

Dyst-irony

It's not easy to harmonize your breathing to the cosmic breath, when people are suffering around you and you feel guilty in one sense or another for their pain – because you know that your job is to find a solution, a therapy, a way out – and you are unable to say what should be done.

Jackie Orr writes in *Panic Diaries*:

In an exquisite sense of contagious connectivity, paranoia is one form that a felt insistence on the social and historical structuring of psychic experience can take. Paranoia 'knows well' the resonant evidence suggesting that everything really is connected, the psyche and the power of the social, a small white pill and a wildly historical story.

In the last few decades, artistic sensibility has been paralysed by a sense of paranoid enchantment: psychic frailty, fear of precariousness and the premonition of a catastrophe that is impossible to avoid. This is why art has become so concerned with suicide and crime. This is why, very often, crime and suicide (most of all suicidal crime) have been modelled as art.

Now all this paranoia has to be disposed of. All that I have been writing of in this horrible book is already out of fashion.

Let's forget about it; let's go forward.

Dystopia has to be faced and dissolved by irony.

If paranoia 'knows well', we need a method of ignorance. We need to assume some distance from what seems to be inscribed as an imminent-immanent tendency in the present cartography of events. The spectrum of the possible is much larger than the range of probability. We need to correct dystopia with irony, because irony (far from being cynical alliance with power) is the excess of language that opens the door to the infinity of the possible.

I strongly dislike doomsayers, those gloomy prophets who want to spread the message that humanity is close to extinction and that we must all repent for our misdeeds. I have little more time for those hysterical enemies of political corruption who see conspiracies and hidden projects of evil everywhere, and absolutely want to revolutionize the world.

Frankly, I don't think that political awareness is going to prove the best medicine for our current malady. Most people know that financial dictatorship is destroying their life; the problem is knowing what to do about it. It is possible that nothing can be done, that power has become so deeply entrenched in the automatisms regulating daily life, connecting our interchanges, and infiltrating our words, that bio-financial control cannot be undone, or avoided.

So what can be done when nothing can be done?

I think that ironic autonomy is the answer. I mean the contrary of participation, I mean the contrary of responsibility, I mean the contrary of faith. Politicians call on us to take part in their political concerns, economists call on us to be responsible, to work more, to go shopping, to stimulate the market. Priests call on us to have faith. If you follow these inveiglements to participate, to be responsible – you are trapped. Do not take part in the game, do not expect any solution from politics, do not be attached to things, do not hope.

Dystopian irony (dyst-irony) is the language of autonomy.

Be sceptical: do not believe your own assumptions and predictions (or mine).

And do not revoke revolution. Revolt against power is necessary even if we may not know how to win.

Do not belong. Distinguish your destiny from the destiny of those who want to belong and to participate and to pay their debt. If they want war, be a deserter. If they are enslaved but want you to suffer like them, do not give in to their blackmail.

If you have to choose between death and slavery, don't be a slave. You have some chance to survive. If you accept slavery, you will die sooner or later anyway. As a slave.

You will die anyway; it is not particularly important when. What is important is how you live your life.

Remember that despair and joy are not incompatible. Despair is a consequence of understanding. Joy is a condition of the emotional mind. Despair is to acknowledge the truth of the present situation, but the sceptical mind knows that the only truth is shared imagination and shared projection. So do not be frightened by despair. It does not delimit the potential for joy. And joy is a condition for proving intellectual despair wrong.

Finally, don't take me too seriously. Don't take too seriously my catastrophic premonitions. And in case it is difficult to follow these prescriptions, don't take too seriously my prescriptions.

Irony is about the independence of mind from knowledge; it is about the excessive nature of the imagination.

So, at the very end: don't believe (me).