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DESPAIRIMENTALIST MANIFESTO

HL Hix

1. The despairimentalist does all that can be done about what nothing can be done about.

Despairiment makes nothing happen. In uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, despairiment despairimentably reaches after fact and reason. And justice. The despairimentalist recognises as delusional the equation *despairiment is as despairiment does*, in a world where intention and outcome prove often dissonant, action and effect disproportionate, decision and result dissimilar.

2. Nothing can be done about despairiment. *Homo is homini lupus* not coincidentally but inevitably, not accidentally but essentially. Despairiment happens. Microaggressions come not single spies but in battalions. Injustices are serial because injustice is systematic. Violences (misogyny, racism, colonialism ...) are manifold because violence is structural.

3. Nothing can be done about despairity. It's not just that how things are *has not yet been made to match* how things ought to be, but that the two *can't match*. It's not a contingent fact that the real differs from the ideal; it's a necessary fact. If despairiment is the proximate cause of despairiment, despairity is the ultimate cause.

4. Despairimentalists are made, not born. Despairiment is not a free-floating disposition, but is *occasioned* and *conditioned*. One turns despairimental at a point in one's life (at the moment, say, of recognising that one's work has come to nothing) and in response to changed conditions (as when one's nation elects an autocrat, and that self-inflicted national wound goes gangrenous).

5. Despairimentalism happens. Because despairiment is occasioned, every despairimentalist has an origin story. To each her own *eureka*. Mine: a poet friend, writing during a time of political crisis, ended an email by declaring 'I am feeling experimental', and asking 'How are you?' I thought: I am feeling despairimental. We *should* feel despairimental. We should *be* despairimental.

6. A despairimentalist is a person; *the* despairimentalist is a figure. Johannes de Silentio's knight of infinite resignation recognises the futility of his desire, but still performs it normatively. Sara Ahmed's affect alien inhabits the 'gap between the promise of happiness and how you are affected by objects that promise happiness'. To note only two of the figure's other names.

7. Despairimenters oppose and are opposed by despairimenters. The despairimentalist's antagonist, the despairimer, also is a figure, with various names: tyrant, bigot, chauvinist ... A despairimer works *within* Hobbes's state of nature; a despairimerter works *against* it. Despairimerter Antigone opposed despairimer Creon. Despairimerter Hamlet was opposed by despairimer

Claudius. Maggie Tulliver/Tom Tulliver, Sethe/Schoolteacher, Offred/the Commander, ...

8. Despairimentalism opposes and is opposed by despairitedness. In the face of despairagement and despairity, it is tempting, possibly even sensible, to become despairited. The despairimentalist doesn't. What does not acquiesce to despairitedness is despairimental.

9. The history of despairiment is written in disappearing ink. The despairimentalist has learned from history that we do not learn from history, which repeatedly dooms us, so the story of despairimentalism can be told only despairimentally. A despairimental manifesto would be written under erasure, and this would-be manifesto is. Despairiment can only be despairimeant.

10. Despairiment does not lend itself to definition. What Wittgenstein observes about games applies also to despairiment: no one feature is common to all instances, but various family resemblances are distributed across instances. The insusceptibility of 'game' to definition does not impede playing; the insusceptibility of 'despairiment' does not preclude despairimentation.

11. Despairiment hopes to hope. As the frame of a painting is a parergon, a work that is and isn't the work, despairiment is a paresperant, a hope that is and isn't hope. Despairiment is second-order hope. As a smoker has not the first-order desire to quit, but the second-order desire to desire to quit, so the despairimentalist does not hope, but does hope to hope.

12. Despairiment is a state, not a feeling. In this it resembles health: I might *feel* healthy, unaware that the cancer that will kill me is already advanced, or I might be a hypochondriac, always *feeling* sick even when I am not. But *health* names the condition, whether or not the feeling matches it. So, too, with despairiment.

13. Despairimenters learn from despairimentors. Like other virtues and dispositions, despairimentalism wants refinement, one means toward which is despairimentorship: securing counsel from, and modeling oneself after, exemplars. Despairimentors are everywhere. In deep history (Socrates, Francis of Assisi), modern history (Sojourner Truth, Simone Weil), recent history (Steve Biko, Riverbend), and our own day (Rigoberta Menchú, Ai Weiwei).

14. Despairiment quia absurdum est. Despairimentalism does not resolve contradiction but orients the despairimentalist within contradiction, does not solve a problem but attends to mystery, tenders not the security of dogma but the provisionality of paradox.

15. Despairimentalists of the world, unite! Not thinking you can end despairagement, not believing you can overcome despairity, but knowing full well that you can't. Not secure in conviction or to secure victory, but as a despairiment.

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