

### INSTRUCTIONS

Read the extract below, taking particular care to understand the sentences in **bold**. Then write an essay-length answer to one of the questions below the passage.

### EXTRACT

Before passing away, the critical theorist Mark Fisher began work on a book that was to be entitled *Acid Communism*. In his draft introduction, he opens with this citation from Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*:

“[T]he closer the real possibility of liberating the individual from the constraints once justified by scarcity and immaturity, the greater the need for maintaining and streamlining these constraints lest the established order of domination dissolve. **Civilization has to protect itself against the specter of a world which could be free.**

[...] In exchange for the commodities that enrich their lives [...] individuals sell not only their labor but also their free time. [...] People dwell in apartment concentrations — and have private automobiles with which they can no longer escape into a different world. They have huge refrigerators stuffed with frozen foods. They have dozens of newspapers and magazines which espouse the same ideals. They have innumerable choices, innumerable gadgets which are all of the same sort and keep them occupied **and divert their attention from the real issue — which is the awareness that they could both work less and determine their own needs and satisfactions.**”

Fisher then goes on to claim that modern capitalist politics have, for the last forty years, tried to suppress or destroy “the specter of a world which could be free.” He suggests that capitalism might be challenged by instead engaging with that specter.

Instead of seeking to overcome capital, we should **focus on what capital must always obstruct: the collective capacity to produce, care and enjoy.** [...] **Capitalism**, with all its visored cops, its teargas, and all the theological niceties of its economics, **is set up to block the emergence of this Red Plenty.** The overcoming of capital has to be fundamentally based on the simple insight that, **far from being about “wealth creation,” capital necessarily and always blocks the production of common wealth.**

### QUESTIONS

- 1) What is your understanding of Fisher's “Red Plenty” and what might the role of literary production be in its (always stunted) emergence?

- 2) What poems or song lyrics with which you are familiar participate in a human “collective capacity to produce, care, and enjoy”—and how?
- 3) How is the “specter of a world which could be free” represented in prose works (short stories, novels, comics) and/or cinematic works (movies, series, video art) with which you are familiar?

NOTE: Please try to focus on English-language works (from any period). If you must refer to works in languages beyond English, all titles, quotes, and keywords must be clearly translated into English.

