

## Towards a critique of fossil reason

Like no other substance, petroleum has determined the fortune of humankind in the 20th century—as an energy source and as a molecular construction kit for the paradigmatic compounds of modernity: fuels, pharmaceuticals and plastics in all their variations and subsequent physical and mental conditions. Modern politics and social systems, economics and life styles have mutually developed with the extraction, the trade, the transformations, the use, and, above all, the combustion of oil and its derivatives.

Not only the material but also the immaterial standards of the current epoch have been emerging under the preconditions of a continuous flow of fossil energy and fossil materialities. This fossil regime is not external to us. It goes right through us. That is the point of departure for a new project of critique. Our fuels contribute to the formulation of our thoughts. We are not just, following Darwin, relatives of monkeys and bacteria, and, following Freud, prisoners of unreflected traumata, we are also guided by a black drug which conditions our perspectives on the world.

A critique of fossil reason must focus on both forms of knowledge and ways of action, never forgetting that the means of critique derive also from the object of its critique. The sublime and the banal, potency and impotence, knowledge and destruction of nature, obfuscation and elucidation, growth and disintegration, beauty and horror stand on an equal footing. We are convinced that only by acknowledging the profound inconsistencies and ambiguities of the landscapes, processes, techniques, peoples and biota of the petrol age, reasonable, realistic and responsible courses of action for the advancing from the current condition can be developed.

The research collective Beauty of Oil wants to contribute to this groundwork.

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