

Capital and Paradise: The Invention of Nature by the Nouveau Right

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Abstract: The 21st century is a melancholic century: even Internet aesthetics promise the return to a new naturalized cottagecore paradise. This work examines how the nouveau right formulates a paradoxical melancholic imperative: the perpetuation of the capitalist accumulation regime and the return to an impossible lost community (reinvented from capitalism) as an escape from that same thanatic regime of capital. This paradise appears as a Golden Age built upon the image of present losses: naturalized notions of family, nation and territory. Following Marx, this study explores how the capitalist second nature produces the temptation to return to an “original” nature. This is the ultimate fetish of the commodity: the exit from the commodity. The nouveau right knows and exploits this by aiming to re-produce nature itself as a lost paradise, an amusement park and a cosplay of tradition. But this is the essence of our timem and it works because it is the dream of capitalist abstraction and exhausted modernity. It works precisely because it is impossible: like a specter.

Keywords: nature; second nature; Golden Age; melancholy; commodity fetishism; Karl Marx; paradise.

Girls in floral dresses planting their own gardens, reading among the stalks and gathering huge bouquets of flowers. Women in pink dresses, aprons, buns, and perfect manicures baking homemade cakes. Landscapes of farms, meadows, mountains, streams, and forests. Fruits, little plants, lambs, cottages, and flowers—above all, many flowers. Pastel tones, green, white, and pink. This is our aesthetic landscape in 2024. Cyberpunk is no longer in fashion. Or at least, it is not as popular as cottagecore. Vaporwave is dead, long live cottagecore. A few decades ago, the escape from capitalism to the imaginaries of the internet returned the magnified image of that same capitalism. The cyberpunk landscape presented the immediate future of actually existing capitalism: *Akira*, *Matrix*, *Blade Runner*, *Ghost in the Shell*. The desert of the real as the domain of a machinic industrial capitalism that biopolitically administers the cultivation and exploitation of human bodily energy. Artificial intelligences embedded in bodies that struggle with the promise of not entirely forgetting the flesh. Vehicles, screens, and chips that test the millennia-old definitions of love and death. Cyborgs that deal with the old definitions of the Western subject: autonomy, free will, or moral consciousness.

But not anymore. Internet aesthetics no longer revel in an industrial or virtual imagery but seek to recreate a simple and idyllic life in a rural and countryside world, accompanied by traditional gender and family roles¹. The internet promises us the pleasure of contemplating a non-alienated world. In a word: natural.

Do this aesthetics represent an outside to capitalism? They are, on the contrary, its most refined version. They are the outside of the system produced by the system itself. Nature is today's new Paradise... promised by the internet algorithm. Svetlana Boym already prophesied in 2001 about the relationship between the internet and the naturalized Paradise. The heart of the feeling of nostalgia, Boym argues, is the relationship between distance and intimacy. The abolition of physical distances achieved by virtual technology has redefined what it means to feel at home, but without abolishing the idea of home. Quite the opposite, the internet recovers a pastoral imaginary:

Technology is not a goal in itself but an enabling medium. While nostalgia mourns distances and disjunctures between times and spaces, never bridging them, technology offers solutions and builds bridges, saving the time that the nostalgic loves to waste. [...] The Internet also took over elements of pastoral imagery and "Western" genres (e.g., the global village, homepages and the frontier mentality). The new media redefined the architecture of space with a 'superhighway,' villages and chatrooms—all evidence that the Internet foregrounds pastoral suburbia and the romance of the highway and domestic morality tales over the ruins of the metropolis.²

Alongside the ruin of the metropolis, the internet always promised domestic morality and pastoral suburbia. Our accelerated and hyper-technologized capitalist world produces the need for a return to the natural. This return to origins seemingly contains the possibility of salvation. But it is a salvation programmed and fueled by the very system that tears society apart. The nouveau right captures this longing and formulates a paradoxical imperative: exit from capitalism and return to the natural (reinvented within capitalism). The return to a Nature virtually invented as the promised Paradise is the fundamental form of political reaction. But in capitalism, "Nature" is expressed in many ways. Who are these new melancholics of the nouveau right? What does this reactionary imperative of returning to nature consist of? Is such a return even possible? How does it relate to the context of advanced neoliberal capitalism? Why, in general, does the escape to this pastoral Paradise called "Nature" seem an inevitable destiny of modern society?

1. The Nouveau right and the Praise of the "Natural"

The nouveau right did not invent this aesthetic, but it certainly draws from it. And for good reasons. In their discourse, we encounter a praise of "the natural," with a special emphasis on the "natural family," but also, to pose it in a renewed Weilian fashion, the "need for roots." One must only hear Giorgia Meloni: "Yes to the natural family, no to the LGBT lobby. Yes to sexual identity, no to gender ideology." "Biological" sex and the "natural"

family are the foundations of the advocated community, the pillars of the desired order. New conservative female influencers spread their message on social media in favor of the traditional feminine role of stay-at-home wives and young mothers to fight the social collapse brought forth by “cultural Marxism.” These roles are explicitly addressed as “natural,” and the cottagecore aesthetics are much appreciated. Vladimir Putin declared 2024 the “Year of the Family” as the last bastion of Christianity against the corrupt West. The nouveau right sustains a very specific agenda concerning both local power and international alliances but does so by referring to “natural” instances that should entail a centuries-old teleology of its own.

New reactionary discourses propose to abandon the corrupt “modern” life and return to rural environments. The simpler life of our ancestors, with their clear gender and class roles, is missed³. Traditional marriage is believed to work as an antidote for the void of the fragmented subject and the consumption of bodies. Women, so they argue, face chronic dissatisfaction due to feminist emancipation and should return to domestic life and motherhood. In a word: freedom is thought of as a retreat, an escape from the social and political; identity is pre-political. The nouveau right understands and feeds the contemporary longing for a return: it appeals to a sort of virgin Nature as the last refuge against the steel storms of neoliberalism, against our harsh accelerated times.

All these discourses capture the real effects of capitalist logic and redirect them towards solutions that bolster a conservative morality. To that extent, they can capture the discontent of a part of the left in the face of the difficulty not just of overcoming but even of minimally reforming neoliberal capitalism. They resonate in harmony with a leftist sensibility, but the fundamental note of the chord is conservative. To the extent that it has updated this discourse with the language of social networks, it can appeal to an increasingly younger audience. Recreations of the rural world are exhibited in TikTok videos; the supposed tradwives who should bring back a traditional lifestyle appear sexualized and objectified according to contemporary culture; new entrepreneurs on Instagram advocate a return to a self-sufficient lifestyle isolated from modern life.

2. The Golden Age and the New Melancholics of the Nouveau right

What is this Nouveau right and why is it gaining so much traction? The neoliberal model is showing signs of exhaustion. On a deeper level, the “decline of the West” has been declared for at least a century. In the face of this decline, reaction emerges. Our present is marked by an epidemic of melancholy, a longing for community and a shared past⁴.

The Nouveau right offers a response to this era of uncertainty and loss. It postulates a Golden Age where we were truly at home, a time when we supposedly had something we have now lost: a homeland, a

family, a religion, a social class, values, a gender identity⁵. This supposed original plenitude could now be recovered to redeem our current state. Returning to it would allow us to build a solid, full, substantial identity, free of cracks, brimming with meaning and content. If we were there once we can be there again: it is possible to recover the homeland, the family, the community, the values. The mission for the future is to replicate the uterine and original Golden Age. The scheme is theological: once we were in the Creator's womb and the Garden of Eden; now we are in the Fall, in Sin, in degeneration, in degradation; but there is a way to save ourselves, to recover our original state of fullness and beatitude. The origin as salvation and goal. The Nouveau right thus projects its own loss onto a Golden Age⁶.

This idea of a Golden Age, as a way of coping with loss, is an exercise in melancholy⁷. Today, the Nouveau right leads an army of melancholics who are at war with the present and their own loss. Slavoj Žižek astutely stated in a 2000 text that we were on the threshold of the "century of melancholy." Indeed. Following the classic distinction by Freud in *Mourning and Melancholy* revisited by Kristeva in *Black Sun*, melancholy is understood here as the inability to lose or let go of the loved object⁸. The subject remains attached to the wound of their loss like a living dead, burying their libido in it, incapable of finding a new object of love. Freud suspected the link between the melancholic position and narcissism; as Žižek states, the melancholic believes that their bond with the object is the only form of authenticity. They see themselves as the sole and true custodians of the lost object. Their only mode of relating to the object is that of ownership, not even of desire.

Here we see an interesting twist on the common notion that we are in a narcissistic era. Inspired by Christopher Lasch's diagnosis in *The Culture of Narcissism*, a certain common sense today would decree that we are still in a postmodern era of narcissism fueled by woke culture, individualistic and consumerist hedonism, the "snowflake" generation and identity politics. Perhaps the narcissism of the late 20th century relates to the consumer individual Lasch speaks of, but the narcissism of the early 21st century involves a different melancholic subjectivity. This subjectivity revolves around the authenticity of their bond with the object and the feeling of grievance if threatened. The homeland, family, or values belong to them and no one else. New voices or subjects disputing the inherited ideas of nation, gender, or class are perceived as an offense for those holding or desiring unquestioned positions in power structures. Privileged think of themselves as the new victims. Desire as private property of the object, victimhood of the privileged and loss of privilege as a personal offense: our narcissistic era brings forth aggrieved melancholic subjectivities that pretend to turn their offense into a restitution of the object.

3. On Nature and Origin

It is difficult to argue that this melancholic Golden Age existed as a concrete stage in a specific past, especially because the complaint about the decadence of the present lineage and an alleged original knowledge of the Ancients is as old, says Kant, as History or even as old as the oldest of poems, that is, religion⁹. But the Golden Age can also be shifted to a sort of normative ideal that, although may not have concretely existed in chronological time, is “natural”: what should be. The Golden Age can be thought of as Paradise, the Garden of Eden or an uncorrupted Nature full of order and meaning; the lost state is better than the present because it was “natural.” Nature and origin function thus as unity and source of normativity for the Nouveau right . Decadence and degeneration are thought of as the corruption of a previous state of natural purity. Before, there were “natural” families; there were “natural” communities. Capitalism, postmodernity and wokeness would, in contrast, be unnatural.

Today, the return to the “natural” is thought of as the definitive form of authenticity in general. As Gilles Lipovetsky argues, in an early phase of modernity, authenticity was sought outside the economic and social sphere, in a realm of values and ends that the individual had to give themselves to self-construct¹⁰. A rebellious phase of our recent modernity built around the counterculture of the 60s and 70s considered that this self-production of an authentic self could only take place through a radical and sharp opposition to all forms of standardized culture. The goal was to abolish capitalism and change life. Liberation occurred against the sphere of consumption, social conventions and fashion. Nowadays, on the contrary, concludes Lipovetsky, authenticity is measured in consumption. The objective is to access authentic goods without leaving the sphere of consumption, in an “obsessive demand for authentic signs”: healthy food, artisanal products, organic and local goods, experiences outside the city, traditional rituals.

In the imagination of the nouveau right , as we saw above, the natural has a clear anchor: the family. Put in the Hegelian systematic language, the truth and meaning of State and civil society are found in the family; but in family understood, unlike Hegel, with an emphasis not on its ethical dimension, but on its natural one. In their nativist view, the familiar bonds bear a connection to territory: a nation is defined by soil and bloodlines, so immigrants and non-traditional individuals or families are regarded, more or less explicitly, as second-class citizens. Thus, the Nouveau right holds a belief: it is possible to access things as they are “in themselves”. It is possible to fully subordinate the State and civil society to the “natural” atom: the family and its soil¹¹. It is possible to abandon the commodity regime to return to a virgin nature. It is no coincidence that Spengler sought to diagnose the alleged decline of the West by unraveling its “organic” meaning¹². What is the secret of this cult of the natural? What is its meaning in times of capitalism?

4. Capitalism and the “Double Movement”

Let us take a step back. Apparently, Walter Benjamin once remarked that the emergence of any fascism is the result of a failed revolution. The disappearance of revolutionary politics since the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent incapacity of the left to defeat the Thatcherian “There is no alternative” surely played a role. But we must also turn to the old *dictum* by Horkheimer: whoever is not willing to talk about capitalism should also keep quiet about fascism. There are indeed aspects internal to the dynamic of capitalism which foster reactionary politics. In line with this, we cannot understand the current forms of the nouveau right without considering the nature of contemporary neoliberal capitalism. These notes should function as framework for the subsequent analysis of the reactionary claim for a return to the “natural”.

I would like to highlight two aspects that follow from Horkheimer’s assertion. First, fascism was an authoritarian and violent solution to the internal contradictions and crises of capitalism: crisis of valorization and accumulation, class struggle, the advance of the workers movement and the threat of socialism. Dictatorship and war economy were the solutions to restore property and production relations in favor of the capitalist class.¹³ Second, as Polanyi intuited, the fascist solution can also be understood as a defensive response of a society subordinated to the market as the only instance of organization¹⁴. Unlike other historical societies, which embedded the market in political, social, or communal relationships, capitalism has sought to produce social material from the objectified and anonymous logic of exchange. The fascist reaction to capitalism’s internal crisis can be interpreted as an attempt to re-embed that capitalist structure in communal instances such as the *Volksgemeinschaft* or race.

This is a necessarily vain attempt, as Hegel demonstrated, since the modern principle of civil society has definitively made any form of substantial ethical community unviable. But the attempt persists precisely, as a specter, in its impossibility. Polanyi coined the term “double movement” to refer to the dialectical process of marketization and social protectionism. In this sense, classical fascism is characterized by an impossible and contradictory “double movement”: both salvation of capitalist relations of production and property and promise of their subordination to “higher” organic “spiritual” instances that have already been *de facto* abolished by capitalism itself. However, their spectral character does not diminish their effectiveness. The fascist phantom community is all the more effective the more impossible it is: like the repressed that can never be made present and yet conditions, as absent, as impossible, the actual.

Even today, despite all the very important differences with historical fascism, we find this contradictory “double movement” in the nouveau right: the perpetuation of the neoliberal accumulation regime and, at

the same time, the promise of an impossible community as an escape from the thanatic regime of capital. Exhausted bodies, depleted natural resources, torn societies, geopolitical instability: the level of tension that capital imposes on its resources for valorization requires increasingly authoritarian solutions where democracy itself might be sacrificed. At the same time, and precisely for these reasons, the temptation to return to an organic ethical community organized around family, morality or religion appears. That organic community is what the *nouveau* right thinks under the name of “the natural.” The *nouveau* right thus fulfills two contradictory imperatives regarding global capital: perfecting it and fleeing from it. Just as in the past, the phantom community determines the impossible real society. The lost phantom ethical community appears as a Paradise, since we inhabit the ruin of the modern metropolis.

5. The Fetishism of Nature and its Secret

We arrive at our next and broader question: How do capitalism and nature relate to each other? Here must recall an indication from Marx: the commodity is filled with metaphysical subtleties and theological residues. The commodity is anything but obvious. Even less obvious is what could be an outside of the commodity. The commodity rewrites everything around it: the State, the family, history, even nature itself. The relationship between commodity and nature is anything but obvious. Marx offers some clues to decipher them.

Firstly, Marx asserts that modern capital breaks with nature as the foundation of social organization: “In all forms where the ownership of land dominates, the relationship with nature is still predominant. In those where capital reigns, the socially, historically created element predominates. [...]. Capital is the economic power that dominates everything in bourgeois society.”¹⁵ Marx contrasts the historical regime of exchange value with the pre-capitalist *naturwüchsig* agrarian organization, which emanates, originates or grows from nature. Capital signifies the irruption of a historical element that inaugurates a rupture from nature and inaugurates the possibility of its domination in the form of an all-powerful economic power. Its cellular form is the commodity, with its double character of use value and exchange value. Accordingly, the objectivity of value is a social, non-natural objectivity: “In direct contradiction with the sensibly crude objectivity of the body of the commodity, not a single atom of natural matter is part of its value objectivity. [...]. So far, no chemist has found exchange value in the pearl or the diamond.”¹⁶

But this does not mean that nature is definitively suppressed in the regime of modern society. On the contrary. It returns recoded. In the middle of the explanation of commodity fetishism, we find a surprising phrase. Marx speaks of “natural forms of social life.”¹⁷ Had he not affirmed that capitalist society is an historical form which abolishes all forms of *naturwüchsig* society and immediate relation with the land? Had not the

pre-modern organic *naturwüchsig* community been definitively liquidated in the chapter of the *Grundrisse* “Forms preceding capitalist production”? Moreover, Marx states: “The exchange of commodities begins where communities end.”¹⁸ Why do “natural forms of social life” reappear in the heart of Book I? Obviously, the “natural” that has returned in *Capital* cannot be the one abolished by capital in the *Grundrisse*.

There is a form of the natural at the heart of capital, but it cannot be the nature abolished by capital. Capital may well have abolished pre-modern nature, but there is a specifically modern form of nature. Namely a *second* nature: historical and social processes appear cloaked in the appearance of nature. Habit and repetition have turned into “natural” what is social and historical, so much so that it seems like there was never anything other than capitalism. The entire capitalist society appears to the modern individual consciousness not as a social creation, but as an external, uncontrollable and ungovernable (second) nature. Capitalism did not always exist, but once it exists, it seems like a natural phenomenon. Social life appears under “natural forms”.

How is this possible? Let us start with the very form of capitalist objectivity, the commodity form. The social objectivity of value that wraps the materiality of things is paradoxical. It depends on social relations but appears only as the property of things¹⁹. The social character of labor is realized in capitalism through the mediation of things: through exchange. There are no directly social relations. Private individuals only become part of the whole as owners of commodities that they exchange – including, of course, their own labor power. The commodity thus appears as the ultimate fetish, as a magical object, with a life of its own, capable of governing the fate of human beings. Money, the lord of all things, more powerful than parliaments and assemblies; we, mere cogs in the gears of market laws. It would seem that there is something in commodities, money, and capital that empowers them to determine the entire destiny of society. But it is not any property of theirs, but our own social forces reflected in relations between things²⁰. Capitalism is thus a realm of inversions. Nature is reified and society is naturalized. Modern society is, Marx asserts, an “enchanted, inverted, and upside-down world” where persons function as mere things, pieces of a mechanism, while Monsieur le Capital and Madame la Terre haunt as social characters²¹. Persons are objectified and things are personified. Capital and the commodity, not citizens, constitute the *dramatis personae* of the modern society.

Therefore, social forces and their metabolism do not appear in capitalism as directly social, but constitute a blind and automatic process as if governed by natural laws.²² As a consequence, as Marx emphasizes in Book III of *Capital*, the entire capitalist process is covered with an appearance of eternity: it appears not as a historical and transitory mode of production, but as the only possible form of society. The systematic functioning of expanded reproduction erases the wound of its origin,

the so-called primitive accumulation: violence, theft, and plunder. What is a social and historical organization takes on the solidity and fixity of a natural phenomenon. The paradox completes and capitalism itself, which emerged by abolishing the *naturwüchsig* society, appears as the natural and original organization of society in general; so it is portrayed by the classic and vulgar political economy. Their naive gaze considers commodities and money as objects “being” value and the market as “natural”, without considering the historical processes that have produced these premises. Capital thus appears, finally, as a second nature: “The forms that turn the products of labor into commodities and that naturally presuppose the circulation of these already possess the firmness of *natural forms of social life* before men strive to explain not the historical character of these forms, which they already consider immutable, but their content.”²³

6. Puy du Fou, or Lost Nature as Theme Park

But second nature is not even the final form of capitalist. The modern era is the era of division and rupture: the genuinely modern problem is, as Kant knows, how synthesis is possible. How are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible, how is experience possible, how is civil society possible: three ways of asking the modern question. In all of them, the secret of a blind synthetic activity that occurs behind the immediate consciousness of the individual and that, we will ultimately discover, makes the individual and its experience possible in the first place²⁴. What we find as primary is already the mediated product of a blind activity. Accordingly, even the most immediate forms of individual consciousness presuppose the totality of the social production process. But that totality is not accessible without critical work. The bourgeois individual has always lost the totality in advance. As Marx said: the exchange of commodities begins where community ends. There are individuals, there is social metabolism, there are *a priori* syntheses, but there is no community. The second nature of value allows to explain the constitution of a modern social totality. But that totality is also constituted as the apparent loss of something irrevocably left behind.

Thus appears a temptation that accompanies modernity as its double: to recover what was lost with its own foundation, to return, in some way, to the non-modern. This romantic temptation of return lurks over capitalism. Marx’s analysis of the commodity fetish allows us to understand the incurable romantic temptation of modern capitalist society. If modernity is (self)foundation, it is thereby and simultaneously a postulation of what was lost with it. This does not mean that modern consciousness has ever actually *been* in that lost state and can now return to it. Modern consciousness does not precede loss: it is the *product* of loss. Only retrospectively does it long for and invent what it is not itself²⁵. There is no origin, only loss. But precisely of that constitutive loss lurks the

temptation to recover it²⁶. Over modern society hovers the unavoidable temptation to return to an organic unity. This is the “natural” community that the nouveau right longs for, demands and paints with premodern strokes. This nature is not an original nature: it is the product retrojected from loss. But precisely for that reason, it is all the more indelible.

The melancholic nouveau right is a pure modern product. Its starting point is unequivocally the loss, which can be attributed to Original Sin, woke culture, capitalism, modernity, postmodernity, the market, mass society, feminism, globalization, neoliberalism, or others. The result is one at the same: our natural, innocent, original state is lost, and the bet is that it can be recovered. Thus, the thesis of the nouveau right is not so much a defense of what is present but rather the need for a recovery of something lost. And hence the double paradoxical gesture of the nouveau right: the capitalist framework is never questioned and is taken as unsurpassable, and at the same time we must regress to “the natural”. But, as we have seen, this first natural was definitely abolished by capitalism itself. The nouveau right then projects an idea of the natural starting from its present state.

This third form of “the natural” claimed by the nouveau right is the origin projected from the wound of Modernity itself. The nouveau right is prey to a form of fetishism: it believes it can access the very things themselves, their “natural” being, before their decadence began. “Nature” is where we return from the Fall. The nouveau right considers it possible to emerge from modern decadence and re-achieve a sacred and direct marriage with the things themselves: to recover family, homeland and the past as they were before, when they were “natural”, in a blissful brotherhood between past, origin, nature and duty. The nouveau right believes it can return to what its own modern existence left behind: as if, as Mishima said in *Confessions of a Mask*, one could witness the scene of their own birth. This third “nature” is, for the melancholic, the ultimate fetish, the ultimate fantasy: the return to the lost Paradise.

Of course, there is no such path of return. There is no return behind the wound of origin. “The effort to recreate [a rustic lifestyle] also constituted the tacit acknowledgment that it had disappeared.”²⁷ There is a temptation of return only because there is a state of loss. As Hegel asserts in his *Aesthetics*, we inhabit “the world of prose,” where there is no longer any community, no longer any polis.²⁸ But capitalism offers the melancholic, instead, another possibility, the possibility of the definitive pastiche: turning tradition, nature, and community into an amusement park. Capitalism allows for the production of the ultimate fiction: an outside of capitalism. Capitalist allows for a production of the Golden Age.

Fortunately, we don’t need to invent examples, because capitalist reality has been inventing better than us for a long time. “*L’Histoire n’attend que vous*” reads the motto of the historical theme park Puy du Fou. In this park, spectators can be transported to the most glorious

events of European history, with exquisite sets and carefully crafted theater and pyrotechnic shows. The park belongs to the entrepreneur, viscount, conspiracy theorist and conservative eurosceptic politician Philippe de Villiers, currently a member of Eric Zemmour's party *Reconquête*.

Does Puy du Fou achieve what it supposedly promises, namely, to transport the spectator to the great events of past centuries of European history? Rather, it achieves something else, which is what it actually promises. "*L'Histoire n'attend que vous*": Puy du Fou does not promise to take the spectator to History. It promises to bring History to the spectator. It promises to twist and shape History so that History waits for the spectator and not vice versa. History as delivery for the customer. History packaged at your doorstep like a delivery food. Does Puy du Fou thus manage to place History at the feet of the spectator? No, nor does it pretend to. Puy du Fou subjugates history to turn it into a warm doormat where the spectator can place their feet. Turning nature, tradition, history into doormats for the consumer to feel something warmer than the icy highways of capitalist accumulation: that is the project of the melancholic nouveau right. The point is not to "return" to natural history or natural community or family. The point is to invent them for and by the anguish of a world that has abandoned us. This is the secret intention of the nouveau right and the reason why it works: not to return to the natural, but to turn the natural into a reproduction.²⁹

Conclusions. Paradises Lost and New

In the hieroglyphic that is modern society, "nature" is said in many ways. In the paradoxical functioning of capitalism, nature is at once suppressed, posited and longed for. Capitalism rewrites the entire relationship with the world. There is no longer a direct connection to nature but neither to the social organization as whole. Modern society has split itself from the individual: in Hegel's words, "the existing world of freedom has become unfaithful to the better will"³⁰. In capitalist conditions, the world is unfaithful to the individual. The individual is divorced from freedom, imprisoned in the individual cells of the system of needs. The world of existing freedom is definitively lost and, even though it is his product, he cannot recover it. The social world now appears to the individual not as the seat of freedom but as "a huge accumulation of commodities," a second nature, both close and alien, which would not exist without his participation, but whose rules subject his as subject and not as agent. Marx, as if anticipating Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectic of Enlightenment, explains how modern instrumental reason, which sought to dominate nature, ends up becoming a second nature that objectifies and reifies the subject itself.

This capitalist second nature immediately produces the temptation to return to an "original" nature. Capitalism produces, in addition to commodities, its most refined product, its own negation: the lost paradise.

This paradise is the nature that the nouveau right yearns for: a natural family, a natural community, a natural nation, ordered by a more or less confessed vertex, God. Capitalism produces what it itself annihilated: a Golden Age to return to. The Golden Age is a projection from our constitutive situation of loss. Nature is only the illusion of an outside of the system produced by the system itself³¹. Origin is only the wound in the present. Community is only the illusion of a return produced by the wound of loss itself. The melancholics asked for the organic communities and received cottagecore produced by an algorithm. Nature is literally turned into an amusement park which should function as a center of gravity for all possible sense and destiny; but, in the end, a fake artifice instead of a sacred genesis, a product instead of a sanctuary, a pastiche instead of salvation.

There would be an intuitive response to this: the return to the natural is a failure because the traditional, the organic, the communal, can never emerge by any act of will. If it ever existed, it certainly did not arise from a purpose of recreation or from a decision. It miraculously occurred, like the beauty of a rose, which cannot be forced. Its magic was precisely, if it ever occurred, its unfounded character: its re-foundation is its ruin. Strictly speaking, a traditional family cannot be restored. A homeland cannot be recreated. Reproducing Nature is a contradiction. The result is a re-production, a re-creation. Authenticity cannot be gained by reproduction, because the very definition of authenticity is that it should not be forced, produced, or performed.

However, this argument, although not false, misses the point and runs the risk of becoming unwillingly romantic. It does not properly understand the contemporary moment. There were never so many churches as after the death of God, just as there was never such a fierce war of values as in our Weberian era of value polytheism³², or never so much renewed faith as in nihilism. Accordingly, there was never so much (fake) nature as in contemporary capitalism. The nouveau right understands the present moment. It is not enough to point out that the ancient gods and natures no longer exist. The nouveau right is not really interested in the natural... and therein precisely lies its strength. The nouveau right is not an outdated position belonging to another era, but the most refined product of our own. The secret intention of the nouveau right is not to return to nature, but to re-create it. The secret bet of the nouveau right is that, indeed, we are in nihilism, but it does not matter. Its aim is to produce a fake nature, an amusement park of traditions, and a pseudo-community. What better wrapper for nihilism than a gaudy artificial paradise?

The epic and classicist aesthetics adopted by the nouveau right are a postmodern pastiche and by no means a rescue of lost essences, a cosplay of false naivety in the ruined world of late capitalism. But that is its strength. In reality, the melancholics are the ultimate postmodern, because they believe in the performative power of language: they believe

they can artificially produce what was once natural or given, if it ever was. They believe that a voluntarist gesture can replace the sediment decanted from the alleged authenticity of a tradition, that the repeated word can perform the effects it names. Their defense of Nature and Tradition is the ultimate performance. Their work of art is the utterly postmodern work of art: fake Nature and the performance of Tradition³³.

The nouveau right's bet works because it is the dream of capitalist abstraction and exhausted modernity; it brings forth the new nuptials of an individual, as Hegel said, abandoned by the world –we have not abandoned the world; the world has abandoned us. It works because it is the fantasy of reconciliation, Modernity attending to and appropriating its own birth. It is the definitive turn: the production of reality itself in a world dominated by technology, code, financial capitalism, and artificial intelligence. “It will be no easier getting rid of the corpse of reality. In desperation, we shall be forced to turn it into a special attraction, a historical tableau, a nature reserve: ‘Coming to you live from reality! Visit this strange world! Experience the thrill of the real world!’”³⁴ Reality as a nature reserve and ultimate attraction is today's most precious relic. Thus, if science and civilization have captured every last atom of the universe, reserves are closed away from science and civilization to allegedly present the virgin nature frozen in its purity.

Nature, equally produced as everything else but appearing as virgin and authentic, is the ultimate fetish: it masks the desert in which we live. Nature has never been more alive. It lives today in the community, in the family, in the nation, in the land as dreamed of by the nouveau right. It lives because it is impossible. Nothing is more alive than a specter. Nothing is more alive than a specter turned into hologram. Nothing is more alive than the artificial paradises of cottagecore on social media and postmodern “traditional” families and nations. This is the lifeblood of the nouveau right and therein resides its power.

- 1 “What qualifies as traditional isn’t precise—the only requirement is that it derive from a mythical, unspoiled version of history and celebrate clearly defined masculine and feminine archetypes.” Darby quoted in Leidig 2023, p. 183.
- 2 Boym 2001, p. 346- 348.
- 3 This even allows for a patina of apparent multicultural sensitivity. For example, former speechwriter on Ron DeSantis’ campaign, Nate Hochman, highlights that Native American tribal jurisdictions have not legalized same-sex marriage and that, according to some tribal leaders, “gay and lesbian couples should leave the reservation because they thought marriage equality was a ‘white man’s way of thinking’.” Hochman 2023.
- 4 This melancholy appears as the other side of the postmodern reconfiguration of time: the present as a pure simultaneity in which the past and the future can be imported. Grevenbrock et al. 2022.
- 5 A detailed analysis in Ramas San Miguel 2024a.
- 6 “Thus were casualties of neoliberal deracination mobilized by the figure of their own losses mirrored in a nation lost: this figure drew on a mythical past when families were happy, whole, and heterosexual, when women and racial minorities knew their place, when neighborhoods were orderly, secure, and homogeneous, when terrorism was outside the homeland, heroin was a black problem, and a hegemonic Christianity and whiteness constituted the manifest identity, power, and pride of the nation and the West.” Brown 2019, p. 41.
- 7 And not nostalgia, which can be defined as a longing for what is lost with the consciousness that it will never return. Nostalgia loves what is lost as *lost* and *because* it is lost. On the contrary, as Julia Kristeva has shown, the fundamental trait of melancholy is the inability to accept loss. Melancholics believe they can replicate in the present the mythical community lost in the past.
- 8 Kristeva 1992.
- 9 Kant 2018.
- 10 Lipovetsky 2021.
- 11 As if ignoring Antigone’s lesson; because, as Judith Butler but also Hegel himself clearly shows, there is no political bond without the “divine law” or the private realm of family and kinship, but the opposite is also true: this realm is only an abstraction of the actual ethical unit, and Antigone plays her role not as a pre-political advocate of familiar bonds, but as a political “masculine” figure with deed and word which Hegel equates with none other than Socrates and Jesus. Neither of both sides can be abstracted from the other, and the fall of the polis is also the fall of the spontaneous, “natural” sphere of the divine law (and its corresponding binary gender division). Hegel’s Antigone represents a political limit to the familiar and a (repressed) bodily limit to the political. Hegel is, as George Steiner states, a “dramatist of meaning” because he understands the intrinsic tragic impossibility of every unity. See also Zupančič 2023.
- 12 Thus begins the text: “Is it possible to find in life itself—for human history is the sum of mighty life-courses which already have had to be endowed with ego and personality, in customary thought and expression, by predicating entities of a higher order like “the Classical” or “the Chinese Culture,” “Modern Civilization”— a series of stages which must be traversed, and traversed moreover in an ordered and obligatory sequence? For everything organic the notions of birth, death, youth, age, lifetime are fundamentals—may not these notions, in this sphere also, possess a rigorous meaning which no one has as yet extracted? In short, is all history founded upon general biographic archetypes?” Spengler 1926.
- 13 Wallat 2015, 244 y ss.
- 14 Polanyi 2024.
- 15 Marx 1983, p. 21. My translation in all non-English texts.
- 16 Marx 1962, p. 98.
- 17 Marx 1962, p. 99.
- 18 Marx 1962, p. 102
- 19 “As soon as these proportions acquire, by force of habit, a certain fixity, it seems as if they sprout from the inherent nature of the products of labor; as if, for example, 1 ton of iron contained the same value as 2 ounces of gold, just as 1 pound of gold and 1 pound of iron contain an equal weight, despite their different physical and chemical properties.” Marx 1962, p. 89.
- 20 The concept of fetishism is at the core of Marx’s concept of value. For a justification and an in-depth exploration of Marx’s understanding of inversions, reifications and forms of appearance in capitalism, see Ramas San Miguel 2024b.
- 21 Marx 1964, p. 838.
- 22 “In the exchange relations of its products, which are accidental and always fluctuating, the socially necessary labor time for their production violently imposes itself as a regulating natural law, in the same way that the law of gravity imposes itself when a house collapses on someone.” Marx 1962, p. 89. The ground form of this movement is the spiral, infinite (bad Hegelian infinite?) movement of the expanded reproduction of capital, M-M’.
- 23 Marx 1962, p. 99, my underlining.
- 24 This is the second via of demonstration of the *a priori* for Kant. It is not necessary, argues Kant, to resort to the sciences to prove that there are *a priori* judgments: experience itself

- already presupposes them, for where would experience itself get its certainty otherwise? Kant 1998a, B5 p. 138.
- 25 “Here we have the properly Hegelian matrix of development: the Fall is already in itself its self-sublation; the wound is already in *itself* its own healing, so that the perception that we are dealing with the Fall is ultimately a misperception, an effect of our skewed perspective – all we have to do is to accomplish the move from In-itself to For-itself: to change our perspective and recognize how the longed-for reversal is already operative in what is going on”. Žižek 2008, p. 78-79.
- 26 Language itself is a product of this temptation to overcome loss, as is its perhaps most refined product, metaphysics: the temptation to convey the primal Thing In Itself beyond the already constituted subject: “To transpose corresponds to the Greek *metaphorein*, to transport; language is, from the start, a translation, but on a level that is heterogeneous to the one where affective loss, renunciation, or the break takes place. If I did not agree to lose mother, I could neither imagine nor name her. [...] The wager of conveyability is also a wager that the primal object can be mastered; in that sense it is an attempt to fight depression (due to an intrusive preobject that I cannot give up) by means of a torrent of signs, which aims precisely at capturing the object of joy, fear, or pain. Metaphysics, and its obsession with conveyability, is a discourse of the pain that is stated and relieved on account of that very statement.” Kristeva 2024, p. 32 and 52-53.
- 27 Tanner 2021, p. 173
- 28 A suggestive reading in Jameson 1974.
- 29 “The more we value natural foods, the more hyper-technological facilities increase to produce them: the authentic is no longer the antinomy of artifice, it has entered the era of ‘clean’ technoscientific production.” Lipovetsky 2021, p. 248.
- 30 Hegel 1991, §138 p. 166.
- 31 “There is no nature, only the effects of nature: denaturalization or naturalization”. Derrida cited by Butler 1993, p. 12.
- 32 Brown 2023.
- 33 “But what about the opposite strategy, which resides in strengthening local traditions in order to make colonial domination more efficient? No wonder the British colonial administration of India elevated *The Laws of Manu* – a detailed justification and manual of the caste system – into the privileged text to be used as a reference for establishing the legal code that would render possible the most efficient domination of India. Up to a point, one can even say that *The Laws of Manu* only became the book of the Hindu tradition retroactively.” Žižek in Žižek, Ruda and Hamza 2018, p. 38.
- 34 Baudrillard 2008, p. 42-43.

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