



Sloterdijk proposes to go beyond resentment (to transform current capitalism to gift-giving motivational type of system in order to achieve self-esteem and provide it to others and to everything) as the solution to the constant world history of paranoia and revenge. That, or repeating the old, the same, and the criminal! Nietzsche's hopes about it (overmen) is a cession to modernity (another great narrative, yet another ultimate kind of the will to power, or freedom) and is contrary to his main idea of eternal recurrence of the same, so I'm less optimistic.

Sloterdijk outlines the contours of capitalism's division into itself, of its immanent self-overcoming: capitalism culminates when it "creates from itself its own most radical—and the only fruitful—opposite, totally different from what the classical left, trapped in his wretchedness, he was capable of dreaming». His positive mention of Andrew Carnegie shows the way: the gesture of sovereign self-denial of the endless accumulation of wealth is to spend that wealth on things beyond price and outside the circulation of the market: the arts and sciences, public health, etc. This conclusive "sovereign" gesture allows the capitalist to break the vicious circle of ever-expanding reproduction, of making money to make more money. When he donates his accumulated wealth to the common good, the capitalist denies himself as the simple personification of capital and its reproductive circulation: his life takes on meaning. The incessant reproduction is no longer taken as an end in itself. Furthermore, the capitalist makes the shift from eros to thymos, from the perverted "erotic" logic of accumulation to public recognition and fame. This amounts, no more and no less, to the elevation of characters like Soros or Gates to personifications of the inherent self-denial of the capitalist process itself: their charitable work – in the form of huge donations for public welfare – is not a personal idiosyncrasy. Whether sincere or hypocritical, it is the logical end point of capitalist circulation, necessary from a strictly economic point of view, since it allows the capitalist system to postpone its crisis. It restores the balance – some kind of redistribution of wealth among the truly needy – without falling into a fateful trap, the destructive logic of resentment and state-imposed redistribution of wealth, which can only end in widespread misery. It also avoids, one might add, the other usual way of restoring some kind of balance and reasserting the thymos through sovereign spending, namely war. This paradox points to a sad situation of ours: contemporary capitalism cannot reproduce itself by itself. It needs extra-economic injections of charity to sustain the cycle of social reproduction. The proximity of Sloterdijk and Van Parijs cannot but attract attention; from opposite extremes they both arrive at the same practical conclusion; both claim to justify capitalism by making it serve the social-democratic welfare state.

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Sloterdijk proposes in *Zorn und Zeit* an interesting critical reading of Lacan: Freud's central weakness is his exclusive focus on eros, which makes him unable to account for the struggles of the thymos (the death drive, created to explain this, fails miserably); to make up for Freud's weakness, Lacan "thymotizes" eros itself (reinterpreting Freud through Kojève's Hegel: desire is always also a desire for recognition, its full realization is the recognition of

desire, etc.), but then the specificity of the erotic is lost.

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With the figure of Thymos set against the psycho-analytical focus on Eros, anger, for Sloterdijk, is not only a vent for frustrated desires, but also, and rather, a reactive manifestation of offended pride. Yet, and in the tradition of both Sloterdijk's earlier (1985) novel on the birth of psychoanalysis and of his critical study of psychoanalysis in the first volume of *Spheres* (1998, p. 297), Sloterdijk does not *per se* negate the merits of psychoanalysis for an understanding of the affective realm of human existence. Rather, Sloterdijk's critique focuses on the limitations of the libido-centrist psychoanalytical vocabulary and thinking.

In conformity with its basic erotodynamic approach, psychoanalysis brought much hatred to light, the other side of love. Psychoanalysis managed to show that hating means to be bound by similar laws as loving. Both hating and loving are projections that are subject to repetitive compulsion. Psychoanalysis remained for the most part silent when it came to that form of rage that springs from the striving for success, prestige, self-respect, and their backlashes.

As we move from the ancient Hellenistic to the monotheistic Judaic world, the politico-religious coding of rage is fundamentally altered, as Sloterdijk shows in the second section of his analysis. In the Jewish faith, the angry hero becomes the metaphysical, wrathful God. Rage is thus conceived as the exclusive privilege of God, the very condition of his absolute sovereignty and power, which is directed in punitive form against his own people or against his chosen people's enemies. As Sloterdijk subsequently shows, this cosmology of wrath of the Old Testament undergoes another set of structural changes in the medieval rage-conception of Catholic teaching, based on the double process of the earthly demonisation and of the metaphysical suspension of rage.

For example, in *Critique of Cynical Reason*, Sloterdijk addresses this problematic through the notion of 'cynicism', as a diffuse, generalised attitude of discontent, following the loss of the great ideals and truths of older cultures. In *Spheres*, this theme emerges somewhat reformulated, in the opposition between the globalising spatialities of classical holistic thought and the foam-like spatialities of modernity. With *Rage and Time*, Sloterdijk further pursues this investigation through the discussion of the contrasting politics of anger in the past and present world.

This individualist-capitalist approach to rage is further explored in the last section of *Rage and Time*, referring to the contemporary world of mass culture and consumerism, which is interpreted by Sloterdijk as a general transformation of rage-dynamic into greed-dynamic and lust-dynamic systems. Sloterdijk argues that in the aftermath of the Western rage-projects in their red, white, and brown colours, the figures of the resolute warrior and the prolific mother are substituted by the ambitious lover and the luxury consumer.

Yet, if consumerism conceals and redirects individual, pent-up rage towards new civic duties of enjoyment and desire, it also creates an explosive 'multiegoistic situation', which is deeply shaped by rather unarticulated and unregulated manifestations of disappointed rage communities. Pointing to the remarkable lack of political collection and administration of the thymiotic energies erupting in the 2005 French riots, the contemporary world, for Sloterdijk, is also a world of multiple decentralised movements of disoriented rage-holders. It is in a sense a postmodern world, in which no theory or project of global meaning prevails as a unitary mediator for the suspension, accumulation, management, and goal-directed increase in value of entrusted, individual rage investments.

On the last fifteen pages of *Rage and Time*, Sloterdijk asserts the potential of political Islam – based on its missionary dynamism, battle-centred cosmology and demographic strength – as an alternative 'World Bank of Rage' in the contemporary sociopolitical context. On the one hand, Sloterdijk acknowledges the actual and future power of political Islam to reunite parts of the disappointed Muslim world; on the other hand, he questions the ability of political Islam's creative forces to develop an alternative oppositional movement of global meaning to the current capitalist mode of existence. In this, Sloterdijk stresses the current technological, economic, and scientific shortcomings of political Islam and thus its general limits in creatively shaping the socioeconomic conditions of humanity in the 21st century. Sloterdijk's reading of political Islam thus focuses more on its high-risk potential in the form of intensified Muslim civil wars, or further amplified conflicts with Israel, than on its oppositional role within the Western world itself.

However, whilst Sloterdijk's analysis of communist and Judeo-Christian anger-semiotics expands on a broad body of historicocultural insights, the investigation of current mediations of anger in the Middle Eastern world and in the context of post-9/11 Western politics appears to have been somewhat slighted. Readers of *Rage and Time* may search in vain for a more profound analysis of the differences and parallels between the historical and the

contemporary sociopolitical coding of anger and revenge, which could have resulted in a more substantial prospective examination of the upcoming sociopolitical challenges in the 21st century. In this light, Sloterdijk's open-ended conclusive consent of a general need for a morally based "education program" and a "great politics" of "balancing acts"

Sloterdijk argues that our age is doomed because of our inability to understand and address our rage. He turns our attention back to Plato's account of *thymos* (all too briefly) as an integral part of our soul and of our society. Contemporary society, by contrast, has either relegated our spirit and its rage to political incorrectness or else appealed to rage in unfortunate and often destructive ways. Along the way, Sloterdijk offers glosses on Marxism, capitalism, psychoanalysis, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. He frames each of these movements in terms of what he terms their "thymotic" aspects. His accounts are irreverent, often interesting, playful, perhaps dangerously misleading, and worst of all obstructive of real critique.

Kinda misses the polemic nature of Sloterdijk's work, which takes as its model Nietzsche's *Gedankenexperiment*, [*The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*](#) (1872). As a lapsed [?] Heideggerian, Sloterdijk would, of course, think polemic in the sense of *polemos*, i.e. *Auseinandersetzung* (lit. conflict, conversation, analysis), a.k.a. difference, that "setting apart from one another that serves essentially to bring together, a contest that unites" (Heidegger, *Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Art* [231](#)).