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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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14.02.2025

## High-Tech Capitalism and Neo-Feudalism



Image by Markus Spiske.

Trumpism is the new, populist, post-postmodern form of a “non-ideological ideology” redefining the relations between the State and Capitalism.

A new iteration of an oligarchy who, after shifting their political allegiance from the Democrat Party to the Republican Party, formed themselves around President Trump and his hubs of power in Mar-a-Lago, Trump Tower, and the Oval Office, in addition to the Web, as Zuckerberg and Musk as the two-popes of the digital age, where Donald Trump reigns as the “Great Twitter Communicator.”

If there were 12 of them, with a pure heart, and a pure mind bent on self-sacrificing, and Christian compassion, they could be compared to Camelot’s Knights of the Round Table,

made famous by the 12<sup>th</sup> century Arthur-Lancelot-Graal cycle of the French-Breton Romance. But since they are filthy rich and self-centered, materialist and opportunist, with a tainted heart and mind, they function more like an ideological Pretorian guard supporting and defending the new Presidential Monarch.

This oligarchy/plutocracy constitutes 0.1% of the American population. It owns 14% of the nation's wealth, \$22 trillion in stocks, bonds and real estate, while 50% of Americans own 2.4% of the national wealth (\$4 trillion). These ultra rich individuals contributed to the super PACs in favor of Trump's candidacy. Elon Musk spent more than \$200 million of his personal wealth on Donald Trump's campaign; OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, Jeff Bezos, (Amazon) and Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook and Meta) each gave \$1 million to the Inauguration Fund of President Trump.

The Super PACs form an unholy alliance between Big Money and Big Politics. In more ways than one, it can be said that MAGA was funded by GAFA—the European acronym to loop together the American multinationals shaping global consumerism (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple). A majority of the American electorate was persuaded that what is good for the ultra-rich entrepreneurs of these multinationals is good for them. [\[1\]](#)

This new configuration took the institution of the State by surprise. It comes as close as possible to a political coup, bypassing the law in many instances. This unconstitutional power grab by the tandem Trump-Musk, took most by surprise, barreling along, as it is, like a runaway train with loose cannons on board. It unwittingly and thoughtlessly imposes what it considers to be the cure to a “rotten,” “lunatic,” “Marxist,” “leftist” state of things existing within many departments of the Federal Government. The Federal agencies Donald Trump accused of harboring (without proof) rampant “abuse, waste, fraud” are gutted or suppressed. Diktats (250 Presidential decrees the first two weeks), the creation of DOGE (Department of Governmental Efficiency), the orders of an unelected, “unofficially official” oligarch (Elon Musk), were used or created ad hoc to clean and wipe-out those agencies deemed by the new political and ideological “system” to draining the Government Treasury, and/or propagating “Anti-American values.” By the same token, Trump holds in suspicion all the intellectuals and academics, lawyers and journalists, artists and Hollywood stars who profess or advertise in public liberal, democratic, or socialist ideas. He believes that, at best, their ideas of control and regulation of capitalism hold the country back, impoverishing the middle- and working-classes; at worst, they are the “inside enemy,” a 5<sup>th</sup> column helping the “outside enemy” by subverting the unity of the country, and demoralizing America by propagating anti-American values.

Elon Musk and his bevy of cost-cutters were given carte blanche, firing US federal employees, forcing them to retire, resign, or accept a buyout. Musk and his henchmen (are there any women?) work beyond governmental legality. On the one hand, what they are doing to Washington is an overhaul of the Federal Government by planning to replace many career-civil servants at mid- and top-level with new loyal employees, partisan sycophants, and political buddies, or making the old ones take an oath of obedience. On the other hand, they want to put the Government out of business, by “un-governing,” by making the big machinery of the Federal State obsolete.

The best way to get rid of a dog is to scream that it is rabid. One does not have to prove it.

Since mid-January 2025, the American people have been experiencing a mild foretaste of what the Russian people experienced when they were hit by the Easterly, socio-economic Shock-Therapy inflicted by the Chicago School of Economy’s Boys just after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. in 1991. If one thinks that this vengeful, punitive, cruel, and ultimately idiotic socio-economic “Shock and Awe” treatment of the ex- Soviet Union did not have any bearing on what happened in Russia afterwards, one is clueless. Putin’s imperialist revenge is the by-product of this historic, American-made humiliation and destruction of the economy of what was, for better or worse, a country—something the Chinese government was able to avoid.

So, these politicians for a new socio-economic policy and these megalomaniac plutocrats have to convince the American people that this huge Washingtonian apparatus is worthless, corrupt, and sinful, that the taxpayers’ money spent to run it would be better spent somewhere else. In this battle for the minds of the American electorate, all tricks are justified, even the senseless is forced to make sense. The politics of the sledgehammer is used to squash flies. These “grand liquidators” feel empowered and self-justified by decades of Republican anti-Federalist rhetoric. As Donald Trump constantly repeats, they are only doing what the American voters-taxpayers elected them to do. They are just accomplishing their mandate. The only thing they won’t touch, reform, or diminish is the military, for obvious reasons.

Their principal goal is to free as much Capital as possible from the State Ideological Apparatuses (Althusser), by suppressing and privatizing as much as possible the Government’s functions and services—even if this means destroying what the Government used to positively stand for in the minds of a large majority of the people. They want to maximize the availability of Capital for Big Tech, Big Business ventures and tax breaks for corporations and wealthy entrepreneurs, since the Reaganian trickle-down theory stands paramount in the ideology of these self-declared “benefactors” of humanity. The future

development of AI, cybernetics, and space travel will necessitate huge investments, although the Chinese DeepSeek didn't cost that much. It developed a world-class model of AI app for \$5 million. If those oligarchs could, they would totally privatize Health Care and even Social Security.

In order to convince the maximum number of voters, that this “grand deconstruction” of Government and realignment of priorities is for their own good, this new ideology of entanglement of “anarchic populism” (American Libertarianism influence) with Big Money has to conceal its ideological biases. That is to say that the new post-postmodern political discourse had to change.

Giving the word “gaslighting” a new life, Donald Trump and his political cohort started to make of denial and fantasy, the two key ingredients of their representation of reality. Associated to a perverse manipulation of what constitutes “normative reality,” gaslighting is a form of psychological abuse where a manipulator incites or induces someone to question his/her sanity, memories, or perception of reality. Gaslighted people feel confused, anxious, and unable to trust their own judgment.<sup>[2]</sup>

The 2023/24 Presidential Campaign was full of air and gaz. Donald Trump was the Great Manipulator, igniting people's passions, fueling their volcanic anger, setting their resentment on fire.

It was marked by a shameless and total reversal of the paradigms of the Symbolic system establishing a basic sense of shared reality, keeping the Imaginary in its place, without which a society cannot function in relative harmony: the false became the true, the lie was the prevailing discourse putting to shame all the others (fake news), the metonymic contamination of the larger picture by the manipulative aggrandizement of a minor detail became the real picture, etc. Authenticity, reality, veracity, accuracy, actuality, testimony, genuineness..., became the victimized signifiers of a perverse, and ultimately schizophrenic reversal of our psychic sanity.

Since this reversal is systemic and systematic, it generated like in a self-fulfilling prophecy, an accepted repetitive recourse to the political discourse of “commonsensical slogans” which then passed as “truisms”: statism means economic stagnation (decreasing citizens' standard of living); rule of law means regulations (impeding creativity, innovation, and development); governmental authority means tyranny; immigration means joblessness and insecurity; diminishing federal and state taxation means income gain; freedom means free enterprise, freedom to choose the type of education for one's children, or choosing one's

doctor; socialism means loss of freedom, higher taxes, statist regulations, government inefficiency and corruption; etc.

The national indicators for physical and mental health, suicide rates, drug addiction, longevity, child mortality, violent death, etc., showing that the American approach to social problems is very problematic, are denounced by Trump's Republicans as nasty, lying, liberal, or socialist anti-American propaganda.

This radical re-alignment between Political Power, Big Tech, and Big Government is re-defining the political relationship between the State and Capitalism—high-tech capitalism that is. It subordinates the State to its vision, interests and benefits. Already, in 1994, Esther Dyson, George Gebele, George Keyworth, and Alvin Toffler mapped the future along those same lines with *Cyberspace & the American Dream*.

What President Trump and his cronies are doing is following the blueprint of Ayn Rand's libertarian philosophy based on an objectivist "State," whereby the Federal Government becomes a genuine marketplace institution governed by the invisible hand, à la Adam Smith, and not at all a genuine "Government for all." It would be an anti-Federalist, anti-state made up of competing agencies for protection, defense, surveillance, and retaliation – in short, a "free-market anarchism" based on a strange alliance between populist leaders and the Big CEOs supposed to take care of the livelihood (consumption, jobs, etc.) of people turned into mere consumer-producers.

Making use of an ideology passing as an anti-ideology, magnified by algorithms (AI), this vindictive and activist anti-statism is streamlining the Government, controlling its administrative apparatus. The goal of this "anti-ideological ideology" is to make sure that what's left of the regulations and restraints imposed by labor laws and environmental sustainability goals, of the constraints put on digital technology (limits put on AI's development), and of what's left of the restrictions put on the speculative dimension of financial capitalism are lifted and made inoperative.

What was left of the surveillance dimension of the State in regard to the excess of capitalism is turned around and directed against the State itself.

In fact, what is deemed reactive or oppositional to this unprecedented "governmental grand liquidation," or critical of the mere unabashed development of a free techno-capitalism and the way it wants to conduct business, quickly receives the accusatory label of being "Anti-American." Since, for these pundits and deciders (President W. Bush called himself The Decider) of this new state of things, the ends justify the means: dis-information, fake news, the gross manipulation of facts, outright lies, insults and defamation, the false elevated to the

level of the “truth,” all constitute the daily staple fed to a credulous, ignorant, indifferent, disoriented crowd, or worse, a public getting off on the spectacle of abjection.

The “ends” here are the colonization and reduction of the economy and its people by the logic and effects of algorithmic digitalization, which, as in a feed-back loop, will guarantee the accumulation of power and capital within the companies of these digital masters, while assuring the future development of the digitalized economy and its people. Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man* will then become a concrete reality.

Tim Cook (Apple), Sam Altman (Open AI), Shou Zi Chen (Tik Tok), Mark Zuckerberg (Meta), Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Sundar Pichau (Google), Elon Musk (Telsa, X) are the feudal lords of this neo-feudalism. This alliance between Big Power, Big Money, and Big Tech forms a new techno-fascism, whose roots have been resting dormant in Silicon Valley for years. Since the 1960s, Ayn Rand’s objectivist philosophy and conception of pure capitalism have been working their way throughout the social body. They heavily influenced the economic and political philosophy of Silicone Valley’s entrepreneurs, techno-geeks and digital gurus. The by-products of this ultra-capitalist ideology also tainted the preconceptions and prejudices of these tech-influencers:

Cult of the performance and of competition, leading logically to the idealization of the winner, the hero, the strong; the one who has the will-power and the intelligence to make things happen, who leads society ahead economically and technologically.

Disdain for the weak, the “feminized” under-achiever, and despising the deviant, the poor, the loser, the dummy; the one unable to adapt or transform himself according the laws of survival of the fittest.

Capitalism is life. It is Nature’s vital force. There’s no Yin and Yang here. This force is masculinist—which prompted Zuckerberg to genuinely and naively declare that America and capitalism need more “masculine energy.” Reminiscent of the 1960s’ ideological strong man, à la Mike Hammer:

*“If he’s anathema out of the past, then it’s our fault. We brought a man back who should have died a long time ago. The present can’t stand a man like that anymore. Now they want indecision and compromise and reluctance and fear... and we’ve dropped a hot iron in society’s lap... he’s always been in the special-privilege class... [someone who is] a threat to a different world.”<sup>[3]</sup>*

Only the strong should lead. Wealth is their just reward. This is the American Dream à la Trusk (characterial alloy of Trump and Musk).



This nexus of techno-capitalists shares the same unapologetic belief in merit and elitism, entrepreneurial savvy and savoir-faire, opening the doors to a return to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western ideology of Anglo-Saxon obedience wrapped up in Ayn Rand's so-called "objectivism." The Russian-Jewish-American intellectual emigree's novels *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) directly inspired Kevin Roberts, head of the ultra-conservative think-tank, the Heritage Foundation. Its more directly activist branch, aptly named Heritage Action, gave birth to the (in)famous "Project 2025" in case the Republicans won the 2024 elections. "Project 2025" is a literal blueprint for the take-over, reduction, and privatization of the Federal Government, while weaponizing its Executive Branch in order to enforce the transformation of society into a genuine capitalist society.

In her writings, Rand sold the virtues of rational self-interest and individual freedom which, very naturally, would express themselves into a pure, *laissez-faire-laissez-passer* capitalist economy with a government whose only *raison d'être* would be the defense and expansion of capitalism with a population able and entitled to make free choices according to their personal interests. Although in Thoreau's *Walden* have the freedom to live the way they chose, they exist in a de-institutionalized state, where the government does "*govern not at all.*"

Nurtured by the same nexus of cognitivism, evolutionary anthropology, behaviorism, sociobiology, and the scientific, physical materialist explanations of Nature and man (genetics, electro-chemistry of the brain, etc.) the American society is witnessing a return of Spenserian socio-Darwinism, of the survival of the fittest-type of ideology, of eugenics (with its racialism—and racism for the most extreme advocates of this populist-capitalist alliance). Perhaps, when students, they read, uncritically, Plato's *Republic* promoting a society directed by an aristocracy based on intellectual and ethical merit and governing over a population divided, according to the ability of its members, into carefully designed and permanent classes, where marriages would be arranged genetically.

Elon Musk (a South African) and Paul Thiel (who spent time in South Africa) at one point or the other have expressed their belief in the genetic (?) inadequacy of Black Africans for capitalism. Donald Trump himself has been known to make crude, racist statements, as well as dismissing many African countries as "shithole countries." Trump has even proposed the idea of taking in White South Africans "suffering from discrimination," while deporting illegal Latino immigrants supposed to be rapist, criminals, drug-addicts, mentally ill— all animals unworthy of being called humans and of becoming Americans.

This ideological behavior and discourse announces the return of a certain form of the “Master/Slave dialectic” without dialectics.

A new form of feudalism is therefore shaping itself; a techno-feudalism using populism as a prop. It claims to be anti-ideological or non-ideological, when in fact Trumpism is very ideological. President Trump hides the ideological side of his political movement by claiming that its ingredients are common sense, traditional American values, liberty and nativism.

Big Tech, Big Money, Big power.

This techno-capitalist neo-feudalism, like the Medieval form of feudalism, will be based on allegiance streamlining a social pyramid. Oaths, vows, and troths of faithful obedience and loyalty by technocrats, devoted work by a subservient and obedient workforce of engineers and technicians, and a de-unionized or un-unionized labor, etc. will form the new social order. No wonder the Presidential candidate expressed his desire to be surrounded by obedient and faithful German army generals, the way Hitler was. If, per chance, the chosen peer fails to his or her mandate (the conservative journalist Megyn Kelly, Vice-President Mike Pence...) the “wrath of God” descends upon the poor recalcitrant.

Religion is no longer the unifying glue of this new form of feudalism.

The amalgamating force of society is now constituted, on one hand, by a nexus of consumerism, high-tech, digitalized communication, artificial intelligence, Meta verse and hyper-real or hyper-virtual spectacles, and, in the near future, cybernetics (robots and androids). On the other hand, on the affective side, the new social order is cemented by nativism and a fear/hatred or mistrust of the foreign other (immigrants or foreign countries), since the other’s jouissance is threatening to undermine the jouissance of the nativist citizen-producer-consumer.

“Truskist” (Trump/Musk) Republican’s post-postmodern brand of neo-conservatism corresponds to the abandonment of the neo-liberal type of democracy which has fulfilled its function since WWII. It accompanied the transformation of capital from an extractive and agrarian-type of economy into an industrial, and then, in the 1980s into a globally consumerist and financial type of capitalism with a welfare state as a buffer against the negative spin-offs of capitalism’s contradictions.

Whereas capitalism used to plug its machinery into human desires, now capitalism has become desire itself. The French/Continental Theory so many neo-positivists and cognitivists passionately dislike offers crucial analysis of what is going on today with the uncanny alliance capitalism- high-technology-populism.



“Capitalism is an unmediated desire, or abstract machine. A society actualizing that desire can be conceptualized as a particular mix between fascism-paranoia and anarchy-schizophrenia (tending strongly toward the latter)... It is the coming out of capital, a new golden age of greed that dares to say its name. Without a wince, Capitalism no longer has to justify itself. It no longer has to hide behind fascist-paranoid quasicauses and argue that it serves the common good. It can dispense with belief in and good sense, because it is now stronger than molarity, and stronger than the ideologies that help to reproduce it. The men who personify it—the Donald Trumps and Michael Milken of the world—do not so much represent an ideological cause as embody a desire. An abstract desire, a mania for accumulating numerical quantities. Possessing things is understandable from the moral-molar point of view, as is wanting to accumulate capital for what it can buy in the way of time, things, and activities. But to accumulate more than anyone could ever spend? And then keep on accumulating greater and greater sums, with no other interest or aim in life? That is beyond good and evil. The neoconservative capitalist is defined less by what he possesses than by what possesses him. He is the personification of a mode of irrationality... It is superabstract.”<sup>[4]</sup>

The coming-out of post-postmodern capital “surfaces as a fatal attractor whose operational arena is immediately coextensive with the social field.”<sup>[5]</sup>

The sky’s the limit of this grand, new re-ordering of things. There used to be a “catch-sentence” symbolizing the expansion of America: “Go West! Young Man!” Elon Musk has changed it into “Let’s Go to Mars!” Perhaps these oligarchs should follow his injunction and build their Xanadu on the Red Planet.

## NOTES

1. (French and European legal acronym for the four most powerful American multinational companies, Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon). ↑
2. The term comes from George Cukor’s *Gaslight* (1944) where a greedy and sadistic Charles Boyer works on Ingrid Bergman (his wife) to send her over the edge into sanity. ↑
3. Mickey Spillane. *The Snake*. Signet. New York: 1964. 16, 19. ↑
4. Brian Massumi. *Monstrosity in A user’s guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*. MIT Press. Cambridge: 1993. 151. ↑
5. Idem. 152. ↑

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FEBRUARY 13, 2025