Capitalist realism

Introduction

Capital realism by mark fisher explores all the developments of capitalist ideologies. Capital realism is seminal text for the fading posture that capitalism posits. Mark Fisher in his book Capitalist Realism asserts the collapse and exhaustion into decadence of a planet that is both artificial and productive to it. The artificial force of the world affirms to its own pessimistic complicity inside an endgame from which there is no final outcome to be expected or an escape into the utopian future as outlying myth. In the book, the author has explored all the consequences of capitalist realism in the demographics of social, cultural, political and economic spheres of human life.

An interesting narrative in the book is in the tracing of the migrations and mutations of political cultural economic and political authority. At times it has been portrayed as something to be resisted and at other times inhabited. He has argued that we should not be nostalgic for old forms of doing thing but we should invent new methodologies of acting. The social cultural practices of most people have changed a lot during the era of capitalism. This has had both positive and negative consequences. For instance; Hip-Hop becomes a variety of criminal capitalism where a desensitized planet stripped of all sentimental illusions is seen for what is really is: a Hobbesian war against all, a system of perpetual exploitation and generalized criminality. According to Friedman, 1962, p.18, the changes in the social, economic, political and cultural aspect of human is due to the advancement in human thinking and not due to capitalism as fisher speculates in his book. Friedman argues that human beings will always change so that they can adapt to the prevailing circumstances. It is worth noting that even in the socialist ideologies these changes are eminent and similar to those found in the capitalist’s space.   
Yet, this fake anti-capitalism becomes in another form of its dark and inherent premises, as seen in most Hollywood films in which the bad old corporation is pitted as the enemy only to become a virtual scapegoat for our own apathetic inability to extricate ourselves from its harsh affectivity. We can observe these movies with impunity, allowing the anti capitalist gambit to play itself out on the screen, leaving us unable to consume the desires of our hearts. Yet, in the end, it is us who are being satirized as spectators at our own banquet, eating ourselves alive in the world of competitive anachronisms. As he utters it the responsibility of capitalist ideologies is not to make an explicit case for something in the way that propaganda does, but to conceal the fact that the operation of capital do not depend on any form of subjectively assumed belief. According to Friedman, 1962, p.19, the fundamental stage of ideology, nevertheless, is not an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an unconscious fantasy structuring our social reality itself.

In a Gothic twist, he typifies our uniqueness by saying the most gothic description of capitalist is also the most accurate. Capital is an abstract parasite, an insatiable vampire and zombie creator, but the existing flesh it changes into dead labor is ours, and the zombie it makes is us. There is a sense in which it simply is the case that the political elite are our servants. The unhappy service they offer from us is to launder our libidos, to obligingly represent for us our disavowed desired as if they had nothing to do with us (Fisher, 2009, p.21). We are already living in a Gothic novel, the one we have all had a fraction in constructing and contributing too. Every one of us is a division of that bizarre machine of culture that has made of us all zombies in a bad rated flick, caught in mindless pursuit of critiques against the bad old corporate elites we have ourselves become the very guardians of its invisible and implicit laws. As a substitute of abandoning the planet we have turned it inside out, shaping it to the most humanizing desires. Instead of public world everything has been privatized, even our views of the planet itself has become an entity to be incorporated into our artificial verdict. There is no genuine planet only the world as it is for us. This human world itself is artificial world that we have created and are now in the process of exploiting even as we try to defend it against its capitalist masters.

Hooked into a matrix of materials signifies we pursue pleasure like anhedonic artifacts of an extraterrestrial species. Neither entirely apathetic nor full of simulated gaze of the melancholic we drift among the commodified corpuscles of a trans-global machine like neuronal pulsations in an artificial brain. Instead of being producers we are produced. We no longer work for a living; it works for us; we being only the embodied assemblage of its broken down toolsets. We have turn out to be bureaucrats in a machine without rules and regulations, and master who might once known that the rules have long ago been interred in the black hole of the command center that is itself invisible and beyond human reach. According to the author, we have all become a part of Kafka’s purgatorial vision of bureaucratic labyrinth without end chimes. New bureaucracy take the form not of an explicit, delimited function carried out by scrupulous workers but invades all the work areas, with the result similar to what Kafka prophesied. Workers have become their own auditors, strained to evaluate their individual performance. He asserts that the result is a kind of postmodern capitalist version of Maoist confessionalism in which workers are required to engage in constant symbolic self-denigration.   
Like replaceable parts in a global machine we learn to subordinate ourselves to this new capitalist realism. In reality this is infinitely plastic capable of reconfiguring itself at any moment (Fisher, 2009, p.60). invisible in the machine like bits of data to be recalled from our dormancy in the data banks of this trans-global system, we exist as objects in the subterranean network of cross referencing matrices which appear and disappear as other entities in the system call us out, and assigning us what task we require to execute, only to remove us and position us back into the dark pockets of non entities, caged and silent, where we live in utter anhedonia until the next task is assigned. Our identity are just a commodity like anything else, to be switched on and off as needed; otherwise put back to sleep in the slippage of all objects enfolded within their own dark hibernation. Remembrance is no longer accepted; instead the unfeasible grafting of fake memories is the order of the day in the late capitalist society. As fisher asserts, memories prior to onset of the condition are left integral, but sufferers are not capable to relocate new memories into long term memories; the new therefore looms up as aggressive, un-navigable, fleeting, and the sufferers are drawn back to the security of the old. The inability to make new memories: a succinct formulation of the postmodern impasse (Fisher, 2009, p.66).

One critical aspect that comes out of the Fisher’s book is the idea of business ontology. One can think that this is something that combines both the technical and the classical aspect of describing ontology. The idea of business ontology described by fisher is too sophisticated and difficult to exist in the common world. According to the concept of fisher, business ontology is simply an idea that everything is folded inside a business reality system whose goals and objectives are translatable into business terms. The main challenge is that business ontology has no place in the public service. According to fisher, the public and other workers in the public service should start driving their business interests and business methods. This is very delicate proposition that Fisher is bringing forth, since it can lead to a collapse of the public sector. According to Bowles, 2007, p.83, it means recognizing that the goal of a genuinely left is not to take over the state but to subordinate the state to the universal will, and reviving the thought of public liberty that is not reducible to an aggregation of individuals and their welfare. Is there an option to capital realism? Are we not locked into a nil space, a location scattered with the debris of ideological approach from the eras that are more alike artifacts in virtual museum not to be studied but to be pondered as new art works in the aesthetic emptiness? Or is there a likelihood of something fresh? As he tell us, capitalist realism is like a pervasive atmosphere conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education, and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining though and action, (Fisher, 2009, p.22).

The education sector has been greatly affected by capitalist realism according to the accounts given by Mark Fisher. The education sector is facing immense restructuring from constant completion and audit as well as the introduction of pseudo markets. Fisher goes ahead and points out that, “Education no longer represses desires in a mode of high intolerance, but produces and incubates stupidities and holds unsolvable problems.” This in my view is an understatement to the dynamic transformation which has been experienced in the education system. Capitalist has led to immense changes to the system of education, and there are many new things which are taught in schools. The students of the current regime are able to come up with complex technologies which have made life relatively easier and comfortable. Fisher asserts that the lecturers are being overworked since the number of students is ever increasing while the employment of lecturers is static. This is unrealistic statement when we take into account the number of new institutions which are coming up. There is a lot of technology that is being applied in teaching whose aim is to ensure improved learning standards. Essentially all this is to say that perhaps the insidious nature of capitalist realism is that, whereas it profess to be free of some top down or big brother or totalitarian tendencies, it actually functions in a way that perpetuates heavy bureaucracy and it fails to come close eradicating economic elites through competition as the neo-liberal ideologues would like to believe. In fact, fisher uses education sector in the UK as an example of the way in which, through marketisation promised to deliver friction free exchanges has only caused greater concerns with measurement of performance resulting additional layers of management and bureaucracy (Fisher, 2009, p.42). Furthermore, these managers at the top of the organizations enjoy much greater slice of national income than in the days of democratic socialism. Yet, Fisher is not suggesting that the alternative is to look back to previous political times and indeed return to them. He asserts, “it is well past time for the left to cease limiting its ambitions to the establishing of a big state and instead, it needs to seek ways to actually do what neo-liberals said capitalism could do: reduce bureaucracy. The way to respond to capitalist failures such as the global financial crisis is not to return to the old way of thinking, but spur of renewal (Fisher, 2009, p.79).

As fisher tells us one of the problems of the Left is the tendency to keep going over other New Economic Policy rather than planning and organizing for a future that it really believes in. He continues saying that the failures of the previous forms of anti capitalist’s political organization should not be a cause of despair, but what needs to be left behind is a certain attachment to the politics of disappointment, to the comfortable location of a defeated marginality (Fisher, 2009, p.85). Instead of embracing politics of a failure we must recognize that the dark night of the end of history has to be grasped as a vast opportunity. The extremely cruel pervasiveness of capitalist realism means that even glimmers of alternative political and economical possibilities can have a disproportionately great consequence. The smallest event can slash an opening in the grey curtain of response which has marked the horizons of possibility under capitalist realism. Commencing from a circumstance in which not anything can happen, suddenly something is possible again (Fisher, 2009, p.87).

Overall I thought Fisher had several principal insights, particularly in relation to a variety of paradoxes inside capitalism. This book is important for it is simple but yet deadly descriptions of capitalist malaise since it capitalizes on the negative consequence of capitalist realism. Something new is brewing here that is much more than a one-sided analysis of the symbolic and ideological, accounting simultaneously for concrete material conditions of production. Fisher’s book is terrific read, often illuminating obscure social, political, and cultural phenomena, taking place in such a way that what at first seems random, and without reason. Apathy of students for instance becomes transformed into a genuine symptom thereby opening a space of the political in response to what has been depoliticized. But above all it is a book that aims straight at the heart of our contemporary malaise characterized by the sense of meaningless and hopelessness, at least carrying out a little of the legwork which would help us to become engaged once again.

References

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