spread to many other parts of the world, dangerously contaminating healthy societies and nations.

It has to be stopped. I say it because I do love this life, the life, which still exists outside the Western realm; I'm intoxicated with it, obsessed with it. I live it to the fullest, with great delight, enjoying every moment of it.

I know the world, from the 'Southern Cone' of South America, to Oceania, the Middle East, to the most god-forsaken corners of Africa and Asia. It is a truly tremendous world, full of beauty and diversity, and hope.

The more I see and know, the more I realize that I absolutely cannot exist without a struggle, without a good fight, without great passions and love, and without purpose; basically without all that the West is trying to reduce to nothing, to make irrelevant, obsolete and ridiculous.

My entire being is rebelling against the awful nihilism and dark pessimism that is being injected almost everywhere by Western culture. I'm violently allergic to it. I refuse to accept it. I refuse to succumb to it.

I see people, good people, talented people, wonderful people, getting contaminated, having their lives ruined. I see them abandoning great battles, abandoning their great loves. I see them choosing selfishness and their 'space' and 'personal feelings' over deep affection and inseparability, opting for meaningless careers over great adventures of epic battles for humanity and better world.

Lives are being ruined one by one, and by millions, every moment and every day. Lives that could have been full of beauty, full of joy, of love, full of adventure, of creativity and

uniqueness, of meaning and purpose, but instead are reduced to emptiness, to nothingness, in brief: to thorough meaninglessness. People living such lives are performing tasks and jobs by inertia, respecting without questioning all behavior patterns ordered by the regime, and obeying countless grotesque laws and regulations.

They cannot walk on their own feet, anymore. They have been made fully submissive. It is over for them.

That is because the courage of the people in the West has been broken. It is because they have been reduced to a crowd of obedient subjects, submissive to the destructive and morally defunct Empire.

They have lost the ability to think for themselves. They have lost courage to feel.

As a result, because the West has such an enormous influence on the rest of the world, the entire humanity is in grave danger, is suffering, and is losing its natural bearing.

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In such a society, a person overflowing with passion, a person fully committed and true to his or her cause can never be taken seriously. It is because in a society like this, only deep nihilism and cynicism are accepted and respected.

In such a society, a revolution or a rebellion could hardly go beyond the pub or a living room couch.

A person, who is still capable of loving in such an emotionally constipating and twisted environment, is usually seen as a buffoon, even as a 'suspicious and sinister element'. It is common for him or for her to be ridiculed and rejected.

Obedient and cowardly masses hate those who are different. They distrust people who stand tall and who are still capable of fighting, people who know perfectly well what their goals are, people who *do* and not just talk, and those who find it easy to throw their entire life, without the slightest hesitation, at the feet of a beloved person or an honorable cause.

Such individuals terrify and irritate those suave, submissive and shallow crowds in Western capitals. As a punishment, they get deserted and divorced, ostracized, socially exiled and demonized. Some end up getting attacked, even thoroughly destroyed.

The result is: there is no culture, anywhere on Earth, so banal and so obedient as that which is now regulating the West. Lately, nothing of revolutionary intellectual significance is flowing from Europe and North America, as there are hardly any detectable unorthodox ways of thinking or perceptions of the world there.

The dialogues and debates are flowing only through fully anticipated and well-regulated channels, and needless to say they fluctuate only marginally and through the fully 'pre-approved' frequencies.

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What is on the other side of the barricade?

I don't want to glorify our revolutionary countries and movements.

I don't even want to write that we are the "exact opposite" of that entire nightmare that has been created by the West. We are not. And we are far from being perfect.

But we are alive if not always well, we are standing, trying to advance this wonderful 'project' called humanity, attempting to save our planet from Western imperialism, its nihilist gloom, as well as absolute environmental disaster.

We are considering many different ways forward. We have never rejected Socialism and Communism, and we are studying various moderate and controlled forms of capitalism. The advantages and disadvantages of the so-called 'mixed economy' are being discussed and evaluated.

We fight, but because we are much less brutal, orthodox and dogmatic than the West, we often lose, as we recently (and hopefully only temporarily) lost in Brazil and Argentina. We also win, again and again. As this essay goes to print, we are celebrating in Ecuador and El Salvador.

Unlike in the West, in such places like China, Russia and Latin America, our debates about the political and economic future are vibrant, even stormy. Our art is engaged, helping to search for the best humanist concepts. Our thinkers are alert, compassionate and innovative, and our songs and poems are great, full of passion and fire, overflowing with love and longing.

Our countries do not steal from anyone; they don't overthrow governments in the opposite parts of the world, they do not undertake massive military invasions. What we have is ours; it is what we have created, produced and sown with our own hands. It is not always much, but we are proud of it, because no one had to die for it, and no one had to be enslaved.

Our hearts are purer. They are not always absolutely pure, but purer than those in the West are. We do not abandon those whom we love, even if they fall, get injured, or cannot walk any longer. Our women do not abandon their men, especially those who are in the middle of fighting for a better world. Our men do not abandon their women, even when they are in deep pain or despair. We know whom and what we love, and we know whom and what we hate: in this we rarely get 'confused'.

We are much simpler than those living in the West. In many ways, we are also much deeper.

We respect hard work, especially work that helps to improve the lives of millions, not just our own lives, or the lives of our families.

We try to keep our promises. We don't always succeed in keeping them, as we are only humans, but we are trying, and most of the times we are managing to.

Things are not always exactly like this, but often they are. And when "things are like this", it means that there is at least some hope and optimism and often even great joy.

Optimism is essential for any progress. No revolution could succeed without tremendous enthusiasm, as no love could. No revolution and no love could be built on depression and defeatism.

Even in the middle of the ashes to which imperialism has reduced our world, a true revolutionary and a true poet can at least find some hope. It will not be easy, not easy at all, but definitely not impossible. Nothing is ever lost in this life, for as long as our hearts are beating.

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The state in which our world is right now is dreadful. It often feels that one more step in a wrong direction, another false turn, and everything will finally collapse, irreversibly. It is easy, extremely easy, to give up, to throw everything up into the air, and to land on a couch with a six-pack of beer, or to simply declare “there is nothing that can be done”, and then resume one’s meaningless life routine.

Western nihilism has already done its devastating work: it has landed tens of millions of thinking beings on their proverbial couches of defeatism. It has spread pessimism and gloom, and a general belief that things can never improve, anymore. It has maneuvered people into refusing to ‘accept labels’, into rejecting progressive ideologies, and into a pathological distrust of any power. The “all politicians are the same” slogan could be translated clearly into:

“We all know that our Western rulers are gangsters, but do not expect anything else from those in other parts of the world.” “All people are the same” reads: “The West has been plundering and murdering hundreds of millions, but don’t expect anything better from Asians, Latin Americans or Africans”.

This irrational, cynical negativism already domesticated in virtually all countries of the West, and has successfully been exported to many colonies, even to such places as Afghanistan, where people have been suffering incessantly from crimes committed by the West.

Its goal is evident: to prevent people from taking action and to convince them that any rebellion is futile. Such attitudes are brutally choking all hopes.

In the meantime, collateral damage is mounting. Metastases of the passivity and nihilistic cancers which are being spread by the Western regime are already attacking even that very human ability to love, to commit to a person or to a cause, and to stand by one’s pledges and obligations.

In the West and in its colonies, courage has lost its entire luster. The Empire has managed to reverse the whole scale of human values, which was firmly and naturally in place on all the continents and in all cultures, for centuries and millennia. All of a sudden, submission and obedience have come to vogue.

It often feels that if the trend is not reversed soon, people will increasingly start live like mice: constantly scared, neurotic, unreliable, depressed, passive, unable to identify true greatness, and unwilling to join those who are still pulling our world and humanity forward.

Billions of lives will get wasted. Billions of lives are already being wasted.

Some of us write about invasions, coups and dictatorships imposed by the Empire. However, almost nothing is being written about this tremendous and silent genocide that is breaking the human spirit and optimism, throwing entire nations into a dark depression and gloom.

But it is taking place, even as these lines are being penned. It is happening everywhere, even in such places as London, Paris and New York, or more precisely, especially there.

In those unfortunate places, fear of great emotions has already been deeply rooted. Originality, courage and determination are now evoking fear. Great love, great gestures and unorthodox dreams are all observed with panic and mistrust.

But no progress, no evolution is possible without entirely unconventional ways of thinking, without the revolutionary spirit, without great sacrifices and discipline, without commitment, and without that most powerful and most daring set of emotions, which is called love.

The demagogues and propagandists of the Empire want us to believe that 'something ended'; they want us to accept defeat.

Why should we? There is no defeat anywhere on the horizon.

There are only two separate realities, two universes, into which our world had been shattered into: one of Western nihilism, another of revolutionary optimism.

I have already described the nihilism, but what do I imagine when I dream about that better, different world?

Do I envision red flags and people forming closed ranks, charging against some lavish palaces and stock exchanges? Do I hear loud revolutionary songs blasted from loudspeakers?

I actually do not. What comes to my mind is essentially very quiet and natural, human and warm.

There is a park near the old train station in the city of Granada, Nicaragua. I visited it some time ago. There, several old trees are throwing fantastic shadows on the ground, providing a desirable shade. Into a few big metal columns are engraved the most beautiful poems ever written in this country, while in between those columns stand simple but solid park benches. I sat on one of them. Not far from me, a couple of ageing lovers was holding hands, reading cheek to cheek from an open book. They were so close that they appeared to be forming a simple and totally self-sufficient universe. Above them were the shining verses written by Ernesto Cardenal, one of my favorite Latin American poets.

I also recall two Cuban doctors, sitting on a very different bench, thousands of miles away, chatting and laughing next to two goodhearted and corpulent nurses, after performing a complex surgery in Kiribati, an island nation 'lost' in the middle of South Pacific.

I remember many things, but they are never monumental, only human. Because that is what revolution really is, I think: a couple of ageing peasants in a beautiful public park, both of them in love, holding hands, reading poetry to each other. Or two doctors travelling to the end of the world, just in order to save lives, far from the spotlight and fame.

And I always remember my dear friend, Eduardo Galeano, one of the greatest revolutionary writers of Latin America, telling me in Montevideo, about his eternal love for his wonderful lady called "Reality".

Then I think: no, we cannot lose. We are not going to lose. The enemy is mighty and many

people are weak and scared, but we will not allow the world to be converted into a mental asylum. We'll fight for each and every person who has been affected, and drowned in gloom.

We'll expose the abnormality and perversity of Western nihilism. We'll fight it with our revolutionary enthusiasm and optimism, and we will use the greatest weapons, such as poetry and love.

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Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. His latest books are: "Exposing Lies Of The Empire" and "Fighting Against Western Imperialism". Discussion with Noam Chomsky: On Western Terrorism. Point of No Return is his critically acclaimed political novel. Oceania - a book on Western imperialism in the South Pacific. His provocative book about Indonesia: "Indonesia - The Archipelago of Fear". Andre is making films for teleSUR and Press TV. After living for many years in Latin America and Oceania, Vltchek presently resides and works in East Asia and the Middle East. He can be reached through his website or his Twitter.

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