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Tony Fry

Political Breakout

Situation, Need, Action

POLITICAL IMAGINARIES: NEW IMPERATIVES

Tony Fry's "Political Breakout" strikes like a hammer; it shatters the political paradigms, technocratic illusions, and the cult of ongoing progress, the brittle idols of our time. This book speaks to those willing to stare into the abyss of current crises, confront existential challenges, and find the strength to create anew. Fry calls for rejecting the slavish comforts yet destructive habitus of political thought and action that perpetuates the negation of humanity's futures. Instead, he advocates for creating a pragmatic vision—a geometry of change—to address the compound of interconnected crises that shape our epoch. "Political Breakout" dares readers to embrace the dangerous yet exhilarating task of re-imagining the world so there can be a future world. At its core, Fry's work is a 'Dionysian' affirmation of life amidst profound crises, embodying an act of will that seeks to overcome, rather than simply endure, our current precarious conditions of being.

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About the author

Tony Fry has led/worked on projects in Australia, the Americas, Asia, and Europe and has won a number of national and international design awards in the area of urban design. He has held visiting academic positions in the Americas and in Asia. As a Professor of Design at Griffith University, Brisbane (2008-2014), he led an AusAID-funded post-conflict material culture recovery research project in Timor-Leste (2008-2012). Since 2015, Tony has also worked on projects in Colombia. He has curated numerous exhibitions and produced major multi-media events. As an author of over twenty books, his most recent are: 'Unstaging War, Confronting Conflict and Peace' (Palgrave/Macmillan, 2019), 'Defuturing, A New Design Philosophy' (reprint of 1999 book – Bloomsbury, 2020), 'A New Political Imagination: Making the Case with Madina Tlostanova' (Routledge, 2021), 'Writing Design Fiction: Relocation a City in Crisis' (Bloomsbury), 2021. He has also published two novels.

Summary

The book is totally preoccupied with thinking beyond existing political thought and institutions. It recognizes that irrespective of who or where we are, and no matter if we know it or not, "we" now all live in "the end times." Most explicitly, this moment is expressed by evolutionary biology, making clear that planetary life is at the start of the sixth extinction event – a situation indivisible from climate change impacts. The already unstable geopolitical "state of the world" and its dangers will amplify the coming eco-environmental conditions, resulting in population displacement, resource stress, critical conditions of food security, and conflict. Globally, across all political ideologies, existing institutional politics demonstrate an incapability of responding to these situations. There is an evident temporal disjuncture between how extant politics is positioned in time and the moment of an ever-accelerating end times. Effectively, political institutions, their theory and practice, are out-of-step with terminal speeding "defuturing" events. As the book makes clear, this situation needs to be fully recognised. At the same time, there are visions and political positions presenting themselves as directing what will come after the end times. Viewing these positions indicates that the future will be plural and contested. In one direction, technology and corporations will become even more powerful (as a critique of the literature on "accelerationism" shows). But at the other extreme, a huge swathe of displaced humanity is almost certain to be abandoned.

In the face of these prospects, new political thinking and practices are essential. But this will not come from the existing political paradigm. Such change needs a new political imagination. Responding to this need is a primary focus of the book. To do this, the influence of Spinoza on political imagination provides a key point of engagement and departure.

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Tony Fry & Madina Tlostanova

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