

Signs of Invasion

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: *Are you OK?*

I'd like to say that I am but OK can mean many things. It rarely signals something good. There are probably more stories about the origin of the word than there are uses for it. A quick search tells me it derives from 'oll korreckt' a misspelling of 'all correct,' a kind of satisfactory or acceptable quality suggesting things are alright. However, in common vernacular it carries connotations of something rather nondescript, we tend to use it to signify quite the opposite; a state of desolate dasein. The more interesting but less probable explanation tells me it derives from Civil War soldiers carrying signs for "zero killed" upon returning from battle, making it a misreading of 0 K. Presumably bearing no casualties, returning troops would surface from the distance, signaling a heroic victory with fluttering flags that would spell "0 K." on the horizon. Their gallant gallop invades my mind and my thoughts easily wander off to join their crusade.

At first there is darkness. A speck of light unfolds a line into a surface, the surface lends itself as an actionable space between two ends. Their relation spells out a political dimension that sets a potential for conflict in motion. The board of the game is now laid down and strategy, skill, chance and luck will continue to choreograph and twist the fate of its players. Each new march into battle stomps the surface further into a sphere, every victory leaves a battlefield behind and a future frontline is projected closer towards the horizon. These are the basic mechanisms of quest and conquest.

Paradoxically, as such the line projected in the distance will remain unconquerable: approach it and it shall evade you. This is partly due to the earth's curvature and rotation but also because the horizon is a shared imaginary, it's a borrowed ground of fictitious firmness. No matter what position we assume, everything that lies beyond the horizon is eternally silent and forever sunk in gloom. But the human desire to articulate its surroundings will hold out to any threat and challenge every such seeming impossibility. Tools and instruments were built to rival the muteness of that lies on the other side of silence. Extensions of the human voice enabled a technology of pipes, valves and bells to indicate power, launch invasions and trespass territory well beyond the limitations of our eyesight. The kick of the boot is now foreshadowed by the toot of a trumpet, the blow of a horn and bang of a drum. As the impulse to map bloomed it made things appear distinguishable and in sight. Hence, vision was to become factual, strategies calculable and invasions probable. Such linear distribution of the sensible turned surfaces into sights, rebuilt sights into spaces, transformed spaces into barriers, reshuffled barriers into barricades and converted barricades into bulwarks that have come to shape our borders. Further fortifications separated soldiers from citizens, sundered citizens from societies, splintered societies from formations eventually coercing them into nations. Each time anew, when our eyes mistake depth for distance the opposite of remembrance starts taking place.

It is hard to harbor depth and dimensionality on a linear timeline that is already indexed on separation, partial observation and endless fragmentation. The linear perspective is per definition a subjective worldview that centers on the individual's eyes; giving away the dangerously seductive illusion that the world belongs to the human, rather than the other way around. Since it's also finite in its capacity and

always already evading, the impulse to map and conquer will eventually reach full expansion and start moving upwards. Horizontal perspectives will stack further skyward to form fertile grounds for future ideologies, they'll serve as rooftops for repressions, amalgamate into strata of further strife and conflict, gradually towering into a thousand plateaus of ever-waning possibilities. The sky is narrowed down until it finally bends over it's own weightiness, breaking loose an elusive new paradigm of metric verticality that we seem to inhabit today.

The dominance of the previously outlined linear perspectives of orientation and visibility are now challenged by a technologized, disembodied regime of remote-controlled and omnipresent supervision from high up. With the implementation of satellite bird's-eye-views and the ubiquitous rise of aerial tracking and surveillance devices, we have little choice but to surrender to the all-knowing gaze from above. Military, surveillance and entertainment technologies now trespass the limits of our senses; fleeing is futile. Watchful skies now gauge the game, they twist the rules and bend the lines.

Frontlines no longer cut through the middle of societies, they now run through the middle of us; piercing us head to toe, from up above to down below. Watch as the roof above your head becomes the floorboard for a new automated and unmanned technology that will make itself imperceptible to you. With it, a sense of shared horizon disintegrates into new augmented zones of targeted policing and individualized control. Former worldviews are yanked out their axis, dismantled, tilted and repurposed to fit a new panoptic paradigm of permanent capture. Age-old traditions are ripped apart and notions of sense-making are flushed down the drain, unleashing a wave of uncertainty, disorientation and fear on the ground. Comprehension tumbles down and relinquishes into a point of absolute zero and no return. O.K. now, if anything, stands for a thermodynamic state of immovable futures, complete stasis and frozen time.

From above all life is territory; shared spaces become divisible, behaviors manageable and everything but the present -- predictable. Strata evaporate into data projecting new signs of invasion that are everywhere: alarming, absolute, boundless, worldwide and impossible to decipher. They take shape where we cannot see, go where the ear can't hear and move in directions the tongue won't twist.

But invasions are not yet occupations. The bird's eye also strips us from personhood, from the captivating constraints of subjectivity and all its separations. For the bird that flocks in the sky, we are not just subjects on a surface, we *are* the surface and in so being, we are one.

War will continue to soldier my mind -- but there is no need to go into that. The breeze brings a morning sky of endless blue. I narrow my eyes and tilt my head sideways to watch the day break and the birds fly by. One ear down and one facing the sky, I prepare to greet more than meets the eye.

: Yeah, I'm OK.

Everything is going to be alright.

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