

Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime

Bruno Latour

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Expansive and thought provoking, *Down to Earth* intertwines ecological concerns with contemporary political realities.

Leading sociologist/anthropologist Bruno Latour approaches the world through the lens of a “New Climatic Regime,” a term he uses to acknowledge “the question of climate change and its denial” as it relates to “the politics of the last 50 years.” His book, which is subdivided into twenty short segments, considers the underlying reality of a changing ecological environment and the “populist” reaction to it—which, Latour believes, intersects with social class inequality, environmental deregulation, and distrust of globalization.

The book begins with an evaluation of the impact of Donald Trump’s election, and its elegant explanation of “Trumpism” is notable. The author writes that it represents a contradiction of sorts: a “headlong rush toward maximum profit” without regard for the masses, combined with a “headlong rush backward” toward nationalism. The discussion quickly broadens to one of global politics, suggesting that ecology itself has become something of a lightning rod for political divisiveness.

Latour wonders if the world’s people “experiencing deprivation feel disoriented and lost,” thus signaling that humanity is headed for a global catastrophe. Interestingly, the book closes with a critical evaluation of Europe’s role in geopolitics, engaging in a perceptive discussion of a European Union that, “by the intricacy of its regulations,” may be a model for solving “the ecological mutation” the world faces.

This work, translated from French into English, has the rare power to demand attention and encourage consideration of how the New Climatic Regime impacts the destiny of humanity. With expressive language and self-acknowledged “deliberate bluntness,” Latour challenges conventional thought and opens a pathway to an alternative worldview. *Down to Earth* will leave a lasting impression on any reader who recognizes the prime importance of raising fundamental if troubling questions.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (November/December 2018)

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