

# **It Always Gets Better**

**A Meditation On The Teleological Limitations Of Narrative, And The  
Ubiquitous Violence of Optimism**

Patrick Jonathan Derilus

03/08/2026

# Contents

- I. Optimism As An Ethico-Libidinal Ruse, Negative/Utilitarianism, & (AntiBlack) Desire . . . 3
- II. Disavowal Of Pessimism On The U.S. Left, Nihilism, And Negativity as Blackness . . . . . 4
- III. Speculation On Ending Without End . . . . . 6

*“Whenever anything negative, be it grief, sadness, suffering, trauma, enters a discussion, they are only brought up only to be dropped out. We talk about them only in the context of healing them or relieving their symptoms, which means we actually never talk about them.”* — Julia Reshe, *Negative Psychoanalysis for the Living Dead: Philosophical Pessimism and the Death Drive*

*“The category of healing for the Black subject, from this perspective, is mendacious to say the least, further reinscribing and licensing the subjugation of the Slave by betraying the Slave if not for an event revolutionary enough to destroy that which constitutes and extends the capacity for everyone else to experience ‘healing’. Or, as Marriott notes, ‘precisely, your annihilation and their pleasure’. Healing saves them from us.”* — Garrett Ross, “To be salved, to be slave(d): reading ‘healing’ with and against the specter of Black suffering”

## **I. Optimism As An Ethico-Libidinal Ruse, Negative/Utilitarianism, & (AntiBlack) Desire**

Whether it is our ineffectual attempts to escape pain by willing ourselves into *faux-perpetual* states of pleasure, rewarding ourselves or what have you, it is pain that subsumes the whole of all sentient beings and Life itself. The logics of utilitarianism and negative utilitarianism address philosophical questions on how to minimize human suffering (*negative utilitarianism*) over maximizing human happiness and maximizing human happiness over minimizing human suffering (*utilitarianism*). These philosophies are insufficient, however, because they propose by theoretical means that the actions are unarguably just insofar as there is a coherent telos for which they are performing said actions. This is to say that in the course of maintaining either objective, there remains more or less a persistence—a necessity to *escape* the world’s ills. Generally, it is assumed that in spite of the fact that “the concept of healing lay claim to universal applicability,” healing, nevertheless, suggests that there is a *subject of loss* who has an arc of redemption from which they will soon recover. To put it another way, it is universally assumed that we all are subjects of our own redemption. Because Humanity is necessitated by the abjection of Blackness, one must ask the question of what it means for nonBlack people looking for that escape by way of healing and what healing means for the socially dead:

*“Is the prospect of healing a possibility proffered to the Black subject when it is one’s death that sustains the World? Alternatively, what kind of demand might be able to be put forth if one understands that there is no possibility of healing within a World that is made a better place to live by your suffering? How might the stakes be increased if we grapple with the specter of Black suffering without requiring recourse to redemption, harmonious coexistence, and the reconciliation of the demand to be sensible to everyone?”*

For the Human (who is white, Latine, Asian, and Indigenous) whose experience of violence is *contingent* then means there is a trajectory through which they can find utility in either minimizing their suffering and/or maximizing their happiness. Because violence and suffering are initiated when non-Blacks resist the mores of civil society, they are still able to seek reprieve in knowing they are not Black while being oppressed themselves. We fail to grasp that antiBlackness is a *pre-logical* structure. We don’t need to do anything for violence to be incurred. Despite this fact, we (both Humans and Black people) have this masochistic insistence to needlessly interrogate about what I or another Black person was doing that led to our dishonor — our deaths — whether it be NYPD stalking, accosting, harassing, and sexually assaulting us in broad daylight and in the dead of night, Haitians being left out of all discourse and action in the onslaught of pol(ICE)-slave patrol abductions and killings, Israelis who have barred Black Africans from entering any bomb shelters in occupied Palestine from Iran and Hezbollah’s attacks against the genocidal Zionist entity. Suffice it to say that for Black people, to be in pursuit

of *maximizing happiness* and *minimizing suffering* is ineffectual because the violence never goes into remission. This is not to suggest that we are undeserving of happiness. It is to say that even when we rejoice in these short-lived, incremental victories against the white State — whether it be after a fascist pig who was indicted after lynching one of our people, or our indulging in a love interest, these joys, pleasures, elations, are simultaneously compounded by gratuitous violence:

*“There can be no space of Blackness — Black love, rage, rebellion, without accounting for violence as part of it — that is, the world. Once Blackness has entered the fold, it’s just a suffering that’s denied to the Black.”* — Selamawit D. Terrefe, “Limits of Legibility”

## II. Disavowal Of Pessimism On The U.S. Left, Nihilism, And Negativity as Blackness

In the case of most social justice circles (amongst progressive and so-called “Leftist” circles particularly in the United States) that a so-called “better world is possible,” one of their leading premises is to *keep hope alive*. There is no time to “be negative.” There is no space for pessimists, nihilists, naysayers or the like in the so-called movement. Devotees of political change place the onus on negativity as the crux of all crises into ‘large uniformed resistances.’ A takeaway from this is that an immense degree of hostility that is bolstered in social, political, interpersonal spaces against negative thinking posits the parochial, binaristic argument that *pessimism is evil*, whereas *optimism is good*. On the contrary, it is in fact optimism that the U.S. so-called “Left”—Humanity that renders optimism evil:

*“Evil is just what is positive; it makes its own existence felt.”* — Arthur Schopenhauer, *Studies In Pessimism*

To avoid recapitulating on the historicity of negativity, pessimism, *philosophical pessimism*, (though it is argued that its origins began within the Greco-Roman and Eurowestern intellectual canon) *has existed since time immemorial*. Negativity, as it is vaguely defined and understood in the United States, has been renounced from grammar. For the reason pessimism is renounced from grammar and global antiBlackness is the grammar of the world, reinforces that the fact that the Human hates and fears that which is *of* the world, i.e. the slave. We hate the concept of pessimism more than we acknowledge that there are many dimensions to it other than *affective pessimism*. Indeed, when we think of affective pessimism (i.e.: *what makes us feel bad*), our initial reaction is to avoid what makes us uncomfortable. If we, for example, broach the assumptive logics of James Baldwin’s assertion to a level of abstraction via a meta-critique of Humanism that Black people cannot be pessimists because we are corporeally alive, we are able to do so because the presupposition that we have a subjectivity that is independent from whites and nonBlacks is not a question of lived experience—positionality, but of ontology. In essence, what this means is it is virtually impossible for us to individuate our own Black desires because our psyches have been ruptured by unfathomable degrees of suffering, even as we affirm ourselves otherwise on a preconscious level. It simply cannot be the case that taking a pessimist position is volitional, not only because Black social death is not experiential, but also because Black social death is an inevitable, psychosocial outcome that is undergirded by the ontological and libidinal foundations of this antiBlack world. Given that our flesh is international therapy for whites and nonBlacks, and the insistence is that Black people, globally, are forced to survive what is to befall us, then pessimism, cannot be disentangled from Blackness. Perhaps optimism is Human; *pessimism, is Black*:

*“You cannot protect yourself and you will not be saved. You will learn that lesson to the young ones and pass it on as a mission or a curse. You cannot protect them with your love or advice and no one has yet devised an art of war sufficient to the task. The hatred of the [negrophobic] world is upon you. It is also within you. It is the substance of your waking*

*dreams, “the single most constant fact of [your] existence.” None of which diminishes your desire to fight. You understand now that black lives matter, not in or to the present order of knowledge that determines human being, but only ever against it, outside the limits of the law.”* — Jared Sexton, “Unbearable Blackness”

In the same way many people in the imperial core want change, we are also enticed into desiring a pleasurable ending. This desire is not only exclusive to nonBlacks, but also Black people as well. My roommate for example, who is a light-skinned, cis, bisexual, disabled, Black American man who is a Quaker and identifies as a pacifist has insisted that violence can be averted in this country on the course to the eventual fall of the Empire. Besides the fact that this sentiment is fictitious, it is martyrish to believe that as Black people, that the violent inception of this fascist settler state would not be upended via Fanon’s “program of complete disorder.” His position is paradoxical to say the least. Ultimately, there is no such thing as a “nonviolent person,” especially in a violent place such as America:

*“There are a lot of progressives who call themselves nonviolent. Nonsense. Everyone is violent. Everyone’s condition of possibility is either sustained or destroyed through violence. You might not pick up a gun. You might not hit someone. But if you are well off, if you are psychically well off, if you are materially well off, if you are not Black, which is to be well off as a human subject, you are well off because you are fortified and extended through a structural violence that is beyond the imagination.”* — George Yancy, Frank B. Wilderson III, “Afropessimism Forces Us to Rethink Our Most Basic Assumptions About Society”

Like pessimism, *nihilism*, too, is renounced from grammar. It is not that someone has forbidden us from making the argument that the emancipatory work that many of us have committed ourselves to is without meaning or purpose but the current epistemological tools that we are using, are to be called into question.

*“Nihilism, in this capacity, serves to break down all the illusions, myths, and all other social, cultural constructions that have hitherto given us a false sense of security and hope.”*

There are obstacles in this life that can never be comprehensively redressed via talking it out (psychoanalysis), unsheathing an elaborately final result (teleology), or using one’s willpower—being logical (rationalism). In the philosophical work of Calvin Warren, he artfully makes use of nihilism to broach the antiBlackness of meaning and metaphysics as a way to render *The Political* as a woefully relentless hindrance of theatrical meandering:

*“We can think of political apostasy...as an active nihilism when an “alternative” political arrangement is impossible. When faced with the impossibility of realizing the “not-yet-social order,” political apostasy becomes an empowered hermeneutical practice; it interprets the antiblack Political symbolic as inherently wicked and rejects it both as critique and spiritual practice.”* — Calvin Warren, “Black Nihilism and the Politics of Hope”

We can therefore use and understand nihilism, *active nihilism*, as an innovative tool to destroy the foundations of antiBlack institutions by way of iterative refusal not toward building, but a motion toward *ceaseless ending*:

*“Naysaying has considerable power...[the] presumption that political action is always positive—that it must lead to something programmatic and organized obscures the potentials of outright refusal for many kinds of thinking and action. No is pregnant with possibilities, promises, and dangers. Above all, it is political.”* — Kennan Ferguson, *The Big No*

### III. Speculation On Ending Without End

I couldn't describe what this ceaseless ending would look like, but it challenges the violence of optimism. If we're to end this world and the succeeding generation of Black people are tasked with building a world anew, how might we try to avoid subscribing to the antiBlack violence of narrative? There are many of us who say that the imperialist forces that be will fall in our lifetimes.

It is fictitious to assume we'll all be alive and see the end of the United States, the end of the United Kingdom, the end of France, the end of Canada, the end of Australia, the end of Israel, the end of the UAE, and every other existing settler-colonial, nation-state.

Combating the antiBlack violence of narrative is to accept the possibility of victory, posthumously. To put it another way, not every end will be a 'happy' one.

The Library of Unconventional Lives

Patrick Jonathan Derilus

It Always Gets Better

A Meditation On The Teleological Limitations Of Narrative, And The Ubiquitous Violence of  
Optimism  
03/08/2026

<[www.pjdee.substack.com/p/it-always-gets-better](http://www.pjdee.substack.com/p/it-always-gets-better)>

Utilizing Afropessimism, philosophy, and (negative) psychoanalysis through the cited works of Selamawit D. Terrefe, Julia Reshe, Calvin Warren, Garrett Ross, Arthur Schopenhauer, Jared Sexton, Kennan Ferguson, and Frank B. Wilderson III, culminates in a streams of consciousness-styled critique of the ethical, humanist, and libidinal dimensions of the American Left's ethos (i.e.: *keeping hope alive*), meditating on the notion that optimism is neither daring nor bold—emanating from a modality in which we garner an uncontested, boundless degree of strength from; inversely, at the structural level, optimism is purely a weapon of antiBlack violence that is tethered to the teleological constraints of hope itself—leaving no space for thorough reflection, critique, and effective action in all liberation movements. Ultimately, while the many progressives and radicals in the imperial core argue for a better world to be built, it inevitably begs the question of how it should be done: by building another unethical World formation on top of our currently existing one, or to end the epistemological order without a telos without a possibility of unethicality?

**thelul.org**