

Withdrawal & Re-Entry

Alone in Mass Society

John Zerzan

2020

Maybe the best single word that describes things today is withdrawal.

From less sexual intimacy to NASCAR attendance, there's just little interest. Clubs are closing as people retreat further into their little screens. When people go out, they are so very likely to be at their tables on their phones. Might as well be at home on the couch. (As obesity rates shoot up in an ever more sedentary culture.)

We do less socializing, have fewer friends. At anarchist websites almost the only one who posts is "anon." The technosphere means more trolling, less human connection.

More and more is delivered to one's door. Even the act of shopping is physically curtailed. Everything is available online, even cars.

Hikikomori, a Japanese withdrawal phenomenon around for decades now, means that over a million, mostly young, take to their rooms and may never come out.

In their "The Development of Shyness and Social Withdrawal" study, Rubin and Coptan refer to "a veritable explosion of research into...social withdrawal in childhood" since the 1990s. The withdrawal phenomenon has been that pronounced. About 20 years ago, Michel Houellebecq's breakout novel, *The Elementary Particles*, depicted a world devoid of energy or hope. Like elementary particles in physics, individuals are separate and alone. Fashion models' faces, women and men, are sullen or blank. Nobody home.

The unfolding catastrophe of the physical world and its flip-side, social existence, are equally imperiled, caught in the same totalizing reality. Mass shootings and rising suicide rates are not only spectacular forms of withdrawal, they speak loudly as to the very nature of society in late civilization.

It is the totality that accounts for the ongoing, accelerating disaster. Every civilization so far has failed. Now, there's a unitary, global civilization that is visibly, grandly failing that threatens to take all life with it.

The liberal politics of vote-for-Bernie and the leftist antifa obsession each miss the point horribly. The reality is there for all to see. It is a cold epoch of withdrawal, but conceivably the hibernation will end. That may be when we are able to come to grips with the real depth of the engulfing crisis.

John Zerzan writes frequently for the *Fifth Estate*. He lives in Eugene, Ore. where he has a weekly radio show.

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