

# Chapman Pincher's 'Not With a Bang' and Coronavirus

by [Pedro Blas González](#) (May 2020)



*Three Faces with Venus (The Hollow Men?)*, Joseph Donaldson, 1979

*This is the way the world ends*

*Not with a bang but a whimper.*

–T. S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men*

In “The Hollow Men” T.S. Eliot offers the reader a dire warning about the reign of spiritually hollow people. Spiritually dead is another appropriate way to think of the people described in Eliot’s poem.

Eliot suggests that hollow men have ushered in a morally exhaustive and meaning–draining era; a revelatory and unprecedented moment that squeezes spiritual thesis and cultural anthesis with the claws of a synthesis that delivers man to a formless kingdom is at hand.

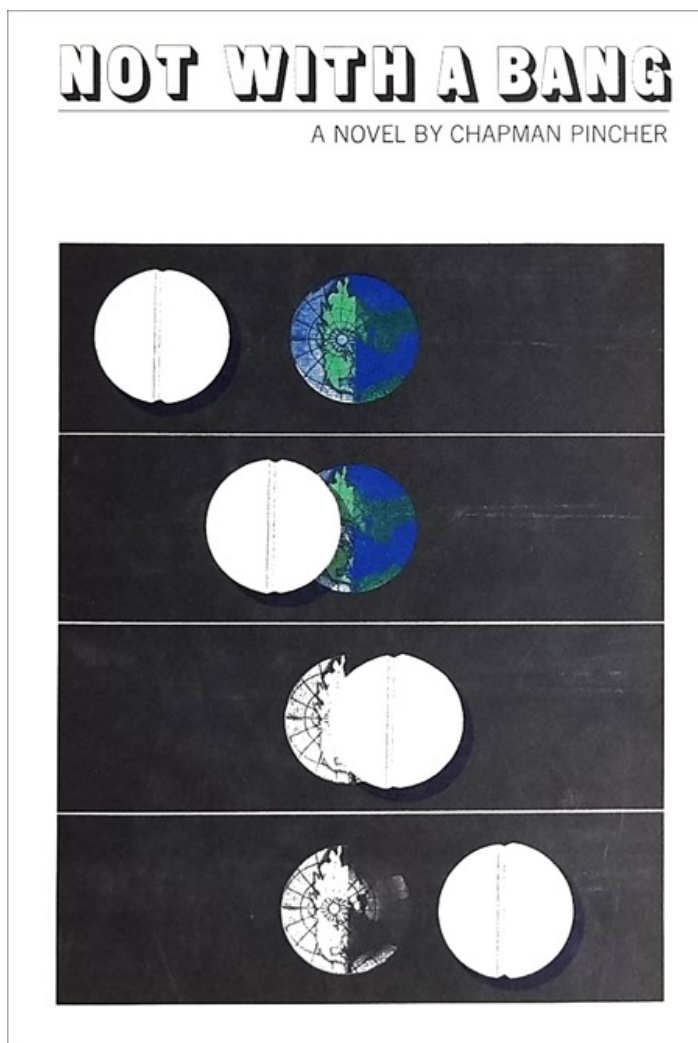
However, unprecedented does not mean unpredictable. The prescience of Eliot’s ominous foresight is that the future of hollow men is as debilitating for individuals as it is for society and civilization.

**What meaning can “the end of the world” have for hollow men?**

*Not With a Bang* is a dystopian novel by Chapman Pincher. Pincher is best known as a non-fiction writer of communism’s influence on Western democracies, through espionage and

elaborate disinformation campaigns. His books include *Their Trade is Treachery* and *Too Secret, Too Long*. Pincher also published five novels.

As dystopian novels go, *Not With a Bang* is an exemplary work that has little to envy the best novels in that genre. The novel's title refers to T.S. Eliot's poem.



*Not With a Bang* is a work of imagination that couples piercing knowledge of cultural, social/political reality with psychological perspicuity. It is a work for thoughtful readers. The novel fuses elements of postmodern moral relativism, blind embrace of scientism as a cure-all for existential longing, and how these elements are manipulated by the all-engulfing talons of communist totalitarianism and its many Western progressive variants.

*Not With a Bang* was published in 1965. Because it is such a forward-looking work about medical advancements, technology and postmodern moral decay, the main themes of the novel describe postmodern man's predicament in a manner that only a handful of cultural commentators can match today.

The book offers readers in our time a massive dose of much needed perspective through the lens of historical and temporal distance and vexes postmodern readers about the dismal moral/spiritual crisis that defines how we live, but which few people suspect.

Pincher's penchant for understanding human nature—reminiscent of Nietzsche—affords him the clarity to extrapolate the effects of the decay of values into the future. This is the opposite of predicting the future, though, which is so prevalent in many works of fantastical science fiction.

Instead, Pincher conceives a moral/spiritual Bell Curve that delivers thoughtful people to a reasonable account of postmodern man in the world of the future. He achieves this not by embracing scientism, ideological radicalism or even science, but by reflecting on philosophical anthropology, which consistently demonstrates how the past molds the future. Pincher explores the question: What is man? He cites man's moral/spiritual past as a model to understand the present and near future. We are the future that *Not With a Bang* describes.

Consider the relevance of other dystopian novels to our own time. In 1924 the Russian writer Yevgeny Zamyatin published

*We*, a novel about a world of coerced conformity that is united through a totalitarian world state. In 1949, George Orwell came out with *Nineteen Eighty-Four: A Novel*, best known as *1984*. Orwell alerts readers to the danger of “Big Brother,” “doublethink,” and “thoughtcrime.” How relevant are these terms today? In *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley calls our attention to a future world of conditioning and psychological manipulation.

Pincher’s historical and cultural acuity enabled him to fast-forward these dystopian aberrations further into the foreseeable future. *Not With a Bang* follows the trajectory of hedonism’s incessant progressive overreach of the pleasure principle. Happiness is achieved via an anti-aging vaccine, much like the Murti-Bing pill in Stanislaw Witkiewicz’s 1930 novel, *Insatiability*, which castrates man’s ability for independent thinking, after communist China invades Poland.

Dystopian novels that shy away from man’s real-world predicament merely spawn sophomoric tales of the fantastic. Pincher shows how communism’s double-dealing and double-morality is lethal, especially when accepted at face value by unsuspecting Western democracies.

### **Cure-all Medical Technology**

*Not With a Bang* is about a form of medical technology that traps man in the false hope that medical advancement will assuage the pangs of aging, the apparent burden of free will in postmodernity, and temperance that accepts death as a necessary by-product of life.

Man's hope is provided by a new drug called SP47. The drug is used on a young boy with progeria (Hutchinson-Gilford syndrome, HGPS), a degenerative disease that accelerates the aging process in children. The drug works so well that its creator and his assistant start taking it in order to become younger. The temptation of eternal Earthly life proves too alluring to ignore. Self-serving avarice wins the day; the race to defeat physical death is on, as people throughout the world scamper for the drug. As word gets out about the wonder-drug, members of Parliament and other elites begin to solicit the creator of the drug.

The drug becomes an elixir of pleasure, a twentieth century fountain of youth. Soon after the SP47 is made available, the problems of this new medical advancement become a lasting staple of the new paradigm that the drug brings about.

Predictably, a wonder drug that makes older people appear younger and young people not age has wide-ranging appeal. The trouble is that because people are living longer, few people find it necessary to retire. This keeps young people out of the workforce. Yet this is only one of the nasty social/political unintended consequences of the drug. Others are equally nightmarish. An explosion in the number of divorces and dysfunctional families is another.

"It's not science, it's discontent that's the root origin of civilized progress," he argued. "Science is only an expression of curiosity, and it wasn't curiosity that drove men out of caves: it was discontent. Apes have curiosity. If they had discontent, they wouldn't still be stuck in trees." [\[1\]](#)

## **Dystopian Avarice**

Dystopian novels test the limits of human avarice. They achieve this in several ways. However, avarice should not be confused with the overused and abused word: greed. Overuse of words makes them trite, cliché . . . useless. Words that make-up the holy pantheon of secular moral affectation are good examples of the aforementioned.

Greed, we ought to remember, is one of the seven cardinal sins. Greed is one of the deadly sins because it spurs further immorality. Ultimately, greed signals a profound dissatisfaction, not so much with the social/political status-quo, but with the human condition. These two are different aspects of man, which in turn demand a different psyche.

Dystopian novels attempt to usurp man's limited and humble moral resources—think about the cardinal virtues—and exhaust their fragile nature by turning them into fodder for social/political alleged innovation. This often serves as a source of calculated intellectual violence.

## **Violence Against the Human Condition**

Avarice plays a central role in dystopian novels because avarice is the sworn enemy of humility. Usually, these two terms are not contrasted with each other. Dystopian novels are fueled by blind emotions. Avarice is blind, inasmuch as it is



self-serving and destructive of the self.

Eliot's "not with a bang" reminds us of the withering-away effect that avarice has on the human person. The inability to accept the forms of limitation that rule over human life, and which serve to moderate individual existence, eventually destroy man's delicate psyche.

When human existence perceives itself to be merely a throwaway life, as is the case in postmodern secularism, it consequently turns on itself. This turning makes man his worst enemy. This form of self-loathing makes man a frustrated and spiteful seeker of El Dorado—at all cost. This is why the frame of mind of "stuffed men" welcomes the call for utopia.

After the success of the SP47 vaccine is made public, the Labor Party in Britain does not waste the opportunity to promote egalitarianism, for, "the old people and the women were almost solid in their support of a crash program to help them cheat the grave." [2] The Labor Party demands that the vaccine be included in the grocery list of "social programs." This ingenious blackmail works like a cinch. This is the point in *Not With a Bang* when personal indiscretion and intemperance become social/political policy.

In the Kremlin, the Central Committee weighs the pros and cons of the Soviet Union's variant of SP47. The Soviets receive the information for the vaccine from a British communist spy. They suppress SP47 because the Soviet dictator becomes horrified of "Panjuvenescence—the eventual situation where the entire population would be youthful and remain so indefinitely." [3]

One of the more interesting themes of *Not With a Bang* is communism's response to Western technology and medical advancement. After it is discovered that SP47 is sensitive to radiation, the Soviets and Chinese see an opportunity for world domination by detonating nuclear bombs in order to kill millions of Westerners. Their blackmail is foolproof, for the greater number of nuclear bombs they explode, the more and quicker that Western people die, given the proliferation of the drug:

**The monstrous fireballs mushroomed high into the stratosphere, carrying with them tons of radioactive debris. There, the minute particles of strontium 90, radioiodine, and other malignant materials were caught up in the stream of great dry winds and distributed around earth.**[\[4\]](#)

## **Communism in the Twenty-First Century, Coronavirus, and Beyond**

Regardless of the origin of coronavirus, whether nefarious in intent or the result of incompetent communist bureaucracy, human liberty has been rocked to its foundation after the virus began in China during late November 2019, and quickly expanded to other nations throughout 2020.

While few medical experts can predict the medical implications of coronavirus for man in the future, thoughtful people realize that the virus is only the latest havoc that communism has wrought on the world.

The eventual response of Western democracies to the origin of coronavirus will be mitigated by their past experiences of communist propaganda, disinformation campaigns and personal character defamation.

Much like what takes place in *Not With a Bang*, the effectiveness of the latter three staples of communism is why China has downplayed their responsibility in the origin and spread of the virus that began in Wuhan—very likely in the Wuhan Institute of Virology. The myth of the virus originating in the Wuhan wet market will soon be put to rest. That wet market did not sell bats at the time coronavirus began to spread.

More importantly, doctors and journalists who sounded the alarm about the spread of the virus have disappeared inside China. At the time of the release of the virus, the communist government of China closed travel from Wuhan to other Chinese cities but not international travel out of China.

To best understand the latest bout of asymmetrical war against Western democracies that communism has unleashed, it will serve us well to ask a potent question that the Polish philosopher, Leszek Kolakowski, poses in his formidable book *Modernity on Endless Trial*. The chapter is entitled “The Self-Poisoning of the Open Society.”

The question is one of the oldest and most relevant that people in Western democracies can ask: “From where inside the democratic order do the totalitarian ideologies derive their

strength?" [\[5\]](#) A potent line from *Not With a Bang* reveals what fifth-columnists in Western democracies swear by: "The weakness of capitalism lies in the liberty needed to support it, as the weakness of a wineglass is in its stem." [\[6\]](#)

China's despotic ruling body has brilliantly figured out in recent times that Western democracies operate on what, from a communist perspective, appears as a fundamental flaw: good will. Communism enjoys a seething, yet ideologically zealous base of fifth-columnists in Western democracies; fellow travelers, they have been called since Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik revolution in Russia, beginning in 1917.

One recent example of this is the case of two Harvard University professors who were caught in January 2020 secretly working with the Chinese government. The professors were paid upwards of \$50,000 a month, plus travel and living expenses. The plan was simple: to move nanotechnology out of American universities and into the possession of the communist government of China.

While it is true that this case appears to be one for profit, this actually serves to bury in anonymity the untold number of cases of classical "useful idiots" who aid and abet totalitarian nations out of ideological motives and resentment. The United States Department of Justice rarely allocates its best resources to investigate ideologically motivated cases.

The communist government of China reaps savory and efficient gains from well-placed propaganda and disinformation campaigns

in the West. The coronavirus cover-up by China and The World Health Organization (WHO) is the latest example of this.

In the absence of the free market, personal liberty and government oversight, deception is how communist governments survive. The tariffs placed on China's products by President Trump and China's secrecy about the spread of the coronavirus point to the moral scandal that communist governments are still thriving in 2020.

## **Post Personhood**

It is not difficult to realize that man's future will be ruled by hollow men.

If Eliot is correct that the "world ends not with a bang but a whimper," the whimper signifies a gradual wasting away—like a decaying carcass—of personhood and its attendant virtues.

The paradigm shift that the coronavirus has ushered is the second destruction of Western values in under twenty years. The other was the terrorist attacks of 911. What will happen to the human person in the next five or ten years? What about the next twenty? An existentially bored and cynical humanity responds to the sublime, crisis and tragedy in a manner that gives away the scope of its dysfunction.

The long-term effects of the destruction of Western values brought about by the coronavirus will be felt for generations.

Lamentably, instead of serving as the building block of virtue and the embrace of the human person, dare I say, through wisdom, the coronavirus crisis carries a morally/spiritually gutted humanity to the next rung of the stairs that leads it to the gallows.

Hollow men cannot comprehend that in the absence of personhood, only self-imposed suffering reigns supreme in a world of “shape without form, shade without colour.”[\[7\]](#)

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[\[1\]](#) Chapman Pincher, *Not With a Bang*. (New York: The New American Library, 1965), 86.

[\[2\]](#) Ibid, 94.

[\[3\]](#) 118.

[\[4\]](#) 205.

[\[5\]](#) Leszek Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 165.

[\[6\]](#) Pincher, 119.

[\[7\]](#) T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems: 1909-1962*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 89.

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