

# IMPERILED LIFE

REVOLUTION AGAINST CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

Javier Sethness-Castro

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## Anarchist Interventions:

### An IAS/AK Press Book Series

Radical ideas can open up spaces for radical actions, by illuminating hierarchical power relations and drawing out possibilities for liberatory social transformations. The Anarchist Interventions series—a collaborative project between the Institute for Anarchist Studies (IAS) and AK Press—strives to contribute to the development of relevant, vital anarchist theory and analysis by intervening in contemporary discussions. Works in this series will look at twenty-first-century social conditions—including social structures and oppression, their historical trajectories, and new forms of domination, to name a few—as well as reveal opportunities for different tomorrows premised on horizontal, egalitarian forms of self-organization.

Given that anarchism has become the dominant tendency within revolutionary milieus and movements today, it is crucial that anarchists explore current phenomena, strategies, and visions in a much more rigorous, serious manner. Each title in this series, then, will feature a present-day anarchist voice, with the aim, over time, of publishing a variety of perspectives. The series' multifaceted goals are to cultivate anarchist thought so as to better inform anarchist practice, encourage a culture of public intellectuals and constructive debate within anarchism, introduce new generations to anarchism, and offer insights into today's world and potentialities for a freer society.

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# Prologue: Cancún and Catastrophe

We turn a blind eye to what surrounds us and a deaf ear  
to humanity's never-ending cry.

—Alain Resnais, *Nuit et Broillard*

**T**he survival of humanity is imperiled. Whereas the prospect of humanity's collective suicide through nuclear war seemed a plausible threat during much of the twentieth century, today the specter of catastrophic climate change has eclipsed nuclear annihilation in this horrifying role. The dangerous human interference with Earth's climate systems that has been driven by the historical rise of capitalism stands within the near future to destroy the very material conditions on which much of life—humanity as well as other beings—depends for its reproduction and sustenance. Basic reflection bears this out.

Average global temperatures in 2010 were tied with those of 2005, when Earth experienced the hottest temperatures observed since people started keeping records in 1880.<sup>1</sup> The average global temperature of the planet has risen 0.8°C (1.4°F) since the beginning of industrialization. Atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide have risen from an estimated preindustrial level of 280 parts per million (ppm) to 394 ppm—the level found in May 2011.<sup>2</sup> The rate of annual percentage increase in carbon emissions has in fact accelerated in recent years, exceeding the worst-case scenarios considered by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its 2007 *Fourth Annual Report*, the most recent of its periodic assessments of the state of the planet's climate.<sup>3</sup> Carbon emissions in 2010 were the highest ever recorded, despite the ongoing recession.<sup>4</sup> As the International Energy Agency notes, the continued reproduction of such trends in the foreseeable future would entirely jeopardize hopes for limiting climate change to a 2°C (3.6°F) rise in average global temperatures, the warming threshold considered “safe.” Worse, a climatological study released just before the 2010 Copenhagen climate negotiations found the world to be on course for a 6°C (10.5°F) rise in average global temperatures by the end of the present century.<sup>5</sup> Change on such a destructive scale would undoubtedly result in mass death among humans as agriculture generally fails, water supplies significantly diminish, and diseases spread. Billions of people would be expected to die under such conditions, as British Earth scientist James Lovelock has warned.<sup>6</sup> British climatologist Kevin Anderson estimates that a mere 10 percent of the

present human population—around a half-billion people—would survive a  $4^{\circ}\text{C}$ – $6^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $7^{\circ}\text{F}$ – $10.5^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) increase.<sup>7</sup>

Plainly stated, much of humanity, together with future generations, is being sacrificed in the interest of what Marxist U.S. geographer David Harvey terms “the two primary systemic agents in our time”: capital and the state.<sup>8</sup> This consideration is readily observed in the behavior engaged in by the world’s states at the November–December 2010 Conference of Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Cancún, Mexico, as in other exercises in absurdist theater that pass for climate negotiations. That Cancún’s Moon Palace, the forum for the talks, is located less than two hundred miles from the Chicxulub site—the location of the impact crater of the infamous asteroid that, striking Earth 65 million years ago, is believed to have induced the mass-extinction event that destroyed the dinosaurs and approximately half of all other existing species—seems fitting, for a similar mass-extinction event is currently being enacted by global capitalism, with present extinction rates having been estimated in 2004 to be a hundred to a thousand times the “background” or average extinction rate observed in Earth’s fossil record.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, of the 8.7 million species estimated in August 2011 to exist on Earth, many are expected to go extinct well before being discovered by science.<sup>10</sup> Whether the present extinction crisis will be as near terminal as that experienced during the Great Dying visited on Earth 251 million years ago in the Permian Age, when over 90 percent of all existing species perished, remains to be seen. It bears noting that the Permian Age, unlike the

end-Cretaceous extinction event that began at Chicxulub, is thought to have been caused not by asteroid impact but rather by catastrophic climate change induced by intense volcanic activity that was accelerated through positive-feedback mechanisms that ultimately synergized in dismantling the planet's protective ozone layer. Unless radically interrupted, the life destruction currently being prosecuted by global capitalism will be similarly catastrophic.

Such reflections militate sharply against German idealist George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's interpretation of human history—the dubious notion that “the Real is the rational, and the rational is the Real”—as well as other manners of understanding and relating to the world denounced by antiauthoritarian French psychoanalyst Félix Guattari as being “sedative”—that is, ones that render invisible the acute suffering perpetrated by the profoundly wrong nature of existing society.<sup>11</sup> In place of this, reflection on the present climate predicament, taken alongside consideration of the threat of imperial war and other potential relapses, could come close to German Marxists Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's assertion in the mid-1940s that the “dialectic of Enlightenment” as well as the chance for human progress generally have failed to bring about an emancipated humanity that does not dominate nature, and have instead ushered in a “world radiant with calamity.”<sup>12</sup> Guattari was in this sense far too optimistic in his 1989 warning that “there is at least a risk that there will be no more human history unless humanity undertakes a radical reconsideration of itself.”<sup>13</sup> It instead now seems to be the case that the chance for “continued progress” necessitates the “radical subversion



of the prevailing direction and organization of progress,” as German critical theorist Herbert Marcuse recommends, together with the institution of the categorical imperative identified by Karl Marx in his early reflections on religion: that humanity “*overthrow all relations* in which man [*sic*] is a debased, enslaved, abandoned, contemptible being.”<sup>14</sup>

The world has long been calamitous, of course. Before the threat posed by climate change came to be understood, the destructions of Vietnam and Iraq were prosecuted, just decades after the attempted extermination of European Jewry along with the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Before these world-historical regressions occurred were the myriad horrors of the First World War. Preceding this mindless conflict were European colonialism and genocides as practiced against southern peoples. The year 1492 CE, when the European powers began destroying the peoples indigenous to what would later be referred to as North and South America, was the same year in which chauvinist Spaniards defeated the Moors, and expelled large swathes of Jews and Muslims from the lands subsequently claimed by the Catholic monarchy. The Crusades as well as the Roman Empire mimicked the ethnocide and slavery engaged in by centralized power since the historical rise of empires in Mesopotamia and later Egypt. The reign of czars, kings, and emperors mirrors the regression that overthrew original nonhierarchical societies. Hannah Arendt, a compelling twentieth-century critic of authority and totalitarianism, rightly notes that “any long-range view of history”—or at least recorded human history—“is not very encouraging.”<sup>15</sup> Hegel’s “history as slaughter-bench”

is too accurate a characterization of a great deal of human history to justify faith in the present and the likely future, as demonstrated most fundamentally in the prospect of catastrophic climate change.<sup>16</sup>

Reflection on this question, however, can also bring one to advocate and promote the cause of revolution—revolution, as French syndicalist and playwright Albert Camus has it, “for the sake of life,” to “give life a chance.”<sup>17</sup> A resolution of the climate crisis might be possible through popular disruption of the operations of presently concentrated power.

## COP Mindlessness in Cancún

The COP16 negotiations held in the Moon Palace continued the same disastrous pattern of the nearly twenty years of UN-sponsored talks dedicated to addressing the problem of climate change. In an astounding dismissal of recommendations made by the IPCC for avoiding a 2°C (3.6°F) increase in average global temperatures beyond those that prevailed in preindustrial times—the end toward which the Cancún Accord itself ineffectually claims to strive—no binding world carbon-reduction trajectory was agreed to at the Cancún COP, nor was any date set for a global peak in carbon emissions. Instead, representatives of powerful states defended existing power and privilege, following the established pattern.

The site of Cancún provided an appropriate backdrop for COP’s absurdities. The city, the product of the

imagination of Mexican planners some forty years ago, is notable relative to other Mexican cities for the degree to which its lifeworld has been colonized by capital, both national and transnational: installations belonging to Walmart, OXXO, Chedraui, Soriana, and Office Depot blight the built environment in the city center, while a seemingly endless number of hotel monstrosities line the beach of Cancún's *zona hotelera*. Most of these sites have been granted either four- or five-star awards, and hence are completely unaffordable to everyone other than the very privileged. The scale of these installations is gigantic; one hotel in particular models itself after the pyramids of Giza. Located on the supposedly public beaches to which their administrators consciously block off access, these stunning testaments to the social inequality created and overseen by global capitalism stand to be destroyed, like Jimi Hendrix's castles made of sand, by the sea-level rise induced by the melting of the polar ice caps. This sea-level rise is naturally one of the most serious future risks entailed by climate catastrophe. While the destruction of these temples might represent a justified response to the concentration of power and dismissal of human concerns that is practiced by the wealthy and powerful, this sort of resolution could not be had without devastation for large swathes of humanity, two-thirds of which resides in coastal settlements threatened by rising sea levels.<sup>18</sup>

The maintenance and operation of Cancún's luxury hotels and massive corporations is the work of Mexican proletarians. The living conditions of many of these workers—like their counterparts the world over—are

lamentable, especially given the contrast of the concentration of wealth exhibited in their places of work. The lot of hotel workers in Cancún calls to mind Marx's comments on capital accumulation: "Accumulation of wealth at one pole is therefore at the same time the accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, [and] mental degradation at the other pole."<sup>19</sup> Whether or not Cancún's proletarians will rise up in defiance, as famously predicted by Marx, is an open question. The seeming lack of participation on the part of locals in mobilizations, discussions, and other events against COP16 proved to be disconcerting, notwithstanding the organizational efforts taken up by various climate activists against this trend.

The master of ceremonies at COP16 was Mexican president Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, from the far-right National Action Party. At one point during COP's two weeks, Calderón was seen literally dressed in green; his major proposal as presented in Cancún was to mandate that the Mexican federal government phase out incandescent bulbs within the country over the next three years.<sup>20</sup> This decidedly minimalist move—one, it should be said, in keeping with the more general trend among the world's states in light of the climate crisis—also was reflected in Calderón's inauguration of a lone wind-energy plant near Cancún on the eve of the summit; the Villa Climática, a space located next to a McDonald's south of the city in which the federal government held exhibits sponsored by Coca-Cola that purportedly examined climate change and hosted a "cultural exhibition" where Nextel, Symantec, Oracle, and other telecommunications corporations were afforded space. The

Villa Climática was catered by, among others, Domino's and Señor Frog's; it also featured a section dedicated to the commemoration of Mexico's bicentennial of formal independence, bearing the title "200 Years of Being Proudly Mexican." No similar space could be found in memory of the Mexican Revolution, the centennial of which was also celebrated in 2010.

COP16 featured a heavy Mexican military and police presence too. One estimate claims there were six thousand units in total at the beginning of the talks.<sup>21</sup> Military patrols in Hummers with machine guns trained on crowds of Cancunenses and outsiders alike were regular events, as was movement by police trucks carrying masked officers with assault rifles. Local news reports in Cancún suggest that the Mexican government acquired a crowd-monitoring drone from the Israeli military.<sup>22</sup> Police and military helicopters originating from the United States could be seen surveilling mobilizations.

In spite of the repressive powers projected in Cancún, though, resistance was also practiced. The international organization Via Campesina put together the Global Forum for Environmental and Social Justice in Cancún's San Jacinto Canek Park to coincide with the second week of COP16. The forum brought six caravans of Mexicans from several regions of the country to report on the socio-environmental situations experienced around the republic, at the end of a year that saw unprecedented rains and attendant flooding in much of southeastern Mexico—a reality for which climate change likely bears responsibility. Via Campesina also invited a number of journalists

and other public intellectuals to speak on the climate and socioenvironmental crises, and helped organize a march of approximately three thousand people from central Cancún toward the site of the Moon Palace during COP's second week. The forum was even addressed by Bolivian president Evo Morales, who spoke of the need for a "neosocialism" that incorporates a defense of ecology with class struggle and called for the third millennium to be a "people's millennium," one in which "oligarchy, hierarchy, and monarchy" are overcome as historical residues—however lacking his own leadership has been in these terms for Bolivia itself, particularly in light of the violence exercised by his police in September 2011 against indigenous protesters opposed to the construction of a highway through the highly biodiverse Isiboro Secure National Park.<sup>23</sup>

Apart from Via Campesina's event, Klimaforum10, the successor to Klimaforum09, which at COP15 in Copenhagen released a rather sensible antisystemic analysis of the climate predicament, held an alternative summit on the site of a polo club near Puerto Morelos, a town south of Cancún. Polo players on horseback could be seen some distance from the Klimaforum campus. The summit's site was mirrored in its mainstream politics, which in contrast to those of Klimaforum09, seemed to revolve around inadequate reforms and approaches stressing lifestyle changes to address the environmental crisis. This current was perhaps best symbolized by the talk given at Klimaforum10 by Polly Higgins, a former corporate lawyer from the United Kingdom who argued that what must be done in light of the climate and environmental crises is to codify the

crime of ecocide into international law—as though capital respected such law in any sense.<sup>24</sup>

Against approaches that defend existing society through reforms were the perspectives and actions of the revolutionary association known as Anti-C@p in Cancún. An explicitly anticapitalist grouping, Anti-C@p was comprised of autonomous youths hailing largely from Mexico City and connected to Marea Creciente México (Rising Tide Mexico). Anti-C@p's vegetable-oil-powered bus, which also had appeared at the Encounter for Autonomous Life in Oaxaca de Juárez eight months previously, was decorated with murals commemorating the life of Lee Kyung Hae, a Korean agriculturalist who committed suicide in protest of neoliberal capitalism during the World Trade Organization meetings in Cancún in 2003. While tied in ways to Via Campesina's forum against COP, Anti-C@p carried out autonomous actions separate from it. One march organized without a permit by Anti-C@p in the streets of downtown Cancún saw scores of Mexican youths donning Zapatista-style masks and mobilizing with the goal of reaching the local branch of PROFEPA, the Mexican federal government's environmental prosecution agency. Anti-C@p had also planned to disrupt a conference at which Calderón, World Bank president Robert Zoellick, and Walmart CEO Robson Walton were to speak—but it was prevented from doing so due to the police checkpoints erected between the city center and the *zona hotelera*. Indeed, in a spirit of internationalism, during the mobilization called for by Via Campesina during COP's second week, the Anti-C@p bus carried a banner commemorating

the two-year anniversary of the murder in Athens of fifteen-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos by police. At these and other demonstrations, Anti-C@p presented a spirit of passionate rage against the cruelties of constituted power and the system it upholds—“outbursts of anger in memory of the suffering of [humanity],” as Christos Filippidis characterizes the December 2008 riots in Greece.<sup>25</sup> Similar in this sense to their Greek comrades, and in marked contrast to the other critical currents to be found in Cancún, those associated with Anti-C@p also expressed a degree of sadness with regard to the state of the world. It is unclear whether this intermixing of passions can be considered an expression of the “hopeless sorrow” of which Hegel warns, but it was undoubtedly informed by what Arendt finds to be “the most powerful and perhaps the most devastating passion motivating revolutionaries”: “the passion of compassion.”<sup>26</sup>

Above all else, human-induced climate change constitutes a brutal assault on humanity and life itself—but with regard to the former, its effects are to be borne overwhelmingly by peoples of the Global South. The drought, famine, flooding, extreme weather events, increased susceptibility to disease, and sea-level rise that follow from climate change will affect human populations residing in southern societies far more severely than those who find themselves in the northern latitudes. While crop yields may well decline some 50 percent over the next ten years on much of the African continent and about 25 percent in Pakistan and Mexico by 2080, parts of Europe and North America stand to enjoy more favorable conditions for agriculture



on average under moderate warming scenarios.<sup>27</sup> In the dry language of McGill doctoral candidate Jason Samson and company, global warming can be expected soon to cause “climate conditions currently associated with high population densities” to “shift towards climate conditions associated with low population densities,” in regions determined by Samson and his colleagues’ findings to suffer from high vulnerability to projected climate change: central South America, eastern and southern Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.<sup>28</sup> In their study of possible future drought scenarios, geographers Justin Sheffield and Eric Wood similarly find that southern Africa, West Africa, Central America, and the Tibetan plateau would be the regions worst affected by unchecked climate change.<sup>29</sup> Of the three hundred thousand annual deaths that have been attributed to human interference with Earth’s climate systems to date, all take place within the “developing world”; 98 percent of those “seriously affected” by climate change live in such regions, and an estimated 90 percent of the total economic losses resulting from climate change are borne by southern societies.<sup>30</sup> Over 99 percent of the five million who may well be killed by climate catastrophe in the next decade reside within societies called “third world.”<sup>31</sup>

What is currently occurring, then, is the mass murder of the Global South by much of the Global North. This trend in world affairs is sadly not without precedent, given neoliberalism, formal colonization, the Atlantic slave trade, and the process known as the Columbian Exchange. Under prevailing assumptions, humanity is little more than an instrument or object by which to advance capital

accumulation, or else “unpeople” whose interests are to be dismissed entirely.<sup>32</sup> Individuals in general are afforded the same regard as that shown to K. by his murderers at the close of Franz Kafka’s *The Trial*, when the protagonist is simply murdered “like a dog.”

Prevailing society’s relationship to the climate predicament can be described as upholding a sort of climate barbarism reminiscent of fascism. Fascism—the violent defense of authoritarian social structures, maintained by the silencing of suffering—is hardly the exclusive mantle of the Nazis, Benito Mussolini, Francisco Franco, or imperial Japan. In the view of Tunisian anticolonial theorist Alberto Memmi, fascism refers to “a regime of oppression for the benefit of a few.”<sup>33</sup> On Arendt’s account, totalitarianism originated precisely from imperialist liberalism; for Marcuse, the “total-authoritarian state” is the form that corresponds to the monopoly stage of capitalism, to which liberal capitalism inevitably gives rise.<sup>34</sup> As Horkheimer argues, “They have nothing to say about fascism who do not want to mention capitalism.”<sup>35</sup> The stubborn refusal by those in power to commit to mitigating future climate change and making resources available for humanity’s materially impoverished societies to attempt to adapt to the destruction wrought by climate change amounts to collaboration with the future death of a decidedly overwhelming number of human beings on a scale far greater than any other in human history. In this is seen the irrationality and barbarism of capitalism—its total authoritarianism. Given that present climate change has been observed to be contingent on the rise and perpetuation of the capitalist system, deaths due to climate

destabilization would result not from “natural” causes but rather human-induced ones, and should be considered homicides. Humanity thus “waits to be woken one day by the memory of what has been lost”—principally, the three hundred thousand individuals currently killed each year by capital-induced climate change, and a sum that could well rise to a million annual deaths within the near future if matters are not radically changed.<sup>36</sup>

As Marx insists, shame can be a revolutionary virtue.<sup>37</sup> Shame regarding humanity’s marked failures to protect itself along with the other forms of life with which it shares Earth could help contribute to the radical reconstruction of global society—for this society, though ruled over by the repressive order of statist militarism, is “after all constituted out of us,” Adorno observes, “made up of us ourselves.”<sup>38</sup>

The response of the world’s peoples to the massive suffering brought about by climate change—dramatically illustrated, for example, in the extreme devastation seen in the 2011 “children’s famine” in the Horn of Africa, which has caused tens of thousands of deaths and imperiled the lives of millions, mainly in Somalia—must not ape that of the old manservant at the close of the *The Misunderstanding* by Camus. In Camus’s work, the character Maria, having just learned of her husband’s murder at the hands of the servant’s managers, desperately asks him to aid her, to “be kind and say that you will help me”: his response is a rather pointed “No.”<sup>39</sup>

Among many other considerations, the problem of climate change raises serious questions about the place of progress in

history. “However passionately we may desire the elimination of fascism,” asserts German Marxist Franz Neumann, “we cannot close our eyes to the possibility that it may not be wiped out.”<sup>40</sup> The many horrors promised by climate change, with their potentially fascist implications, may well not be prevented and averted. It is hardly inconceivable that the present course toward a climate-devastated Earth will not be arrested and radically redirected. While human history would have likely fared far better were it not subjected to events such as European colonialism, World War I, or the invention and proliferation of nuclear weapons, the fact of the matter is that such horrors did in fact come about. The “astonishment” Walter Benjamin notes in the realization that “the things we are experiencing in the 20th [or 21st] century are *still* possible” is tenable only if one subscribes to philosophical orientations that see, like Hegel, the steady march of progress in the passage of historical time.<sup>41</sup> In words written by journalist Ulrike Meinhof before her questionable collaboration with the Red Army Faction, “Recognizing that something is unreasonable does not necessarily mean it will not happen. There has already been a time in Germany when people thought ‘This can’t be true,’ and it was true, and cost millions of them their lives.”<sup>42</sup>

Adorno writes that “there is horror because there is no freedom yet.”<sup>43</sup> The Chinese Marxist economist Minqi Li is correct to note that “there is no hope whatsoever to achieve climate stabilization so long as the world is organized as a system that is based on production for profit and structured to pursue endless capital accumulation.”<sup>44</sup> Against this radical lack that characterizes the forms in which humanity

is at present entrapped nonetheless stands the chance for what French aesthetician Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls the “advent of humanity,” or what Adorno terms “a rational establishment of overall society as humankind”—a possibility that in the latter’s view “opens in the face of extinction.”<sup>45</sup> Global human society must come to “abandon blood and horror,” both as an intrinsic and instrumental end, for the “debarbarization of humanity is the immediate prerequisite for survival.”<sup>46</sup>

Fortunately for our prospects, humanity has long resisted. The revolt of the Helots against Sparta as well as the slave rebellions led by Spartacus and Toussaint L’Ouverture are in ways continued in modern times by the efforts of the Spanish anarchists, the anti-Nazi resistance, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), the Naxalites of eastern and central India, and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, among other groups and collectives. This tradition, advanced in Cancún by Anti-C@p, involves “resistance of the eye that does not want the colors of the world to fade.”<sup>47</sup> It has been continued by activists in recent years through, for example, the attempted shutdown of the city of San Francisco the day after the commencement of the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, the blockading of an Israeli air base during the July 2006 war on southern Lebanon, the “decommissioning” of an EDO MBM weapons production plant in the United Kingdom in January 2009, the direct actions to defend and liberate oppressed nonhuman animals, the antagonistic fury expressed in Greece against the state and capital in December 2008, the destruction of police stations in Egypt

and popular storming of the Israeli embassy in Cairo, and the peoples' rebellions that have gripped much of the Arab world since December 2010, in addition to the popular occupations of public space that have followed in many Western societies.

As can readily be seen through reflection on the fate to date of these revolts, though—and generally on the “failed culture” that has allowed for genocide, the possibility of nuclear warfare, and potentially catastrophic climate change—the specter of despair is far from illusory. While it is to be hoped, as Egyptian Marxist Samir Amin suggests, that the recent waves of popular revolt against oligarchy and tyranny will amount to the “autumn for capitalism and the springtime for the peoples of the South”—or that, as world-systems theorist Immanuel Wallerstein writes, the global protest movement of 2011 will carry the revolutionary “1968 current” into the future—the outcome remains uncertain.<sup>48</sup> An orthodox Marxist faith that the subordinated necessarily will be victorious in history—that the abolition of capitalism follows from “the premises now in existence”—cannot itself be justified.<sup>49</sup> On the contrary, the fear Adorno observes in Marx regarding a “relapse into barbarism” is a rational one, considering that “the relapse has already occurred.”<sup>50</sup>

In light of the problems posed by the threat of capital-induced climate destabilization, it remains clear that if humanity does not “determine itself,” it will “bring about terrestrial catastrophe.”<sup>51</sup> The dark choice presently faced by humankind, in the prognosis of Belgian Situationist Raoul Vaneigem, is that of suicide or revolution.<sup>52</sup>

Contemplation of this choice is the task of the remainder of this work, which investigates past catastrophes, synthesizes current climatological findings, and considers the question of hope for a “progress that leads out and away” from total negation.<sup>53</sup>

Against the dominion of death, it is to be the position expressed in this book, as Arendt declares beautifully in a repudiation of the philosophy advanced by her mentor Martin Heidegger, that humans, “though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin.”<sup>54</sup>