



# TIQQUN

# **VOL. 1**

# CONTENTS

<b>VOL. 1 .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>OF COURSE YOU KNOW, THIS MEANS WAR!.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>WHAT IS CRITICAL METAPHYSICS?.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>THEORY OF BLOOM.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>PHENOMENOLOGY OF EVERYDAY LIFE.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>THESES ON THE IMAGINARY PARTY .....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>SILENCE AND BEYOND.....</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>ON THE ECONOMY CONSIDERED AS BLACK MAGIC .....</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>THEOLOGY IN 1999 .....</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>THE CRITICAL METAPHYSICIANS BENEATH THE UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' MOVEMENT.....</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>MARGINAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PRESENT MOVEMENT.....</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>THE JOBLESS SPEAK.....</b>	<b>278</b>
<b>EARLY TEXTS.....</b>	<b>282</b>
<b>CALL.....</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>PRELIMINARIES TO THE WAR ON PRISON .....</b>	<b>342</b>

**MISCELLANEA..... 366**

**THE GREAT GAME OF CIVIL WAR ..... 367**

**THE HUMAN STRIKE WITHIN THE FIELD OF LIBIDINAL ECONOMY ..... 371**

**WE ARE ALL WHATEVER-SINGULARITIES ..... 384**

**TIQQUN APOCRYPHA ..... 387**

**TO A FRIEND ..... 425**

**OF COURSE YOU  
KNOW, THIS  
MEANS WAR!**

In everything one must begin with principles. The correct course of action follows.

When a civilization is ruined, its bankruptcy must be declared. There's no point cleaning house when the house is falling apart.

Goals aren't lacking; nihilism is nothing. It's not a question of means; powerlessness is no excuse. The value of the means has to do with the ends.

Everything that is, is good. The world of the Qlipboth, the Spectacle, is all entirely evil. Evil isn't a substance; if it were it would be good. The mystery of the effectiveness of evil comes down to the fact that evil doesn't exist; it's just an active nothingness.

What's evil is not distinguishing evil from good. Indistinction is its kingdom, indifference is its power. Men do not love evil, they love the good that's within it.

In Tikkun being returns to being, nothingness to nothingness. The fulfillment of Justice is its abolition.

History isn't over; it needs our consent first.

As long as there's one single free man, that's enough to prove that freedom isn't dead.

The question is never how to "live with one's times," but for or against them. That's final.

Whatever boasts of moving forward in time only shows that it isn't superior to time.

Newness is just an excuse for mediocrity. Up to now, progress has only meant a certain growing insignificance. The essential has remained in its infancy. Men had morals, but they still haven't thought them through. It's a neglect they don't have the means to correct anymore. History starts here.

The catastrophes of history prove nothing against the good. It's not revolutionary movements that have suspended the "normal course of things." Reverse that. That ordinary course of things is the suspension of the good. In their successive occurrence, revolutionary movements comprise the tradition of the good; up to now, that's been the tradition of the vanquished. It's ours too.

All past history comes down to this: a great city has been besieged by little kings. Indelibly, the rest remains.

Meaning comes absolutely before time.

There's a clock that never chimes. All true royalty is hers.

We must act as if we were no one's children. Men are not given to know their true filiation. It is the constellation of history that they manage to steel themselves with. It's good to have a pantheon. Not all pantheons are found at the end of Soufflot street [street of the French Pantheon].

Commonplaces are the most beautiful things in the world. You can say that again. Truth has always said the same thing in a thousand different ways. When the time comes, commonplaces have the power to rock worlds. The universe was born from a common place after all.



This world hasn't been adequately described because it hasn't been adequately contested, and vice-versa. We aren't seeking the knowledge that takes account of the state of the facts, but the knowledge that creates them. Critique must fear neither the weight of foundations, nor the grace of consequences. Our era is furiously metaphysical, and it works incessantly to make that forgotten.

Some people think that truth doesn't exist. And truth punishes them for it. They don't unveil the truth, even as the truth unveils itself to them. They do not bury it, even as it buries them.

We don't have to wail and cry; we'll give to no one the charity of a tailor-made revolt. You'll have to start all over yourselves. This world needs truth, not consolation.

Domination has to be criticized because servitude dominates. The fact that there are "happy" slaves doesn't justify slavery.

They were born. They want to live. And they pursue their deathly destiny. They even want to rest, and they leave behind sons so that other dead men and other deathly destinies can be born.

This is the time of larvae; they even write little books that chronicle their breeding. As long as there have been men, and men have read Marx, we've known what the commodity is, but we've always ended up practically taking sides with it. Some people who once made it their profession to criticize it even say that it's a second nature, more beautiful and legitimate than the first, and that we ought to fold to its authority. It's metastasized to the far reaches of the world; it's useful to remember that it doesn't take long before a totally cancer-ridden organism collapses.

The old choices and disputes are bloodless. We're imposing new ones.

Reject both sides. Only love the remainder. Only the remainder will be saved.

Men are responsible for a world they didn't create. That's no mystical idea, it's a given. And the satisfied are shocked by it.

Hence the war.

The enemy lacks the intelligence of words; the enemy tramples upon them. And words yearn to be avenged.

Happiness has never been a synonym for peace. It is necessary to make happiness a plan of attack.

Sensibility has for only too long been a passive disposition towards suffering; it must itself become a means for doing battle. It's an art of turning suffering back into strength.

Freedom has no truck with patience; it is the practice of history in acts. Conversely, "liberations" are but the opium of bad slaves. Critique is borne of freedom and gives birth to it.

Men are far more certain to get free by escaping than they are to attain to happiness by having it handed to them.

Pursue freedom; the rest will come naturally. Whoever tries to stay safe will just come to ruin.

Just like anything else whose existence needs prior proof, according to our times, life has very little value.

An ancient order lives on here, in appearances. In reality it's only there anymore so all its perversions can be followed through on.

People say that there's no danger at all because there's no riot going on; people say that since there's no material disorder on society's surface that revolution is a far-off thing. The forces of annihilation are just traveling down a completely different road from the one that people expected it to.

Know well young imbeciles, little realist boors, there are many more things under the sun and in the heavens than your inconsequential little solipsism could imagine.

This society operates like a constant appeal to mental restriction. Its best elements are foreign to it. They rebel against it. This world revolves around its fringes; its decomposition infuriates it. Everything that is still alive lives against this society.

Abandon ship — not because it's sinking, but in order to sink it.

Those who today fail to understand already expended all their strength yesterday trying not to understand. In his inner conscience, man is aware of the state of the world.

Everything's getting radicalized — both stupidity and intelligence.

Tiqun exposes the cracks in the world of homogeneity. The element of time is reabsorbed into the element of meaning. Forms come to life; figures become incarnate. The world is.

Each new mode of being ruins the mode of being preceding it and it's only then, on the ruins of the old, that the new can begin. And this coming time of great tumult is the "labor pains" of that birth. It appears that the old mode of being in the world will be destroyed; that will change various different things.

Once there was a society that tried by innumerable and endlessly repeated means to annihilate the most lively of its children. Those children survived. They want the death of this society. They are free of hatred.

This is an undeclared war. We aren't declaring war; we're just revealing it.

There are two camps; their conflict is over the nature of the war. The party of confusion says there's only one camp – it's waging a military peace. The Imaginary Party knows that conflict is the mother of all things. It lives scattered and exiled. Outside of the war it is nothing. Its war is an exodus, where forces constitute themselves and weapons are discovered.

Leave behind to this passing century its battles between ghosts. We're not fighting against ectoplasms here; we're pushing them away to make the target clear.

In a world of lies, the lie cannot be vanquished by its opposite, but only by a world of truth.

Complacency engenders hatred and resentment; truth gathers brothers together.

"We" means us and our brothers.

Intelligence must become a collective affair.

And the rest is silence.

Venice, January 15th 1999.

# **WHAT IS CRITICAL METAPHYSICS?**

“There was no longer any reality, only its caricature”

-Gottfried Benn

“We are the cause of the universe, its creation and its future destruction.”

-Baudelaire

It does not escape us that “‘metaphysical’ - exactly like ‘abstract’ and even ‘thinking’ - has become a word before which everyone more or less takes flight as before a plague victim.” (Hegel). And it is certainly with a shiver of wicked joy, and the worrying certitude that we’re going right to the wound, that we bring back into the center what the triumphant frivolity of our times believed it had forever repressed to the periphery. In so doing, we also have the effrontery to claim that we’re not just giving in to some sophisticated caprice, but to an imperious necessity inscribed in history. Critical Metaphysics is not just one more piece of blather about the way the world is going; nor is it just the latest piece of heady speculation with some particular intelligence to it – it is the most *real* thing contained in our times. *Critical Metaphysics is in everyone’s guts*. Whatever we might protest about this, there is no doubt that *people* will try to say we were the inventors of Critical Metaphysics, so as to hide the fact that it existed *already* before finding its formulation, that it was already *everywhere*, in the state of emptiness behind suffering, in the denial behind entertainment, in the motives behind consumption, or, obviously, in anxiety. It’s

clearly a part of all the sordid spinelessness, the incurable banality, and the repugnant insignificance of the times called “modern” that it’s made metaphysics the apparently innocent leisure activity of learned men in stiff suits, and that it’s reduced it to the sole exercise proper to insects like that: a kind of platonic mandibulation. Merely by virtue of the fact that it is not reducible to conceptual experience, Critical Metaphysics is *the experience* that fundamentally denies an inept “modernity”, and, with open eyes, celebrates more each day the excesses of the disaster.

## ACT THE FIRST:

“When the false becomes true, truth itself is but a mirage. When nothingness becomes reality, reality in turn falls into nothingness.”

(The inscriptions at either side of the entrance to the “Kingdom of Dreams and Immense Illusion” in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*)

Western civilization is living on credit. It thought it could last forever, and get off without paying the outstanding debt it owes for its lies. But now it’s suffocating under their crushing dead weight. Thus, before entering into more substantial considerations, we have to start by clearing the air, and unburdening this world of a few of its illusions. For example: the fact is that modernity has never existed. We’re not going to linger over indisputable facts. That the term “modernity” now just



evokes a bored irony, no matter the progressivist senility accompanying it, and that it has finally appeared as what it always was — just a verbal fetish that the superstition of shitheads and simple spirits, ever since the supposed “Renaissance,” have decorated the progressive rise of commodity relations to a state of social hegemony with, in favor of interests we understand only all too well — hardly merits any critical explanation. This is just another vulgar brutish use of labels, whose elucidation we’ll leave to the priests of tomorrow’s historicism. We’ve got far more serious things to deal with. In fact, in the same way as commodity relations never really existed as such, i.e., as commodity relations, but only as relations between men mutilated into relations between things, everything that is said to be, believed to be, or held up as being “modern” has never really existed *as modern*. The essence of the economy, that transparent pseudonym with which commodity modernity always tries to pass itself off as eternally obvious, has nothing economic about it; and in fact, its foundation, which is also its program, can be expressed in these rude terms: it is THE NEGATION OF METAPHYSICS — that is, the negation of that the transcendence of which is for humanity the effective cause of immanence; to put it in other words, it is the negation of that which makes sense of the world, of the imperceptible appearing within the perceptible. This fine project is wholly contained within the aberrant but *effective* illusion that a complete separation between the physical and the metaphysical is possible — a fallacy which most often takes form as the underlying reality behind the physical reality, setting itself up as the model for all objectivity, and logically commanding a myriad of local ruptures, between life and meaning, dreams and reason, individual and society, means and ends, artist and bourgeois,

intellectual work and physical labor, bosses and workers, etc. – which are not, by and large, any less absurd – with all these concepts becoming abstract and losing all their content outside of their living interaction with their opposites. Now, since such a separation is really impossible, that is, *humanly* impossible, and since the liquidation of humanity has so far failed, nothing modern has ever existed as such. *What is modern is not real, what is real is not modern.* Thus there is indeed a *realization* of this program, but as it perfects itself at present we also see that it is just the opposite of what it thought it was, in a word: the complete de-realization of the world. And the whole extent of the visible now carries within it – with its vacillating character – the brutal proof that the realized negation of metaphysics is in the end but the realization of a metaphysics of negation. The functionalism and materialism inherent to commodity modernity have produced a void everywhere, but this void corresponds to the primordial metaphysical experience: where there is no longer any response that goes beyond mere being-there, which would permit a position within the latter to be taken, anxiety surges forth, and the metaphysical character of the world blossoms in plain sight for everyone. Never has the sentiment of foreignness been so pregnant as it is in the face of the abstract productions of a world that had intended to bury it under the immense, unquestionable opulence of its accumulated commodities. Places, clothes, words and architecture, faces, acts, gazes and loves are nothing anymore but the terrible masks invented by one and the same absence to put on in order to approach us. Nothingness has visibly taken up residence in the intimate depths of things and beings, and the smooth surface of spectacular appearances is cracking everywhere as a result of its growth. The *physical* sensation of its proximity is

no longer the ultimate experience reserved for a few mystical circles. On the contrary it is the only sensation left to us by the capitalist world, the only sensation still intact, and indeed increased tenfold, as all the others are slated to disappear. It also happens to have been precisely the one it had explicitly proposed to eliminate. All the products of this society- whether the hollow conceptuality of the Young-Girl, contemporary urbanism, or techno- are things that the spirit has gone out of, things that have outlived all their meaning and all their reason for being. These are all just interchangeable symbols that replace each other moving about on one plane; it's not that these symbols signify nothing, as the kindly morons of postmodernism like to think – indeed they signify *Nothingness* itself. All the things of this world live on in a perceptible state of exile. They are the victims of a faint and constant loss of being. Indeed, this modernity, which claims to be free of mystery and thought it had liquidated metaphysics, has instead realized it. It has produced a décor comprised purely of phenomena, of pure beings-there that are nothing beyond the simple fact that they are there, in their empty positivity, and which ceaselessly push humanity to feel “the marvel of marvels: *that being-there is*” (Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics?*). In this ultramodern hall of ice, marble, and steel we've wandered into, a slight relaxation of our cerebral constriction suffices for us to be brutally confronted with seeing all that exists slip away and be inverted into a simultaneously oppressive and floating presence where nothing remains. Thus we get the experience of Total Otherness even in the most common of circumstances, even in newly renovated bakeries. Before us is spread a world that *can no longer hold our gaze*, a world that can no longer look us in the eye. Anxiety is on guard duty at every street corner. Now this

disastrous experience, wherein we are violently expelled from all that exists, is the experience of transcendence and of the irremediable negativity *contained* in us. In that experience is the whole of the asphyxiating “reality” that all the great machinery of social deception works to make us take for granted, that suddenly and in so cowardly a way collapses, into the vast chasm of its nullity. This experience is the birth of metaphysics, where metaphysics appears precisely *as metaphysics*, where the world appears as the world. But the metaphysics that arises again there is not the same metaphysics that *people* had hunted down and banished, because it returns as the truth and negation of what had defeated the old metaphysics: as a *conquering force*, as *critical* Metaphysics. Because the project of capitalist modernity is *nothing*, its realization is but the spreading desertification of everything that exists. And we are here to ravage that desert.

Enthroned on its rickety stilts in the middle of the mounting catastrophes, commodity domination no longer feels at home in the singular state of things that it itself nonetheless produced, every detail of which contradicts it more. And by domination we mean specifically the symbolically mediated relation of complicity between the dominators and the dominated; so for us there is a little doubt that “the torturer and the tortured are one, that the former is fooling himself believing he’s not himself tortured, and the latter believing he’s not participating in the crime”: go sit at the back of the class, Bourdieu! To convince ourselves of this, we can merely take a close look at the *steps taken* by our contemporaries, who are reminiscent of a band of deserters running after themselves, spurred on by their own metaphysical disquiet. It’s a full time job now for Blooms to get themselves out of the fundamental experience of nothingness, which destroys all

simple faith in this world. The mockery of things threatens to overwhelm his consciousness at any given moment. To not know the forgetting of Being, the retreat of which closes in on us in every metropolitan slum, every vagina, and every gas station, now requires a daily ingestion of almost lethal doses of Prozac, news, and Viagra. But all these temporary fixes don't suppress the anxiety, they just mask it, and banish it to an obscurity that only spurs on its silent growth. And in the end, in order to sell their lies and disease, women's magazines all the same end up having to convince their readers that "the truth is good for your health," cosmetics multinationals are decide to put things like "metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology" on their packaging, TF1 sets up the "quest for meaning", as a profitable principle for its upcoming programming, and Starck, that enlightened counterfeiter, gives La Redoute information about its competitors a few years in advance by putting together for it a "catalogue of non-products for use by non-consumers." It's hard to imagine how so totally at a loss domination must have been internally to get to such a state. In these conditions, critical thought must stop waiting for a mass revolutionary subject to constitute itself to show how imminent social upheaval is. It must rather learn to see this in the formidable explosion of the social demand for entertainment/distraction in recent times. That kind of a phenomenon is a sign that the pressure of essential questions which were for so long left unanswered, so profitably, has crossed the line into the intolerable. Because, if *people* distract themselves so furiously, it must be that they're getting their minds off something, and this something must be becoming an very obsessing presence. "If man were happy, he would be all the happier the less distracted/entertained he was." (Pascal).

Let's suppose that the object that spreads such a significant terror everywhere, which *people* can deny the effective action of only so long as it is unnamed, is Critical Metaphysics- and this is a definition, perhaps the clearest and most comprehensible one we'll give ourselves. The harmless sociologists are naturally not gifted with the proper endowments to comprehend what this is about, no more than is that handful of poor aesthetes, who in vain indignation denounce the misery of the times from the lofty heights of their profession as writers, and who see its mere consumption as its consummation. We would never dream to protest against the extent of the disaster, but its meaning. The generalized fear of getting old, the charming anorexia of women, the official takeover of all life, the sexual apocalypse, the industrial management of entertainment, the triumph of the Young-Girl, the appearance of unprecedented and monstrous pathologies, the paranoid isolation of egos, the explosion of acts of gratuitous violence, the fanatical and universal affirmation of a supermarket hedonism, make an elegant litany for paroxysms of all kinds. The trained eye sees nothing in all this to lend credit to some eternal victory of the commodity and its empire of confusion; rather it sees the intensity of the generalized state of patient expectation, a messianic waiting for the catastrophe, for the *moment of truth* which will finally put an end to the unreality of a world of lies. On this point as on many others, it is not superfluous to be Sabbatean.

From the perspective we've taken, the resolute plunge of the masses into immanence, and their uninterrupted flight into insignificance- all things that could make us lose hope for the human race- cease to appear as positive phenomena containing their truth within themselves, and come to be seen as purely negative movements, accompanying our forced exile from of the sphere of meaning, wholly colonized by the Spectacle, from all the figures and forms in which one is permitted to appear, and which expropriate from us the meaning of our acts, and our acts themselves. But this escape is no longer enough, and it must sell off in individual packages the void left by Critical Metaphysics. The New Age, for example, corresponds to its infinitesimal dilution and the burlesque travesty by which commodity society attempts to immunize itself against it. The fact of generalized separation (between the perceptible and superperceptible as well as between humans), the project of restoring the unity of the world, the insistence on the category of totality, the primacy of the mind, and intimate knowledge of human pain combine themselves there, in a calculated fashion, as a new commodity, as new technologies. Buddhism also belongs to the mass of hygienic spiritualities that domination must put to work to save positivism and individualism in whatever form it can, so as to go on a little longer still in its nihilism. In any case *people* resort even to taking up the moth-eaten banner of religions, and *everyone* knows what a useful complement these can be to the reign of all miseries down here on earth – it goes without saying that when a weekly magazine of bigots in sneakers ingenuously worries in covering whether “Will the 21<sup>st</sup> century be religious?” one must read instead: “Will the 21<sup>st</sup> century manage to repress Critical Metaphysics?”; all the “new needs” that late capitalism flatters

itself that it can satisfy, all the hysterical agitation of its employees, and even the expansion of consumer relations into the whole of human life — all that good news that it believes it can give itself that its triumph will be a lasting one thus only show the profundity of its failure, of suffering, and of anxiety. And it is this immense suffering that inhabits so many gazes and hardens so many things, that it must always race breathlessly to *put to work* by degrading into *needs* the fundamental tension of human beings towards the sovereign realization of their virtualities, a tension that grows in proportion to the distance of their separation from them. But their evasion gets exhausted and its underlying effectiveness quickly wanes. Consumerism can longer manage to wipe away the excess of held-back tears. Thus it must put into place selection apparatuses that are ever more ruinous and drastic, so as to exclude from the gear-works of domination those who were unable to destroy any propensity towards humanity in themselves. No one who effectively participates in this society is supposed to fail to know just what it might cost for them to let their true pain be seen in public. But in spite of these machinations suffering nonetheless continues to grow in the forbidden night of intimacy, where it stubbornly gropes for a way to pour out. And since the Spectacle can't prevent it to manifest itself forever, it must ever more often give in and allow it to come out, but only while misrepresenting its expression, by assigning one of its empty objects to the world's mourning, one of those royal mummies it alone holds the secret recipe for the preparation of. But suffering isn't satisfied with such doppelgangers. And so it waits patiently, almost as if lying in wait, for a brutal interruption in the regular course of the horror, where human beings would own up to themselves with an unlimited relief: "We miss



everything unspeakably. We're dying of nostalgia for Being." (Bloy, *Gladiators and Pig-Keeper*s).

It should now certainly be clear to the reader that we are not in any way the inventors of Critical Metaphysics: all we had to do was open our eyes a bit to see that it is plain on the very surface of our times, sketched out in the *hollow imprint* it's left. Critical Metaphysics manifests itself to anyone that decides to live with their eyes open, which only requires a particular stubbornness that *people* usually just pass off as madness. Because Critical Metaphysics is *rage* to such degree of accumulation that it becomes a *viewpoint*. But such a viewpoint, one that has recovered from all the beguilements of modernity, does not know the world as distinct from itself. It *sees* that in their typical forms materialism and idealism have had their day, that "the infinite is as indispensable to man as the planet he lives on" (Dostoevski), and that even where *people* seems to be flourishing in the most satisfied immanence, consciousness is still present, as an inaudible feeling of decay, as *bad conscience*. The Kojevian hypothesis of an "end of History" where man would remain "alive as an animal in accord with his given Nature and Being," where "the post-historical animals of the species *Homo Sapiens* (who [would live] in abundance and total security) [would be] *content* in virtue of their artistic, playful, and erotic activity, since by definition they [would be content in it]," and where discursive knowledge of the world and the self would disappear, has proved to be the Spectacle's utopia, but has revealed itself to be unrealizable as such. There is manifestly no access to the animal condition anywhere for human beings. Naked life is still a *form of life* for

them. The unfortunate “modern man” – we’ll let the oxymoron slide – who had such a virulent need to liberate himself of the burden of freedom, is now starting to perceive that this is impossible, that he cannot renounce his humanity without renouncing *life itself*, that an animalized man is *still not* an animal. Everything, at the end of this era, leads one to believe that man can only survive in an environment that has meaning to it. Nothing shows the extent to which the possibilities that mankind contains themselves tend towards mankind’s realization as does the effort our contemporaries put into distracting themselves from them. Even people’s crimes are dictated by their desire to find an outlet for their capacities. Thus, thinking is not a duty of man, but his essential necessity, the non-fulfillment of which is suffering — that is, a contradiction between his possibilities and his existence. Human beings *physically* wilt when they negate their metaphysical dimension. At the same time, appears clearly that alienation is not a *state* that mankind has definitively been plunged into, but the incessant *activity* that *people* must engage in to remain alienated. The absence of consciousness is but the continual repression of consciousness. Insignificance *still* has meaning. The complete forgetting of the metaphysical character of all existence is certainly a catastrophe, but it is a metaphysical catastrophe. And the same affirmation, even though it’s thirty years old, still reigns in the domain of thought. “Contemporary analytic philosophy is out to exorcize such ‘myths’ or metaphysical ‘ghosts’ as Mind, Consciousness, Will, Soul, Self, by dissolving the intent of these concepts into statements on particular identifiable operations, performances, powers, dispositions, propensities, skills, etc. The result shows, in a strange way, the impotence of the destruction—the ghost continues to haunt.” (Marcuse, One-dimensional

Man). Metaphysics is the specter that has haunted western man over the past five centuries, as he's been trying to drown himself in immanence and has failed to do so.

## ACT THE SECOND:

*"The Truth must be said and the world must be shattered by it."*  
(Fichte).

Even so, the *act* of acknowledging the forgetting of Being, and thus escaping nihilism, can't be taken for granted and couldn't have a rational foundation; *it is a question of ethical decision*. And it's not abstractly, but *concretely* ethical: because in the world of the authoritarian commodity, where the renunciation of thought is the first condition for "fitting in socially," consciousness is immediately an *act*, and an act for which the typical punishment is that *people* will starve you out, whether directly or indirectly, by the gracious service of those you depend on. Now that all the repressive courtrooms where ethics were alienated into morality have fallen to pieces, it has finally become clear what 'ethics' means, in all their original radicalness, which designates it as *the unity of the morals of human beings and their consciousness of them*, and as such the absolute enemy of this world. This could be explained in more decisive terms as follows: you're either fighting for the Spectacle, or for the Imaginary Party; there's nothing in between. All those who could accommodate themselves to a society that accommodates itself so well to inhumanity, all those for whom it already sits well to give the alms of their indifference to their own suffering and that of their peers, all those who speak

of disaster as if it were simply another new market with promising prospects – are not our brothers. Rather we would find their *deaths* highly desirable. And we'd certainly not blame them for not devoting themselves to Critical Metaphysics, which, as a mere discourse, could constitute a particular social object to decide to take up, but for *refusing* to see the truth in it, which, being everywhere, is beyond any particular decision. No alibi holds up in the face of such blindness; a metaphysical aptitude is the most common thing in the world: "you don't need to be a shoemaker to know whether a shoe is going to fit you" (Hegel); in the present conditions, refusing to exercise this aptitude constitutes a permanent crime. And this crime, the denial of the metaphysical character of what exists, has enjoyed such a lasting and generalized complicity that it has become revolutionary merely to *formulate* the a priori principles on which all human experience is based. And here we must recount them; our times should be ashamed of the fact that we have to.

1. Like a disease is obviously not merely the sum of its symptoms, the world is manifestly not the sum of its objects, of "the case at hand," nor of its phenomena, but rather it is a characteristic of humanity itself. The world exists as a world only for mankind. Conversely, there is no *world-less humanity*; Bloom's situation is a transitional abstraction. Each person finds himself always already projected into a world which he experiences as a dynamic totality, and he necessarily goes out into it with a prior understanding of it, however rudimentary it may be. His mere preservation requires that.

2. *The world is a metaphysics*, that is: the way it presents itself first of all, its supposed objective neutrality, its simple material structure, are already part of a certain metaphysical interpretation that constitutes it. The world is always the product of a mode of disclosure that brings things out into presence. Things like the “perceptible” only exist for man relative to man’s superperceptible interpretation of what exists. Obviously, this interpretation does not exist separately; it cannot be found outside of the world, since it itself is what configures the world. Everything visible rests on the invisibility of this representation, which is at the root of that which lets itself be seen, which conceals even in its disclosure. The essence of the visible is thus not something visible. This mode of disclosure, imperceptible as it may be, is far more concrete than all the colorful abstractions that *people* would like to pass off as “reality.” The given is always the posed, its being comes from an original affirmation of the Mind: “the world is my representation.” At their bottom, that is to say in their emergence, humanity and the world coincide.

3. The perceptible and the superperceptible are fundamentally the same, but in a different way. Forgetting one of these two terms and hypostatizing the other renders both of them abstract: “to dispose of the superperceptible is also to suppress the purely sensible and thus the difference between the two.” (Heidegger).

4. Primitive human intuition is but the intuition for representation and imagination. What's called perceptible immediacy comes only after that. "Men start by seeing things only such as they appear to them and not such as they are; by seeing not the things themselves but the idea they have of them." (Feuerbach, *Philosophy of the Future*). The ideology of the "concrete," which in its different versions fetishizes the "real, the "authentic," the "everyday," the "little nothings," the "natural" and other "slices of life," is but the zero-point of metaphysics, the general theory of this world — its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point of pride, its moral sanction, its ceremonial complement, and its universal grounds for consolation and justification.

5. By all evidence, "man is a metaphysical animal" (Schopenhauer). By that it should not only be understood that he is the being for whom the world *makes sense* even in its insignificance, or whose disquiet does not let itself be appeased by anything finished, but quite eminently that all his experience is woven in a fabric *that does not exist*. That's why materialist systems properly so-called, as well as absolute skepticism, have never been able *by themselves* to have a very deep or a very lasting influence. Certainly, man can for long periods of time refuse to consciously engage in metaphysics, and that's most often how he deals with it, but he cannot completely do without it. "Nothing is so portable, if one wants, as metaphysics [...]" And what would be difficult, and even totally impossible, would be to fail to have – would be to not have a metaphysics of one's own, or at least some metaphysics... But it's not just that not everyone has the same one, which is only

too obvious, but not everyone even has the same kind of metaphysics, nor the same degree of metaphysics, nor a metaphysics of the same nature, nor of the same quality." (Peguy, *Situations*).

6. The metaphysical is not the simple negation of the physical; it is, symmetrically, also its foundation and its dialectical transcendence. The prefix meta-, which means both "with" and "beyond", does not imply a disjunction, but an *Aufhebung* in the Hegelian sense. Hence metaphysics is in no way something abstract, because it is the basis for all concreteness; it's what stands behind the physical and makes it possible. It "goes beyond nature to get at what is hidden in it or behind it, but it considers this hidden element only as something appearing in nature, not as something independent of all phenomena" (Schopenhauer). Metaphysics is thus the simple fact that the mode of disclosure and the object disclosed in a primordial sense remain "the same thing." Thus all together it is *experience as experience*, and is only possible on the basis of a *phenomenology of everyday life*.

7. The successive defeats that mechanistic science has for a century ceaselessly mopped up and repressed, both on the battlefield of infinitely great matters and on the battlefield of infinitely small matters, have definitively condemned the project of establishing any physicality without metaphysics. And once again, after so many foreseeable disasters, we must acknowledge along with Schopenhauer that the physical explanation – which, as such,

though it refuses to see it, “needs a *metaphysical* explanation to give it the key to all its presuppositions – [...] clashes everywhere with a metaphysical explanation that suppresses it; that is, one that takes away from it its explanatory character.” “The naturalists try hard to show that all phenomena, even spiritual phenomena, are physical, and in this, they are right; their error is that they don’t see that all physical things equally have a metaphysical side to them.” And we read the following lines as a bitter prophecy: “The greater is the progress made by *physics*, the greater it will make felt a need for a *metaphysics*. In effect, though on the one hand, a more exact, more widespread, and more profound knowledge of nature undermines and ends up overturning the metaphysical ideas ongoing up to then; on the other hand it will serve to give a clearer and more complete perspective on the issue of metaphysics itself, by removing it ever more severely away from its physical environment.”

8. Commodity metaphysics is not just one more metaphysics among others; it is *the* metaphysics, that denies all metaphysics and above all denies itself as metaphysics. It is also why it is, among all, *the most null* of metaphysics, the one that would sincerely like to pass itself as simple physicality. Contradiction, that is, falsehood, is its most durable and distinctive character, the one that affirms so categorically what is but pure negation. The historical period of this metaphysics’ *explanation*, and its nullity, is one of nihilism. But this explanation must itself be explained. Once and for all: there is no commodity world, there is only a commodity perspective on the world.



9. Language is not a system of symbols, but the promise of a reconciliation between words and things. "Its universals are the primary elements in experience; they are not so much philosophical concepts as they are real qualities of the world as we confront it every day. ...Each substantial universal tends to express qualities that surpass all particular experience, but which persist in the mind, not as fictions of the imagination or as logical possibilities, but as the substance, the 'matter' our world is made of." From this it follows that the operation by which a concept designates a reality is simultaneously the negation and the realization of that reality. "Thus the concept of beauty encompasses all the beauty not *yet* realized; the concept of freedom all the freedoms that not *yet* attained." (Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*). Universals have a *normative* character, which is why nihilism has declared war on them. "The *ens perfectissimum* is at the same time the *ens realissimum*. The more a thing is perfected, the more it really is." (Lukacs, *Soul and Form*). What is excellent is more *real*, more *general* than the mediocre, because it realizes its essence more fully: a specific concept does indeed *unify* a specific variety, but it unifies it by aristocratizing it. Critical thought is thought that brings about an exit from nihilism, starting from a profane transcendence of language and the world. What is transcendental to critical thought is *that the world exists*, and what is unspeakable is *that there is a language there*. There is an uncommon faculty of conflagration to a consciousness that spends its time on the edges of such nothingness, gazing into its abyss. Every time it finds that language to communicate itself, history will be marked by it. What's essential is to concentrate our efforts in that direction. Language is both what's at stake and the stage

that the decisive part of this will be played out on. "It will always only be about knowing whether we can reconcile speech and life, and how." (Brice Parain, *On Dialectics*).

10. The basis for the "categorical imperative to overturn all the conditions in which man is a humiliated, enslaved, abandoned, and contemptible being" (Marx) can only be a definition of man as a metaphysical being; that is, a being open to the *experience* of meaning. Not even Hans Jonas, that earthworm of intelligence, who will remain one as long as he exists, has failed to recognize this: "Philosophically, metaphysics has fallen into disgrace in our days, but we could not do without it — so we'll have to risk going into it anew. Because only metaphysics is capable of telling us *why* man must exist, and thus does not have the right to provoke his disappearance from the world or to permit it by simple negligence; and also *how* man must be so as to honor and not betray the reason by virtue of which he must exist. . .thus we have a renewed need for metaphysics, which must, with its vision, arm us against blindness" (*On the ontological foundations of a ethics of the future*).

11. We mention in passing that reality is the unity of meaning and life.

12. All that is separated remembers that it was once unified, but the object of this memory is in the future. "The mind is what finds itself, and thus what had gotten lost" (Hegel).

13. Human freedom has never consisted of being able to go, come, and pass the time as one pleases- this is more suitable for animals, which *people* thus say, very significantly, are "at liberty" – but in giving *oneself* form, in realizing the figure one contains, or *wants*. Being means keeping your word. All of human life is but a bet on transcendence.

*People* could, in the past, treat such pronouncements with the special and amused contempt that philistines have always reserved for considerations apparently deprived of any effectiveness. But meanwhile, the metamorphoses of domination have conferred upon them an unpleasantly quotidian concreteness. The definitive and historic collapse of really existing liberalism in 1914 cornered commodity society; revolutionary assaults were making manifest, in all western countries, the incapacity of the economic perspective to fathom the *whole* of man, and finally to ensure the abstract reproduction of its relations. Thus in order to keep the *fiction* of that liberalism

feeling obvious, it had to colonize all the spheres of meaning, the whole territory of appearances and finally, as well, the whole field of imaginary creation, at first in a state of emergency and then methodically. In a few words, it had to infest the whole of the continent of metaphysics in order to ensure its hegemony over all of the earth. Certainly, the simple fact that the very moment of its apogee, the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was dominated not by harmony, but by an absolute, and absolutely false, hostility between the figures of the Artist and the Bourgeois, was in itself sufficient proof of its impossibility, but it took the great disasters that washed over the first decades of this century to fill its absurdity with enough pain to actually make the whole edifice of civilization itself appear to shake. Commodity domination then learned from those who were against it that it couldn't content itself anymore with seeing man simply as a worker, an inert factor in production, but that to remain what it was, it was going to have to organize the whole of everything that stretched outside the sphere of material production as well. However repugnant it may have seemed at the time to it, it had to impose a brusque *accelerando* on society's socialization process, and lay hands on everything it had denied the existence of up to then, all that it had disdainfully written off as "non-productive activity", "private fantasy", art and "metaphysics." In the space of a few years, and at first without significant resistance, Publicity had entirely given itself over to the arbitrary power of the spectacular protectorate – it is a general fact that the undertaking of ancient offensives is rarely recognized when they make use of totally new means. Since the commodity interpretation of the world had been revealed in acts to be insane, *people* undertook to put it *into* the very heart of all acts. Once commodity mysticism, which *formally* and *externally* postulated

the general equivalence of everything, and the universal interchangeability of all, proved itself to be a pure negation, a morbid official takeover, *people* resolved to make all things *really* equivalent, and beings *inwardly* exchangeable. Since the systematic liquidation of all that contained a hidden transcendence in its immediacy (communities, ethos, values, language, history) put humanity in a place where it was dangerously likely to make demands for freedom, *people* decided to industrially produce cheap transcendences, and to hawk them priced like gold. We stand at the other extreme of this long night of aberration. Because even as it was its failure that in the past created the basis for the infinite extension of the world of the economy, the contemporary accomplishment of this universal extension carries the announcement of its upcoming collapse.

This critical *realization* process of the ever-impooverished commodity metaphysics has been referred to variously as “Total Mobilization” by Junger, as the “Great Transformation” by Polanyi, or the “Spectacle” by Debord. For the time being the lattermost concept remains indisputably one of the war machines it pleases us to use, as a *Figure* that transversely penetrates all the spheres of social activity — one where *the object revealed merges with its mode of disclosure*. Though the Figure can’t be deduced simply from its manifestations, since it is at their very root, it could nonetheless be useful to take note at least of some of the most superficial of them. So in the 1920s, advertising took it upon itself to inculcate the Blooms with “a new philosophy of existence,” in the terms of its first ideologues, Walter Pitkin and Edward Filene; to present to them the world of consumerism as

"the world of acts" with the declared intention of thwarting the communist offensive. The adjusted production of cultural commodities and their massive circulation – the lightning deployment of the movie industry is a good example of this – was responsible for tightening up the control over joyous behavior, spreading lifestyles adapted to the new demands of capitalism, and above all spreading the illusion of their viability. Urbanism was responsible for building a physical environment commanded by the commodity *Weltanschauung*. The formidable development of the means of communication and transportation in these years began concretely abolishing space and time, which had put up such annoying resistance to the universal putting into equivalence of all things. The mass media then initiated the process by which little by little they concentrated together into an autonomous monopoly on the production of meaning. Then they had to extend over the whole realm of the visible a particular mode of disclosure, the essence of which is that it confers upon the ruling state of things an unshakeable objectivity, and thus models on the scale of the whole human race a relationship with the world based on a postulated approval of what exists. It should also be noted that it was at that time that the first literary mentions of the repressive function of the Young-Girl were made, by Proust, Kraus, or Gombrowicz. It was among their contemporaries, after all, that there began to appear in the productions of the mind the figure of Bloom, so recognizable in the work of Valéry, Kafka, Musil, Michaux or Heidegger.

This terminal phase of commodity modernity appears in a necessarily contradictory light, because in its process *it denies itself*

*while realizing itself.* On the one hand, at this stage each of its advances contributes a little more to the destruction of its own foundation — the negation of metaphysics, in other words the strict disconnect between the perceptible and the superperceptible. With the virtually infinite extension of the world of experience, “the speculations...tend to obtain an increasingly realistic content; on technological grounds, the metaphysical tends to become physical.” (Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*). The separation of the perceptible and the superperceptible is ever further undermined by the new productions of industry. “the marvellous and the positive (contract) an astonishing alliance, the two old enemies swearing to engage us in a race of unlimited transformations and surprises ...The real no longer has a clear end. Place, time, and matter permit unanticipated liberties. Precision breeds dreams. Dreams take body. . .The fabulous is today to be found in business. The manufacture of marvel-making provides the livelihood of the thousands,” remarked Valéry in 1929, with all the disarming naivety of a time when the meaning of life had not yet become just another consumer product in the shopping cart, just the most hackneyed sales pitch. Even when the total realization of abstraction – in the mimetic behavior of hip youth, the televised image, or the new city – makes obvious to everyone the clearly physical character of metaphysics, Biopower, a differentiated moment of the Spectacle, shamefully admits the *political* character – and there is a “metaphysical nugget present in all politics” (Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*) – of the rawest physicality, of “bare life.” Underneath this relationship is a process of reunification between the perceptible and the superperceptible, meaning and life, the mode of disclosure and the object revealed; that implies commodity society’s complete

disavowal of its very basis, but at the same time such reunification only operates *on the terrain of their separation itself*. It follows that this pseudo-reconciliation is not a passage of each of these terms through each other and onto a superior level, but rather their suppression pure and simple, which brings them together not as united, but as separate. So much so, that on its flipside the Spectacle presents itself as the realization of commodity metaphysics, as the realization of nothingness. The commodity here effectively becomes the form in which all manifestations of life appear, the objective form itself both of object and subject – love, for example, appears from now on as a regulated exchange of orgasms, favors, sentiments, where each contracting party is ideally to benefit *equally*. The Spectacle is no longer content to externally tie together processes independent of it by monetary mediations. The commodity, that “superperceptible yet perceptible thing” (Marx), transforms into something *perceptible yet superperceptible*. It imposes itself *in reality* as the “universal category of total social being” (Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*). Little by little, its “ghostly objectivity” comes to drape itself over all that exists. At this point, the commodity interpretation of the world, the only content of which is the affirmation of the quantitative replaceability of all things, that is to say the negation of all qualitative differences and all real determinations, reveals itself to be *the negation of the world*. The principle according to which “everything has a price” was certainly always the morbid refrain of nihilism before it became the global hymn of the economy. Also, and this is an everyday experience that no one can escape, putting this interpretation of the world into acts would consist exclusively in taking away all the qualities of everything, purging every being of all particular



meaning, and reducing everything to the non-differentiated identity of general equivalence – in a word, to nothing. There's no more this or that; and singularity remains but an illusion. What appears now no longer arrogates to itself any higher organic nature, but gives itself over with infinite abandon to the simple fact of being, without being anything. Under the effect of this rising disaster, the world has ended up starting to look like just a chaos of empty forms. All the pronouncements made above, which *people* thought were safely cut off from having any possible effectiveness, take form in the ensembles of a tangible, oppressive, and, to put it plainly, diabolical reality. In the Spectacle, the metaphysical character of existence is taken as a obvious, central fact: the world has become *visibly* metaphysical. Even the narrowest of minds, whose custom it always was to hide in their comfortable sense of objectivity – whether it's rainy weather or nice out – can't even be spoken of without immediately evoking the decline of industrial society. There, the light has solidified, the incomprehensible mode of disclosure that *produces* all being-there has become *incarnate as such*, that is to say independent of all content, in a sprawling sector of social activity all its own. That which makes things visible itself becomes visible there. Phenomena, by autonomizing themselves from what they manifest, that is by manifesting no more than nothingness, immediately thus appear *as phenomena*. The surroundings man exists in, the metropolis, itself proves to be a mere "linguistic formation, a constituted framework comprised above all of objectivized discourses, pre-established codes, materialized grammars." (Virno, *The Labyrinths of Language*). In the end, since "communicative action" is becoming the very material used in productive activity, the *reality* of language falls among the number

of things that can be experienced in a mere leisurely way. In this sense, the Spectacle is the final figure of metaphysics, where it objectivizes itself *as such*, becomes visible and shows itself to man as material evidence for the fundamental alienation of the Common. In these conditions, *man's metaphysical dimension escapes him, confronts him and oppresses him*. But just as well, before man becomes completely and totally alienated he cannot *concretely* comprehend it, or consequently hope to reappropriate it for himself. The darkest days give us the greatest hope, precisely because they will come on the eve of victories.

“It would be ridiculous to reproach chewing gum for being an affront to metaphysics’ good taste, but one could probably show that Wrigley’s profits and their Chicago palace were due to its operation of a social function consisting in the reconciliation of men with their impoverished conditions of existence and dissuading them from criticizing them. **It’s a matter of explaining that chewing gum, far from being harmful to metaphysics, is itself metaphysical.**”

(Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*)

As soon as the economy becomes flesh, it must perish like all living things. It falls under the hard law of the mortal realm, and knows it. In the overthrow of all things, in the chasms that we see opening up everywhere, we can already see the hints of its impending shipwreck. Commodity domination has now

embarked upon an endless, hopeless war to put up obstacles to the necessity of this process. It's no longer a question of whether it will die, but of when it will die. Life within such an order, which has as its only ambition anymore just to last a little bit longer, is distinguished by the extreme sadness attached to all its manifestations. Here, the survival of commodity domination, which is but the prolongation of its death agony, is hanging from a thin thread: it must ensure that the visible not be *seen*, and thus must carry out an ever more brutal takeover of the totality. It can only exercise its sovereignty under the constant threat that *people* might make its metaphysical character explicit, and that it might be recognized for what it is: it is a tyranny, and the most mediocre tyranny that ever was — the tyranny of servitude. Everywhere, domination's efforts to maintain a particular interpretation of the world that when realized finds that it is itself subject to interpretation end up more and more tending towards brute force. Certainly, the naturalization of the commodity mode of disclosure required a constant dose of violence towards humans and things in the past. It had to raze, intern, enslave, confine, brutalize or imprison in camps the whole mass of phenomena that contradicted commodity nihilism. For the others, suffering teaches everyone how to see them only from the point of view of reification, utility, and separation, and generalized equivalence, over the whole course of their lives, in an uninterrupted manner. But now a new configuration of hostilities is coming about. Commodity domination can no longer limit itself to merely keeping its contradictions in a frozen state, getting alienation, corruption and exile taken for granted by everyone, and repressing any aspirations Man might have to Being. It must make its progress a forced march, though every step it takes towards its

perfection only brings it closer to the moment of its collapse. With Biopower, which, under the cover of ameliorating, simplifying and extending “life,” “form,” or “health,” leads to the total social control of behavior, it has played its last card: by supporting its whole weight on the cardinal illusion of common sense, the immediacy of the body, it ended up destroying it. After that, everything is ambiguous now. Bloom’s own body appears like a foreign jurisdiction that he inhabits against his will. By buying its further survival at the price of putting the metaphysical *to work for it*, commodity domination has robbed this terrain of its neutrality, which alone guaranteed its victorious advancement: it made metaphysics into a *material force*. Every bit of progress it makes must henceforth be responded to by a substantial rebellion that will oppose its *faith* head on, and which will proclaim in one tone or another that humanity “can only be revived by a metaphysical act of reawakening the spiritual element that created or maintained it in its earlier or ideal existence” (Lukacs). And so the commodity order, which is taking on water everywhere, will have to *physically* eliminate, one by one, all extremism or sects, every independent metaphysical universe that may manifest itself, until the unification and victory of the Imaginary Party. All the individuals that refuse to wallow in its half-starved immanence, in the nothingness of entertainment, all those who are too slow to renounce their own most human attributes, and in particular to renounce any concerns beyond mere being-there, will be excluded, banished, and starved out. For the others, they must be maintained in an ever more vicious fear. More than ever, “the holders of power live haunted by the terrifying idea that not only some handful of loners, but entire masses might one day free themselves of their fear: this would be their certain downfall. It’s

also the real reason for their rage in the face of any and all doctrines of transcendence. There's a supreme danger hidden there: that man might lose his fear. There are places on the earth where the word 'metaphysics' itself is hunted down as a heresy." (Junger, *Crossing the Line*). In this final metamorphosis of the social war, where it's no longer mere classes, but "metaphysical castes" (Lukacs, *On the Poverty of Mind*) that enter into conflict with one another, it is inevitable that men – first a few at a time, and then in their vast numbers – will gather together with an *explicit project: to POLITICIZE METAPHYSICS*. From now on, those that do so are signals of the coming insurrection of the Mind.

## **ACT THE THIRD:**

*"It is necessary to take a position where destruction is not seen as the end goal, but as the precursor."* (Junger, *The Worker*)

At the moment in the spectacle when commodity domination reveals its metaphysics, and reveals itself *to be* metaphysical, its real past and present contestation comes back onto the stage and reveals itself as such. It is then that its relatedness to messianic movements, millenarianisms, mysticisms, the heresies of the past or even with Christians before Christianity appears. All "modern" revolutionary thought settles before our very eyes into the encounter between German Idealism and the concept of *Tiqqun*, which in the Lurianic Kabbalah refers to a *process* – one of redemption, of the restoration of unity between meaning and life, the repair of all things *by the action of human beings*. As for its

supposed “modernity,” that in the end it was but the repression of its fundamentally metaphysical character. Thence the ambiguity of the work of a Marx or a Lukacs, for example. As a rule, the Spectacle, where we saw the *conceptual* violence of idealism change into *real*, even *physical* violence, repudiates as “idealist” this very aspect of the thinking of those it didn’t manage to suppress soon enough. That is a solid criteria to judge pseudo-contestation’s consequent criticisms, which are always allied with this society in their relentless evacuation of all the Unspeakable out of the politically expressible. Such bastards can unfailingly be recognized by their rage to understanding nothing, see nothing, and understand nothing. As long as they live, anxiety, suffering, the experience of nothingness, the feeling of foreignness to everything – as well as the innumerable manifestations of human negativity – will be expelled from the gates of Publicity, either with a smile or with a team of riot police. As long as they live, *people* will consider them null and void. The historic window opening at present is the psychological moment that will bring to light the content of truth, that is, the power of devastation, in all past and present critique. Since commodity domination has come to fight openly on the metaphysical battlefield, its contestation will have to place itself on that battlefield as well. This is a necessity which has as little in common with the good will of militants as it does with the resolve of their cardboard theoreticians: it has to do with the fact that this society needs that conflict in order to have something to employ all its accumulated technological powers in. Once again we’re in a high-speed chase where we can’t just be content to apply critique, but must begin by creating it. It’s about making criticism *possible*, and nothing else. Thus, Critical Metaphysics isn’t just another object jumping

up on the world stage in all its definitive splendor; it is what elaborates itself and will elaborate itself in the fight against the present order. *Critical Metaphysics is the determined negation of commodity domination.*

Whether this negation manifests itself without betraying itself or whether its forces will be hijacked once again to serve the calculated spread of disaster has nothing to do with necessity; it depends on the melancholic decision made by a few free elements bound together by their determination to make a *practical* use of their consciousness, in other words, to sow in the world of the Spectacle a Terror that is the inverse of the terror that reigns at present. However, the simple fact that, faced with a reality that has taken such a perfectly systematic turn, it can no longer be contested in its details, leaves no room for ambiguity about the terrible radicalness of our era. Critique has no choice but to seize things by the roots; and the root of man is his metaphysical essence. So, when domination consists in *occupying* Publicity, building a world of facts piece by piece, a system of conventions and a mode of perception independent of any relations other than its own, its enemies recognize one another in their double ambition to destroy the aura of familiarity in what still passes for “reality” by revealing it to be a mere construct, and to set up symbolic spaces in the recesses of the present semiocratic tyranny, autonomous from the state of public explanation and foreign to it, but with as much a claim to universal validity as it has. We must everywhere contradict *People*. And that’s what we’re working on, according to our own penchants, when we reveal the Young-Girl as a *political* coercion apparatus, the economy as a ritual of black

magic, Bloom as a criminal saintliness, the Imaginary Party as the bearer of a hostility as invisible as it is absolute, or the corner bakery as a supernatural apparition. It is above all about bringing out, in everything *people* say, in everything *people* do, and in everything *people* see, its natural unreality factor. This world will cease to be so monstrous when it ceases to be taken for granted. And so the whole of our theory is written in everyday life, where it must obtain, still and forever, all the familiar things that is our duty to render disturbing. Our maniacal interest for “miscellaneous events” could be related to this, because in them is the habitual itself uprooting itself from normal habit, the varnish on which thus suddenly fades away. The lucid and blind violence of a Kipland Kinkel or an Alain Oreiller is a testimony what happens when one takes a lethal doses of the *negative* truth of man, that a well-planned, everyday banality is invariably asphyxiating. Up to a certain point in this offensive language comprises the field of battle; what we’re doing is burying *mines* all over it. This isn’t an arbitrary choice; it’s based on the observation that domination, which was *forced* to infest it, will never be at ease there. Though in certain aspects the economy’s present effectiveness and its apparent durability are based on a free manipulation of signs, and their operative reduction to signals, it is just as clear that the definitive success of this reduction will be its death. So that domination can still handle them as its vehicles, the signs must contain some meaning, that is to say a transcendence which in one way or another goes beyond the present state of things and the threat of nullity. And there is a contradiction there, an open wound, that if it were exploited malevolently enough could bring about the downfall of domination. We’ll provide for that.



Critical Metaphysics, in many aspects, pursues and completes the steady undermining successfully carried on by nihilism for five centuries. The consistency with which all simple faith in reality found itself, piece by piece, to be first shaken, then damaged, and finally destroyed, is not unfamiliar to it; it feels no regrets about helping that process. Critical Metaphysics has no vocation for procuring a new and refined type of consolation for humanity. Rather, its watchword is: GENERALIZE DISQUIET. Critical Metaphysics itself is this inquiet, which can no longer be understood as a weakness, or as a vulnerability, but as the origin of *all strength*. It is not there to bring security to the weak in need of help, but to lead them into battle. It is like a weapon; whoever seizes it can decide who it's going to serve. In each life that remains in contact with Being there is a devastating power; and *people* have no idea just how intense that power can be. The struggle against the real, taken up before us by so many others, is getting close to being won, but by the enemy. That's why, on our wrong-headed path, we consider the preliminary to *everything* the pulverization of the last palpable structure for the apprehension of what exists: the quantitative abstract form of the commodity, which "for the reified" has become "the form in which its own authentic immediacy becomes manifest and – as reified consciousness- does not even attempt to transcend it. On the contrary, it is concerned to make it permanent by 'scientifically deepening' the laws at work" (Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*). Rendering the wisdom of the world insane is indisputably part of our program, but that's only the first step. Critical Metaphysics, rather, is "the spiritual movement that takes nihilism as its terrain and models itself on it, reflecting it into

Being," (Junker, *Treatise of the Rebel*), that necessary force that intends to reverse commodity hegemony by revealing it to be *metaphysical*. Only that act of reflecting reality and manifesting it as a mere interpretation, a construct, by merely showing that the essence of nihilism is not at all nihilist, already advances *beyond* nihilism. Everywhere it exposes its viewpoint, Critical Metaphysics marks being-there with signs contrary to the dominant convention. All reality which it is brought to bear upon brusquely changes its meaning, and its proportions are inverted: what had always appeared to be a few mere *remains* on the margins of the Spectacle proves to be the most real thing, what *people* had always thought of as the very world itself is rendered to its miniscule misery, that which appears firmly established begins to totter, what seemed to be of such airy consistency acquires a rock-hard presence. Thus Critical Metaphysics reveals the insignificance to which all being-there is reduced in the Spectacle, that false unity of meaning and life (false because it is abstract) – not as an insignificant fact, but as a *political* situation of servitude, a *concrete* form of social oppression. In so doing, it puts this insignificance into possession of a multiplied reality that nothing in this world can lay claim to. But what it pushes into presence, and makes audible and thus real, is really all the non-identity that had been repressed to the feeble light of the infraspectacular world, everything that was neither expressible nor admissible in the dominant mode of disclosure. By starting from nothingness, Critical Metaphysics creates a truer, more compact, and looser fullness than the apparent fullness of the Spectacle: the fullness of dereliction, the absoluteness of disaster. In revealing to human suffering its political significance, it abolishes it as such and makes it the harbinger of a superior state. This goes equally well for

anxiety, where what exists itself goes beyond what exists: once this experience is driven into the heart of Publicity, the finite as such falls apart and comes back together as a *sign* of the infinite. But the transfiguration that Critical Metaphysics is synonymous with operates first of all in man dispossessed of all that he'd believed was his own, in Bloom, who thus recognizes the nothingness left for him to share in as the only thing really of his own that he's ever had: his indestructible metaphysical faculty. The idea of the Imaginary Party, hence, gives form to that residue, to that *remainder*, to non-coincidence, to everything that falls outside of the universal plane of the economy, forced takeover, and Total Mobilization. Thus, Critical Metaphysics is the doctrine of transcendence which alone permits a liberation from and annihilation of this world, draws up the prologue for all future insurrections, and affirms itself as the *determined* negation of commodity domination, and simultaneously it *already* contains, in its present manifestations, the positive transcendence that goes beyond the zones of destruction. "Each man," it says, "exercises a certain intellectual activity, adopts a vision of the world, follows a conscious line of moral conduct, and thus contributes to the defense and victory of a certain vision of the world." (Gramsci, *Intellectuals and the Organization of Culture*). Consequently Critical Metaphysics will come to impose itself as an always more inflexible and virulent injunction to each Bloom to become conscious of the worldview underlying his lifestyle, then, either rejecting or appropriating it, to recognize his peers and adversaries, and thus, fundamentally, to awaken to the world. We won't grant anyone the leisure of failing to understand the importance of their existence. Everything is bound to everything else. We will make people lose even their *taste* for consumption.

Critical Metaphysics is thus not content to consider everything from the point of view of *Tiqqun*, in other words of the unity of the world, the final realization of all things, the immanence of meaning in life; it *produces* that unity, this realization and this immanence in its practical and exemplary character. It is itself part of the world of *Tiqqun*. In its everyday existence, Critical Metaphysics is the perspective from which the Beautiful, the Good and the True have already ceased to be contradictorily perceived. Because nihilism is the “provisional loss of the opening where a certain interpretation of being-there constitutes itself as interpretation” (Junker) and Critical Metaphysics presents itself as a general injunction to determine oneself *starting from* the metaphysical character of the world, it constitutes by its own trajectory the *fulfillment* and the *transcendence* of nihilism; that is, in the words of Heidegger – that old swine – “The Appropriation of metaphysics,” “The Appropriation of the forgetting of Being.” In the first place it’s about distancing yourself from the world as it is in representation; it “appears at first as a transcendence of metaphysics... But what happens in the appropriation of metaphysics, and there alone, is rather that the truth of metaphysics comes flooding back, the lasting truth of an apparently repudiated metaphysics, which is nothing else but its henceforth reappropriated *essence*: its *Dwelling*. What’s happening here is something different from a restoration of metaphysics,” (Heidegger, Contribution to the Question of Being).

“On Saturday, she’d left work while saying to her colleagues, as if it were a joke: ‘I’m leaving a little early today, I’m going to go throw myself into the Seine.’ The body of this resident of Villeneuve-Le-Roi (Val-de-Marine), 45 years of age, was recovered

from the river yesterday morning by firemen.” (Libération, Monday November 30, 1998)

For the community of critical metaphysicians, there is now nothing more *concrete* than this Appropriation and this Dwelling, even if they still provisionally present themselves in the form of problems to solve, rather than as immediately given solutions. To whatever extent they can within the constraints imposed on them by this society, they are doubtless now building, somewhere in the crevices of the metropolises, a really – that is, *collectively* – practiced *ethos* where “Metaphysics (is) part of the everyday practice of life” (Artaud). One would be wrong to see this as a comfortable alternative to taking up arms and going on the attack. Contrary to what certain hasty leftists would have us believe, in the current conditions, the immediate issue for revolutionary practice is not direct struggle against commodity domination, since that unavoidably crumbles away, “and what crumbles away may crumble away, but it cannot be destroyed.” (Kafka) Thus one must instead leave that old whore to decompose insipidly, and prepare for the moment to come to deliver a fatal blow it can’t recover from; this means uniting, by any means necessary, all the particular forces currently confronting commodity hegemony — in other words, *building the Imaginary Party*. Solely because of the fact that “in a world of lies, lies cannot be eliminated by their opposite, but only by a world of truth” (Kafka), those whose vocation is but to destroy have no choice but to work for the formation, in the infra-spectacular space, of such “worlds of truth” if nevertheless they intend to become something other than the sworn professionals of social contestation. Among the ruins, the positive elaboration of forms of life, community and affectivity independent and superior to the icy waters of

spectacular morals is an act of sabotage where the power capable of defeating the *imperium* of abstraction acts without appearing. It thus comprises the *sine qua non* condition for all effective contestation, because unless they gather into mental families, those opposed to this society have *zero* chance of survival. Nevertheless, nothing will be able to prevent the critical metaphysicians from rallying to all agitation that explicitly attacks commodity domination, and fomenting some of their own too. We will never give up disrupting the dreary ceremony of the world. But such acts on our part will be falsely understood if without the understanding that they make sense only in the broader construction of a lifestyle that *war* has a place in. The peaceful coexistence of universal mutual ridicule, which makes our times such a strong emetic, is one of those things we intend to bring to a bloody end. It is intolerable that truth and falsehood go on living at peace with one another. The mutual compromise of so many viscerally irreconcilable metaphysics, in the baroque pay-toilet of the Spectacle, is one of the means at the enemy's command for breaking down even the liveliest of minds. Human beings will have to agree to express their disagreements, trace out the clear borders between the different metaphysical homelands, and thus put an end to the world of confusion, where no one can recognize their brothers nor their enemies anymore. The interminable disputation of theologians comprises a model for social life. The utopia of Tlön does not displease us. We grant no laurels to the love of those who were never able to hate, nor to the peace of those who have never done battle. Therefore, in daring to act in such a way as to make "the utopian rejection of the conventional world objectivizes itself in a likewise existent reality, so that polemical refusal actually becomes the central form of the work"

(Lukacs, Theory of the Novel), our search for chances to quarrel with those whose metaphysics are objectively adverse to ours is no less important than is our quest to find our brothers dispersed in Exile. The object of authentic community can only be the conscious construction of the Common itself, that is to say the creation of the world, or, to be more exact, the creation of *a* world. This is why critical metaphysicians are so particularly concerned with composing, *together*, the true alphabet whose application gives meaning to things, beings, and discourses; in other words with reconstituting a hidden order within reality, where what exists would cease to drown them and at last present itself in the familiar form of figures, rather than as faces, in Gombrowicz' sense. It's about elevating elective affinity up to the free construction of a common mode of reality-disclosure. We must make our individual perceptions and our moral sentiments a *collective creation*. Such is the task. But here we can already feel – along with an *objective* feeling of evil – an inexorable shiver of vice, like one gets when fucking a Young-Girl, or shopping in a supermarket. In each of our enemies, the postmodernist, the Young-Girl, the sociologist, the manager, the bureaucrat, the artist or the intellectual, all defects that can easily all come together in just one scumbag, we see only their metaphysics. Our “power of voluntary hallucination” has gone beyond such a degree of coherence to where now everything speaks to us of what we are doing – and that's just what our messianic era is all about: *the re-absorption of the element of time in the element of meaning*. Those who believe they can build a new world without building a new language are fooling themselves: the whole of this world is contained in its language. Ours does not hide its imperialist vocations any more than any other does: all poetry, all thought, all

imagination that doesn't manage to become effective, when that becomes *possible*, doesn't even rise above the pathetic rank of cutesy crap. Roger Gilbert-Lecomte gives this observation an expression we find perfectly suitable: "the birth of concrete thought (experimental metaphysics), by drawing upon the vision in its artistic expression, will transform its knowledge into power." He has also remarked that "the experimental metaphysician bets on his disequilibrium, which gives him various different perspectives on reality." Quite true. A world made of ideas is also a world at the mercy of ideas, as long as they rule arbitrarily. The matter that absorbs us, in sum, is the realization of the *concrete* utopia of a world where each of the great metaphysics, each of the great "languages of creation", among which there can be "no overtaking nor doubling" (Peguy) can finally and in the full sense of the word *inhabit* the world, come into a kingdom of its own, and lose itself unrestrainedly in inexhaustible holy wars, schisms, sects and heresies, where the immanence of meaning in life will be rediscovered, where language will draw upon Being and Being language, where the metaphysical will no longer be a discourse, but the fecund tissue of existence, where each community will be another unique space within a reappropriated common, where man, giving up disguising his insoluble relationship with the world with the stupid and crude lie of private property, will truly open himself to the experience of anguish, ecstasy, and abandon. Life does not delight in our consciousness of it and its form is still experienced as suffering; this shows that we are living in times nearing their end. As for us, we announce a world where man will espouse his destiny as the tragic play of his freedom. There is no life more properly human than that. Doubtless the critical-metaphysicians



carry in their unreason the outcome of the disaster. And even if we must succumb to the powers that this world will have unleashed against us, we will have at least presaged that happy time when there will be no more metaphysics, because all men will be metaphysicians, living bearers of the Absolute. Then we'll understand that up to now *nothing's happened*.

# **THEORY OF BLOOM**

How could that which PEOPLE have essentially dispossessed of all appearance ever appear *as such* in the Spectacle?

It is Bloom's fate to never be *visible* except to the extent that he participates in poor substantiality, that is, only to the extent that he disowns himself as Bloom.

All the radicalness of the figure of Bloom is concentrated in the fact that the choice he finds himself permanently faced with has on the one side the best and on the other side the worst, with no transition zone between the two accessible to him. He is the neutral core that casts a light on the analogical relationship between the highest point and the lowest point. His lack of interest can comprise a great opening to *agapê*, or the desire to simply operate like a gear in a technocratic extermination enterprise, for instance. In the same way, an absence of personality can prefigure the transcendence of the classical petrified personality, as well as the terminal inconsistency of the metropolitan *hipster*.

There is the "*me ne frego*" [I don't give a damn] of fascism, and there is the "*me ne frego*" of the insurgent. There is the banality of evil, and there is also the *banality of good*. But in circumstances of domination, Bloom's banality always manifests itself as the banality of evil. Thus, for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bloom would have been Eichmann much more than Elser (1); as for Eichmann, Hannah Arendt tells us, "it was obvious to everyone that he was not a 'monster,'" and that "one couldn't help thinking that he was really a clown." It should be mentioned in passing that there is *no* difference in their nature between Eichmann — who identified *purely and completely* with his criminal function, and the *hipster*

who, unable to assume his fundamental non-belonging to the world, nor the consequences of an exile situation, devotes himself to the frenetic consumption of the *symbols* of belonging that this society sells so expensively. But in a more general sense, everywhere PEOPLE talk about “economy,” the banality of evil prospers. And it is there peeking out from under the allegiances of all kinds that men swear to “necessity,” “doin’ alright,” to the “that’s the way it is” by way of “all work is honorable.”

And it is there that the extreme reaches of unhappiness begin, when all commitments are replaced by the commitment to surviving. And commitment / attachment is thus stripped naked. With no object but itself. Hell.

# THE INNER MAN

The pure exteriority of the conditions of existence also form the illusion of pure interiority.

Bloom is that being who has taken up into himself the emptiness that surrounds him.

Hunted out of any place of his own, he *himself* has become a place.

Banished from the world, he has *become* a world.

It was not in vain that Paul, the Gnostics, and later on the Christian mystics drew a distinction between the inner man and outer man, because in Bloom this separation has taken place *historically*.

The marginal condition of those who, like Ruysbroeck the Admirable's inner man, feel "more inwardly inclined than outwardly inclined," who live "anywhere at all, and among anyone at all, in the depths of solitude... sheltered from multiplicity, sheltered from places, sheltered from men," has since then become the *common* condition.

However, it is a rare person who, having experienced it *positively*, has had the strength to *want* it. Pessoa:

*"To create myself, I destroyed myself; I exteriorized myself so totally within myself that inside myself I only exist outwardly. I am the living stage over which various actors pass, playing various theater pieces."*

But for the time being if Bloom resembles this inner man it's most often only in a negative manner. The non-essential interior of his personality hardly contains more than the feeling that he's found himself to be pulled along on an endless fall towards an underlying dark and all-enveloping space, as if he were ceaselessly jumping off into himself while disintegrating. Drop by drop, in uniform beads, his very being oozes, rushes away, and bleeds out. His interiority is less and less a space or a substance, and more and more a *threshold* and its passage.

And this is also what makes Bloom fundamentally a free *spirit*, because he is an empty spirit.

**"Whoever would thus leave himself behind shall truly be returned to himself"**

Meister Eckhart

The ecstatic "essence" of Bloom is expressed as follows:

IN EVERYTHING THAT HE IS,

BLOOM IS *OUTSIDE OF HIMSELF*.

In the empire of Biopower and autonomous publicity — the tyranny of the impersonal, of what PEOPLE say, do, or think — the ecstatic structure of human existence becomes manifest in the form of a generalized schizoid state. Each person now distinguishes between his "true self," something pure, detached from all objectifiable manifestations, and the system of his "false self," social, acted, constrained, inauthentic.

In each of his determinations — in his body, in his “qualities,” in his gestures, in his language — Bloom clearly feels that he is leaving himself behind, that he *has left* himself behind. And he *contemplates* that egress. And he *is* that wandering among those attributes, in that contemplation.

His becoming is a becoming-foreign.

Léon Bloy, in his time, compared the capitalist to the mystic; his *The Blood of the Poor* dedicates a good number of pages to a rather free interpretation of the “fetishistic character of the commodity”:

*“This money, which is but the visible figure of the blood of Christ circulating through all his limbs,” “far from loving it for its material enjoyment, which he deprives himself of, (the greedy man) adores it in spirit and in truth, like the Saints adore the God that gives them their duty of penitence and their martyrs’ glory. He adores it for the sake of those who do not adore it; he suffers in the place of those who do not wish to suffer for money. The greedy are mystics! Everything they do is done in view of pleasing an invisible God whose visible and so laboriously sought-after simulacrum showers them in tortures and ignominy.”*

If the capitalist is similar to the mystic in his activity, Bloom is similar to the mystic in his *passivity*. And in fact, nothing resembles Bloom’s existential situation better than the *detachment* of the mystics. His reified consciousness effectuates upon it a definite propensity towards contemplation, whereas his indifference corresponds to that “honorable detachment (that is) none other than the fact that the mind remains immobile in the face of all the vicissitudes of love and suffering, honor, shame, and outrage.” Until paralysis sets in.

In the end, Bloom reminds one of Meister Eckhart's God, a God that is defined as "he who has no name, who is the negation of all names, and has never had a name," like the pure nothingness for whom all things are nothingness.

Under its perfection, Bloom's alienation conceals a truly primordial alienation.

## CLOWN

*One day.*

*One day, maybe soon.*

*One day I'll pull up the anchor  
that keeps my ship far from the high seas.*

*With that kind of courage  
one needs to have in order to be nothing and nothing but nothing,  
I will let go of everything that had seemed to be so indissolubly close to  
me.*

*I'll cut it off, I'll overturn it,  
I'll smash it, I'll make it collapse.*

*Disgorging in one fell stroke my miserable prudishness, my miserable  
passwords and sequences, 'with them dropping like dominoes.'*

*Drained out of the abscess of having to be someone, I'll drink of life-  
giving space once more...*

*...*

*With ridicule, by debasement (what is debasement?), bursts, emptiness,  
and with a total dissipation-derision-purging, I will expel from myself  
the form in which I was believed to be so attached, made up of,  
coordinated by, and well-matched to my entourage and my peers, so  
worthy, my ever so worthy peers.*



*Reduced to a humility evoking catastrophe, a perfect leveling like after  
being intensely frightened.  
Brought back immeasurably to my true rank, the lowly rank that I don't  
know what idea/ambition made me abandon.  
Annihilated in my haughtiness, my esteem,  
lost in a far away place  
(or not even), with no name, no identity.  
A CLOWN, tearing down in roaring laughter, guffaws, and  
grotesqueness  
the sense of my own importance that I had  
in spite of my seeing myself in such a clear light;  
I will take the plunge,  
with no stipend, into the underlying  
Infinity-mind open to all,  
and myself open to a new  
and incredible dewdrop  
because of my being null  
and blank,  
and laughable...*

Henri Michaux, *Paintings*

# LET US SHARE OUR POVERTY, NOT OUR MISERY!

For Meister Eckhart, the poor man is he who “wants nothing, knows nothing, and has nothing.”

Eventually dispossessed and deprived of everything, mutely foreign to his world, and as ignorant of himself as of what surrounds him, Bloom realizes, at the heart of the historical process and in all its fullness, the truly metaphysical magnitude of the concept of *poverty*.

Indeed, they needed every bit of the dense tackiness of an era where economy has served as metaphysics in order to make an economic notion out of poverty (now that this era is coming to an end, it becomes obvious once again that the opposite of poverty is not wealth, but misery, and that of those three, only poverty has any perfection about it. Poverty means the state of he *who can make use of anything*, having nothing specifically his own, and misery means the state of he *who cannot make use of anything*, whether because he has too much, or because he doesn't have the *time*, or because he has no community).

Thus, everything that the idea of wealth has been able to carry through history, all the bourgeois tranquility, all the *domestic* bliss, all the immanent familiarity with the readily perceived reality here below, is something that Bloom can appreciate, out of nostalgia or simulation, but that he cannot experience. For him, happiness has become a very old idea, and not only in Europe.

Together with all interest, and all *ethos*, the very possibility of use *value* has been lost. Bloom only understands the supernatural language of exchange value. He gazes upon the world with eyes that see nothing; nothing but the nothingness of value. His desires themselves are only roused towards absences, abstractions, not the least of which is the YoungGirl's ass (2). Even when Bloom appears to want something, he never ceases to not-want, since he wants emptily, since he wants emptiness.

That's why wealth, in the world of the authoritarian commodity, has become something grotesque and incomprehensible, merely a cluttered form of miserable poverty.

Wealth is now merely something that possesses *you*; something PEOPLE restrain you with.

# AGAPÊ

*...ja wohl, alles scheisse! [yes sir-ee! It's all shit!] Your conscience is clean. "We were right, all you've got to do is take a look at them!" You are more mystified than anyone, and by us, we who are taking you to the endpoint of your error. Relax, we aren't going to set you straight; we'll just take your outrageous remarks to their necessary conclusions. We'll let ourselves go along with it even to the death, and you'll see the vermin dying.*

*We don't need to wait for the liberation of bodies or count on them to be resurrected for us to be right. Our reasoning triumphs now, living and like waste. It's true that it isn't plain to see. But we're just as right as you are unlikely to understand anything about it, anything at all. Not only do we have reason on our side, we are the right thinking that you've pushed into a clandestine existence.*

*And thus less than ever can we admire any of these apparent victories. Understand this well: you have transformed reason into conscience. You have remade the unity of man. You have manufactured the most diehard conscience. You can never again hope to manage to make us simultaneously take your place and remain in our own skin, which would condemn us. Nobody here will ever become his own SS.*

Robert Antelme, *The Human Race*

Bloom is the man in whom everything has been socialized, but socialized *as private*. Nothing is more exclusively common than what he calls his "individual happiness." Bloom is ordinary and characterless even in his desire to stand out as a singular

individual. For Bloom, all substantial differences between him and other men has been *effectively* abolished. All that remains is a pure difference without content. And everything, in the world of the authoritarian commodity, aims to maintain this pure difference, which is pure separation. And so Bloom may still answer to a particular name, but that name no longer means anything.

All the misunderstandings regarding Bloom have to do with the depth of the gazes that people allow themselves to stare at him with. In any case, the award for blindness has to go to the *sociologists*, who like Castoriadis talk about “a retreat into the private sphere” without clarifying that this sphere itself has been *entirely socialized*. At the other extreme we find those who have let themselves go so far as even to go *into* Bloom. And the stories they bring back all resemble in one way or another the experience that the narrator of *Monsieur Teste* had upon discovering what that character was like “at home”: “*I’ve never had a greater impression of the ordinary. It was an ordinary, characterless dwelling, similar at any given point to the theorems, and perhaps just as useful. My host’s existence took place within the most general home, the most common of interiors.*” Bloom is, indeed, the man that exists in the “most common of interiors.”

It is only in those places and circumstances where the Spectacle’s effect is temporarily suspended that the most intimate truth about Bloom comes out: that he is, at bottom, in *agapê*. Such a suspension arises in an exemplary manner in uprisings, but also at the moment when we talk to a stranger in the streets of the metropolis, and in the final analysis anywhere that people must recognize themselves, beyond all specifics, as simply people; as separate beings, finite and exposed. It is then not rare to see

perfect strangers show us their common humanity, by protecting us from some danger, by offering us their whole pack of cigarettes instead of just the one cigarette we'd asked for, or by spending a quarter-hour helping us find the address we'd been looking for when otherwise they are usually so stingy with their time. Such phenomena are in no way explainable by an interpretation using the classical ethnological terms of gift and counter-gift like a certain kind of bar-room sociality, on the contrary, might indeed be. No hierarchical rank is in play here. There's no glory being sought after. The only thing that can explain it is the ethics of *infinite gift*, which, in the Christian tradition, and specifically the Franciscan, is known as *agapê*.

*Agapê* is part of the existential situation of man that has *informed* commodity society in this, its final age. And that's the state commodity society has left mankind in, by making it so foreign to itself and its desires. In spite of all indications to the contrary, and as disturbing as it may be, this society is coming down with a serious kindness infection.

# **“BE DIFFERENT — BE YOURSELF!”**

(an underwear ad)

In many respects, commodity society can't do without Bloom. The return to effectiveness of spectacular representations, known as “consumption,” is entirely conditioned by the mimetic competition that Bloom's inner nothingness impels him towards. The tyrannical judgments of the impersonal, of what “PEOPLE” will think, would remain just another item in a universal mockery if “being” did not, in the Spectacle, mean “being different,” or at least making an effort to. So it's not so much, as good old Simmel put it, that “a person's personal, special importance comes about through their having a certain impersonal trait,” but rather that the special importance of impersonality would be impossible without a certain *labor* on the part of individual persons.

Naturally what is reinforced with the originality that PEOPLE give to Bloom is never his singularity, but the impersonal “PEOPLE”-ness itself, in other words, poor substantiality. All recognition *within* the Spectacle is but recognition *of* the Spectacle.

Without Bloom, therefore, the commodity would be no more than a purely formal principle deprived of all contact with becoming.

# I WOULD PREFER NOT TO

*I walked amongst them as a foreigner, but none of them saw that I was one. I lived among them as a spy, but none of them — not even me — suspected that I was one. All of them took me for one of their relatives: no one knew that there'd been a change-out when I was born. And so I was a peer of the others that in no way resembled them, the brother of each and all but without being from any of their families.*

*I came from vast lands, from landscapes more beautiful than life itself, but I never mentioned these countries. My footprints on the theater-floors and pavements were similar to theirs, but my heart was far away, all the while beating quite near, the fictive master of an exiled, foreign body...*

*No one really knew me underneath this mask of similarity, no one even knew that I was wearing one because no one knew that there are masked beings here in this world. No one ever dreamed that there was always someone else standing beside me, which in the final analysis was actually me. I was always believed to be identical to myself.*

Bernardo Soares, *The Book of Disturbances*



At the same time, one thing's for sure — Bloom carries within himself the destruction of commodity society. In Bloom we find that same ambivalent character seen in all the realities in which *the transcendence of commodity society on its own terrain* manifest itself.

In this dissolution, it is the foundations themselves, which have for a long time now been deserted, rather than the great edifices of the superstructure that are the first to be attacked. The invisible precedes the visible, and the basis of the world changes imperceptibly.

Bloom bears the end of the world within himself, but does not declare its abolition; he just empties it of meaning and reduces it to the state of a left-over husk awaiting demolition. In this sense one might affirm that the metaphysical upheaval that Bloom is a synonym for is already behind us, but that the bulk of its consequences is yet to come.

With Bloom, for whom all the self-intimacy that gave rise to private property is lacking, the latter has lost all substance: what is really left that is truly *proper* to anyone, that is really anyone's own? What is left, a fortiori, that is private, in the proper sense? Private property now subsists merely in an empirical manner, as a dead abstraction gliding along above a reality that escapes it ever more visibly.

Bloom doesn't contest the law, he *lays it down*. And how could the law not have been definitively outdated with the appearance of this being who is not a subject, whose acts bear relation to no particular personalty at all, and whose behaviors are no more

dependent on the bourgeois categories of interest and motivation than they are on passion or responsibility?

Faced with Bloom, thus, the law loses all its competence to deliver justice — what could justice mean to a totally indifferent being? — and it is only when PEOPLE leave it strictly to police terror that it can be applied at all. Because in the world of the always-similar, we stagnate just as much in jail as we do at Club Med: life is everywhere identically absent.

That's why it's so important to domination for prisons to become places of prolonged torture, and for that to be well known by everyone.

But it is the economy itself, and with it all notions of utility, credit, or instrumental rationality, that Bloom has above all made a thing of the past. That's the reason for the well planned and public constitution of a *lumpen-proletariat* in all the nations where late capitalism reigns: the lumpens are there to dissuade Bloom from abandoning his essential detachment by the abrupt but frightening threat of hunger. Because from the economic point of view, this "non-practical man" (Musil) is a disastrously clumsy producer, and a totally irresponsible consumer. Even his egoism itself is in decline: it is an *egoism without ego*.

If Bloom hasn't failed to devastate classical politics in its very principles, it's in part only by default (there can be no more imaginable establishment of equivalence between everything within the universal than there can be senatorial elections among rats — each rat is an equal and inalienable representative of his species, *primus inter pares* [first among equals]) but also in part by

excess, because Bloom moves spontaneously within the unrepresentable, which is Bloomness itself.

So; what can we think, then, of the troubles that this ungrateful son causes the Spectacle, from under which all characters and all roles slip out with a little murmur saying “I would prefer not to?”

# TIQQUN

*"For the awakened ones, there is a world that is one and common to all, whereas for the sleepers each turns away from it towards their own."*

Heraclitus

*Tiqqun* goes to the root of things. It is still only crossing through purgatory. It carries out its work methodically. *Tiqqun* is the only possible outlook for revolution. Not the revolution that *must be waited for*, much less the revolution that *we can prepare*: but the revolution that *is taking place* according to its own invisible pulsations, in a temporality operating internally within history.

*Tiqqun* is not a determinable point in the future, with a validity period more or less short, even if it is also that, but rather it is the "real movement that abolishes the existing state of things."

*Tiqqun is always already there*; that is, it is but the *manifestation process of what exists*, which also entails the *annulment* of that which does not exist.

The fragile positivity of this world has to do precisely with the fact that it is nothing, nothing but the *suspension* of *Tiqqun*. This epochal suspension can now be felt everywhere. And there really isn't anything else that can truly be felt at all anymore.

Bloom is a part of *Tiqqun*. Precisely because he is the man of full-fledged nihilism, his fate is either to make his escape from nihilism or perish. The intuition of the proletariat, for Marx, aims

at that, but its trajectory ends up warped before it reaches its target. So we read, in *The German Ideology*: “*The productive forces are confronted by the great mass of individuals, from whom these forces have been torn, and who, all the real substance of their lives having been frustrated, have become abstract beings, but precisely for that reason are able to establish relationships with one another as individuals.*”

But it is precisely to the extent that *he is not* an individual that Bloom establishes relations with his peers. The individual carries within his deceptive integrity, in an atavistic manner, the repression of communication, or the need for its artificiality. The ecstatic opening of mankind, and specifically of Bloom, that I that is a THEY, that THEY that is a I, is the very thing that the fiction of the individual was invented to counter.

Bloom does not experience a particular finiteness or a specific separation; he experiences an ontological finiteness and separation common to all men. Furthermore, Bloom is only alone *in appearances*, because he is not alone in his being alone; all men have that solitude *in common*. He lives like a foreigner in his own country; non-existent and on the margins of everything — but all Blooms inhabit *together* their fatherland: Exile. All Blooms belong indistinguishably to one and the same world, which is the world of forgetting — forgetting the world. And so, the Common is alienated, but only *in appearances*, because it is even more alienated *as the Common*; the alienation of the Common only refers to the fact that what is common to them *appears* to men as something particular, something of their own, something private.

And this Common, issued from the alienation of the Common and formed by it, is none other than the veritable and unique Common

among mankind, its primordial alienation: finiteness, solitude, exposedness. Here the most intimate coincides with the most general, and the most “private” is the most shared.

# DID YOU SEE YOURSELF WHEN YOU WERE DRUNK?

*"They say he's dead since he has no taste for earthly things."*

Meister Eckhart

As PEOPLE can easily see, all this sketches out a *catastrophic* possibility for commodity domination, the realization of which it must ward off by all means: the possibility that Bloom might come to *want* what he is and reappropriate his inappropriateness.

This "society," that is, the set of situations that it authorizes, fears nothing more than Bloom, that "condemned man that has no business, no feelings, no attachments, no property, and not even a name of his own." (Nechayev). It must be considered, even in the most miserable of its details, as a formidable apparatus set up with the exclusive purpose of eternalizing the Bloom Condition, which is a condition of *suffering*. In principle, entertainment is no more than the *politics* devoted to such ends; eternalizing Bloom's condition starts by distracting him from it. Thence, as if in a cascade, come certain absolute necessities — the necessity of containing all manifestations of the general suffering, which presupposes an ever more absolute control over appearances, and the necessity of painting pretty makeup on the all-too-visible effects of that suffering, to which the totally disproportionate inflation of Biopower is the response. Because at the confused point things have gotten to now, the *body* represents, on a generic scale, the last performer of the irreducibility of human beings to

total alienation. It's through the body's illnesses and dysfunction, and *only* through them, that the demand for self-knowledge remains an immediate reality for each person. This "society" would never have declared such an all-out war on Bloom's suffering if it didn't constitute in itself and in all its aspects an intolerable attack on the empire of positivity; if it didn't go hand in hand with an immediate revocation of all the illusions of participation in its flowery immanence.

Maintaining in everyday life the use of representations and categories that long ago became inoperative; periodically imposing the most ephemeral but renovated versions of the most gappy asses' bridges of bourgeois morality; maintaining, beyond the intense obviousness of their falsehood and expiration, the sad illusions of "modernity"; such are just a few chapters in the heavy labor that the perpetuation of this total separation among people requires.

The impersonal 'THEY' decides in advance on what is comprehensible, and what must be rejected for its incomprehensibility. Bloom and his ecstasy are incomprehensible; they must be rejected. His poverty is also reputed to be a pretty shady thing in alienated Publicity — it is quite true that capitalism has done all it can to make poverty identical to misery at its heart, the property of a given thing always being essentially *the right to deprive others of its use*. PEOPLE are even ready, in order to keep Bloom *shameful* of his poverty, to allow Bloom to subjectivize himself in this shame. The executive failure will thus, in the panoply of fashionable writers, find a lot to identify with and be reassured by: yes, "abject man" is indeed on its way towards becoming an honorable form of life. Otherwise, he may turn



towards Buddhism, that nauseating, sordid, corny spirituality for oppressed wage workers, which sees as already quite the excessive ambition the idea that it might teach its fascinated and stupid faithful flock the art of wading in their own nullity. It is of absolutely primary importance from domination's perspective that we never recognize ourselves as having all the traits of Bloom, that we appear to ourselves and each other as opaque, terrifying objects. At all costs Bloom must be given ideas, desires, and a subjectivity by the impersonal force of PEOPLE. THEY give him everything he needs so that he can remain that mute man in whose mouth the Spectacle puts the words it wants to hear. THEY aren't even averse to wielding Bloom against Bloom, turning his own impersonality against him, precisely by personifying him, in "society," "the people," or even "the average joe."

All this converges in a social sum that always puts an ever more exorbitant price on "being yourself," that is, it all converges in a strict assignment to a residence within one of the identities recognized by autonomized Publicity.

Parallel to this, the processes of subjectivation and desubjectivation become more and more violent and their control more and more measured to the millimeter. And since this control can't operate other than in a strict economy of time, in a synchrony, Bloom is henceforth regularly exhorted to be "proud" of this or that, proud of being homo or techno, second-generation north African, black, or even a gang-member. No matter what, Bloom absolutely must *be something*, anything, rather than nothing.



# MENE, TEKEL, PERES.

[your kingdom's days are numbered;  
it has been weighed and found wanting;  
and it is divided.]

Adorno speculated, in his work *Prisms*, that *“those men that no longer exist except through others, being the absolute zöon politicon, may certainly lose their identity, but they would at the same time escape their grip on self-preservation, which ensures the coherence of the ‘best of worlds,’ as well as that of the old world. Total interchangeability would destroy the substance of domination and show some promise for freedom.”*

Meanwhile, the Spectacle has had all the time in the world to test out the truth of such conjectures, but has at the same time victoriously applied itself to wrecking the fulfillment of that incongruous promise of freedom. Naturally, that wouldn't work out too well without taking a tougher stance, and the commodity world thus had to become ever more implacable in the exercise of its dictatorship.

From “crises” to “recoveries,” from “recoveries” to depressions, life in the Spectacle has since 1914 never ceased to become ever more stifling. A look of terror hangs on all gazes, even in would-be popular celebrations. The planetary watchword of “transparency” explains the present context of permanent war against Bloom's opacity, as well as the deferred character of the existence that arises from it.

As a first response to this situation we see appearing among Blooms not only a certain taste for anonymity, but at the same time a certain defiance towards visibility, a hatred for *things*. There's a metaphysical hostility coming back again, a hostility towards that which exists, and it threatens to burst at every moment and in every circumstance.

At the origin of this instability is a disorder, a disorder that comes from unused strength, from a negativity that can't eternally remain unemployed, on pain of *physically* destroying those experiencing that negativity.

Most often, that negativity remains silent, though as a result of its being so bottled up it constantly manifests itself in a hysterical formalization of all human relationships. But here already we are looking at the critical zone of totally disproportionate backlash against repression. An ever more compact mass of crimes, of *strange acts* comprising a "violence" and destruction "with no apparent motive," besieges the everyday life of biopolitical democracies — in general, the Spectacle calls "violence" everything that it intends to handle by force, everything that it would like to be able to wield all its arbitrary power against; and this category only has any validity within the commodity mode of disclosure, which itself has no validity, and which always hypostatizes the means relative to the ends, which here is all activity itself, even to the detriment of its immanent significance.

Incapable of preventing them and even more incapable of understanding them, commodity domination claims to be committed to not allowing any such attacks on the social control of behavior. So it broadcasts its habitual saber-rattling about

video-surveillance and “zero tolerance,” the repression of “uncivil behaviors” and of the “feeling of insecurity,” as if the surveillers themselves didn’t need to be surveilled, as if the “feeling of insecurity” had not been *ontologically* assigned to Bloom!

A socialist cop, high up in the bureaucracy of some Japanese teachers’ union, expresses in the following passage his disturbance about the little Blooms under him: “*The phenomenon is all the more concerning because the authors of these violent acts have often always been such ‘good kids.’ We used to get problem children; but today the kids don’t revolt, they just ditch out of school. And if we punish them, their reaction is totally disproportionate: they just explode.*” (Le Monde, Friday April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1998). An infernal dialectic is at work here, one that will tend to make such “explosions” become ever more frequent, fortuitous, and ferocious as the massive and systematic character of the control necessary for their prevention is ever more emphasized. It is a rarely disputed fact: we know from experience that the violence of explosions grows in proportion to excessive confinement.

In Bloom, domination, which thought it prudent to impose the economy as a *morality* so that commerce could make men soft, predictable, and inoffensive — we’ve seen a number of centuries’ worth of this now — sees its project flipping over into its opposite: to wit, it appears that “homo economicus,” in his perfection, is also what makes the economy outdated; and he makes it outdated as that which, having deprived him of all substance, has made him *perfectly unpredictable*.

The man without content, has, in the final analysis, the hardest time of anyone trying to contain himself.



# THE UNAVOWABLE ENEMY

*In which every Bloom, as a Bloom, is an agent of the Imaginary Party.*

Faced with this unknown enemy — in the sense that we can speak of an Unknown Soldier, that is, a soldier that everyone knows to be unknown, singularized as an “anybody,” who has no name, no face, no epic history of his own, who resembles nothing, but is present under his camouflage everywhere in the order of possibilities — domination’s disquiet becomes more and more clearly paranoid. The dedication it has now undertaken to carrying out its decimation, even in its own ranks and against all odds, appears to the detached viewer as rather a comedic spectacle.

There’s something *objectively terrifying* about the sad forty-year-old who, up to the moment of the outbreak of total carnage, had been the most normal, the flattest, the most insignificant of average men. No one had ever heard him declare his hatred for the family, work, or his petty-bourgeois suburb, up until that fine morning when he wakes up, takes a shower, and eats his breakfast, with his wife, daughter and son still sleeping, and then loads his hunting rifle and very discreetly blows all their brains out. Confronted by his judges, or even by torture, Bloom will remain silent about the motives of his crime. Partly because sovereignty doesn’t need to give reasons, but also because he senses that the worst atrocity he could subject this “society” to would be to leave his act unexplained.

And thus has Bloom managed to insinuate into all minds the poisonous certainty that in each and every man there is a sleeping enemy of civilization. Quite apparently he has no other purpose than to devastate this world — indeed, it's his destiny, even — but he'll never say so. Because his strategy is to produce disaster, and around himself to produce *silence*.



# **“BECAUSE WHAT CRIME AND MADNESS OBJECTIVIZE IS THE ABSENCE OF A TRANSCENDENTAL HOMELAND.”**

Lukacs, *Theory of the Novel*

To the extent that the desolate forms we are intended to be contained within tighten their tyranny, some strikingly curious manifestations come about.

Runners-amok, for instance, adapt to existing in the very heart of the most advanced societies, in unexpected forms, and take on new significance.

In the territories administered by autonomous Publicity, such disintegration phenomena are rare things that expose the true state of the world nakedly, *the pure scandal of things*.

And at the same time as they reveal the lines of force within the reign of apathy, they show the dimensions of the possibilities we're living in. That's why — even in their very distance — they are so familiar to us.

The traces of blood that they leave behind in their trail mark the last steps taken by a man who made the mistake of wanting to escape *alone* from the grey terror in which he had been detained at such high cost. Our tendency to conceive of that is a measure of what life is left in us.

The living are those who understand *for themselves* that at the moment when fear and submission attain, in Bloom, to their ultimate figure as a fear and submission that is *absolute* because it has no object, the liberation from *that* fear and *that* submission means an equally absolute liberation from *all* fear and *all* submission. Once he who had indistinctly feared everything passes such a point, he can *never fear anything again*. There is, beyond the most far-flung wastelands of alienation, a zone of total clear and calm where man becomes incapable of feeling any *interest* in his *own* life, nor even the slightest hint of attachment to his place in the world.

All freedom, present or future, which departs in some way or other from that detachment, from that serene calm/ataraxy, can hardly do any more than expound the principles of a more *modern* servitude.

# THE POSSESSED OF NOTHINGNESS

*"I'm sorry. Like Shakespeare says, Good*

*wombs hath borne bad sons."*

Eric Harris, *Littleton*, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1999

There aren't many ways out from under the universal crush.

We extend our arms but they don't find anything to touch. The world's been distanced from our grasp; PEOPLE put it outside our range. Very few Blooms manage to resist the disproportionate enormity of that pressure.

The omnipresence of the commodity's occupation troops and the rigor of their 'state of emergency' condemn most projects of freedom to a short existence. And so, everywhere that order appears to have firmly set in, negativity prefers to turn against itself, as illness, suffering, or frenzied servitude. There are some invaluable cases, however, where isolated beings take the initiative, without hope or strategy, to open a breach in the well-regulated, smooth course of disaster.

In them, Bloom violently liberates himself from the *patience* that PEOPLE would like to make him languish in forever. And since the only instinct that can tame such a howling presence of nothingness is that of destruction, the taste for the Totally Different takes on the appearance of crime and is experienced in a

passionate indifference where its author manages to hold steady when confronted with it.

This manifests itself in the most *spectacular* way in the growing number of Blooms, big and small, who, for lack of anything better, lust after the charm of the simplest surrealist act (recall that “the simplest surrealist act consists in going out into the street, revolvers in hand, and firing at random, as much as possible, into the crowd. Whoever has not at least once had the urge to finish off in this way the wretched little system of degradation and cretinization in force belongs in that crowd himself, with his gut at bullet height.” (Breton). Recall as well that this inclination, like many other things, remained among the surrealists a mere theory without practice, just like its contemporary practice is most often without theory).

These individual eruptions, which are doomed to proliferate among those who have still not fallen into the deep sleep of cybernetics, are indeed desperate calls for desertion and fraternity. The freedom that they affirm is not that of a particular man assigning himself a particular end, but the freedom of each, the freedom of the human race itself: a single man is enough to declare that freedom has still not disappeared.

The Spectacle cannot metabolize characteristics bearing so many poisons. It can report them, but it can never strip them entirely of the unexplainable, the inexpressible, and the terror at their core. These are the *Noble and Generous Acts* of our times, a world-weary form of propaganda by the deed, whose ideological mutism only increases its disturbing and somberly metaphysical character.



# PARADOXES OF SOVEREIGNTY

*"I am NOTHING": this parody of an affirmation is the final word of sovereign subjectivity, liberated from the influence that it would like to — or that it must — have on things... Because I know that I am, at bottom, this subjective, content-free existence.*

Georges Bataille, *Sovereignty*

In the Spectacle, power is everywhere; that is, *all* relations are in the final analysis relations of domination. And because of this no one is sovereign in the Spectacle. It is an objective world where everyone must first subjugate themselves in order to subjugate others in turn.

To live in conformance with man's fundamental aspiration to sovereignty is impossible in the Spectacle except in one single instant: the instant of the *act*.

He who isn't just playing around with life has a need for acts, for gestures, so that his life can become more real to him than a simple game which can be oriented in any given direction. In the world of the commodity, which is the world of generalized reversibility, where all things merge and transform into one another, where everything is merely ambiguous, transitional, ephemeral, and blended together, only acts *cut through it all*. In the splendor of their necessary brutality, they carve an unsolvable "after" into what had been "before," which PEOPLE will regretfully have to recognize as *definitive*.

A gesture/an act is an *event*. It cuts open a wound in the chaos of the world, and installs at the bottom of that wound its shards of unambiguity/univocity. It is a matter of establishing so profoundly in their difference things that have been judged as different that what separated them out from each other can never have any possibility of being erased. If there's anything in Bloom that thwarts domination, it is the fact that even dispossessed of everything, even in all his nudity, man still has an uncontrollable metaphysical power of repudiation: the power to kill others and to kill himself. Death, every time it intervenes, rips a disgraceful hole in the biopolitical tissue. Total nihilism/nihilism fulfilled, which has really fulfilled nothing but the dissolution of all otherness in a limitless circulatory immanence, always meets its defeat right there: upon contact with death, life suddenly ceases to be taken for granted. The *duty to make decisions* which sanctions all properly human existence has always been in part tied to the approach to that abyss.

On the eve of the day in March 1998 when he massacred four Bloom-students and a Bloom-professor, little Mitchell Johnson declared to his incredulous schoolmates: "*Tomorrow I will decide who will live and who will die.*" This is as far from the Erostratus-ism of Pierre Riviere as it is from fascist hysteria. Nothing is more striking in the reports on the carnage brought about by Kipland Kinkel or Alain Oreiller than their state of cold self-control and total vertical detachment relative to the world. "*I'm no longer acting out of sentiment,*" said Alain Oreiller while executing his mother. There's something calmly suicidal in the affirmation of so omnilateral a non-participation, indifference, and refusal to suffer.

Often the Spectacle uses this as a pretext to start talking about “gratuitous” acts — a generic qualifier with which it hides the purposes it doesn’t *want* to understand, all the while making use of them as a fantastic opportunity to reinject some life into one or the other of bourgeois utilitarianism’s favorite false paradoxes — as long as those acts aren’t lacking in hatred or reason. To prove this all one needs to do is watch the five video tapes that the “monsters of Littleton” filmed in anticipation of their operation. Their program appears in them quite clearly: “*We’re going to set off a revolution, a revolution of the dispossessed.*”

Here hatred itself is undifferentiated, free of all personality. Death enters into the universal in the same way as it emerges from the universal, and it has no anger about it.

This isn’t about giving some revolutionary significance to such acts, and it’s hardly even about treating them as exemplary. It’s about understanding what they express *the doom of*, and grasping onto them in order to plumb the depths of Bloom. And whoever follows this path to the end will see that Bloom is NOTHING, but that this NOTHING is a nothing that is sovereign, an emptiness with a pure potential.

The contradiction between Bloom’s isolation, apathy, powerlessness, and insensitivity on the one hand and on the other his dry and brutal need for sovereignty can only bring about more of these acts, absurd and murderous as they may be, yet still necessary and true. It’s all about knowing how to deal with them in the right terms in the future: like [in Mallarmé’s] *Igitur*, for instance: “*One of the acts of the universe has been committed there. Nothing else but the breath remained, the end of speech and gesture*



*united — blow out the candle of being, by which everything has existed.  
Proof."*

# THE ERA OF PURE GUILT

Men don't have the option of not fighting; the only choice they have is which side they're on. Neutrality has nothing neutral about it; it is indeed the bloodiest side there is to take.

Bloom, both when he's the one that shoots the bullets and when he's one that succumbs to them, is certainly innocent. After all, isn't it true that Bloom is but dependence itself on the central farce? Did he choose to live in this world, whose perpetuation is the result of an autonomous social totality that appears ever more extraterrestrial to him every day? How could he do otherwise, stray Lilliputian confronting the Leviathan of the commodity? All he can do is speak the language of the spectacular occupier, eat from the hand of Biopower, and participate in his own way in the production and reproduction of its horrors.

This is how Bloom would like to be able to be understood: as a foreigner, as something external to himself. But in this defense, he only tacitly admits that *he himself is that fraction of himself that sees to it that the rest of his being will remain alienated.*

It matters little that Bloom can't be held responsible for any of his acts: he remains nonetheless responsible for his own irresponsibility, which he is *at every instant* given the opportunity to declare himself against. Since he has consented, negatively at least, to being no more than the predicate of his own existence, he is an *objective* part of domination, and his innocence is itself pure guilt.

The man of total nihilism, the man of “what’s the point?” who cries on the shoulder of the man of “what can I do about it?” is indeed quite mistaken to believe himself free of fault just because *he hasn’t done anything* and because so many others are in the same situation he’s in.

The Spectacle, in so regularly admitting that the murderer was “an ordinary man,” a “student like any other,” is suggesting that the men of our times all participate equally in the unappealable crime that our times really are. But it refuses to recognize this as a *metaphysical fact*: as the case of the gas-chamber operators in Auschwitz shows, the fear of responsibility is not only stronger than conscience, it is in certain circumstances even stronger than the fear of death.

In a world of slaves without masters, in a world of *collaborators*, in a world dominated by a veritable tyranny of servitude, the simplest surrealist act is governed by none other than the ancient duty of tyrannicide.

# HOMO SACER

*"One day or another the bombs will drop, and people will finally believe what they'd always refused to admit; that words have a metaphysical sense to them."*

Brice Parain, *The Trouble with Choice*

The possessed of nothingness *begin* by drawing the consequences from their Bloom condition. And thus they expose the dizzying vertigo of it: Bloom is *sacer*, in the sense of the word used by Giorgio Agamben; that is, a creature that has no rights, who cannot be judged or condemned by men, but who anyone may kill without being considered to have committed a crime. Bloom is *sacer* to the exact extent that he knows himself to be *possessed* by bare life, to the extent that, like a *Muselmann* in the concentration camps, he is the simple witness to his own becoming-inhuman.

Insignificance and anonymity, separation and foreignness — these are not the poetic circumstances that the melancholic penchant of certain subjectivities may tend to exaggerate them as: the scope of the existential situation they characterize — Bloom — is *total*, and it is exceedingly *political*.

*Anyone that has no community is sacer.*

Being nothing, remaining outside all recognition, or presenting oneself as a pure, non-political individuality, is enough to make any man at all a being whose disappearance is uninscribable. However inexhaustible the obituary eulogies may be — eternal

regrets, etc. — such a death is trivial, indifferent, and only concerns he who disappears; meaning, that is — in keeping with good logic — nobody. Analogous to his entirely private life, Bloom's death is such a non-event that anybody can eliminate him. That's why the expostulations of those who, sobs in their voices, lament the fact that Kip Kinkel's victims "didn't deserve to die" are inadmissible, because they didn't *deserve* to live, either; *they were outside the sphere of deservingness*. To the extent that they found themselves in the hands of Biopower, they were already the living dead, at the mercy of any sovereign decision-making, whether that of the State or of a murderer. Hannah Arendt:

*"Being reduced to nothing anymore but a simple specimen of an animal species called Mankind; this is what happens to those who've lost all distinct political qualities, and who have become human beings and that alone... The loss of the Rights of Man takes place at the moment when a person becomes just a human being in general — without profession, citizenship, opinion, or any acts by which he identifies himself and specifies himself — and appears as differentiated only in a general way, representing no more than his own and absolutely unique individuality, which, in the absence of a common world where it might express itself and upon which it might act, loses all meaning." (Imperialism)*

Bloom's exile has a metaphysical status to it; that is, it is effective in all domains. And that metaphysical status expresses his *real* situation, in light of which his *legal* situation has no truth to it. The fact that he can be shot down like a dog by a stranger without the slightest justification, or — parallel to that and conversely — that he is capable of murdering "innocents" without the slightest remorse, is a reality that no jurisdiction whatsoever is capable of dealing with. Only weak and superstitious minds could give

themselves up to believing that a verdict of life in prison or some orderly trial could suffice to sweep those facts into the limbo of null and void-ness. At the most, domination is free to attest to the Bloom condition, for instance by declaring an only slightly-disguised state of exception, as the United States did with its 1996 adoption of a so-called “anti-terrorist” law which allows the arrest of “suspects” on the basis of secret information, without any count of indictment or any limit to its duration. There’s a certain physical risk to being metaphysically nil. Doubtless it was in anticipation of the truly glorious possibilities that such nullity was to give rise to that Unesco adopted the oh-so highly consequential “Universal Declaration of Animal Rights” on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1978, which stipulates in article 3: “1 — No animal should be subjected to mistreatment or to acts of cruelty. 2 — If it is necessary to kill an animal, it should be carried out in a manner that is instantaneous, painless, and does not cause it fear. 3 — Dead animals must be treated with decency.”



# **“TU NON SEI MORTA, MA SE’ISMARRITA ANIMA NOSTRA CHE SI TI LAMENTI.”**

[you are not dead, but merely lost,  
o ever-lamenting soul of ours.]

Dante, *Convivio* [Banquet]

That Bloom’s kindness still expresses itself here and there in acts of murder is a sign that the dividing line is near but has not yet been crossed.

In zones governed by nihilism in its final stage, where the ends are still lacking though the means abound, kindness is a mystical possession. There, the desire for an unconditional freedom gives rise to singular formations, and gives words a value full of paradoxes. Lukacs: *“Kindness is savage and pitiless, it is blind and daring, In the soul of a kind person all psychological content is erased, all causes and effects. Their soul is a blank slate upon which fate writes its absurd commandments. And said commandments are carried out blindly, in a reckless and pitiless manner. And that this impossibility becomes an act, that this blindness becomes illumination, that this cruelty is transformed into kindness — that’s the real miracle, that’s true grace.”* (On Mental Poverty)

But at the same time as these eruptions bear witness to an impossibility, they also, in their proliferation, announce a speedup of the flow of time. The universal disturbance, which tends to subordinate itself under ever greater quantities of ever more



minute activities, brings to a glowing intensity in each man his need to make his *choice*. Already those for whom this necessity means annihilation speak of apocalypse, while the vast majority content themselves with living under it all in the swampy pleasures of the last days.

Only those who understand the meaning they themselves will give to the catastrophe will remain calm and retain the precision of their movements.

In the magnitude and the way in which a given mind gives itself over to panic, one can recognize its station, the ranks it falls in. And this is a mark that is valid not only ethically and metaphysically but also in praxis, and in time.

Etcetera.

*But the world that we're born into is a world at war, all the dazzle of which comes from its sharp division into friends and enemies. Naming the front lines in that war is part of crossing the line, but that's not enough to really do it. Only combat can really cross the line. Not so much because it gives rise to such grandeur, but more because it is the deepest experience of community, the one that permanently mingles with annihilation and only measures itself in extreme proximity to risk. Living together in the heart of the desert, with the same resolution to never reconcile ourselves with it; that's the proof, that's the light.*

Etcetera.

.....

Theory is not  
about thought,

A certain quantity of coagulated,  
manufactured  
thought.

Theory  
is a *state*,  
a state of *shock*.

A Theory *of* Bloom,

Where Bloom is not the *object* of theory, where theory is but the  
most familiar activity, the *spontaneous* penchant of an essentially  
*theoretical* creature,  
of a Bloom.

Theory is WITHOUT END.

thence

the need

to PUT AN END TO IT,

*decisively*.

The weariness of speech

What's the way out of Bloom?

*The Assumption* of Bloom,  
for instance.

— You can only really liberate yourself from anything by  
reappropriating the thing you're liberating yourself from. —

What does the assumption of Bloom mean?

Making *use* of the metaphysical situation defined by Bloom, the  
exercise of the self as a *prankster*.

Not fighting against the dominant schizoid state, against *our*  
schizoid state, but *starting from there*, and making use of it as a  
pure power of subjectivation and desubjectivation, as an aptitude  
for experimentation.

Breaking with the old anxiety of "who am I really?" to the benefit  
of a real understanding of my situation and the *use* of it that I  
could possibly make.

Not just surviving in the constant imminence of a miraculous  
*departure*,

not forcing ourselves to believe in the jobs we do, the lies we tell,

but *starting from there*, to enter into contact with other agents of the  
Invisible Committee — through *Tiqqun* for example — and  
silently coordinate a truly elegant act of sabotage.

To detach from our detachment through a conscious, strategic  
practice of self-splitting.

BREAKING WITH THE WORLD, FIRST OF ALL INWARDLY.

The Invisible Committee:

an *openly secret* society,

a public conspiracy,

an instance of anonymous subjectivation,

whose name is everywhere and headquarters nowhere,

the experimental-revolutionary polarity of the Imaginary Party

The Invisible Committee: not a revolutionary *organization*, but a higher level of reality,

a metaphysical territory of secession with all the magnitude of a whole world of its own,

the *playing area* where positive creation *alone* can accomplish the great emigration of the economy from the world.

IT'S A FICTION THAT'S MADE ITS REALITY REAL.

All the elsewheres that we could have fled to have been liquidated;

we can only desert the situation *inwardly*,

by reclaiming our fundamental non-belonging to the biopolitical fabric with a participation

on a more intimate,  
and thus unattributable level,  
in the strategic community of the Invisible Committee,  
where an infiltration of society on all levels is being plotted.

This desertion is  
*a metamorphosis.*

The Invisible Committee — the *concrete* space where our attacks,  
our writings, our acts, our words, our gatherings, our events  
circulate:

our desertion —  
transfigures the totality of what we'd accepted as a trade-off,  
of what we'd endured as our "alienations,"  
into a *infiltration strategy*.

The Other ceases to possess us:  
and indeed,  
possession itself is reversed  
and becomes gentle.

We will conceal our act  
within a relationship  
that our powers have not yet attained to.

#### A TONGUE-IN-CHEEK ACCESS TO EXPERIENCE

Experimentation:

*the practice* of freedom,

*the practice* of idleness,

opposing the design of

a process of emancipation separate

from the existence of men,

and sending back to their desks all the learned *plans* and *projects* of  
liberation.

#### **A kind of Contestation**

**whose authority**

**and methods are not**

**in any way distinct**

**from experience.**

*Taking the possibilities that my situation contains all the way.*

Revolutionary experimentation,

*collective*-revolutionary experimentation,

*revolutionary-experimental* collectivity carrying out the assumption of finiteness, separation and exposedness as the ecstatic coordinates of existence.

The life of he who

knows that his appearance and his essence are identical to one another, but not identical *to him*,

cannot be *in* the world without remembering that he is not *of* this world,

cannot accommodate himself to a community which would be a simple amusement of his solitude in the face of death,

— dancing, in total precision, *to the death* with time, which kills you —

THAT'S EXPERIMENTATION.

Language,

words and gestures:

that's the common home of the placeless.

The bond between those that cannot be reduced to the lie of  
belonging, to a certain plot of land, a certain birthplace.

A journey into dispersion and exile,

communication

that *acts upon*

our essential separation.

"Once we've spoken, to remain as close as possible in line with  
what we'd said, so that everything won't be effectively up in the  
air, with our words on the one side and ourselves on the other,  
and with the remorse of separations."

This text is a pact.

The protocol for an experimentation now open

among deserters.

**Without anyone noticing,**

**Break ranks.**

**NOW**



# **PHENOMENOLOGY OF EVERYDAY LIFE**

1) from the bottom of a shipwreck

*mein sohn, es ist ein nebelstreif*

[’tis but a wisp of fog, my son]

– goethe, erlkonig

there are fragile moments when the bleating unreality of our world, which generally masks the sediments of habit under a compact layer of apparent concreteness, suddenly gushes forth, like a ghost flying out from some crumbling tomb: Absence.

I will here mingle a little more with this metaphysical experience (because it is one; too bad if that startles the cheerful ones and dogs), which appears, it’s true, to be the cousin of Nausea as Sartre described it – although it is there that the non-existence, rather than some quivering existence that reality has now been stricken by, unveils itself.

I found myself in a slightly curved street, in the city outskirts where I live. And something was there, strangely, instead of something else that wouldn’t have caught my memories — this thing that shouldn’t have been there. There was a large window above an immaculately shined, far-too-new placard, affixed to the wall; on that placard, in rigid letters, the word “BAKERY” was written. Through the window you could see a few display shelves that appeared in a way – and even with quite the frank similarity – to resemble those that are often used to display pastries or some sickening cake or another, display shelves doubtless placed there

to perfect its confusion with familiar places; but I wasn't duped. I was all the less fooled since their enthusiasm had gone way beyond the believable. So, there, planted behind those phantom display shelves, perfectly immobile, standing in an expectant position, was the baker! The baker... and her white apron. And the whole assemblage, so firm yet scattered, was more evanescent than that false manor suddenly evaporating into mist that Mallarmé spoke of, more shifting and impalpable than all the ethers; behind or in it – I don't know, since it was as if the cloudy screen had with so much finesse been muddled up with what it already no longer covered up, as if it were woven of its own tears – terrible, was Nothingness.

Destabilized by so much foreignness, I decided to go inside anyway – I marched into the emptiness. I already felt how you feel, or how you think you feel upon waking up, in some very hazy dream where you haven't quite forgotten the feeling that's passed through you. From that cloud, which was also the cloud of nothingness, my head and my whole body were like sealed off, and thought itself, which sometimes can slide so well like a brazen blade, with a clear but serious whistle, and my thinking itself was that cloud, that gas that spread out as if it were following the physical laws governing the noble gases. All matter had melted or was perhaps sublimated; in any case it was dead at that moment, disappeared. I finally managed, waveringly, to approach the calm baker, who pushed her impossible role all the way to the point of asking me, terrible music with a diabolic candor – since the devil excels in putting on candid airs – what I wanted. Her question made me flinch. I couldn't look around myself; all the nothingness blinded me more than I could bear. I understood quickly that the only presence that could absorb my gaze, hold it a bit, instead of

imperviously repelling it, that the only island of existence that could save me from all this drowning, rather, this drowning of everything, was this woman, disguised as a baker, her face and her arms, emerging alone from the fallacious costume. I suddenly found a kind of Spanish charm in her that troubled me a bit, but oh so much less than all the nothingness that I had to drown in did! Anyway, an existing being, in form and substance too... a being that did not immediately fade away elsewhere. I thought: there's no way that this woman, standing there facing me, in the middle of all this Nothing, all this abyss quickly dressed up as a simulacrum of a bakery, really believes all this pasteboard decor, this shameful pantomime – this whole scene; are we really required to act it out!? No... I had to tell her... tell her that it needed to stop... "Miss, we know full well, don't we, that all this is nothing but an absurd practical joke, and you're not really a baker, that this isn't a bakery, and how absurd it would be for me to play the customer. The age of playing commodity has passed; let's speak frankly and forget all this frightful decor, which fools no one... I don't know how you found yourself in this strange situation – so tell me, what's all this about?" The reply, the only reasonable one, which then filled my mind like a clear truth rescuing me, I couldn't say; my whole being, still cloudy, was still incapable of responding practically to such an injunction from Reason, when a man appeared behind her, grotesquely disguised as a baker, and made me fear that this bad theater piece was going to turn into some kind of vaudeville, a final bouquet on an insolence that had already lasted too long. So I muttered – absurdity! – an unmotivated order for a perfectly random number of loaves of bread, putting off clearing up this affair until later. Still dubious, and now almost getting into the game, by some vice

I didn't know I had, I laid down a few coins – to see if this pataphysical scene really was determined to run its course. It was, and I regretted my lie a bit, since after all, I wanted the truth, not bread. So I left, dizzied and dreaming after the whole event. People around me remarked that the number of baguettes I'd bought (I didn't even imagine that what had happened at that moment even had a name) was singularly disproportionate. And so I told the tale of my adventure, and then, since I couldn't make myself understood, I thought about it alone.

What I'd felt there was true, no doubt about that. The experience had revealed to me, in a brutal way, the unreality of this world, the realized abstraction which is the Spectacle. The whole metaphysical – and thus total and filled out all the way to the existential sphere – dimension of this concept had appeared clearly to me in this private mode of disclosure, and could appear as it really is, as something really strange, posing a problem the essence of which is absolute foreignness, only insofar as it is lived as an experience, as a phenomenon. Habit makes phenomena be forgotten as phenomena, that is, the supra-sensible – must I add that Hegel's famous affirmation too took on a kind of dazzling concreteness, the power of a revelation? And yet, habit is precisely the characteristic means of commodity metaphysics, its manifestation, which never manifests anything but the forgetting of its character as a manifestation... That's how the bulging intuition of Absence also reveals that it's already transcended as such, since it presents itself as a manifestation of the forgetting of the manifestation as such, meaning as the revealing of the commodity mode of disclosure, as the revealing of the Spectacle. When it shows itself thus, Absence is already but a hollow space, a pure absence. It is a positive affirmation of the World about

itself. It is precisely the return of all reality and already the possibility of reappropriating it. This whirlwind of paradoxes showed how much my experience had been critical-metaphysical. I also thought back about similar sensations, and tried to make an almost zoological classification of the various textures that the phenomenon can manifest, from the half-vapor, half-liquid melancholy to that other state, where everything is, on the contrary, quite marked with all the hallmarks of a concreteness so massive that it shocks you (and reality is then palpably too concrete to not reveal itself still as being, in fact, abstract to the point of delirium). All these magico-circumstantial experiences are obviously inaccessible to Blooms that know nothing of solitude, which is often their case. Our contemporaries, for the most part, habitually obviate such unappealed perceptions of the Nothingness, which is also their nothingness, our Bloom nothingness, which terrify them, by massing them against one another in sordid accumulations that they sometimes dare to call friendship, that great powerful word that the worst cockroaches are no longer afraid to grind under their filthy feet when they say no less crudely that they hang out together. There are also a few tools that such a service of forgetting offers, in an equivalent manner to this fallacious proximity: television, walkman, boom box or lighted radio "to give a musical backdrop," etc. And finally when it appears anyway, that Demon which is critical metaphysics, in spite of all Bloom's precautions, the latter can still try to put one last falsification past, with the reassuring use of a word without any meaning, invented or recuperated for such cases: stress, fatigue: in the cases when the Demon comes in through the window itself, depression, or lastly, if the Bloom in question proclaims New-Age-isms or some other young-cool-

isms, he can exteriorize the phenomenon, rather than directly denying the phenomenon's being a phenomenon, and put it on a level of general equivalence, out on the psychedelics market, as a purely subjective experience (1), that is, transform it into poor substantiality, by just calling it a trip. It goes without saying that this short list of amusements is by and large non-exhaustive.

All these attitudes sketch out negatively a particular terrain, which had to be clarified before positively, which would be that of a critical-metaphysical attitude. Taking a closer look, this appeared as a kind of unity between, on the one hand, the practice of a conceptually powerful dialectic, and on the other, a certain existentialist attention, and a certain *laissez-être* ('let it be'), too. These two approaches, far from being irreconcilable, are incarnate in anyone who knows how to conceive of and feel becoming, who knows thought as a science in the sense Hegel understood it, who knows the purpose of the Figure used, while at the same time being attentive enough to be able to stop at certain moments, before they are suppressed, and squeeze out their content, becoming totally immersed in them (the surrealists had already felt this, but had explained it differently – compare with the summary of the surrealist attitude given by Breton in *Mad Love*). It's a question of considering the Gaze as experience, and thus as a certain tension between two successive moments: the first moment is the sensation of the phenomenon, the second its revealing as a phenomenon. When the critical-metaphysician is shown the moon, he first looks at the moon and then at the finger pointing at it. The phenomenon takes place first off in itself, then, for itself, and from the basis of being for itself emerges being in itself. The Paraclete never comes right away and is always already there. This critical-metaphysical attitude, fixed-exploding, this

changing of the gaze, which is not blind, can only really be attained and know itself as as such by sharing all these sensations and analyzing them, whether or not these experiences themselves are or must be lived in a solitary manner. Thus we'll be including this section, phenomenology of everyday life, until further notice.

As for us, far from considering such an experience as simply subjective, we affirm, on the contrary, its objective and eminently political character.



# **THESES ON THE IMAGINARY PARTY**

“The moral and political significance of thought only appears in those rare moments of history where “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world”; where “The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity”. In these crucial moments, thought ceases to be a marginal affair to political questions. When the whole world lets itself be carried away without thinking by what the many do and believe, those who think find themselves exposed, because their refusal to join with others is patent and becomes thus a sort of action.”

— Hannah Arendt, *Moral Considerations*

# 1

The Imaginary Party is the particular form that Contradiction assumes in the historic period where Domination imposes itself as dictatorship of visibility and of dictatorship as visibility, in a word as Spectacle. Because there is at first but the negative party of negativity, and because of an inability to liquidate this, the sorcery of the Spectacle consists in rendering invisible the expressions of negation — and this goes as well for the liberty to act as for suffering or pollution — its most remarkable character is precisely to be reputed as nonexistent, or, to be more exact, imaginary. However, it is of this and exclusively of this that one speaks of without stop, because it is that which each day makes a little more visible the failures of the proper functioning of society. But one keeps from pronouncing its name -can one pronounce its name, in any case?- as one fears to invoke the devil. And in this, one does well: in a world so manifestly become an attribute of Spirit, enunciation has a regrettable tendency to become performative. Inversely, the nominal evocation, even here, of the Imaginary Party merits equally well as its act of constitution. Up to the present, that is to say up until its naming, it could not be more than what was the classical proletariat before knowing itself as proletariat: a class of civil society that is not a class of civil society, but which is rather its dissolution. And in effect, it only composes itself to this day of the negative multitude of those who do not have a class, and do not want to have one, of the solitary crowd of those who have re-appropriated their fundamental non-appearance in commodity society under the form of a voluntary non-participation in it. At first, the Imaginary Party presents itself simply as the community of defection, the party of exodus, of

fleeing reality and paradoxically as subversion without subject. But this is not its essence just as dawn is not the essence of the day. The richness of its becoming is yet to come and can not appear except in its living rapport with that which produced it, and which now disclaims it. "Only those who have the vocation and the will to make the future can see the concrete truth of the present" (Lukacs, *History & Class Consciousness*).

## 2

The Imaginary Party is the party that tends to become real, incessantly. The spectacle has no other ministry than to hinder, relentlessly, its manifestation as such, that is to say its becoming conscious, that is to say its becoming real; because then it would have to admit the existence of this negativity of which it is, in so much as the positive party of positivity, the perpetual denegation. It is thus in the essence of the Spectacle to cast the opposing camp as a negligible residue, to make of it a total nothing, and which comes to the same thing, to declare it criminal and inhuman in its entirety, under the pain of having to know itself for a criminal and a monster. At bottom, it's why there are in this society but two parties: the party of those who pretend that there is but one party, and the party of those who know that there are in truth two. Already from this observation, one will know to recognize our party.

### 3

It is wrong that we reduce war to the brutal shock of the battle, save for reasons that explain themselves without difficulty. Certainly, it would be truly harmful to public order that this be apprehended for what it is really: the supreme eventuality of which the preparation for, and the adjournment of, inwardly work in a continual movement all human groupings, and of which peace is not in the end but a moment. It follows identically for the social war of which the combats can remain at their paroxysm perfectly silent and, so to speak, colorless. One only divines them from a sudden rejuvenation of the dominant aberration. Dispositions taken, one must recognize that battles are exaggeratedly rare, compared to casualties.

## 4

It is in applying in this type of case the fundamental axiom according to which what is unseen does not exist — *esse est percipi* — that the Spectacle maintains the exorbitant and planetary illusion of a fragile civil peace, of which the perfection demands that we leave it to spread in all domains its gigantic campaign of the pacification of societies and of the neutralization of their contradictions. But its foreseeable failure is logically inscribed in the simple fact that this campaign of pacification is still a war— certainly the most terrible and destructive that ever was, because it is lead in the name of peace. It is besides one of the most constant traits of the Spectacle that it does not speak of war but in a language where the word “war” does not appear more than a question of “humanitarian operations”, “international sanctions”, “maintaining order”, “safeguarding the rights of man”, of the fight against “terrorism”, “sects”, “extremism”, or “pedophilia”, and above all this, the “process of peace”. The adversary no longer carries the name of enemy, but in revenge they are placed outside the law and outside of humanity for having broken and disturbed the peace; and each war lead to the end of conserving or spreading the positions of economic or strategic force will have to call on a propaganda which transforms it into a crusade or the last war of humanity. The lie upon which the Spectacle reposes demands that is be thus. This non-sense reveals, besides a systematic coherence and a shocking internal logic, that up to now this apparently apolitical and at the same time anti-political system does not help existing configurations of hostilities nor does it provoke new regroupings among friends and enemies, because it does not know how to escape from the

logic of the political. Those who do not understand war do not understand their own times.



## 5

Since its birth, Commodity Society has never renounced its absolute hatred of the political, and it is in this that resides its greatest vexation as the project of eradicating it is itself still political. It greatly wants to speak of law, economy, culture, philosophy, the environment, and even of politics, but never of the political. Invariably, this negation takes the form of a naturalization, of which the impossibility finds itself denounced in an equally invariable fashion by periodic crises. Classical economy and the century of liberalism that corresponds to it (1815–1914) constituted a first attempt, and a first failure, of this naturalization. The doctrine of utility, the system of needs, the myth of a “natural” auto-regulation of the market, the ideology of the rights of man, and parliamentary democracy are to be numbered as means that were put in place in this time to that end. But it is indisputably in the historic period opened in 1914 that the naturalization of commodity dominance reveals its most radical form: Biopower. In Biopower, the social totality which little by little autonomized itself came to take charge of life itself. On one side, it oversaw the politicization of biology: health, beauty, sexuality, and the available energy of each individual each year reveals more clearly the managerial responsibility of society. On another side, it is a biologization of politics that operates: ecology, the economy, the general repartition of “well-being” and “care”, growth, longevity and aging of the population impose themselves as the principal chapters by which one measures the exercise of power. This, of course, is only the appearance of the process, not the process itself. In reality, that which it concerns is to rely upon the false evidence of the body and biological life, the total control

of behaviors, of representations and rapports between humans, that is to say, at bottom, to force everyone to consent to the Spectacle out of a supposed instinct of conservation. Because it founds its absolute sovereignty on the zoological unity of the human species and upon the immanent continuum of the production and reproduction of "life", Biopower is this essentially murderous tyranny that exercises itself upon everyone in the name of all and of "nature". All hostility to this society, whether it is that of the criminal, the deviant, or the political enemy, must be liquidated because it goes against the interest of the species, and more particularly the species of the criminal, the deviant, and the political enemy. And it is thusly that each new diktat that restrains a little more already derisory liberties pretends to protect everyone against themselves, in opposing the extravagance of its sovereignty to the ultima ratio of naked life. "Pardon them, they know not what they do" says Biopower as it takes out its syringe. Certainly, naked life — the point of view where human life ceases to be distinct from animal life — has always been the point of view of commodity nihilism considering humans. But it is at present all manifestations of transcendence, of which the political is a shattering form, all intentions of liberty, all expressions of metaphysical essence and of the negativity of humans are treated as a malady that must, for the common happiness, be suppressed. However, the penchant for revolution — an endemic pathology for which a campaign of permanent vaccination has not yet come to pass — certainly explains itself by the unhappy coincidence of an at-risk heredity, excessive hormonal levels and the insufficiency of a certain neuro-mediator. There could not be politics inside of Biopower, but only against Biopower. Because Biopower is the achieved negation of the political, veritable

politics must commence by freeing itself from Biopower, that is to say to reveal it as such.

## 6

In Biopower, it is therefore the physical dimension that escapes from humans, erects itself facing them and oppresses them; and it is precisely in this that Biopower is a moment of the Spectacle, just as the physical is a moment of the metaphysical. It is thus an iron necessity which, from even the smallest detail apparently the most simple, the most immediate — the body — condemns the present contestation to place itself on the metaphysical plane or to be nothing. Therefore neither could it be included, nor similarly perceived in the interior of the Spectacle nor of Biopower, like the rest of all that which throws into relief the Imaginary Party. For the hour, its principal attribute is its factual invisibility in the heart of a mode of commodified unveiling that is assuredly metaphysical, but factually metaphysical singularly in that it is the negation of metaphysics, and first of itself as metaphysical. But, the Spectacle abhors a vacuum, it cannot bring itself to disclaim the massive evidence of these hostilities of a new type which agitate, ever more violently, the social body; it is necessary in other words that it mask this. Thus it comes back to multiple occult forces to invent pseudo-conflicts always more empty, always more fabricated and themselves always more violent, in so much as anti-political. It's upon this heavy equilibrium of terror that rests the apparent calm of all the societies of late capitalism.

In this sense, the Imaginary Party is the political party, or more exactly the party of the political, because it is the sole one which can designate in this society the metaphysical labor of an absolute hostility, that is to say the inner existence of a veritable rupture. By that, it takes the path of an absolute politics. The Imaginary Party is the form which politics assumes in the hour of the collapse of Nation-states, of which we know from henceforth to be mortal. It dramatically calls to mind to any State that is not senile, or sufficiently exuberant, the total assertion that the political space is not, in its reality, distinct from physical, social, cultural, etc. space; that in other terms and according to an old formulation, everything is political, or at least is so for power. At this point, politics appears rather as the All of the spaces which liberalism believed it could, predicate by predicate, fragment. The era of Biopower is the moment where domination comes to apply itself to the body, until the individual physiology takes a political character, in spite of the ridiculous alibi of biological naturality. Politics is thus more than ever the total, existential, metaphysical element in which is packed all of human liberty.

## 8

We witness in these gloomy days the final phase of the decomposition of commodity society, which we agree has lasted only too long. It is at the planetary level that we see diverge in always greater proportions the map of the commodity and the territory of the human. The spectacle puts in place a worldwide chaos, but this “chaos” only manifests itself in the from now on proven inaptitude of the economic vision of the world that has never understood human reality. It has become evident that value no longer measures anything: accounting turns to emptiness. Work itself has no other object than to satisfy the universal need of servitude, and Money has finished by leaving itself to be earned by the nothingness it propagates. At the same time, the totality of old bourgeois institutions, which rest on the abstract principles of equivalence and representation, have entered into a crisis which they seem too fatigued to recover from: Justice no longer manages to judge, Teaching no longer teaches, Medicine no longer heals, Parliament no longer legislates, Police no longer force respect for the law, nor does the Family even raise children. Certainly, the exterior forms of the ancient edifice remain, but all life has quitted it definitively. It floats in an intemporality always more absurd and always more perceptible. To deceive the world about the mounting disaster, the Spectacle still arrives from one time to another to sport the symbols of parade, but no one comprehends them anymore. Their magic fascinates none but the magicians. Thus, the National Assembly has become a historic monument, which excites nothing more than the stupid curiosity of tourists. The Old World offers to our view a desolate countryside of new ruins and dead carcasses that wait for a demolition that does not

come and could yet wait for eternity, if no one had the idea to undertake it. Never has there been the project of so many celebrations, and never, too, did their enthusiasm appear more false, more faint, and more forced. Even the crudest rejoicing no longer takes place without a certain air of sadness. Contrary to appearances, the perishing of the ensemble is not so much organ after organ; it decomposes and corrodes, not, for the rest, in some observable positive phenomenon, but rather in the general indifference that has been unchained; indifference that procures the clear sentiment that no one judges themselves to be concerned by this, nor in any fashion have they decided to remedy it. And as “before the sentiment of collapse of all things, to do nothing but to await patiently and blindly the crashing of the old edifice so full of fissures and attacked in its roots and to leave it destroyed by its crumbling scaffolding is contrary to wisdom as much as to dignity” (Hegel), we see, in certain signs that do not permit the discernment of the mode of spectacular unveiling, preparation for the inevitable exile outside “the old edifice so full of fissures”. Already, masses of silent and solitary humans appear, who choose to live in the interstices of the commodity world and who refuse to participate with what they once had a rapport with. It is not solely that the charms of the commodity leave them stubbornly unenthused, it is moreover that they carry an inexplicable suspicion for all that is linked to the universe that it fashioned and that now is collapsing. At the same time, the ever more patent malfunctionings of the capitalist state, become incapable of any integration with the society upon which it imposes itself, guarantees in its midst the necessary temporary subsistence of spaces of indetermination, zones of autonomy always more vast and always more numerous, where there is sketched an ethos for

a whole infra-spectacular world that seems at dusk, but that in truth is at dawn. Some forms of life appear in which the promise goes well beyond the general decomposition. In all respects, this resembles a massive experience of illegality and clandestinity. There are moments where one already lives as if this world no longer existed. During these times, and as a confirmation of this bad omen, we see the despairing tensing and contractions of a world that knows it is to die. One speaks of the reform of the republic when the time of republics has passed. One speaks still of the color of flags, when it is the era of flags themselves that has passed. Such is the grandiose and mortal spectacle that unveils itself to those who dare to consider their time from the point of view of its negation, that is to say from the point of view of the Imaginary Party.



The historic period in which we enter must be a time of extreme violence and grand disorders. The permanent and generalized state of exception is the sole fashion in which commodity society can maintain itself as it has accomplished the undermining of the specific conditions possible for installing itself durably in nihilism. Certainly, domination still has force — physical force as well as symbolic force — but it does not have more than that. At the same time as the discourse of its critique, this society has also lost the discourse of its justification. It finds itself before an abyss, which it discovers is its heart. And it is this truth, noticeable everywhere, that it travesties without stop in embracing in all dialogue “the language of flattery” where “the content of the discourse that the spirit has with itself and upon itself is the perversion of all concepts and of all realities, is the universal trumpery of itself and of others, and the impudence of enunciating this trumpery is for this the highest truth” and where “the simple consciousness of the true and the good...can say nothing to this spirit which does not know them and does not say them”. In these conditions, “if the simple consciousness at last claims the dissolution of this whole world of perversion, it can not all at once demand of the individual to reject this world, because Diogenes himself in his barrel was conditioned by it; besides this demand posed to the singular individual is precisely that which passes for wrong, because wrong consists in worrying about oneself in so much as singular...the demand of this dissolution can only address itself to this same spirit of culture”. One recognizes there the true description of the language that henceforth domination speaks in its most advanced forms, when it has incorporated into its

discourse the critique of consumer society, of spectacle and their misery. "Culture Canal+" and "Inrockuptibles" give, in France, passing but significant examples. It's more generally the scintillating and sophisticated language of the modern cynic, who has definitively identified all usage of liberty as the abstract liberty to accept everything, but in his own manner. In his gregarious solitude, the shrill consciousness of his world prides itself on its perfect powerlessness to change it. It finds itself similarly mobilized in a maniacal fashion against the consciousness of self and against all quest for substantiality. A world such as this "knows all become estranged from it, knows being-for-itself separated from being-in-itself, or that what is aimed at and the goal separate from truth" (Hegel), in other terms that, all in dominating effectively, attaches itself to the luxury of knowing overtly its domination as vain, absurd and illegitimate, calls against it as the only response to what it states the violence of those who, having been mutilated by it of all rights, draw their rights from hostility. One can no longer reign innocently.

## 10

At this stage domination, which feels its life inexorably escaping, becomes mad and pretends to a tyranny of which it no longer has the means. Biopower and the Spectacle correspond, as complementary moments, to this ultimate radicalization of the commodity aberration that seems its triumph and preludes its loss. In the one and the other case, it is a question of eradicating from reality all that, in it, exceeds its representation. At the end, an unchained caprice attaches itself to this ruined edifice, which tries to tyrannize and weaken without delay all that dares to give itself an independent existence outside of it. We are there. The Society of the Spectacle has become untreatable on this point: it is necessary to participate in the collective crime of its existence, no one must be able to claim to reside outside it. It can no longer tolerate the existence of the colossal party of abstention that is the Imaginary Party. It is necessary to work, that is to say to hold oneself in all readiness at its disposition, to be mobilizable. To reach its ends, it uses in equal measure the most vulgar means, like the menace of hunger, and the most insidious, like the young woman. The faded old tune of "citizenship" which spreads everywhere with regard to everything, and to nothing, expresses the dictatorship of this abstract duty of participation in a social totality that is in all ways autonomized. It is in this manner, even with the fact of this dictatorship, that the negative party of negativity comes little by little to unify and acquire a positive content. Because the elements of the multitude of the indifferent who mutually ignore one another and who do not think to be of any party, find themselves equally exposed to this unique and centralized dictatorship, the dictatorship of the Spectacle, of which

the salariat, the commodity, nihilism and the imperative of visibility are not but partial aspects. It is therefore domination itself that imposes on them, on those who would have been content volunteers of a floating existence, to recognize themselves for what they are: rebels. "The contemporary enemy does not cease to imitate the army of Pharaoh: they hunt down the runaways, the deserters, but never arrive at preceding them or confronting them" (Paolo Virno, *Miracle, virtuosity and déjà-vu*). In the course of this exodus, some unprecedented solidarities constitute themselves, friends and brothers reassemble behind the new lines of the front that they designate, and the formal opposition between the Spectacle and the Imaginary Party becomes concrete. There develops thus, among those who take note of their essential marginality, a strong sentiment of belonging to non-belonging, a sort of community of Exile. The simple sensation of estrangement in this world metamorphosizes in accord with the circumstances into intimacy with estrangement. Flight was nothing more than a fact become a strategy. Now "flight, says the thirty sixth stratagem, is the supreme politics". But hence, the Imaginary Party is already more than solely imaginary; it commences to know itself as such and marches with slowness towards its realization, which is its ruin. The metaphysical hostility to this society has from now on ceased to be lived on a purely negative mode, like the casual indifference to all that could come upon it, a refusal to play, or the forced failure of domination by rejection of domination. It takes a positive character and by this is so perfectly worrying that power is not wrong, in its paranoia, to see terrorists everywhere. It's a frigid, cold hatred, like of an inflammation, that for the hour does not express itself overtly or theoretically, but rather by a practical

paralysis of all social devices, by a mute and obstinate ill-wishing, and by the sabotage of all innovation, all movement and all intelligence. There are crises nowhere, there is only the omnipresence of the Imaginary Party, of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere, because it operates on the same territory as the Spectacle.

# 11

Each of the failures of this society must thus be comprehended positively, as the work of the Imaginary Party, as the work of negativity, that is to say the human: in such a war, all who deny one party, subjectively, do but objectively rally to the other. The radicalism of the times imposes its conditions. As long as there is the Spectacle, the notion of the Imaginary Party is that which renders visible the new configuration of hostilities. The Imaginary Party claims the totality of those who in thoughts, words or acts conspire to the destruction of the present order. The disaster is its work.

## 12

Up until a certain point, the Imaginary Party corresponds to a specter, to an invisible presence, to the fantastical return of the Other in a society where all otherness was suppressed, to a separate accounting for all that was generalized. But this bad dream, this idea of suicide that passes by the head of the Spectacle, can not delay — in respect to the character, itself imaginary, of the present social production — engendering its reality as consciousness becoming practice, as immediately practical consciousness. The Imaginary Party is the other name of the shameful sickness of shaken power: paranoia, which Canetti too vaguely defined as “the malady of strength”. The despairing and planetary deployment of always more massive and sophisticated techniques to control public space materializes in a piquant fashion the madhouse insanity of wounded domination which still pursues the old dream of the Titans for a universal state; when it is no more than a dwarf among others, and upset with that. In this terminal phase, it speaks only of the fight against terrorism, delinquency, extremism and criminality, because it is constitutionally forbidden to explicitly mention the existence of the Imaginary Party. Besides, this represents for it, in combat, a certain handicap, because it can not designate its fanatics to hate “the veritable enemy that inspires an infinite courage” (Kafka).

# 13

However it is necessary to know that this paranoia does not lack for reasons, in respect to the direction of historical development. It is a fact that at the point where we have arrived in the process of socialization of society, each individual act of destruction constitutes an act of terrorism, that is to say it objectively aims at the entire society. Thus, at the extreme of suicide that manifests itself in a gesture where death and liberty blend, which delimits, suspends, and annuls the sovereignty of Biopower — and which acquires by that the meaning of a direct derogation of domination — sees itself thus delight a strong force of consummation, of production and reproduction of its world. Similarly, when the law rests on nothing more than its promulgation, that is to say on force and caprice, when this enters a phase of autonomous proliferation, and atop it all, when no ethos is no longer contained in it, then all crime must be comprehended as a total contestation of a solidly ruined social order. All murders are no longer the murder of a particular person- if such a thing as a “particular person” is still possible- but pure murder, without object or subject, without culprit or victim. It is immediately an attempt against the law, which does not exist, but wishes to reign everywhere. From now on, the tiniest infractions have changed their meaning. All crimes are become political crimes, and it is precisely this that domination must at all costs make occult, to veil from all that an epoch has passed, and that political violence, this living corpse, comes to demand the reckoning of all the forms that one does not know it in. It is in this manner, of which the Spectacle could have an intuition, that as the Imaginary Party manifests itself it is escorted by a certain trait of blind terrorism.



Certainly, one can interpret this as the moment of the interiorization by all developed commodity societies of the negation that they hold in an cathartic but illusory exteriority of “really existing socialism”, but it is there however its most superficial aspect. It is also permitted for each to diminish the insoluble character by certifying the general rule that “a political unity can not exist under the form of *res publica*, of the public, which finds itself put into question each time that it creates a space of non-publicity which is an effective disavowal of this publicity”. It is certainly not rare, thus, that certain people take the Party as “disappearing in the shadow, but transforming the shadow into a strategic space from whence come the attacks which destroy the place where until now imperium manifested itself, which dismantle the vast background of official public life, that a technocratic intelligence would not know to organize” (Carl Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*). It is a constant temptation, in effect, to conceive the positive existence of the Imaginary Party under the familiar species of the guerrilla, of civil war, of partisan warfare, of a conflict without a precise front or a declaration of hostilities, without armistice or peace treaty. And by these many aspects, it is verily a question of a war that has nothing behind its acts, its violence, its crimes, and which appear to have no other program, on this point, than to become conscious violence, that is to say conscious of its metaphysical and political character.

# 14

Because the Spectacle cannot, in virtue of the congenital aberration of its vision of the world no less than from strategic considerations, say anything, see anything, nor understand anything of the Imaginary Party, of which the substance is purely metaphysical, the particular form under which the latter makes irruption into visibility is the form of catastrophe. The catastrophe is that which reveals, but cannot be revealed. By that, one must understand that the catastrophe does not exist save for the Spectacle, of which it is the sudden and unalterable ruin of all its patient labor to make pass as a world that which is only its own *Weltanschauung*; that besides signals by this that it is incapable, like all that is finished, of understanding destruction. In each “catastrophe” it is the mode of commodity unveiling that finds itself unveiled and discontinued. Its character is in evidence as it flies into pieces. The totality of categories, of which it enforces the use, fear an exploding reality. Interest, equivalence, calculus, utility, work, and value are put to flight by the non-assignability of negation. Therefore the Imaginary Party is known in the Spectacle as the party of chaos, crisis, and disaster.

# 15

In the exact proportion as the catastrophe is truth to the state of fulguration, those of the Imaginary Party work to hasten the advent of this by any means. The axes of communication are for them privileged targets. They know how infrastructures that “are worth billions” can be destroyed in an audacious coup. They know the tactical weakness, the points of least resistance and the moments of vulnerability of the opposing organization. They are besides freer to choose what will be the theatre of their operations and act at the point where the smallest forces can cause the greatest losses. The most troubling, as one interrogates them, is certainly that they know all of this, without however knowing that they know it. Thus, an anonymous worker at a bottling plant pours cyanide “just like that” in a handful of cans, a young man assassinates a tourist in the name of the “purity of the mountain” and signs his crime “Le MESSI”, another “without apparent reason” blew out the brains of his petit-bourgeois father on his birthday, a third opens fire on the wise herd of his school comrades, a last “gratuitously” threw bricks at cars launched on the lively allure of the highway, when he did not burn them in their parking lots. In the Spectacle, the Imaginary Party does not appear as the work of humans, but of strange acts, in the sense understood by the Sabbatean tradition. These acts themselves are not however connected with one another, but systematically held in the enigma of the exception; one would not have the idea to see in these manifestations a unique and similar human negativity, because one does not know what negativity is; at bottom, one does not know any longer what humanity is, nor even if it exists. All this stands out in the register of the absurd, and at this price:

there is nothing much that does not stand out. Above all, the Spectacle does not want to see there that so many attacks are directed against it and its ignominy. Ergo, from the spectacular point of view, the point of view of a certain alienation of the state of public explanation, the Imaginary Party is resumed into a confused ensemble of gratuitous and isolated criminal acts of which the authors possess no sense, similar to the periodic irruption in visibility of the always more mysterious forms of terrorism; all things which finish all the same, in the end, by producing the disagreeable impression that one is shielded from nothing in the Spectacle, that an obscure menace weighs on the empty order of commodity society. Indisputably, the state of exception becomes generalized. No one can any longer pretend, in one camp as in the other, to security. This is good. We know at present that the denouement is close. "Lucid saintliness recognizes in itself the necessity of destruction, the necessity of a tragic issue" (Bataille, *The Guilty*).

The effective configuration of hostilities that the notion of the Imaginary Party makes readable is marked essentially by asymmetry. We have no business, presently, with the dispute of two camps that compete for the conquest of the same trophy around which, all things told, they find themselves. Here, the protagonists move on such perfectly strange planes, one from the other, that they do not meet except at very rare points of intersection, and everything accounted for, by the whim of a certain chance. But this strangeness is itself asymmetrical: because, for the Imaginary Party, the Spectacle is without mystery whereas for the Spectacle the Imaginary Party must remain forever a mystery. From this follows a strategic consequence of the first importance: while we can without problem designate our enemy, which is besides by essence designatable, our enemy cannot designate us. There is no uniformity in the Imaginary Party, because uniformity is precisely the central attribute of the Spectacle. Thus it is from now on that all uniformity must feel itself menaced and, with it, all that it represents as currency. In other terms, the Imaginary Party knows nothing but its enemies, not its members, because its enemies are precisely all those who one could know. Those of the Imaginary Party, in re-appropriating their Bloom-being, have re-appropriated the anonymity with which they were constrained. In so doing, they turn against the Spectacle the situation it forced on them and use it as a condition of invincibility. In a certain manner, they will make this society pay for the imprescriptable crime of having stolen from them their name—that is to say the knowledge of their sovereign singularity and by that of all properly human life—to

have excluded them from all visibility, all community, all participation, to have thrown them into the indistinction of the crowd, into the nothingness of ordinary life, into the mass in which homo sacer is suspended, and to have walled off from their existence the access of meaning. It is from this condition, in which the Spectacle would like to maintain them, that they depart. It is perfectly insufficient, and at the same time significant of a certain intellectual impotence, to remark that, in this terrorism, innocents receive the chastisement "of being nothing, of being without destiny, to have been dispossessed of their name by a system, itself anonymous, of which they become thus the most pure incarnation. In that they are finished social products of an henceforth globalized abstract sociality." (Baudrillard). For, each one of these murders without motive and without designated victim, each one of these anonymous sabotages constitutes an act of Tiquun, that executes the sentence that this world has already pronounced against itself. It returns to nothingness that which Spirit has already quitted, to death those who do not live but rather survive, to the ruin of that which has for so long been no more than ruins. And if one must accept for these acts the absurd qualifier of "gratuitous" it is because they do but lead to manifest that which is already true, but still occult, to realizing that which is already real, but not known as such. They add nothing over the course of the disaster, they record and notify.

That its enemy has neither face, nor name, nor anything that could be tied to an identity; that this always presents itself, in spite of its colossal designs, under the detritus of a perfect Bloom, voila that which is fit to unleash the paranoia of power. Johann Georg Elser, of which the bomb attempt November 8, 1939 in Munich did not spare Hitler save for a small favor of fate, furnishes the model of that which, in the years to come, will plunge commodity domination into an ever more sensible fright. Elser is the model Bloom, if ever such an expression did not express a crippling contradiction. In him all evokes neutrality and nothingness. His absence from the world was complete, his solitude absolute. His banality was itself banal. The poverty of spirit, the lack of personality and insignificance were his only attributes, but they never became conspicuous. When he recounts his life as a handyman, it is in the manner of an impersonality without bottom. Nothing kindled passion in him. Politics and ideology left him equally indifferent. He neither knew what Communism was, nor what National-Socialism was, and he was however a worker in Germany in the 1930's. And when the "judges" interrogated him on his motives for an act into which he put a year and minute care to prepare, he came only to mention the augmentation of deductions upon the salary of workers. He even declared he did not have the intention to eliminate National-Socialism, but solely a few men that he judged evil. It is such a being that missed saving the planet from a world war and unparalleled suffering. His project rested on nothing but his solitary resolution, which his existence had denied, to ravage that of which he was the inexpressible enemy, that which represented the hegemony of

Evil. He took his right only from himself, that is to say from the shattering absolute of his decision. The "Party of Order" will have to face, and already faces, the multiplication of such elementary acts of terrorism that it can not understand nor foresee, because they authorize themselves from nothing but the unshakeable sovereignty of metaphysics, of the crazy possibility of disaster that each human existence carries in itself in infinitesimal doses. Nothing, not even glory, can shelter from such eruptions, which aim at the social in response to the terrorism of the social. Their target is as vast as the world. Thus, all that employs itself in residing in the Spectacle must forevermore live in terror of a menace of destruction, which no one knows whence it emanates, nor what it concerns, and of which one can just barely guess that it wants itself to be an example. In similar actions of brilliance, the lack of discernable goal is necessarily a part of the goal itself, because it is by this that they manifest an exteriority, a strangeness, an irreducibility to the mode of commodity unveiling, because it is in this way that they corrode it. It is a matter of spreading the unease that makes humans metaphysicians and the doubt that cracks, level after level, the dominant interpretation of the world. Thus it is in vain that the Spectacle credits us an immediate goal, if it isn't maybe the hope to provoke a more or less durable breakdown in the whole of the machine. Nothing is more similar to abolishing the totality of the world of administered alienation than one of those miraculous suspensions where all the humanity that the Spectacle habitually eclipses brusquely returns, where the empire of separation is defeated, where the mouths rediscover words which they must, and where humans are reborn in regard to their fellow humans and to the indistinguishable need that they have of one another.



Domination sometimes takes many decades to completely recover from a single one of these moments of intense truth. But one gravely mistakes the strategy of the Imaginary Party to reduce it to the pursuit of catastrophe. One does not misunderstand any less in crediting to us the infantilism of wanting to pulverize, in one blow, who knows which general quarter where power finds itself concentrated. One does not assault a mode of unveiling like a fortress, even if the one can usefully lead to the other. Hence, the Imaginary Party does not aim for a general insurrection against the Spectacle, nor even for its direct and instantaneous destruction. Rather it arranges an ensemble of conditions such that domination succumbs as quickly and as largely as possible to the progressive paralysis to which its paranoia condemns it. Although it does not abandon at any moment its designs to achieve this itself, its tactic is not to attack from the front, but in the same action to hide itself, to orient and to hasten the issuance of the malady. "It is this that is fearful for the holders of power that it does not recognize: not letting itself be seized, being the dissolution of social facts as well as the restive obstinacy to reinvent in itself a sovereignty that the law can not circumscribe" (Blanchot, *The Shameful Community*). Impotent faced with the omnipresence of this danger, domination, which feels itself more and more alone, betrayed and fragile, has no other choice but to extend control and suspicion to the totality of a territory of which, however, free circulation resides the vital principle. It can encircle its "gated communities" with as many guardians as it would like, the ground will continue no less to slip out from under its feet. It is in the essence of the Imaginary Party to everywhere carve up commodity society, even at its foundation of credit. Its dissolving

practice knows no other limit than the collapse of what it undermines.

## 18

It is not so much the content of the crimes of the Imaginary Party that tend to ruin the imperium of bloody peace as their form. Because their form is that of an hostility with no specific object, of a fundamental hatred that wells up, without respect for any obstacle, from a most unreachable interiority, from unaltered depths where humans maintain a veritable contact with themselves. That is why there emanates from them a force that all the chatter of the Spectacle cannot manage to hold back. Japanese children, whom one might justly consider the most intense avant-garde of the Imaginary Party, have forged certain words to designate these absolute fits of rage, where something in them that is not them, indeed, something much greater than them, takes hold. The best-known formula is mukatsuku; at the origin it meant "to have nausea," that is, to be possessed by the most physical of metaphysical sensations. In this special rage there is something sacred.

It is however manifest that the Spectacle can no longer content itself, before the massacres, crimes and catastrophes that besiege it, before this inexplicable mass that accumulates, with noting the extension of a gap in its vision of the world. Besides, it expresses without evasion: "one would like that this violence be the fruit of misery, of great poverty. It would be more easy to admit to" (Evenement du Jeudi, September 10 1998). As one can observe with a disarming regularity, its first movement is to advance an explanation at all costs, as it must ruin all that upon which it could repose in theory. Thus, when the pathetic Clinton is summoned to give reasons for and to draw the consequences of the Beautiful Gesture of Kipland Kinkel, exemplary Bloom by all accounts, he found nothing responsible save "the influence of the new culture of films and violent videogames". In so doing, he made note of the transparency, of the insubstantiality, and of the radical liquidation of the subject by commodity domination and publicly recognized that the tragic robinsonnade upon which this pretends to found itself, the juridical irreducibility of the individual, is no longer tenable. He ingenuously saps even the principal of commodity society, without which law, private property, the sale of labor power, and until now what has been called "culture", read all the more like literary fantasy. It would still prefer to sacrifice the whole edifice of its pseudo-justification rather than to penetrate the reasons and nature of its enemy. Because otherwise one must grant to Marx that "the coincidence of the transformation of surroundings and of human activity or of the transformation of man by himself can only be seized and rationally comprehended as revolutionary praxis". Then, for a second time, we return to this

confession that it tries at present to efface; it is the painful moment where it exhausts itself in ridiculous epilogues upon the inexistent psychology of the Bloom that has turned to action. In spite of these interminable considerations, it does not arrive at defending itself from the sentiment in the trial, which is, at bottom, that it itself is judged, and that society takes the place of the accused. It is too evident that the origin of its gesture is nothing subjective, that it is simply a part, in its saintliness, of the objectivity of domination. On this point, it comes all the same to confess, from its very lips, that verily it is a social war that it has business with, without clarifying, however, which social war, that is to say who the protagonists are: "the authors of these mad acts, these new barbarians, are not all head cases. They are most often very ordinary people" (Evenement du Jeudi, 10 September 1998). From now on it is this last rhetoric of an absolute hostility, where it presides over the naming of the enemy who is declared a barbarian and rejected as outside of humanity, which tends to impose itself in a universal fashion. To wit, it is now possible to hear, in the midst of a beautiful period of social peace, such and such a potentate of public transport proclaiming "we are going to reconquer territory". And in fact, we see the spread everywhere, under forms most often painted over, the certitude of the existence of an un-nameable interior enemy, which pursues a continuous action of sabotage; but this time, unhappily, there are no more kulaks to "liquidate as a class". One would be wrong, thus, to not subscribe to the paranoiac point of view, which supposes behind the inarticulate multiplicity of protests in the world a singular will armed with black designs: because in a world of paranoiacs, it is the paranoiacs who are right.

That the Spectacle fears harboring in its breast an imaginary party, even if in fact the inverse produces itself—in effect, it’s rather the Imaginary Party which holds in its aura the Spectacle-- this suspicion betrays that while it has qualified these acts of destruction as “gratuitous”, it has not said everything. It is glaring that the ensemble of misdeeds that one attributes to “lunatics”, “barbarians”, “irresponsibles” all contribute in adjacent ways to a unique unformulated project: the liquidation of commodity domination. In the last instance, it is always a question of objectively rendering its life impossible, from propagating unease, doubt and mistrust; to make, in the modest measure of the means of each one, as much harm as possible. Nothing can explain the systematic lack of remorse in criminals, if not the mute sentiment of participating in a grandiose work of devastation. From all evidence, these people, in themselves insignificant, are the agents of a severe, historical and transcendent reason that advertises the destruction of the world--that is to say, the accomplishing of its nothingness. The sole refinement of those conscious fractions of the Imaginary Party is the fact that they do not work towards the end of the world, but the end of a world. This difference could, when the moment comes, leave a sufficient place to the most reasoned hatred. But this is without consequence for the Imaginary Party itself, which must remain the next figure of Spirit.

Those of the Imaginary Party fight irregularly. They are engaged in this Spanish war where the spectacular occupier is ruined by stationing troops and material, and where a rampant dialectical paroxysm in the terms of which “the force and the importance of irregularity are determined by the force and the importance that the regular organization puts in place” (Carl Schmitt), and inversely. The Imaginary Party can count upon this constant: that a handful of partisans suffices to immobilize all the “Party of Order”. In this war that the present abandons itself to, there remains nothing of a *jus belli*. Hostility is absolute. The “Party of Order” itself is not reluctant to recall from one time to another: it is necessary to operate as a partisan wherever there are partisans—it suffices to know what prisons have become in the last decade, and how diverse police forces have in the same time taken the habit of proceeding with “marginals”, to comprehend that such a watchword can signify bloody caprice. Thus, as long as commodity domination subsists, those of the Imaginary Party must expect to receive from it consideration as criminals to be dealt with, or as partridges to be shot down, depending on the circumstances. The disproportion of weapons and punishments that it already brandishes against them does not join itself to any conjuncture of political repression, it is consubstantial with what it is, and with what its enemy is. What expresses this is the simple fact that the Imaginary Party contains in its principle the negation of all that upon which commodity domination erects itself, the negation that will manifest itself in action before manifesting itself as discourse. Different from the revolutions of the past, the coming insurrection does not call upon any secular transcendence

save the continued disappearance of so many regimes of oppression eager to justify themselves that end up by being hated. At no moment does it pretend to draw its legitimacy from the People, from Opinion, from the Church, the Nation, or the Working Class, even under an attenuated form. It founds its cause on nothing, but this nothingness it knows to be identical to being. That its crimes evidence such a miraculous sovereignty, this proves that it inscribes itself in no particular transcendence, residing dead; rather that it roots itself in Transcendence itself, and that without intermediary. It is by this that it represents for the capitalist State the most considerable peril that it has ever seen facing it. That which hereafter acts as an obstacle does not contest this or that aspect of rights, nor this or that law, it attacks rather that which precedes all laws, the obligation of obedience. Worse still, the partisan of the Imaginary Party develops in the most complete violation of all the existing rules without ever having the sentiment of transgressing them, acting in disdain of them. They do not oppose themselves to rights, they depose them. It aspires to a superior justification to all the written and unwritten laws: the text without a law that it is. It thus renews the absolute scandal of the Sabbattein doctrine, which affirmed that “the accomplishing of the law is its transgression”, and left it behind. It itself constitutes, in so much as it is the living abolition of the ancient law which shares, divides, and separates, a scrap of Tikkun. It responds to the state of exception by the state of exception, and thus returns the whole juridical edifice back to its sad unreality. Finally it represents no one, and not from a lack, but on the contrary by excess, by the refusal of even the principal of representation. Starting from the fundamental irreducibility of all human existence, it proclaims itself as non-susceptible to



representation, as the un-representable, but also as the un-representing. Analogous in this to the totality of language, or of the world, it defies all concrete equivalencies. Such an Imaginary Party that renders all monuments to law infamous from its origin as a Roman fiction takes the capitalist State back to the ranks of an association of criminals only more consequential, more organized and more powerful than others. This presumes nothing of any social disorganization: Chicago in the 1920's was administered in an exemplary fashion. As we see, the Imaginary Party is also fundamentally anti-state and anti-popular. Nothing is more odious to it than the idea of political unity, if not maybe obedience. In the present conditions, it can be nothing other than the non-party of the multitude because, as the contemptible Hobbes remarked aptly, "when the citizens rebel against the State, they are the multitude against the people".

If the notion of the Imaginary Party names first of all the negativity in the epoch in suspension, at the same time as the invisibility of this negativity, it is necessary to understand it inseparably from the notion which lets itself dread the positive content of all the practices of which the Spectacle can grasp only the negative, that is to say that which they are not. As it qualifies “the crisis of politics” the massive defection from the vile, established political space, “the crisis of culture” the obstinate indifference that welcomes all the shocking waste that season after season of modern art elaborates, “the crisis of education” the growing refusal of scholarly incarceration, “the economic crisis” as the mute resistance to capitalist modernization and the always spreading refusal to work, “the crisis of the family” the resolute sacking of the unhealthy nuclear family, “the crisis of social ties” that which is nothing other than the rejection of alienated social relations and spectacular mores, it remains blind before this “silent revolution... which is not visible by all eyes, that our contemporaries are the least capable to observe, and that is as difficult to paint in words as to conceive”. It ignores that “the spirit of the time, growing slowly and quietly ripe for the new form it is to assume, disintegrates one fragment after another of the structure of its previous world. That it is tottering to its fall is indicated only by symptoms here and there. Frivolity and again ennui, which are spreading in the established order of things, the undefined foreboding of something unknown – all these betoken that there is something else approaching. This gradual crumbling to pieces, which did not alter the general look and aspect of the whole, is interrupted by the sunrise, which, in a flash and at a

single stroke, brings to view the form and structure of the new world" (Hegel). As it sheds its skin, it is true, the snake remains blind.

All the positivity of the Imaginary Party holds itself in the giant blind spot of the un-representable of which the Spectacle is atavistically incapable of a sole glimpse; this is because the Imaginary Party is, in all its aspects, only the political consequence of the positivity of which Metaphysical Critique is the concept and the Bloom the representation. When the Bloom, this creature that is not administrated by any social determination other than negativity and of which Hannah Arendt, identifying it a little too quickly with the mass-man, held “isolation and lack of normal social relations” for the principle characteristic, becomes besides the dominant human type of the world, commodity society discovers that it has no more hold on the subjectivities that it has, however, entirely formed and that it, in following its proper course, has thus engendered its fitting negation. In a privileged manner the sphere of sociology shows the failure of products made for domination: the Bloom is everywhere, but sociology does not see it anywhere. Similarly, it would be vain to wait for sociology, as if it could ever give any indication of the effective existence of the Imaginary Party, which the essence is, for it, extraterrestrial. It is there, be it said in passing, that but one of the aspects of the death of sociology, which has definitively outlasted this socialization of society, which takes away equally well the socialization of sociology. In this trial it loses itself in realizing itself, finds itself ridiculed as separate science by its guinea pigs themselves, who meanwhile have been forced to become their own sociologists. In this manner, since that central, unique, and undifferentiated instance, the Spectacle has taken charge of the continued secretion of all social codes, and the social sciences from

Weber to Bourdieu save and share only the weight of their lies. With the death of sociology, it is a total failure of classical social critique founded upon sociology and as sociology that, in collapsing, reveals its perfidious and servile essence. This critique is no longer at the level of the epoch, it is neither apt to describe nor to contest. This task henceforth returns to Metaphysical Criticism.

Up to here, one has very badly figured the frontline, which is shared by friends and enemies of the dominant order, to be like a continuous line. To this representation one must hereafter substitute the image of circular and innumerable frontlines, of which each holds in its interior space-time human communities, practices, languages absolutely disobedient to commodity domination, and which the latter, according to its immanent logic, besieges without lapse. All that contributes to maintaining the ancient representation belongs to the camp of the enemy. The first consequence of this new geometry of the struggle concerns the form of the propagation of subversion. We have no more business, in face of a world of authoritarian commodities, with an advance, company after company, in a straight line — of the poor, the workers, or the wretched of the earth — but to a contagion similar to the succession of concentric circles on the surface of a mercury droplet when it is touched. Here, the effect of mass as in the past is identically attained by the intensity of that which is lived at the moment of collapse. It follows that the elementary revolutionary subject is no longer a class, or the individual, but the metaphysical community, whatever be its degree of exile — that's what evidences, by default, the fundamentally insignificant character and unimportance, in the Spectacle, of all personal adventure, of all private history. The good surveyor does not judge it exaggerated to reduce the world in its ensemble to miniscule and dispersed centers, because all that is not them, all that does not give to life a particular and shared existential content is, behind the lifeless charade of appearance, dead. Each one of these metaphysical communities awakens to a harsh world where

humans can no longer meet save on the basis of the essential, and constitute, in the midst of the desert, an exclusive pole of substantiality. All knowledge that does not possess its own laws, all simple superficiality is excluded in it. There, conditions create themselves in which the Absolute can recover its temporal pretensions; possibilities that we have lost since the Millenarist uprisings and messianic Jewish movements of the 17<sup>th</sup> century open themselves. Whatever one says, the acute demand of a new force and language feel themselves become illuminated well beyond the misery of the present. And it is precisely this that the forces of decomposition fear, who promise so many excessive favors to those who will consent to renounce themselves in order to be liked. The Imaginary Party does at first only designate the positive fact of this multitude of zones fully autonomous from commodity domination experiment hic et nunc, to the spreading disappearance of the alienated Common, the last convulsions of a social organisms in the process of perishing, and of the proper forms of Publicity. Until now, there had never been federation save for intellectualizing. And what binds them is not in effect, in the first case, more than a passive character: these are communities in which the meaning and form of life dominates that of life itself, where the duty to be had been elevated until incandescence. They share thus the same metaphysical substance, but they do not yet know it. It is only under the dark auspices of the common persecution by the global domination of the commodity that condemns them to come to know themselves for what they are: fractions of the Imaginary Party. There is in this process something ineluctable: the resistance of these communities to the generalized accounting expressly designates them to the steamrollers of the reigning abstraction. But in the end

the only identifiable effect of this oppression is that these independent universes are led, one by one, and by their enemy no less, to leave the immediacy of their particularity by which they receive, over the course of combat, their universal character. And it is in the same proportion where this enemy is nothing other than a permanent labor of negation of metaphysics that they accede to the consciousness of what unites them: not the affirmation of a metaphysical particularity, but of the metaphysical as such. This tie, all in not being certainly immediate, is nothing formal, nothing constructed, but rather it is something anterior of all liberty, and upon which it is founded: existential hostility, absolute and concrete, to the nihilism of the commodity. It follows from this that the Imaginary Party does not converge towards a general will, contrary to all that was called a "party" in the past, because it already shares the Common, identified here with language, with Spirit, with the metaphysical, or again to a politics of finitude- all these terms become in the circumstances so many pseudonyms of a sole Indescribable. To say that the cohesion of the Imaginary Party is of a metaphysical order does not thus mean to evoke anything other than this everyday war of which each one among us finds themselves always already engaged and which opposes the thorough negation of all aspects of life. On this point, the necessity of its unification imposes itself on all its elements, as identical to its becoming conscious: "The struggle is between the modern world, for one part, and for another part all the other possible worlds." (Peguy, *Notes conjointes*). All those who, liking truth but certainly not the same truth, agree to ravage the despotism of the derisory metaphysics of the market attach themselves to the Imaginary Party. But the movement in which unity produces itself is also



that by which differences pose and solidify themselves. Each specific community in the fight against the empty universality of the commodity knows itself, bit by bit, as specific and raises itself to the consciousness of its specificity, that is to say it diffuses itself by the universal and understands its reflection. It writes itself into the concrete generality of Spirit, from which there progresses, amongst all the celebrated figures, the bacchanal where all irreducibilites are intoxicated. Fragment following fragment, the reappropriation of the Common undertakes itself. In this manner in the heat of combat, the nomadic ballet of communities acquires the complex and architectonic structure of a system of metaphysical castes of which the principle could be none other than play, that is to say the sovereign consciousness of Nothingness. Each metaphysical kingdom slowly learns the frontiers of its territory on the continent of the Infinite. At the same time, a common generality constitutes itself, that contains in it all the different totalities of regional commonalities, that is to say that it is the tracing of their trimming. One can foresee that with the approach of victory those of the Imaginary Party will fight no more battles to defeat an enemy that is at any rate diminished, so much as to at last be able to give free reign to their metaphysical disagreements, that they well intend to exhaust physically and by play. In this, they are the fierce advocates of violence, but of an agonistic violence, highly ritualized and rich in meaning. As one can see, and it would be wrong to be deceived, the triumph of the Imaginary Party is equally its ruin and disintegration.

The form of Publicity that removes and prefigures the Imaginary Party has nothing in common with all that could be elaborated in classical political philosophy. If one had to give it an ancestor, it would be necessary to call to memory that which was fugitively sketched in rare and precious moments of insurrection, in Soviets, in Communes, in the Aragon collectives of 1936–1937, or in the secret schools of the Kabbala, that of Safed, for example. Each time that this last came to force a way onto the ingrate stage of History, the consequences were limitless. Few among those who lived in instants where this one — making break forth in pieces all the amputated and circumscribed forms of Publicity — let itself be glimpsed, were subsequently even to endure the sight of the world as it left those whose eyes had sustained the unequalled aurora of the *restitutio in integrum* of Tiqqun. But at present by a necessary consequence of evolution, in so much as it progresses in all the developed capitalist societies, one has never known this thing save in the violent fractures that silently install themselves in the calm and for their duration as unperceived, in so much as their forwardness seems to be self-evident. Truly a curious spectacle, that of a world where the dominant forms of existence know they have been, according to the concept, surpassed, and yet persist in existing, as if nothing had happened; meanwhile, on this side the extreme alienation of Publicity imposed by the Spectacle, and as counterweight, we see dawn, yet mingled with the contrary principle, a humanity of which meaning is the exclusive nourishment, although corrupted. Free of the necessity to produce, liberated from the chains of cloistered work, fragile worlds compose themselves for which elective affinitive are all

and servitude nothing. The ruins of the metropolis already contain nothing more of living than fluid aggregations of individual humans who, finding no reason for alienation, bypass it in all directions. The slavery of humans in the Spectacle seems no less extravagant to them than their liberty is incomprehensible to the slaves. In the suspension of their existence, the problems of the world cease to be problematic, it has become the material in which they live. Language no longer appears to them as a laborious exteriority that must be internalized to then apply it to the world, it has become the immediate substance of that world. At no moment does their action detach itself as separate from their words. One understands thus that the Spectacle, where politics and economics remain abstractions separated from metaphysics, represents for them a prior form of Publicity. But it is in fact all the old petrified dualisms that, in the substantive continuity of meaning, abolish themselves. In the midst of these rich totalities of meaning, full and overt, eternity finds itself lodged in each instant and the entire universe in each of its details. Their world, the city, shelters them as an interiority, while their interiority has taken on the dimensions of a world. They are already, in a partial, provisional, and sadly reversible manner, in the “restoration of the broken unity of the real and the transcendent” (Lukacs). But for the caprices of domination, their life leads itself to the realization of all human potentialities that it contains. This next figure of Publicity corresponds to the maximum deployment of this, that is to say that it espouses language without the least restraint, that it is the language, just as it knows silence. With it, essence is no longer distinguishable from appearance, but humanity has ceased to confound these with itself. With it, Spirit has its Rest, and attends in peace its own metamorphoses.

Language is there the unique law, new and eternal, that goes beyond all past laws of which it was certainly the material, but in a crystallized state. If the ancient forms of Publicity bring themselves up in more or less equilibrated constructions, more or less harmonious, this one is on the contrary horizontal, labyrinthine, and topological. No representation can surpass it on any point; all its space advertises being explored. As to the operational articulation of the Imaginary Party, in regard to the innervation of the world, this is not assured by any system of vertical delegation, but in a mode of transmission itself inscribed in the limitless horizontality of language: that of the Example. The geographical plane of the world of Tiquun in no way signifies the abolition of values and the end of all human pursuit of exploration. Only, it is by “the authority of the prototype and not the normativity of order” (Virno) that it is permitted to humans, as it already is to fractions of the Imaginary Party, to impose their excellence. The map of the world that we draw is nothing other than the map of Spirit. And it is at present this Publicity of Spirit that, on all sides, overflows the party of nothingness, of which the idiocy and baseness become each day more ferocious and more intolerable. We will put an end to it, inevitably.

Without doubt, the war of attrition that the Spectacle leads against the Imaginary Party and freedom henceforth devastates entire regions of the social space. There it decrees measures of protection of which have been common only in world conflicts: curfews, military escorts, methodical information gathering, control of weapons and communications, putting into trusteeship whole sectors of the economy, etc. The humans of our time march straight to an immeasurable fear. Their nightmares are peopled with tortures that no longer belong only to the domain of dreams. Now, one speaks of pirates, of monsters, and of giants. Tied to the progress of a universal sentiment of insecurity, facial expressions bear the evidence of a fatal and continued accumulation of small nervous fatigues. And as each epoch dreams the following, little sultans emerge suddenly and dispute amongst themselves the control of a public space already reduced to the space of circulation. The weakest spirits give themselves over to insane rumors that no one is in a position to confirm or deny. Tenebrous infinities have filled the distance that humans have left amongst one another. Each day make a little more clear, in spite of the growing obscurity, the lugubrious profile of civil war where no one knows who does and does not fight, where confusion is limited by death alone; where nothing is assured, in the end, but worse to come. We thus hold ourselves, on this side of all growth, in the evidence of the disaster, but nothing can restrain our glances going to the beyond. Thus it seems that these are the "birth pangs" which no new epoch has the right to preserve itself from. Those who sharpen their glance to distinguish in the night the nearby combat of giants discover that all this desolation, all

these dull echoes of cannon, all these faceless screams are not, in fact, but of the lone, hideous Titan of commodity domination which in its bloody delirium struggles, howls, burns, and tramples; to insure that we want its hide, it hurries off nonsensical orders, rolls on the ground and finishes by hitting with all its weight the walls of its living-room. In the profundity of its folly, it judges that the Imaginary Party is only the obscurity that surrounds it, and that this must be abolished. To hear it, it seems to have had it with this territory of wrongdoing that persists in never coinciding with the map, and already it menaces it with the worst reprisals. But in proportion as the day exhausts it, no one listens anymore, its closest subjects themselves lend no more than an absent-minded ear to this capering old lunatic. They act as if to listen, and then they wink at one another.

The Imaginary Party awaits nothing from the present society and its evolution, because it is already practically, that is to say the existence in fact, of its dissolution and transcendence.

Consequently, it is not a question for it of taking power, but solely of making domination fail everywhere, by durably making it impossible for its apparatus to function—the temporary character, and even the fugitive places, of the contestation that operates under the banner of the Imaginary Party explain themselves by this: it is guaranteed to never become a power itself. This is why the violence it has recourse to is of a totally different nature than that of the Spectacle, and this is also why it fights alone in obscurity. While commodity domination unleashes its “empty liberty”, its “negative will which has no feeling of existence save in destruction”(Hegel), so long as its pointless violence aspires to nothing but the infinite extension of nothingness, the exercise of violence by the Imaginary Party, although unlimited, only attaches itself to the preservation of forms of life that power prepares to alter, or already menaces. From thence comes its force and its incomparable aura, from thence also comes its richness and its absolute legitimacy. Even in the midst of the offensive, it is a violence of conservation. We rediscover here the dissymmetry of which we have spoken. The Imaginary Party does not pursue the same end as domination, and if they are concurrent, it is that each one among them wants to destroy that which the other attempts to realize; with this difference however, that the Spectacle does not want more than that. That the Imaginary Party should come to the end of commodity society and that this victory should be irreversible will depend on its faculty of giving intensity,

greatness and substance to a life free of all domination, no less than the aptitude of its conscious fractions to make this explicit in their practice as much as in their theory. It is to be feared that domination would yet prefer to the eventuality of its defeat a generalized suicide where it will be at least assured of bringing with it its adversary. From one end to the other, it is a bet that we make. It belongs to history to judge if what we undertake is but a beginning or already an end. The Absolute is in history.



# **SILENCE AND BEYOND**

*A man that wants to take a fortress by assault can't  
do it merely with words, but must dedicate all his  
forces to the task. Thus must we accomplish our  
task of silence.*

—Jakob Frank, *Words of the Lord*

PEOPLE write a lot about these times, and PEOPLE talk even more. And it seems that the more PEOPLE write and talk the less they want to be understood. Their reasons for that are pretty sparse, yet there certainly are reasons. There have to be. What's clear is that the majority of them are hardly avowable. As for those that are, in the end they always give in to the need to make themselves heard, and then are met with laughter. The only exception to this rule is Critical Metaphysics in the broad sense, in the sense that we, like so many others, *submit* to it; in the one sense that is appropriate, in sum, to the enormity of its object. It even mixes the fiercest severity in with its demand to be heard; you have to use a kind of imperious tone when you're dealing with overthrowing an order that's based on and perpetuates the suffering of human beings. It is strictly to the extent that they contribute to defining an *effective* practical critique for the new conditions, modalities and possibilities at hand that the conscious fractions of the Imaginary Party can exercise their most insolent right to humanity's attention. Capitalism produces the *conditions* for its transcendence, not that transcendence itself. The latter depends, rather, on the activity of a few people who, having adjusted their eyes to discerning the true geography of the times beyond domination's glaring illusions, concentrate their forces at

the right moment on the most vulnerable point in the whole. Among those we encounter, we appreciate nothing more than such cold resolution to ruining this world.

Put the surrounding cretinism to the test with a bit of dialectics; you'll most likely hear some insolent praise for the incredible plasticity of capitalism, which was able to use the defeat of contestation itself as the basis for its latest modernization. When their approach to the subject immediately shows a kind of reconciliatory fury, a fury of "Logical ruses," you can clearly see what the real object of people's fascination is. Even contestation proves daily how incapable it has been of supporting itself on that modernization's uninterrupted avalanche of defeats. Over the course of the last twenty years, the mechanical renewal of inoperative methods and poorly clarified aims in successive social agitation campaigns has everywhere won out over "critical-practical activity." It has in many cases even ended up able to make a simple avant-avant-garde variant of social work out of it. *People* have even condescended to grant a name of its own to this special sector of general production, whose participants are so scantily remunerated: the "new social movements." But this expression is more than just a reference to the spongy Monsieur Touraine; there's actually a particularly cruel irony in it, since it designates something so totally old, and the qualifier "movement" in the phrase is applied to a kind of agitation that has no real meaning or direction. It wasn't humanly possible to see the degree to which the monstrous effect of commodity subsumption has extinguished all the negativity in social critique until Toni Negri, with an enthusiasm that wasn't even fake, described the militant of the future as an "inflationist biopolitical entrepreneur." Nowhere among domination's enemies has any evaluation been

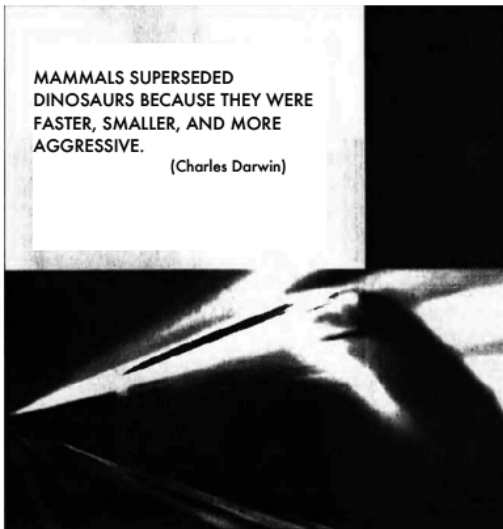
made of the reforms it has put in motion with its vast range of metamorphoses. The fact that our tyrannical enemy no longer draws its power from its ability to shut people up, but from its aptitude to make them talk – i.e., from the fact that it has moved its center of gravity from its mastery of the world itself to its seizure of the world's mode of disclosure – requires that a few tactical adjustments be made. Because, indeed, that's precisely how, little by little, it has deprived the opposition forces of their sense of direction. Let all those who thought they could change the world without even going so far as to interpret it – all those who have refused to see that they are operating in radically new conditions – deign to see things for a moment from our perspective: they'll realize that in the final analysis they are merely serving what they think they're challenging. Look at the few hysterical groupuscles working to maintain the low-intensity social guerrilla war that buzzes stubbornly around the various issues, like the "illegal immigration" issue or the "anti-National Front" struggle. That shows well enough how the negation of the Spectacle, inverted into the spectacle of negation, can act as the basis for a collective *catharsis* procedure without which the present state of things could not survive itself. By triggering *within and against* itself its Scourge of denomination, domination has made even its pseudo-contestation into the spearhead of its *ideal* self-improvement. To such an extent that there's no real difference anymore between these two camps that, at bottom, want the same world; it's just that one of them has the means to make it and the other just dreams of doing so. There's no place for moralizing in this matter, just lessons to be drawn, the first of which is perhaps that the Spectacle only recognizes as a truly existent opposition the opposition that *is willing to speak*; that is, to speak *its language*,

and hence to subscribe to the alienation of the Common. In all discussions, the *listener* imposes the terms, not the talker. Thus the real hostility, the metaphysical hostility, which allows neither the language nor the moment it will express itself to be controlled, and which moreover prefers silence to any speech, has been pushed back into the shadows of what does not appear and hence does not exist. By means of this offensive in the form of a retreat, organized capitalism has derailed all the forces of effective critique, drowning it out in its resounding chatter and adapting to it with the language of flattery, not without first having deprived it of any real point at which it could apply itself. Everything that prolonged the classical workers' movement within it had to succumb to these new conditions, where now the true is no longer limited by the false, but rather by the insignificant. Quite quickly, it ceased to exist in fact as practical contestation beyond an unanimous parrotlike repetition on the one hand ("let's all chant together now!") and the a mute autism of direct action cut off from all substantial life on the other. Once the latter part had been liquidated – perhaps the past tense verb "exterminated" would be more appropriate in certain cases, like in the case of Italy for example, where the savagery of the repression had something really exemplary about it – the former abandoned itself to its natural inclination: repetition to mask its aphasia and aphasia to mask its repetition. By deteriorating into a pitiful practicalism of resentment, practice has just as consciously discredited itself as theory has by taking refuge in theoreticism and literature. After that nothing remained to oppose the restoration process that since the 70s has swept away everything that was consciously hostile to commodity society. With time, the Spectacle has managed to circumscribe the possible by what is permitted to be said keeping

it in terms that it alone now has the authority to define. In spite of a formidable primitive accumulation of frustration, suffering, and anxiety among the population, over the course of all this time critique has *never really manifested itself*. It has remained *voiceless* in the face of the advancing disaster. It has even had to allow the enemy to impudently play on its own failures. This was how the Spectacle was able to turn the progressive crumbling of Nation-States and the universal discredit of systems of political representation into the farce we see today, which every day adds a new episode to its endless infamy. It has gotten *everyone* to permit it to exercise its symbolic violence, and it has gotten *each person* to submit to enduring it as something simultaneously natural and chimerical. Sure, there are a few local eruptions from time to time that disturb this tired mimodrama, but domination is so sure of itself in its course that it can even allow itself to look with scorn at those tactless few who, by forcing it to repress them too visibly, require it to echo what everyone already knows: that the rule of law rests on a permanent state of exception, and that at present it rests on that alone. In this context of mute social war, where, like “in any transitional period, the riff-raff found in all societies rises to the surface, not only having no aims but without even the

slightest ideas, expressing only its disquiet and its impatience" (Dostoevski, *The Possessed*), all "social struggles" are ridiculous.

From the chaos of 1986 to the "unemployed workers' movement," for those that experienced them from within, not a single one of them wasn't emptied of all substance and removed from all contact with reality by a sub- policelike para-trotskyist activism that repeatedly "let itself be carried away by the trend it intended or pretended to oppose: bourgeois instrumentalism, which fetishizes means because its own form of practice cannot tolerate



*A malicious ad for the Italian High Speed Trains (Ferrovie Dello Stato)*

any reflection upon its ends." (Adorno, *Critical Models*). And yet, somewhere within the total wreck and ruin of institutions and their contestation, there is still something powerful, new, and intact: an existential hostility to domination.

Beyond the carnage, suicides and

miscellaneous irregularities, beyond all these *strange gestures* that provide us with so much encouraging news of commodity civilization's decomposition, and consequently of the deaf advancement of the Imaginary Party, we place a high importance on the form of the manifestations of negativity that invent a new *active grammar* of contestation. Among those manifestations, there was in recent months one that was particularly *touching* for us: the

“Turin Antagonists.” The events we’re referring to here lasted a whole week, in which Turin was plunged into a terror of a nature totally different from that of the planned, profitable, gray Terror typically running rife through the metropolises of separation.

It all started Friday March 27th, 1998, the day after the evening when Edoardo Massari, a 34 year old anarchist, hanged himself in his cell in Turin prison, where he had been duly incarcerated on the 5th of March along with his fiancée and another comrade. They were presumed to have been guilty – which after all is irrelevant, when you’re dealing with anarchists – of a number of attacks on the construction sites of the Italian TGV [high speed train], all acts of eco-terrorism which made the mistake of seriously irritating a certain number of business and mafia lobbies whose interests were deeply tied in with this grandiose project, a project which, as everyone so obviously knows, is of the utmost necessity. This “suicide” should have quietly gone to take its place in the long list of State murders; *people* would prefer to leave the establishment of such a list to the scrupulous care of next century’s historians, but we already know that Italy will be able to proudly claim an honorable number of outstanding contributions to it. Unfortunately, said Massari belonged to the little community of Turin social centers, and their reaction wasn’t exactly as expected in domination’s simulation models. Thus, the next day, the citizen-consumers were presented with quite the motive for complaint: a *silent and hostile* procession of many hundreds of anarchists-with-knives-clenched-in-their-teeth and other autonomists-with-iron-rods, who showed up to upset the colorful frolicking of a laughter-filled Saturday afternoon festival of consumerism, insisting all too seriously on striding through the downtown area carrying a banner saying “murderers,” and



getting up on the roofs of some public buses to read out a communiqué seeming to insinuate that every Bloom within earshot was an accomplice to that murder, and even promising that “within one hour (from then), life in this city of death isn’t going to be the same anymore, and it’s their fault.” Besides the animosity-filled invective they addressed to the innocent, terrorized passers-by, they even gave a hiding to a cameraman from *Rai* TV, and to a photographer and columnist from *Repubblica* newspaper, taking even the *instruments of their labor* from them, which they methodically reduced to their primitive state of scattered electronic components. Not content with having thus reminded a finally pacified Italy of the darkest hours of its years of lead and urban guerrilla warfare, which everyone was doing their best to forget, in Brozzo on Thursday April 2nd they *lynched* the journalist who had ratted Massari out, grabbing him while he was on his way to go listen to what was to be a heavily biased sermon by the bishop of Ivrea comparing Massari to the Penitent Thief from the gospel of Luke. On that day they really did go beyond the limits of the reasonable, *indifferently* attacking both right wing and extreme left journalists, and all the representatives of the media without distinction as to party, even taking to pieces one of their cars. But the high point was really the April 4 manifestation where seven thousand of these “antagonists,” without scruples and out of nowhere, went for another march. With the same, evil silence about them as at first, but now with an extreme tension, they went calmly and wordlessly smashing windows, cars, and cameras, smudging up the walls with inane stuff like “We’re gonna burn you, McDonald’s,” attacking the Palace of Justice with paving stones and spreading fear among the honest citizens. The sociologist

Marco Revelli can claim all he wants that “the city should *communicate* with them, consider them as a *resource* and not as enemies» (*La Repubblica*, 30 March), but how can you talk to people who don’t say a word, and take recourse to violence and terrorism? People who as minister Piero Fassino commented quite justly, “detest this society but don’t even propose to change it”? The majority of the media and the Blooms basically reacted to these new manifestations of “disorderly youth” like this. Deputy Furio Colombo faithfully summarizes the atrocious amazement the good people fell into: “It’s my city, and I saw what happened here, and I just can’t explain it. There was this procession of strangers, young people we’d never seen before and no one had ever talked to, going around the city streets, and it was plain that they were dangerous... The march was totally silent, but it had these unexplainably threatening physical signs about it;... words that passers by didn’t always understand the meaning of, but it felt hostile. Anyone who saw them up close would have said they were ‘young people,’ but they certainly weren’t ‘our’ youths. They came down here but they weren’t from here. It felt like they’d come from far away. How far? You can’t measure that kind of distance in kilometers. It was like an inner distance, something that you can only feel... My own city; it was impeccably clean, freshly painted, and then it was terrorized, with this march by these unknown invaders... » (*Repubblica*, April 2nd).



*"The soviet is the place of silence" (Brice Parain)*

*Guard Post in front of the central train station during the second council republic of Munich.*

Men's moral values can doubtless be seen in the way they react to news about acts like this. Exploding with their slave's resentment, they certainly won't be able to make even an imperceptibly small sign of intelligence. For our part, this was one of those joys that come up from such a depth that you don't just hear it, you understand it from *within you*, as if it were something that had happened in your body. We, the others, the critical metaphysicians, intend to found on the basis of that psychopathology a method of analysis that, while radicalizing the meaning of certain manifestations and *by removing them from their temporal element*, strips nude the truth of our times. It is only insofar as they too undergo such a broadening of vision that people will be able to recognize that with what happened that week, a Veil of Maya was pierced in the world of the Spectacle, or that with "antagonists" like this we are entering the time of *wordless revolts*, the time of illogical revolts, which must in turn be massacred. The enemy has let himself be *seen*, he has shown himself and has been recognized as such. Now this society *knows* that it is flanked by men who, although they are certainly doing *something*, are doing nothing to participate in it, and who, rather, are *collectively* questioning its right to exist. The Spectacle, at that moment, was brutally forced to face up to the defeat of its pacification campaign. It was torn from its façade of neutrality by the very people that it thought it had definitively entombed in its profusion of conditioning, and for whom it had even prepared a whole prison so full of privileges that people even dream of being confined in it forever: "youth." And it discovered, on its familiar map of cities arranged according to its plans where it had even been able to accommodate "self-managed social centers" and other "liberated zones" for "rebellious individualities," an

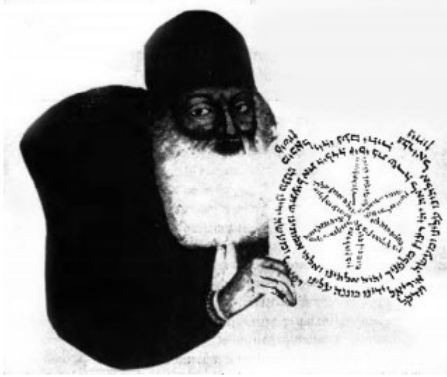
interdependent chaos of ruins, spread over with innumerable enclaves where people aren't just content to live with it, but also *conspire* against it. It had thought that it would be enough to hide negativity in order to suffocate it, but all that did was free it from mimetic behavior control and make it take to the shadows where free forms of existence can blossom. But the most disturbing aspect of these new people of the abyss – since that's how they were depicted – was that the critique they were carrying out was above all the *affirmation* of an *ethos* that is foreign to the Spectacle, that is, a heretical relationship to lived experience. It appeared that in this section of territory it thought it had gotten squared away, there were recesses where relations were not mediated by it; that in other words its monopoly on the production of meaning was not just being contested but had even been *locally and temporarily* removed. And it's clear that those who – and this is a rare event in these “autonomous zones” – succeed in *tying together* a critique of commodity society and an effective experimentation with free sociality are an immeasurable danger for the Spectacle, because they are the partial realization *here and now* of a *concrete and offensive utopia*. When a few individuals remove themselves from the corset of codes and reified behaviors prescribed by the tyranny of servitude, domination starts to talk of genius, madness, or criminal deviance, which all boil down to the same thing. But let that kind of phenomenon present itself in the form of a whole community, and domination is brutally without recourse and has to fight the battle according to the non- rules of absolute hostility, where the enemy is always non-human. And this procedure will in this case be more painful than otherwise, because it's their own children they'll have to exclude from humanity – because they wouldn't let themselves be *sold* on the market. And so, in Italy,

where the conditions for it are the least propitious of anywhere, the Imaginary Party *manifested itself* as such. It was an event not without import, because in light of it, all the traditional forms of contestation appear somehow provincial and polite.

Those who are simply happy because such a state of war gives them faith once more in the possibility of new epic sagas of struggle are not going beyond a superficial comprehension of what happened there. Because these Turin “antagonists” gave rise to much more than damages, lynchings, and frightened people: they laid open the way for *crossing the line*, the way towards the exit from nihilism. At the same time, they also forged the weapons that lead beyond it. We recognize the passage over the line in the fact that a protest like all the rest, like *people* are so used to seeing, was suddenly changed by the introduction of new factors. And so the silence of the antagonists was no longer the traditional aphasia of the leftist protestors, nor that of Bloom, but something qualitatively new. The remarkable and mute tension that they gave rise to throughout the course of their marches must be essentially understood as the confrontation between two types of silence that are radically different from one another. On the one hand, there is the natural, negative, and to put it plainly, animal silence of the solitary crowd of Blooms who never really express anything of their own at all, anything that the Spectacle has not already said; the silence of the inorganic mass of consumers on their knees, who are not supposed to speak, but just respond when they’re *spoken to*; the silence of the bleating flock of those who think they can peacefully go back to being simply the representatives of the most intelligent of animal species since there are no real *human beings* to denounce their degeneration. And on the other, there is strategic silence, the full, positive silence

of the “antagonists,” deployed as a tactical device so as to manifest the existence of negativity, so they could erupt into visibility without allowing themselves to be frozen into any petrifying spectacular positivity. (Perhaps we should clarify here that for them there was a *vital need* to appear out in the open: the need to break the encirclement that domination had subjected them to, which was threatening them with the same fate that Massari had, the same fate suffered by those who Nanni Balestrini calls *the invisibles*: the discreet physical elimination, in unanimous indifference, of those whose existence Publicity never recognized.) Perhaps we sound like we’re saying that the “antagonists,” after some mature deliberation by an omniscient general staff, *chose* that silence. But nothing could be more false: they were cornered into it by the objective modalities of domination. And it is precisely because these modalities have generalized themselves throughout the whole of all industrialized societies that the way silence took on a new character in their hands and became an offensive tool/weapon deserves our attention. All reality’s mode of disclosure and Publicity, all mankind’s linguistic essence, have been radically alienated into an autonomous sphere which holds a monopoly on the production of meaning, i.e., the Spectacle. And in such conditions, when anything is explained or shown it is by that simple fact immediately exposed to being metabolized by said Spectacle, as long as that serves its ends. The “antagonists” are the first – and it hardly matters whether they’re consciously aware of this or not – to draw the *practical* consequences from this situation. By refusing to take any recourse to any of the codes, to any of the accepted signifiers or meanings, which are all managed and controlled by the occupier, and *by manifesting that refusal*, they established *in acts* that wherever the Spectacle reigns, silence is the

necessary form in which true contestation - the Imaginary Party - must appear. They brought into existence what lucid minds, like Jünger in his *Crossing the Line*, had already observed: "the tyrants of today," he wrote, "no longer fear speechifiers. Maybe they used to in the good old days of the absolutist State. Silence is much



more terrible – the silence of millions of men, and also the silence of the dead, which the drums cannot drown out and which gets deeper every day until it sparks off the Judgment. As nihilism becomes more and more the norm, the symbols of emptiness spread much more

terror than those of power do." Silence on its own, however, can only become a war-machine by becoming *conscious* silence. All its effectiveness is suspended until it recognizes itself as a *critical-metaphysical sabotage device* directed against the triumph of positivity and the defeat of Being by its forgetting. "In order to be able to be quieted, Dasein (being-there) must have something to say; it must have a veritable and rich openness to itself. Then the silence it had kept bursts out, and quiets the impersonal voice of the 'people say,'" said the old swine [Heidegger] in his jargon.

The silence of infinite rage has a frightful power that has still not even begun to appear, and in the coming years we would be foolish not to hope to give a few good examples. For the case at hand, this power so shocked the Spectacle that it made that philosopher-for-Young-Girls, Umberto Galimberti, immediately begin to blather on about "this squatters' silence," and greatly



bemoan the “collapse of communication” – as if communication had ever really existed in the framework of the modern world; and as if such silence was not disturbing to it precisely and only because it acknowledges the former’s nothingness – and to pompously predict the poverty of the era and the indigence of “politics” – as if politics, as a separate moment, had ever been anything but another kind of poverty. Sociologists and elected officials also came out to call, suicidally, for “dialogue” with these “new barbarians.” What these rotting corpses had gotten an inkling of, with the keen instinct of someone who knows he’d have everything to lose were alienation to come to an end, was that in their very silence, these “antagonists” hit upon something that in the right hands would be able to blow the whole worm-eaten social organization to bits: *the unspeakable*. Because by *manifesting their silence*, they brought out into Publicity not just some thing or other, but a pure potential speech, a statement liberated from the said, and more original than it is, i.e., the unspeakable itself: the fact that language is. By making the nothingness heard and seen, they managed to *render visibility to visibility as visibility*, or, in Heidegger’s terms, to “render speech to speech as speech.” They forced the dictatorship of presence, which claims: “that which is, you are not,” to admit that *that’s reality itself* as it is really lived. Thus they forced visibility to *come out at its very limits*; they ruined its illusion of neutrality. The Spectacle was forced to recognize an exteriority, even a kind of transcendence, perhaps; *people* overheard it make the fatal confession, “the inexpressible certainly exists. It *shows* itself.” (Wittgenstein). It simultaneously became *visibly* what it was essentially: a *party* to the unfolding of the social war. By imposing silence upon it, by shutting up its inexhaustible babbling with

their fists, the “antagonists” rendered it questionable, and *that’s its downfall*. From the moment the alienation of the Common is projected as such into the very heart of the Common itself, its days are numbered. – The press can squawk and complain that a few of its henchmen got beat up and cry foul about freedom of expression being sacrosanct all it likes, but no one’s listening, since there’s no doubt in anyone’s mind anymore that that freedom long ago became merely the tyrant’s freedom, and that expression merely that of its baseness. -

But the parable of Turin also contains other good news, like the defeat of domination right where it had concentrated all its forces: in keeping *all* the important issues in suspended animation. And of course it has to have had a confused intuition about this possibility; otherwise it would not have donned the ingenuous and diabolical trappings of an ever more frenetic proliferation of cultural commodities and distractions it has over the last decades. In fact, it appears that the neutralization of social contradictions has no other effect but to push them little by little onto a higher plane where they become radicalized into metaphysical frenzies. But then there are no more important issues left: those who have found the answer to the question of life recognize themselves in this, since for them the question has disappeared. These “antagonists” are just the tip of the iceberg of immeasurable violence; to them belongs the terrible glory of having brought the unspeakable to the very heart of politics. Between the two parties that they provoked the immediate crystallization of *by their simple presence*, between the Imaginary Party and the Spectacle, *nothing* can be resolved with words, *nothing* can comprise a subject for any kind of discussion, and there is only a *total, existential hostility*. In every sense, the existence of the one is the absolute negation of the

existence of the other. These are two camps between which there is not so much a difference of opinion as a difference of *substance*; what happened in Turin made that obvious fact *perceptible*. The one is the anomic heap of monads that “have no windows through which anything at all can enter or exit” (Leibniz); the nothingness accumulated of humanity, meaning, and metaphysics; the desert of nihilism and pure indifference where “the idea of death has lost all presence and all plastic force” (Benjamin, *The Narrator*). The other is the *community* in mourning, the community of mourning, for which the act of dying is “the most public act of individual life, and a highly exemplary one” – only animals fail to accompany their own in death – which experiences the loss of one of its constituents as the loss of a *whole world* and where each takes “the death of others upon himself as the only death that concerns (him)... that puts (him) outside of himself and is the only separation that can open him up, in all his impossibility, to the Openness of a community” (Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*). The one falls short of nihilism, and the other already stands beyond it. Between the two there is *the line*. And that line is the unspeakable, which imposes silence. *The greatest possible demands don’t allow themselves to be formulated.*

The years pass, and we see the Spectacle burden itself with a growing quantity of strange and brutal displays whose meanings it proves incapable of aligning, and for which it cannot find a name suitable to satisfy its spirit of classification. This is a sure sign that this world is little by little in the process of crossing the line.

*"Perhaps mobile phones allow the rediscovery of speech, which had been lost in a more and more dehumanized society. [ ... ] Free speech everywhere and at all times has become possible thanks to this technology which has become available precisely at the moment when society feels most acutely the need for expression that such technology can satisfy."*  
(Le Monde, Sunday 25th-Monday 26th October 1998)

And it's not the only sign, either. Hence, the latest bewitchments of the commodity fail more and more to maintain themselves for more than a few weeks, and new ones constantly need to be found which are already surrounded by skepticism at their birth. No one can believe their own or anyone else's lies anymore, even if that is the best kept and at the same time the most shared secret of all. Ageless enjoyments shed their millenarian attraction, and what not long ago was the object of universal longing now inspires no more than weary scorn. To recover a speck of the dust of past pleasures, forces and effects must now be unleashed that no one had ever thought to devote to such mediocre ends before. Consumption's own inevitability pushes it to ever more extreme forms, in no way distinct from crime anymore besides in the name *people* give it. And at the same time, a landscape of catastrophes is unrelentingly forming in which even participating at all in the final metamorphoses of nihilism has ended up losing its charm. The old feeling of security is crumbling everywhere. Blooms live in a state of terror that nothing can match, except perhaps the monstrous hodgepodge of metropolises where asphyxiation, pollution, and embittered promiscuity seem to be the only things that give them any feeling of safety. When we look at them

separately, we see that Bloom's trembling has attained to such heights that it has put him in a general state of paralysis and incredulity that forever excludes him from any *contact* with the world. Even when there is nothing anymore in the zones still held in the grip of the empire of nihilism that is not driven by a secret desire for self-destruction, we see the army of those that have crossed the line and are applying nihilism to nihilism itself appear here and there, detachment after detachment. They still retain, from their prior state, the feeling that they are living as if they were already dead; but from this state of indifference concerning the raw fact of being alive, they draw the formula for the greatest possible sovereignty, a freedom which is incapable of trembling in the face of *anything* anymore, because they know that their lives are no more than the meaning they *collectively* give to them. Domination fears nothing more than these purely metaphysical creatures, these maquis of the Imaginary Party: "today, as ever, those that do not fear death are infinitely superior to the greatest of temporal powers. Hence they must ceaselessly spread fear." (Jünger, *Crossing the Line*). In the glassy eyes of the Spectacle, this renaissance, this new influx of Being presents itself as a fall back into barbarism, and it is true that we are indeed dealing with a return of the elementary forces. It is also true that all this is operating in the context of a universal cybernetic alienation, the mode of expression proper to such a context is the most unintelligible brutality. But this violence is distinct from all other criminal manifestations, because it is in its essence a *moral violence*. And it is precisely to the extent that it is moral that it is also *mute and calm*. "Truth and justice demand calm, but only the violent attain them." (Bataille, *Literature and Evil*)—there was no shortage of old roadies of abjection surprised about how even a guy that

was witness to all the political violence 1970s and worked for the good cause, for *Manifesto* newspaper, even, got beat up by the “antagonists”; and concluding from that in one sitting that it was just some banal “apolitical violence.” Clearly certain lives would be hardly predisposed towards getting an understanding of what *a hyperpolitical violence* might mean. That once again it is possible to designate with certainty who the real *scum* and their accomplices are shows clearly enough just how far beyond nihilism we have come. When Lynch law reappears among men who will not deign to listen to anyone but the bishop of Ivrea, then we know that the *gravity of history* is making its bloody return. The time is gone when a Sorel could observe that “the old ferocity has been replaced by trickery,” even if there are still “plenty of sociologists around who think serious progress (was) being made.” That remark was in regards to the deformation that the very concept of “violence” has undergone over the last decades, which presently designates in a generic manner anything that pulls Bloom out of his passivity, starting with history itself. As a general thesis, insofar as the arbitrariness of domination is more and more threatened by the arbitrariness of freedom, it will have to label as “violence” everything that opposes it in practice which it is preparing to crush, all the while proclaiming itself to be open to “dialogue” between three carloads’ worth of riot cops. And it is precisely because there is no dialogue except among equals that the *complete* liquidation of the world of closed discourse, the spectacular infrastructure, and all the relays of alienated Publicity is the necessary prerequisite for even the possibility of true discussion being reestablished. Before that happens it’s all just empty chatter. Also, contrary to what a certain Jacques Luzi wrote in issue 11 of the magazine *Agone*, it’s only

when mankind will be free from the grip of things that they will really be able to communicate, and not just by “communicating” their intent to free themselves from that grip.

Here, though only partially, we have hit upon an enormous truth which we doubt will be recognized as reasonable before it becomes brutally real: *we cannot transcend nihilism without realizing it, nor realize it without transcending it*. Crossing the line means the *general destruction of things as such*, or in other words the annihilation of nothingness. In effect, at the moment when society’s socialization attains completion, each existing being fades away into what he *represents* in the totality that he can then come to occupy a place in materially, with his whole being absorbed by what he’s participating in. Hence there is nothing that must not be destroyed, no one that can be guaranteed pardon, inasmuch as they are part of a real order, a Common, that was designed only to separate us. In the Sabbatean tradition, the moment of the general destruction of *things* was given the name *Tiqqun*. In that instant, each thing is repaired and removed from the long chain of suffering it underwent in this world. “All the subsistence existence and toil that permitted me to get there were suddenly destroyed, they emptied out infinitely like a river into the ocean of that one infinitesimal moment.” (Bataille, *Theory of Religion*) But the “perfect silent ones” that carry universal ruin within them also know the paths that lead beyond it. Jakob Frank, the absolute heretic, handled this truth in his usual abrupt style: “Everywhere Adam went, a city was built; but everywhere I have set foot *everything* will be destroyed. I came to this world only to destroy and annihilate, but what I will build will last eternally.” Another heretic said likewise, a century later: “no matter what you want to undertake, you have to begin by destroying

everything.” Whether *Tiqqun* will bring life or death depends for each person on how much of his illusions he has been able to lose: “it is to the extent that clear consciousness wins out that the objects effectively destroyed will not destroy mankind itself.” (Bataille). It is certain that those who have not been able to throw off their reifications, those who persist in putting their whole being into things, are doomed to the same annihilation they are. Whoever has never experienced one of those hours of joyous or melancholic negativity cannot tell how close to destruction the infinite is. What we’re saying here is in no way reverie; events such as these can be found scattered throughout history, but since the world was still not unified in a substantial totality, they remained mere *local curiosities*. The laughable Ortega y Gasset tells, in his *The Revolt of the Masses*, how such a *catastrophe* came about in Tijar, a village near Almeria, when Charles III was crowned the king, on September 13th, 1759, as follows: “The proclamation was made at the town’s Central Square. Soon afterwards, drink was ordered for the whole enormous crowd, which consumed 250 gallons of wine and 13 gallons of brandy, and the pernicious vapors warmed their spirits in so fine a manner that the crowd spilled over towards the Town Granary all yelling ‘viva’ repeatedly, went inside, and threw all the wheat that was in there and all the Treasury’s 900 silver coins out the windows. Then they proceeded over to the City Hall, and made them throw all the tobacco and money out of the doors of the Tax Collector’s office. They did the same in the shops, to spice up the festivities, scattering all the edible and liquid goods that were inside. The ecclesiastical State contributed in a lively manner as well; then, with great cries, the women were called upon to throw out everything they had in their houses, which they did with the



most total selflessness because there was nothing left: bread, wheat, flour, barley, plates, kettles, mortars and chairs. These rejoicings went on until the village was completely destroyed.” The imbecile then concludes – oh bitter irony – “Admirable Tijar, the future belongs to you!”

We must work to make *that* future come about, and aim for a *world-wide realization of Tijar*. We would be quite upset if one of these universal High Mass events that the Spectacle is so fond of, like the year 2000 for instance, did not one day turn disastrous. So many people gathered in the streets can only herald the storming of new Bastilles. Not a stone upon a stone must be left of this enemy world.



# **ON THE ECONOMY CONSIDERED AS BLACK MAGIC**

[202]

# A METAPHYSICAL CRITIQUE

*“Hornsocket! We will not have demolished it all completely until we’ve destroyed even the ruins! And I see no other way of doing it besides balancing it out with beautiful, well- ordered buildings.” - Alfred Jarry*

# **1 – THE COMMODITY AND EQUIVALENCE**

# 1.

The commodity is, *essentially*, the *absolutely equivalent* thing. This can be seen whenever two commodities (one of which is often money) are exchanged for one other. Marx denounced this equivalence as an abstraction, for good reason: it is an abstraction that has become *real*.

# 2.

Quite naturally, Marx sought the concrete foundations of that abstraction. He thought he'd found such a foundation in *use value*, in value as utility. For Marx, use value has no mystery about it; it is the bare state of the thing, its very body – its physical reality. Moreover, and consequently, use value is not at all implied in the logic proper to exchange value, which is a logic of total equivalence: "as use values, commodities have - above all - different qualities." Marx remarks, furthermore, that use value is not something specific to commodities (for instance, the air we breathe is *still* not for sale), and he implies, as if it were an obvious fact, that it does not even presuppose the commodity world.

But we will see that not only that use value, which appears at first glance to be something trivial and self-sufficient, is in fact something quite problematic and full of metaphysical subtleties, but also that it itself is the foundation of an abstract logic of equivalence, inseparable from the logic of exchange value that Marx criticized.

### 3.

The perspective of the metaphysics of the *useful* was summarized as follows by Hegel: “since everything is useful to man, man himself is useful to man as well, and his fate is, equally, to make himself a member of the flock useful to the community and universally of service. Just as much as he attends to himself, he must lavish just as much of himself on others, and just as much as he lavishes himself upon others, he must attend to himself; one hand washes the other. Everywhere he finds himself, he is there on purpose; he uses others and he himself is used.

“One thing is useful to another, in another way; but all things have this reciprocity of utility in their very essence; indeed, they have doubly to do with the absolute: one is positive, where things exist *in themselves and for themselves*, and the other negative, where things are for others. The *relationship* with the absolute essence or religion is thus the supreme utility among all utilities, because it is the purely useful itself; it is this subsistence of all things, or their *being-in-themselves and for themselves*, and the fall of all things or their *being for another thing*.” (Phenomenology of Spirit)

Notes:

1) The “discourse” of the negriist cretins is reduced to this tawdriness. These people, more than a century after Marx’s very regrettable chapter in *Grundrisse* “Immaterial Production,” still thoroughly enjoy that late-in-coming Mandevillian excrement, to the point where they’re still spreading it all over the place with their dirty paintbrushes. There they are, these gourmets of muck, licking their lips and assholes in a peaceful enumeration of all the Xs and Ys that could have been “put to work,”

*from the soul to the emotions by way of the revolving door-becoming of their immaterial vinaigrette. Rather than figuring out that work has finally showed itself to be something inessential, something that in itself is without foundation, these stinky imbeciles sing the ambiguous glory of the supposed magnitude of the useful, while in fact, as it is conceived by utilitarianism (that is, as a relationship capable of configuring a world), the useful is nowhere to be found! And this supposed magnitude, anyway, should be ample proof of that. From one day to the next, the concept of usefulness more and more designates everything and anything, and that shows that in fact it designates nothing. The petty, cunning utilitarians invoke the usefulness of the useless but do not see the uselessness of the useful. What is everywhere - blueballs!- isn't usefulness, but utilitarianism.*

*2) The absolute essence, seen through the opera-glasses of supreme usefulness, can then either (still) be called God (like it was for Voltaire for instance), or, among those for whom God has explicitly become a useless hypothesis, it can be "society," where the supreme usefulness then gets called by more specific names, like: The Greatest Happiness for the Greatest Number of People (Bentham found this puke when reading Beccaria – "massima felicità divisa nel maggior numero" – and gargled it), The Wealth Of Nations, economic growth, etc., or more flatly need, as an abstraction. In any case, it always ends up subsuming within it the relationship of things to themselves and to each other, and comprises a pedestal of general equivalence, equivalence as the foundation upon which all that can come out between things is a negative relationship, a negative relationship which itself is subsumed into absolute essence as the supreme usefulness (the so-called wealth of refined needs, that branch office of supreme usefulness). Exit the negative! To the delight of all the world's grocers, this charming concept – and all its avatars, from the early naïve theories of the social contract to the modern ones, including*

*that of flat, militant, pro-communication democratism – by smothering the flames - even the hottest! – that burn under the frozen marsh of ignoble social positivity. But, much to the displeasure of these good sirs, those dead waters are haunted, by what ghouls we shall now see.*

## 4.

Use value is to need what Marx considers that exchange value is to labor: use value is the abstract need crystallized in a particular thing, which appears as a purely specific quality of that thing, because need is presented as something general, abstract. “The *intention* according to which all things are, in their immediate being, either as they are ‘per se’ or something good” is in so many words *returned* to the thing, and comprises the metaphysical foundation of exchange value and commodity abstraction. Notes:

1) *This is how we’ll be making our critiques - over the length of this article, and more generally, over the length of these Exercises in Critical Metaphysics— of the double-edged sword of utilitarianism that we’ve passed from mouth to mouth for far too long, formed from all the mucus of commerce and mixed with economist bile cooked up on the driftwood of a certain Marxism that has by now quite visibly become counter-revolutionary; this infinite certainty of having exhausted our Being and Mind thanks to magical concepts of usefulness, need, and interest. – This mortuary scholasticism, still paying for its millions of Pierre Bourdieus, which is quite simply the flattest discourse that the commodity can sustain about itself, is contradicted each day by the simple existence of the commodity itself.*

2) *This is what a certain Jean Baudrillard almost understood, in his call to make a criticism of the political economy of signs, not without a*



certain tension of mind unusual for this good fellow, it's true. But he foolishly believed that a simple reference to some Absolute would be enough to invalidate utilitarianism... Whereas, indeed, what makes the metaphysics of the useful despicable – because it is, effectively, a particular metaphysics – is not that it has a relation to the Absolute, but rather the modality of this relation, the fact that this relation is conceived of as the supreme usefulness, the fact, in sum, that this metaphysics is false. And mister Baudrillard assimilates it to Christianity, and deplores that still no one has buried this filthy transcendence along with all the old-fashioned metaphysics. This is what takes off Baudrillard's mask and shows him to be a super-utilitarian, when he affirms an identity between Christianity and use value – without even the slightest laugh – merely because of the fact that both of them participate in some kind of transcendence – a transcendence that our gentle post-modernist schoolboy can obviously only think of abstractly as some kind of transcendence or other, and in the modality of the supreme “useful.” And so, not only does this pig establish a general equivalence between all the moments of metaphysics, he even falls under the beguiling illusion of the utilitarians, who believed their thinking to be “guaranteed without any metaphysics.” Imbecile, if you'd read Péguy (Situations). you'd know just how portable metaphysics is! What world do you think you're fidgeting in? Does all the telos inscribed in the heart of things disgust you so? Apparently everything that's effectively inscribed in it presents the risk that it might just sweep you aside... And so, you and all the other post-modernist dogs howl yourselves to death screaming that all that is but illusion, that nothing exists; that you don't give a fuck, and anyway that you're getting your income from the University and the cruel politeness of your doglike colleagues –utile e onore [need and honor], perhaps.

3) *It's this metaphysics of the useful that lays the foundation of utilitarianism in its two moments, the one of which is called theoretical, the other normative (Cf., notably, A. Caillé's Critique of Utilitarian Reason). The former, which claims to explain all the acts of men, considered as isolable individuals because of the utility that anybody can find in any one of them separately, is obviously the only anthropological representation that could possibly grow from such a poor metaphysical hummus, wherein all relations are conceived of as relations of utility. Normative utilitarianism, which, supposing the other to be true, considers that all that is quite fine, and adds that the supreme utility is the supreme Good; which is nothing more than the morality, supposedly immanent, that is consecutive to said metaphysics. You can't seriously attack utilitarianism if you don't attack its foundation, the metaphysics of utility.*

## **II – EXCHANGE IN GENERAL**

## 5.

The majority of false ideas about the ancient/old world are based on the eternalization of commodity categories, and belief in their naturalness. What modern man *believes* himself to be, he also believes all the men of the past to have been as well, with the slight difference that he thinks they were less perfectly so. The thread of our demonstration will take us on a tour through the field of ruins covering this fine evolutionist tranquility.

## A) GIFT

## 6.

Primitive society still appears to certain people as being the society of *pure neediness*. But need is not the primary fact of humanity: it is not the condition of all human life, nor is it that which was present at the beginning of human history. *Far from being primitive, need is rather a product specific to modernity.*

Remark: *Utilitarianism would like to grant that needs are historical, that needs change with social organization, etc. However, even the supreme utility is relative to a particular era, since the society it involves the reproduction of is not always the same. Functionalism is an elastic kind of utilitarianism – but this elastic snaps under the tension of history. What is historical is not only the mode of being of needs, nor even merely their essence: the simple existence of needs as needs is not*

*an anthropological invariable, but an historical creation whose global spread is relatively recent, as is that particular mode of life which is called survival. We also know that it is precisely the appearance of the modern market that created scarcity, that "presupposition" of the so-called economy.*

## 7.

Primitive exchange takes on the form of gift.

*Remark: There is nothing more false than the notion of barter. All Adam Smith's speculation start from Cook's error regarding the Polynesians, who climbed on board his ship and proposed to the Europeans an exchange, not of objects, but of gifts. The notion of barter – which is supposedly a utilitarian exchange of goods considered as equivalent and in which all would be lacking for it to become commodity exchange would be currency ... -- d was born in the 18th and 19th centuries, from utilitarianism as we know it. Marcel Mauss gathered together a considerable number of facts dealing with various primitive societies under the head of the concept of the "gift" (cf. His essay, The Gift), and expressed a few of its universal traits. It now seems that we would hardly be overstepping ourselves to generalize his discovery to all primitive societies. In passing it should be mentioned that all the modern robinsonades start from the same idiotic postulate: to wit, that something called homo economicus lived in caves and on islands – a farce all the more amusing considering that no such species has ever existed, even in the London-style "City," where nonetheless certain cave-dwelling sorcerers called "stock traders" abound.*

## 8.

In the way it is represented to us, gift-giving appears above all as an isolated act, where one person gives up a good to another. But isolating an act from the totality of social life like that seems, rather, to be mere abstraction.

## 9.

Gift, as the simple act of giving, immediately poses beside it two other acts, two other moments: *receiving* it and *returning* it.

## 10.

But, in fact, of the three former moments, *giving*, *receiving*, and *returning* the gift, only the lattermost appears to be the one that makes it into a *cycle*, because the gift given in return will itself be received and returned. In the primitive world, *debt* is permanent. This cyclical aspect of gift reveals it to be the unity of these three moments.

## REMARK:

*It was in this that Levi-Strauss objected to Mauss, in his preface to the anthology Sociology and Anthropology; to wit, that "it is exchange which constitutes the primitive phenomenon, and not the distinct operations that social life is broken down into," or, as Mauss*

himself had already put it in his Essay on Magic, "The unity of the whole is even more real than each of its parts."

## 11.

But what is exchanged are not goods, words, polite remarks, services, etc. What is exchanged in the primitive world is the *gift* itself. That is, exchange is the exchange of exchange. And so, the gift, as the unity of these three moments, is reflected back into the moments that make it up and into its simple means of reproduction. Primitive man gives so that Gift can be, and because Gift is. The thing itself that circulates is but the symbolic reflection of Gift itself, as the *figure of Publicity* (Publicity in the sense of a *mode of public expression*), the being-for-itself of the World – this is what Mauss calls a *total social fact*.

## REMARKS:

1) *The gift as a unity of the three moments is but Gift revealing itself as a figure.*

2) *Then we see that gift is not motivated by need, but by Gift. This explains the fact perfectly "useless" objects, with no "use value," are primarily what get exchanged, to the great surprise of the utilitarian observer. One might cite the case of the vaygu'a of the Trobriand Islands, described by Malinowski (in The Argonauts of the Western Pacific), two particular types of which, the soulava and the mwali, establish in their exchange what is called Kula, and in sum the whole social organization of a very extensive district. But a soulava can only be exchanged for a mwali, and vice-versa. These vaygu'a, which are*

respectively large necklaces and armbands, are often unusable as finery because of their dimensions or because of their heavy symbolic content. In the same way it thus becomes clear that – contrary to an idea widespread in the West and defended by Aristotle and Marx – costumes are exchanged for costumes. In sum, once one has grasped the total aspect of Gift there's nothing mysterious anymore about the fact that labor itself is subordinate to Gift; not only does the producer give the whole material product of his labor to someone else (for instance to his step-parents, whereas he himself will receive everything his sons-in-law produce) – but, more symbolically, that labor itself is the object of great pride on the part of the producer and above all a significant Publicity (we cite, for instance, the aesthetic concern – and the resulting efforts – a Trobriand gardener has for his garden, and the ritual he carries out, which consists in piling up the yams he's grown in conical piles, and keeping anyone from seeing them). And indeed one might say that work is a form of exchange, that is a manifestation of Gift. And Gift, as a figure of Publicity, also appears as a unit of labor and exchange. Add to that the fact that material scarcity is generally absent from primitive life, and the commonplace idea that says that man has always worked for his subsistence and that he did so more in the primitive world than in any other, because of some hypothetical insufficiency that the "means of production" supposedly had to meet just as hypothetical a set of "needs," is knocked flat. In fact, the primitive world aspired to little more than to Publicity, and it had quite ample means to attain it. It only lacked the public consciousness of Publicity as Publicity: the Publicity of Publicity.

3) A remark in passing on Voyer, the buffoon-dialectician. We've taken his concept of Publicity; he didn't deserve to keep it, since he wasn't able to do anything else with it after his Introduction to the Science of Publicity, which was nevertheless a pretty good book. But one could already see his intolerable defect even there: Voyer has an instinctive



*hatred for SILENCE. And so he wanted to believe that Publicity was definitively and absolutely based on itself, which is obviously false (in the same way, the concepts individual and human race have an inexcusable defect: they hide, under a self-satisfied immanence, the incompleteness of man; there is still a remainder, and that remainder is Bloom). We can then see that this concept, which is supposed to float somewhere up among the high summits of the Spirit, was able to give birth to that anorexic and positive little mouse, "communication," or to a utopia as cretinous and repulsive as gab and gossip. All the contortions and grimaces Voyer can make won't hide the fact that he too "forgot" to consider the negative as it lays in the place where people buried it... How could such a pseudo-trobriander of contestation ever comprehend that the conflict between Publicity and Spectacle has been transcended, and in the final analysis is actively mediated by Silence(certainly the Spectacle is an alienated Publicity, and thus is Publicity denying itself, but Silence – that is, the Invisible – is the negation of that negation); that the negation of the Spectacle is not only the negation of dictatorship in visibility, but also the negation of the dictatorship of visibility; that the silent destroyers of Turin have espoused the formidable weapon form of that negation, and that it is precisely because of that that they are destroyers! And so, out of his passion for visibility, Voyer, that rusty weathercock, has made contestation invisible; and he can go ahead and spin around, leap about, and howl for us to watch him carry on with his deplorable clowning - epistolary or otherwise - all he wants, but we'll just leave him there, in indifference, and to the scorpions.*

## B) THE INVERSION OF GENERIC RELATIONS

### 12.

Posed as separate, the individual and the [human] race remain abstract. It is only in their relationship – insofar as the race takes form in individuals, and the individual can only define him or herself as an individual, that is, as a social being, within *relationships*, which draw their substance from the race – in their being for one another, that they attain concreteness. The unity in which these moments, the race and the individual, are as inseparable, is at the same time different from them; it is thus a third term alongside them, which is found precisely to be none other than Publicity itself, that which forms the absolute basis for *relations* or exchange as pure exchange.

### 13.

The *Generic relationship* is the same thing as Publicity, but in the generic relationship the two terms going from the one to the other are better represented as the one resting outside of the other, and the generic relationship as taking place between them. Wherever the individual and the race are present, this third term must also be present; because they cannot subsist independently – contrary to what is abstractly posited by economism and its “methodological individualism” – but only exist in Publicity, that

third term. It is in the unity of Publicity that the generic relationship can become something concrete.

## REMARK:

*At the same time it is quite clear that the generic relationship takes place via relations, or exchange.*

## 14.

Thus Gift, as the figure of Publicity, is a specific figure of the unity of the human race and the individual - and corresponds to a specific modality of the generic relationship.

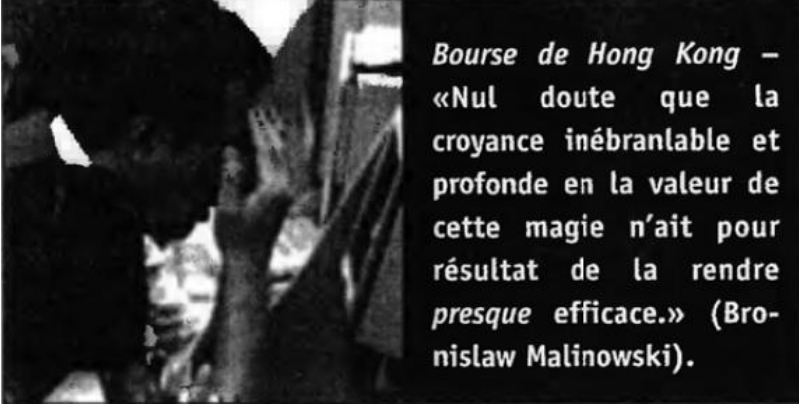
## 15.

In this modality, individuals are, as *personages*, absolutely differentiated from one another *a priori*, and realize their difference through exchange, which is gift. And this gift itself is singular, as an act that takes place between specific personages. So much so that the object given, as a symbol of Gift, appears immediately to the primitive consciousness as the singular symbol for all the singular gifts that he has participated in and will participate in giving. Furthermore, things, in the primitive world, are themselves reputed to be absolutely unique, differentiated, singular and personal (that is, *endowed with personalities of their own*).

Remark: *Thus Malinowski remarked, in The Argonauts of the Western Pacific, that "each quality Kula object has its own name, and in the form of a story or legend it has its place in the indigenous peoples' traditions." And Mauss says, concerning certain Amerindian objects: "each of these precious things, each of these signs for all this wealth, has – like it does among the Trobrianders – its own individuality, its own name, qualities, and power. The big abalone shells, the shields they cover in them, the belts and blankets adorned with them, the decorated blankets themselves, covered with faces, eyes, animal and human figures, woven into and embroidered upon them. The houses, their girders, the walls themselves are beings. Everything speaks; the roof, the fire, the sculptures, the paintings – because the magical house is built not only by the chief or his people, and by the people from the brother tribe across the way, but by the gods and the ancestors; the house itself receives and vomits out the spirits and the initiated youths. "Each of these precious things furthermore has a productive virtue to it. It is not just a sign and a pledge, it is also a sign and a pledge of wealth, a magical and religious principle of rank and abundance." (Essay on the Gift). We may furthermore remark that things themselves are the performers of the gift, or rather of Gift. They themselves are also personages, and participate in and with the race as its Community. Nonetheless, though two things, like two human beings, are incomparable in the primitive world, a thing and a human being, as we will see now, can be united by a bond of identity.*

## 16.

The immediate symbolic unity of a primitive object and the personage that is temporarily the performer of this thing as a relation, as a gift, is possession.



## REMARK:

*In the primitive world, it happens that the thing itself is identified with its possessor, to the point where it has the same name and the acts of the one can be considered as emanating from the other. We see then how absurd it is to still believe in any primitive communism. Furthermore it must be noted that possession does not designate a bond with the thing as utility. I can give you my vaygu'a if you desire it, but it will remain mine and if you exhibit it in the village, it will be exhibited as mine and will participate in and with my glory. Furthermore, we've already seen that the things in question could have no other use besides as something to be given. Hegel already said it in Principles of the Philosophy of Right: "the will of the property owner that a thing be his own is the primary substantial basis, the ulterior development of which – use – is but its phenomenon, its specific modality, and must come only after the establishment of that universal foundation." And this ulterior development, in the primitive world, quite quickly takes on an aspect of contingency.*

## 17.

In the gift cycle, the human personages involved affirm their common humanity, their common belonging to the human race. The personage-things exchanged themselves also affirm their belonging to a common race, their being of a kind. At the same time, the cosmic unity that brings together all the personages, things, and men, is reproduced; the living reproduce the living.

*Remark: We can here cite the example of a Kula incantation, cited by both Mauss and Malinowski, which expresses this common belonging to a race / being of a kind, affirmed on the basis of an irreducible a priori singularity of the partners. The incantation says, notably:*

Everything diminishes, everything stops!

Your rage diminishes, it dies out, oh man of Dobu!

Your war paint is fading, it's going away, oh man of Dobu!

*Then:*

Your rage, oh man of Dobu, shall subside like the rage of a dog when he has just

caught the scent of a newcomer.

*Or:*

Your rage is going out like the tide; the dog is at play,

Your anger is going out like the tide, the dog is playing around,  
etc.

*Aside from the obvious -- that this means appeasement and communion surging forth, whereas supposedly rage, radical singularity in fact, reigns a priori, there is a second explanation given for this evocation of the dog, an explanation of indigenous origin: "Dogs play nose to nose. When you speak that word, dog, as has been forbidden for a long time, the precious things come out too (to play). We gave bracelets; necklaces will come. The ones and the others will find each other (like dogs that come around sniffing)." Mauss comments on this as follows: "The expression, the parable here is beautiful. The whole plexus of collective feelings comes out at once: the possible hatred of associates, the aloneness of the vaygu'a coming to an end through enchantment; precious men and things gathering like dogs playing and rushing up at the sound of voice.*

*Another symbolic expression is that of the marriage of the mwali, the bracelets, the feminine symbols, and the soulava, the necklaces, the masculine symbols, which tend towards one another like the male to the female.*

*These various metaphors signify exactly the same thing as the mythical jurisprudence of the Maori expresses in different terms. Sociologically speaking, it is once again the blend of things, values, contracts, and men that is being expressed."*(ibid.)

## 18.

All the partnered personages, people and things, emerge from the gift cycle with their singularity confirmed, shimmering with

having bathed in the fountains of the substantial: in being-of-a-kind.

## REMARK:

*Here, primitive possession is contrary to modern private property in that it is no case so alienable as to be "reformattable." Things retain the memory of all the gifts that they had ever participated in. Thus, a primitive man will be able to recount the historical or mythical exchanges that a given thing has participated in. This is the basis for the renown of the thing, and its value. In the same way, the renown of men is built, perpetuates itself, and is ceaselessly put back into play in Gift. This is the primitive manna. Its law is that of agon, the conflict of peers as social bond.*

*Moreover, Gift organizes singular and permanent bonds as well. For example, Kula is practiced between permanent partners, and there is a privileged bond among them.*

## 19.

But in the primitive world, each community, as an Interiority, affirms itself as the whole race itself. And *for us*, and for universalist consciousness in general – what we're dealing with here is more like a fragmentation of the race as a human totality. This fragmentation of the human race into *species* is the condition for the subsistence not only of each fragment as a fragment, but also and above all of Gift, which as a figure of Publicity also reveals itself to be the greater unity of the fragments.



## REMARKS:

1) *In order to obviate any messily biologizing interpretations of this thesis, we clarify that we're only using the term species here for lack of any other, to convey the idea of a fragmentation of the human race into subunits, irreducible Interiorities, even though they are rooted in their unity within the race as a whole. Thus the above theses should be re-read in light of the idea that where the generic relationship comes into it, this generic fragmentation of the human race steps in as well.*

2) *In the primitive world, relations are primarily face-to-face, and cannot remain as such over too great a distance. Also, each primitive society establishes what is inside and what is outside of itself, and only those that are inside can be recognized as participants in the human community, in the human race. Gift has to do with the inside, and only the inside (an interiority that can, moreover, bring in a rather large number of tribes). Exchange with the outside, with the foreign, when it takes place, occurs according to what Marshall Sahlins calls negative reciprocity – a form similar to commerce, or to pillage. Gift defines the internal, by positing limits that enclose the race and the personages. At the same time, the Gift also defines each community or society as internal, and also defines the fragmentation of the race as a whole, as much as it does the affirmation of each fragment as being the race.*

*We can thus understand the power of destruction that the great universalist religions were able to wield over primitive communities (even though, regardless, primitive societies had a certain capacity to incorporate into their mythical unities beliefs that came from outside, as the instructive example of the Cargo cults in Melanesia shows).*

## 20.

In Gift, the generic relationship presents itself above all as the process of realization of the individual personage by means of the race, and its fragmentation into species. The race appears in the species, as if it were appearing on its own final, absolute frontier, and thus realizes itself in the personage himself, and becomes the united community of singular personages. The personage, like the community, has a concrete existence, and Publicity is *effectively* present and unitary inside each community (but then Publicity breaks down into different interiorities, and the appearance of one interiority for another is that of an exteriority, although that other is also an interiority), although it is still not understood as Publicity.

## 21.

The modern world presents, quite visibly in the era of the *Spectacle*, a generic relationship that is a *reversal* of the Gift relationship.

## 22.

Bloom, that being without particularities, is equivalent *a priori* to any other Bloom or rather to the Blooms as a *mass*, and thus, as a Bloom, is *absolutely* equivalent. All the particularities that he frenetically exhibits are in fact for him something outside himself, and their banality reveals itself in the end as a *ruse of equivalence*.

## REMARK:

*To the insolent question, “Who hides behind an Audemars Piguet watch?” that was recently spit out of the Advertisers’ bag of shit-streaked tricks, the answer is obviously: nobody.*

## 23.

Bloom’s permanent agitation, his desperate effort to build an *appearance* of personality, a *personality as appearance*, reveals the appearance as an act both *of* Publicity and *for* Publicity. And in fact, Bloom evokes these small primitive tribes whose lives revolve around affirmations of prestige. It calls to mind the pride that a Trobriander takes in his piles of yams. Nothing resembles a Trobriander’s display more than a storefront window or a *cool kid’s* clothes.

## 24.

However, it cannot be said that primitive man is *superficial*. His truth – and this proves Hegel right – is *immediacy*, or rather the unity of the totality and the appearance of the totality, that is, *Publicity*; but then only as an immediate unity. It’s Publicity that still doesn’t know itself to be what it is, which has not attained to the Publicity of Publicity, Publicity purely *in and of itself*, which is still not *for itself*.

## 25.

Inversely, Bloom's world is the world where Publicity at last appears. And the primitive world is the beginning that this world deserves. Our era is the era when Publicity has finally appeared, as the truth of the primitive world. Advanced capitalist society is thus *the first primitive society*.

## 26.

But if Publicity is visible today, it is visible only in its absence. Because Publicity appears at the hands of each Bloom. But no Bloom experiences the unity of the world and its appearance; that is, Publicity. On the contrary; confronted with his own misery, he sees in the apparent happiness of the Other only a contradiction, something terrifying, which impels him to build an appearance for himself: *The Other has stolen his life from him*; he's never lived anything, and this dispossession appears to Bloom as a horrifying *curse* that he must at all costs hide since he can't completely forget it. But the Other, the impersonal "*they*," is also he himself. The world we "live" in is thus the world where the appearance of Publicity comes up against Publicity; but this division is itself split: Publicity's exteriority to its own appearance is also Publicity's exteriority to itself, a *split* in the heart of Publicity, insofar as the latter is precisely the unity of *what is* and *what* appears. This split in Publicity, which then only unites its two moments as separate, is, precisely, the Spectacle.

## REMARK:

*Alienation creates the conditions for its own transcendence. It is precisely because Publicity is absent that it can finally appear, by appearing as something necessary. And it is, in the end, the alienation of Publicity into Spectacle that shows us Publicity as Publicity.*



**27.**

To this split in Publicity which is the Spectacle there also corresponds a becoming- abstract of the individual and the

human race. In this movement, the individual becomes Bloom, the individual without individuality, the abstract individual who seems to be no more than an accident of the human race or rather a means for or it to remain purely of a kind; that is, as the human race abstractly, as masses. Simultaneously, the race itself, as the pure, abstract, mass human race, appears to lose all its organic nature and become a simple ensemble of atom-individuals.

## REMARK:

*Bloom often attempts, with the use of apparently particular commodities, and with roles (in the sense of the term used by the Situationists) – roles that not only generally organize themselves around commodities, but are themselves commodities ontologically speaking, as the following section of this article makes clear – to capture a simulacrum of individuality. He sometimes attempts to take on a reassuring pseudo-belonging to some puppet-like community or other, one of those that manage a poor substantiality (we note that this pseudo-belonging has for Bloom the advantage – which becomes even a necessity – of reducing the tyrannical power of the Other, that thief of life, that demiurge, by taking it down to proximity; thus it can be tamed, gotten used to... - and this spiteful relationship between enemies, between strangers, is in general the basis for that abject state still called “friendship”). This is what the disgusting ad-men of the commodity and certain of their sociologist colleagues dare to call a “tribe.” But if this abstract form of a species is a tribe, it is clearly but the tribe of roles and of the commodities that organize it, rather than that of the Blooms themselves, who are merely the mediators of the all-important communication that things engage in so as to ever further appropriate the Common, and ever further alienate Publicity.*

## 28.

In the Spectacle, that figure of Publicity, equivalence triumphs. One atom is equivalent to another atom; atoms are *absolutely* equivalent, and the human race is revealed as simply the universal and absolute reign of equivalence, as the absolutism of equivalence.

### REMARKS:

1) *On the other hand, the absolute equivalence of Bloom as equivalence to Bloom's abstract Self is also for him the illusion of his identity with himself, of pure subjectivity. That's what makes Bloom tend to become so massively relativist.*

2) *This atomism and generalized split in Publicity might be considered a kind of closing down, a shrinking of interiorities as discussed in theses 19 and 20, a closure around the lone individual, who consequently cannot exist any longer as an individual, as an atom. Note that this signifies a radical foreignness among all men, and the extension of this foreignness; that is, the alienation of Publicity. Because the foreigner, as simply a stranger, is only negatively characterized relative to interiorities; for each given interiority, each "inside," everything that is foreign to it is handled as equivalent. Here we find Bloom's absolute equivalence once more. And then we see how the practice of commerce has from the beginning gone hand in hand with the alienation of Publicity.*



## 29.

The whole aim of *relations* is thus to make singularity appear, to create singularity as appearance. But this appearance of the totality as a fabric of singularities is in external opposition to the totality, which in reality is alienated into an absolute equivalence.

## 30.

The generic relationship is thus the movement from which the *a priori* absolute equivalence emerges from the relationship as confirmed, ever more powerful, and ever more tyrannical, as an appearance of singularity, or rather of simple particularity. In this sense an *inversion of the generic relationship* takes place. Nothing is more antinomic to a Trobriander *display* than a storefront window or a *cool kids* clothes.

# III – CRITICAL METAPHYSICS

*And the social puzzle*

*Has revealed its final combination*

André Breton

## 31.

Two commodities are *a priori* and veritably *equivalent*. It is only superficially, and secondly, that they present themselves as *singular*. A commodity must always present itself as singular; that's what gives it all its *manna*. It is only thus that it is desired, that is, that the idea of exchange as equivalence, which is contained within it, becomes public, and can then participate in the magical act of consumption. And this is an act that confirms its absolute equivalence in exchange, before the absolute equivalence of use affirms itself tyrannically as a speedy impoverishment among all the Blooms that have bought it. And the singularity that had appeared also shows itself as a mere commodity singularity; that is, as perfectly undifferentiated. The *manna* has gone out from it.

## 32.

This singularity is first of all undifferentiated because each species of commodity is produced and consumed on a mass scale, and because that mass is comprised of identical objects. It is then also undifferentiated because the pseudo-singularities themselves, which appear to differentiate the various species, reveal themselves to be merely abstract. What was really desired – and was lost at the very moment it was believed to have been obtained – is commodity manna, canned substance for individuals without substance, pure singularity, general singularity, something totally abstract.



### 33.

But this substance is more like a kind of *active nothingness*, so much so that the commodity is in fact like pure form, an empty shell, simply a dead fragment of a broken and emptied vase. And this *formal substance* is *essentially* defined by its manner of appearing as a pure, immediate presence, and it is only to realize

its essence as a pure, immediate, and abstract presence that it must be made to look like a singularity. Its apparent singularity is what allows the commodity to realize its concept, by appearing as something immediate and free of any mystery, whereas in reality it is profoundly magical. The fact that the commodity must be magical in order to *effectively* exist as a commodity, while for the very same reason hiding its magical nature – because it must also be pure immediacy and pure evidence – is what characterizes it as the union of the profane and the sacred, not as transcended but as separate. The commodity is not the transcendence of the profane and the sacred, something borne of them. It is, rather, the simple *sodomite* union of these two moments, which does not transcend them but merely *muddles* them together, as is customary in the world of *Qlippoth*.

## 34.

The reason that the commodity's form and substance are presented, not as inseparable moments transcended in a higher unity, but simply as subsumed into abstraction by a hypostasis of their form, is that the commodity is in fact *objectivized being-for-itself* presented as something external to man.

## REMARK:

*And so, value is not "crystallized labor," as Marx believed; rather it is crystallized being-for-itself.*

[The manna's escaping. Let's reinvent magic]

## 35.

But at the same time as this external being-for-itself, this objectivized Publicity, is what is most desirable in the era of the Spectacle, where the split in Publicity also means the absence of being-for-itself -- the absence of Publicity – at the same time, this *being-for- itself* wrapped in cellophane, this *manna*, is what is most evanescent.

## 36.

Because this *being-for-itself*, in consumption, remains external to the consumer. And this exteriority denies him as *being-for-himself*, as reflexivity. And that's why the *manna* escapes, and why the consumer is insatiable.

## 37.

But then, the commodity, rather than as a simple externally objectivized *being-for-itself*, reveals itself to be the object principle of the *absolutely*-exterior-being of this *being-for- itself*, and thus also of the exteriority to itself of the being-for-itself, and appears as precisely the very mediation that separates Bloom from being-for-himself, and separates the totality from its appearance – and the movement of the commodity is the movement of the splitting of Publicity.

Remark: *In other words, the commodity is the active mediation of being-for-oneself-as- much-as-for-any-other*(in the sense that in the Spectacle

*the Other is always the impersonal PEOPLE); that is, poor substantiality. But this poor substantiality is always "internalized" as being-for-oneself-as-another, or: it is the mediation of reification.*

## **38.**

The Spectacle is the commodity that shows itself in the end to be a *figure of Publicity*.

## **39.**

The inversion of the generic relationship of human beings is also the diffusion of generic relationship of the commodity.

## **40.**

This generic relationship is an essential property of the commodity as a *pure phenomenon*. In effect, 1) it is the process of its appearance; 2) Insofar as it is inverted, it presupposes by its absolute *a priori* equivalence, the total *platitude* of commodities, their blueprint-being, their declared absence from Interiority. Now, this pure phenomenality affirmed by the commodity, insofar as it is itself a phenomenon, is immediately supersumed. And this pure phenomenality also reveals itself as a *mode of disclosure*.

## REMARKS:

1) By “supersume” we mean, by a classic translation, the Hegelian *aufheben* (which simultaneously means to suppress, preserve, and transcend).

2) The commodity presents itself as platitude itself, and the confession of that platitude, as the declaration of the non-existence of any mystery. But this manner of appearing is itself mysterious. That was already explained in thesis 33.

## 41.

As such, and as the form of pure commodity phenomenality, the inverse generic relationship is a *metaphysical* property of the commodity: what is super-perceptible is the *phenomenon as phenomenon*.

## REMARKS:

1) In effect, classically, the super-perceptible is something beyond the perceptible, as an Interiority inaccessible to comprehension. In such a exasperating situation, where the Interiority is like something empty (because the result is assuredly the same as one would get upon putting a blind man among the treasures of the super-perceptible world – though has treasure in it, it hardly matters whether that treasure is the content proper to this world, or whether consciousness itself comprises that content – or as we would get by putting a man with good eyesight into the most total darkness, or, if we wish, into pure light, if that’s what the



*super-perceptible world is; he who has no eyes cannot see either in pure light or pure darkness, like the blind man would see none of the treasures spread out before him), there is nothing left to consciousness but to cling to the phenomenon – that is, to consider true what it knows to be false – or to fill this emptiness with chimeras, which are always at least better than nothing...*

*But the Interiority, or the super-perceptible beyond, has been born; it arises from the phenomenon, and the phenomenon is its mediation. Better yet, the phenomenon is its essence, and in fact is its filling-out. The super-perceptible is the perceptible and the perceived presented as they are in reality; but the reality of the perceptible and the perceived is that they are phenomena. That's why the super-perceptible is the phenomenon as a phenomenon. If one were to understand by this that the super- perceptible is consequently the perceptible world, or the world as it is for immediate perceptual certitude and for perception, one would understand it upside-down; because the phenomenon is not the world of perceptible knowledge and perception as being-there, but rather it is the perceptible knowledge and perception presented as transcended and presented in their truth as interiorities. One might have thought that the super- perceptible was not the phenomenon, but that's just because when using the word phenomenon what was understood was not really the phenomenon itself, but rather the perceptible world itself, as real effective reality (which, it should be mentioned in passing, does not exist in-and-for-itself, nor absolutely, and is thus not a truly existing thing.)*

*The commodity, contrary to the most ancient metaphysics, positively affirms the vacuity of the Interiority, and even its own non-existence. It decrees that everything stops at the phenomenon; such an absolutism of pure phenomena also denies the phenomenality of the phenomenon. But*

*as soon as this negation of the phenomenality of the phenomenon reveals itself to be a phenomenon, the phenomenon rediscovers itself as a phenomenon once more – which denounces this negation as a lie – and this phenomenality, as a phenomenon, is already supersumed into the super-perceptible, and this lying negation appears also as the metaphysical property of the commodity. In sum, insofar as the commodity presents itself as a pure phenomenon, its Interiority, its super-perceptible reality, becomes like something external to it. And this separation of the sacred and the profane, though muddled together – this split in the middle of the unity of the World as a totality, as Metaphysical – is itself still metaphysical, is itself a figure of metaphysics – in the same way as the split in Publicity was a figure of Publicity.*

*2) Those who have been able to read this far will here see an explanation of the third remark on thesis 11. Science is not the always-smooth unraveling of a white thread, or otherwise of an Ariadne's thread, full of knots. On the contrary, Science revisits itself and backtracks and crosses over own path ceaselessly in the labyrinth of figures where meaning is in its element. And so, unswervingly, the blank returns, very soon gratuitously, to conclude, certain now, that nothing is beyond it, and authenticate the silence –*

*The phenomenon as phenomenon is the super-perceptible; the fact of its appearing itself does not appear. Critical Metaphysics can reveal that appearing is, and that that constitutes a mystery. It can also show how this mystery manifests itself, in the era of the Spectacle: It manifests itself as something not manifesting itself as a mystery. But Critical Metaphysics cannot, and does not wish to destroy this mystery. We will leave that Sisyphean dedication to such absurd tasks to the Spectacle.*



*"The Common can however erupt into Publicity, in the form of individual or collective experiences, which are always experiences of the inexpressible. The presence of the Common is none other than the presence of the transcendent."*

3) More specifically: the existence of this mystery can be rendered public, contrary to the mystery itself, which is common but could obviously not itself be public. Here the difference between Publicity and the Common intervenes (a difference which Voyer lewdly confuses, for the sake of Publicis and Euro-RSCG). The Common is that which is given to us in sharing, and Publicity is the conscious practice of that

*sharing, which knows what it owes to the Common: that it is its necessary alienation. Thus it also consciously shares in the radical impossibility of sharing. The Common is that which makes the public expression that comprises Publicity possible, but this possibility itself does not let itself be expressed. The Common peeks out from the surface even of Publicity, but by unveiling itself it veils itself, and veils its unveiling. What is the most consubstantial with us and the closest to us, is also the furthest away from us, what we have the least a grasp of. And that is the absolute paradox. We have in common to be in the world, to speak, to be mortal, but we cannot say what being-in-the-world, language, or death really are at bottom. The Common can however erupt into Publicity, in the form of individual or collective experiences, which are always experiences of the inexpressible. The presence of the Common is none other than the presence of the transcendent.*

## 42.

But this mode of disclosure which discloses itself as a *figure* also reveals the Spectacle as a *figure of Being*, or as a figure of metaphysics, or, rather, as the *commodity* revealing itself to be a *figure of Being* and a *figure of metaphysics*.

## REMARKS:

1) *It is the ultimately metaphysical and ontological nature of the concept of the Spectacle that impelled Debord to give so many different definitions for what the Spectacle is, without which it would have been hard to see how they can all agree and unite into an organic whole. Debord, like the majority of revolutionary theoreticians up to now, did not want or was unable to acknowledge that he was operating on*

*metaphysical terrain so as to critique commodity metaphysics. And nevertheless it is precisely this fact and its necessity that Critical Metaphysics reveals.*

*2) The metaphysical character of the Spectacle concept also appears in what unites the object revealed and the mode of its disclosure. Any anti-metaphysical interpretations of that concept, by separating out these two moments, condemn themselves to impoverishing the critique of the Spectacle by reducing it to merely a critique of the media. In effect, such interpretations, by considering the mode of disclosure in an isolated manner, are quite naturally led to seek it out in an isolable social object, and thus to hypostatize it, most generally in a particular sector of production. Moreover, this - in general vulgarly materialist - perspective, is quite content that the media can then be reduced to a simple material structure; but in so doing it also contradicts all modes of disclosure: according to said perspective there are nothing but things, some of which are rather good (good uncaptialized wine, immaculate artisanal works, and good friends), and others rather bad (television, computers, and Coca-Cola). Once it has circumscribed the Spectacle as some big external object, it can play the "well, that's shit but I have an authentic life" card and go back to sleepy-headed comfort, as if having flashed some certificate of anti-spectacular purity. Such an attitude naturally leads one to fetishize the true "concrete little things," the "real people," that concretely wear them out, and the oh-so-very authentic concrete little plots of soil they ever so truly cultivate – the summit of the Spectacle's insolence, eternally trying to sell us what it's already destroyed! O, but where've PEOPLE put the snows of yester-year?*

*By insisting on leaving out the effectiveness of the mode of disclosure, this pseudo-critique of the Spectacle only speaks the language of the Spectacle – even in spite of itself.*

*The critique of the Spectacle is either metaphysical or not a critique at all. And it must be explicitly metaphysical, or else it will turn against itself and reinforce the Spectacle.*

## 43.

“The spirit of nature is a hidden one; it does not manifest itself in the form of a spirit: it is only a spirit for minds that know it, and it is spirit in itself, but not for itself.” (Hegel). The commodity is the spirit that alienates itself in an oppressive nature, the dead spirit victorious. Critical Metaphysics is the mind that knows the spirit of this shoddy nature, the *being-for-itself* of that spirit. Critical Metaphysics is the *manifestation of commodity metaphysics as metaphysics*, the *neglegentiae mihi videtur si non studemos quod credimus intelligere* – “it would be in my eyes negligent of us not to study thoroughly the things we think we understand” – inscribed in the pure commodity presence itself. Up to the present time, the world has done our thinking for us.

## REMARKS:

1) *And so, contrary to popular opinion, we affirm that humanity has historically gone from social alienation to natural alienation, and not the other way around. And in spite of what certain economists may believe, the naturalness of the commodity is in no way a justification for its existence, and even less, indeed, a proof of its “eternal” nature. Humanity that alienates itself in nature does not correspond to its concept, and reality as nature is a reality that’s been fooled. Critical Metaphysics reveals this error of reality as the reality of error.*

2) *It is because nature is still a spirit that one can say, as we have (see our remark on thesis 27), that things communicate. Let us make ourselves clear: indeed, this spirit is still the spirit of men, but when mankind fails to grasp and know itself, when spirit is not for-itself, its being-for-itself separated from its being-in-itself, and that is also the autonomization of spirit; this is the effective power of things.*

## 44.

Critical Metaphysics applies even to being-there: every one of the fragments of this world is a confession of its falsehood.

## 45.

The historical development of the commodity mode of disclosure has brought mankind to such degree of bloomitude that we know it and *are it*. But only a man can make a Bloom. Alienation is always alienation from something. And so, the Bloom that discovers himself to be a Bloom, who is conscious of his Bloom state, has already qualitatively become something other than a simple Bloom. Because what peeks out from under the surface then and reveals itself is once again the layer of being which comprises the experience of the commodity being, and consequently the foundation and its transcendence of the layer found underneath that of absolute equivalence. The Bloom who has the intelligence of his Bloom-being is thus a critical metaphysician.

## REMARKS:

1) *It was indeed our intent to write “the Bloom who has the intelligence of his Bloom-being.” He who only has a simple consciousness or comprehension of it is not yet a critical metaphysician; he can become one, that is unless he prefers to sell himself out as a professional in the language of flattery...*

2) *Who hides behind the Bloom that hides behind whatever watch? The act of hiding himself as Bloom, and thus the potential consciousness of it, inscribes in the very heart of his being, in the very heart of his bloomitude, a critical metaphysician who doesn't know he is one (or does).*

**Critical Metaphysics is in everyone's guts.**

## 46.

But also, insofar as Critical Metaphysics is the manifestation of commodity metaphysics as metaphysics, its very movement itself pushes it towards its own abolition, towards its transcendence. The primary aim of Critical Metaphysics is to suppress itself. It's merely a question of giving it the means to do so.

## REMARK:

*In effect, because the movement of Critical Metaphysics is precisely the movement of expression, and thus also the movement of the negation of commodity metaphysics, the fact of its attaining to effectiveness is its*



*means of destroying commodity metaphysics, and thus of its own suppression, its own transcendence.*

## **47.**

*Science is now the movement of Critical Metaphysics' disclosure. On its path towards self-suppression, Critical Metaphysics is science.*

## **REMARK:**

*What we mean by "science" here is certainly not what the so-called scientists – whether they're on the payroll of the CNRS [French National Center for Scientific Research] or of the laboratories of Biopower and Co. – and other positivists imagine science to be, but, obviously, the practical movement of the self-expression of the Spirit.*

(to be continued)

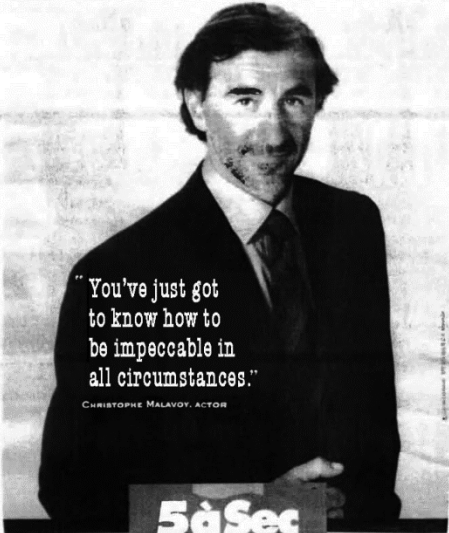


**DOWN WITH BLACK MAGIC!**



## Theology in 1999

IRONING BY HAND



"You've just got to know how to be impeccable in all circumstances."

CHRISTOPHE MALAVOY, ACTOR

**5àSec**

ALWAYS THERE FOR ME

"IMPECCABLE" adj. - mid 16th century, from eccles. lat. *impeccabilis*, radical; *peccare* - to sin • Not subject to sin. (The Dictionary)

**THE CRITICAL  
METAPHYSICIANS  
BENEATH THE  
UNEMPLOYED  
WORKERS'  
MOVEMENT**

It's well understood: there is no "unemployed persons' movement." The good fortune that this phrase had immediately within a certain spectacular leftism, where it had already been a figure of historical reference, demonstrates that sufficiently, since nothing named by the Spectacle has any chance of bringing any kind of contestation to bear against it. Moreover, one would have to be in the terminal phase of some nephritic Trotskyism or other, or otherwise aspiring to some position in the joint management of human misery to fail to acknowledge that the very concept of a "movement," and a fortiori of a "social movement" has no other content besides the operations that they permit: a general rendering equivalent of all intentions on the basis of a generalized fidgeting quite in compliance with the ends that commodity nihilism commands. That some swarm of human beings with a pretense to critique gets labeled as a "movement" must in the future be considered as an irrefutable proof of its innocuousness; that is, in the present configuration of hostilities, as a manifestation of an intimate connivance with domination. There will certainly be no lack of fidgeters to object to the fact that we aren't dealing here with any particular movement, but with the "unemployed persons' movement," a strictly determined object, and to put it another way, an empirical one. But the unfortunate thing, in this instance, is that the concept of "unemployed worker" is just as stripped of all meaning as is the concept of "movement," and that their coupling, in the absence of some miracle or another, is hardly gifted with many genesic virtues. Whoever consents to take the slightest glance can easily see that the concept of "unemployed worker" doesn't express any real attribute in particular, but on the contrary the absence of an attribute, the fact of not working, that it specifies nothing, nothing positive at least,

nothing existent. An individual can only be labeled as “not working” within a society where to work, that is, to enter into a certain type of domination-relations, is the norm. The concept of “unemployed worker” thus has in the last resort nothing to do with any tangible, isolable reality, it just expresses the obligation to work, and the fact that this obligation, in commodity society, is operative on the individual level. The innocent little maneuver where the lack of a given quality transforms into being itself a particular quality, and non-belonging to a category becomes a distinct category of its own has in fact nothing neutral about it at all; it is precisely that which gives the foundation to the whole exorbitant power of constraint in the world of the authoritarian commodity.

# **SANTA CLAUS INDIGNANTLY INSISTS: “THE UNEMPLOYED PERSONS’ MOVEMENT IS GARBAGE!”**

“More profoundly, here at the end of 1998, the opinion that for the most part went through a revival this year has shown itself to be less receptive and has not let itself be distracted from the preparation of its festive events. Furthermore the novelty effect that the media are generally so fond of, which the unemployed persons’ movement benefited from in 1997, has gone flat. The welfare occupations have appeared to have so totally gotten a ‘makeover’ that the government has taken great care this year to not let these kinds of actions come about.”

(Le Monde, December 31st 1998)

Even in the context of an accelerated disintegration of the classical wage system, the notion of “unemployed person” remains doubtless a war machine of the highest caliber in domination’s arsenal; however, there its use is flipped upside-down. From being a weapon of attack, it has now gone into use as a defensive apparatus, and now serves to prevent the eruption into commodity Publicity of the alarming inflation of its negation: Bloom. For the time being, the crisis of labor, which at a certain point managed, as an ethos, to substitute itself for all singular ethos, must be understood as a crisis of domination, which only imperfectly controls – with its present means – what subsists



outside of labor; that is, outside of its influence over appearances. The “jobless person,” the “precarious worker,” the this-less people, the that-less people, are just so many masks that the Spectacle imposes on the Blooms when they try to openly [unmaskedly] force open the doors of Publicity. The “excluded” thus can be included, precisely as excluded. But the growing haste and tactlessness with which people ban the bare man, mankind as human beings, from access to an acknowledged existence, indicate with certainty that there’s a crack in the very heart of social appearances. Certainly, the ordinary recipe for preserving the regime of separation, which consists in sociologizing metaphysics, in making what is in fact the truth for everyone appear as if it were just a particular fraction of the population, still provides significant service, but to be duped by that requires a faculty of illusion that our contemporaries appear to be less and less capable of. And so, with the exception of an inexorable handful of assholes, the feeling that we’re inhabiting our own lives like sparrows in the Montparnasse train station, as exiles, has tended to spread among all mankind. This is what the forces of concealment have a heavy interest in hiding behind some harmless and noisy “unemployed persons’ movement.”

# A NEW RACE OF ASSHOLES: THE MANAGERS OF MISERY

“There were more than 30,000 of us at the demonstration this morning. I don’t want to shine your shoes or nothing, but I really find you quite extraordinary. I’m proud of you. Proud to be in charge of the poor people’s union.” (Charles Hoareau, leader of the CGT unemployed persons’ committees in Bouches-du-Rhône, quoted by Libération, December 4th 1998)

If the “unemployed persons’ movement” were in spite of all related to any reality at all, it certainly wouldn’t resemble in any way what people would like to understand by that – an adventure in contestation. Because before assuming its autonomy as a spectacular creature, the latter had to be born from one as a surprise event within domination, that is, in less oracular terms, of a conflict of interests, and as a conflict of interests between union putrefactions, having to do with the management and monopolizing of the gigantic masses of money that circulate around the welfare allocations and their distribution. As for their unexpected duration, it must be imputed to another kind of competition, this time between the classic, decomposing unionism – although it suffices to merely glance a bit at the methods of the CGT-unemployed or SUD to remember that in effect “in history as in nature, decomposition is the laboratory of life” (Marx) – and the young emerging bureaucracies of associations like AC!, Droits Devant!, DAL, etc., who’ve pop up with a highly suspicious spontaneity to cauterize one by one all the new wounds of the social disaster, as licensed specialists, demanding in exchange a

few crumbs and a little recognition. In all this hullabaloo, all this merry mess, there's not even the shadow of any contradiction, and above all in the rotting role playing that "opposed" the bosses' government regarding the 35 hour work-week, an obvious plagiarism of the most burlesque exploits of the Comité des Forges in the 20s. And so if the "unemployed persons' movement" was anything at all, it was but that and nothing else. For those who know the kind of fanaticism that our contemporaries so enjoy putting into their submission, there's no doubt that domination can afford to have a movement like that every winter, and maybe even a few at a time.

However, something did happen, on the margins of this ever-so artistically mastered orchestration, which even went beyond it at many points. It was something that didn't start with the "unemployed persons' movement" and didn't end with it. Something that can't be named, and that all the critical metaphysicians participated in, in one way or another. Lasting a number of weeks, assemblies gathered in the Jussieu amphitheaters that could only be defined by their suspensory refusal to define themselves, or more probably the impossibility of their doing so. There's no room here to say more. It will suffice for the reader to know that neither patient discussions, nor actions carried out in common, nor even the shared hostility towards this society were enough to overcome the separation; the first consequence of this was the assemblies' powerlessness to delimit themselves, but above all – and this is a more serious problem – to designate their enemy. It goes without saying that external circumstances and the isolation of the assembly were not uninvolved in this, as was our failure to make ourselves understood. Since then, the problem of constituting a collective

subject has remained the only question that we have deserved in any way to be measured by. Transcending Bloom; such is the task. All Critical Metaphysics tends towards this exclusive goal, and it is in that light alone that we may be read, in all honesty. Our perspective is purely practical. Nothing in the world besides the spectacle of paralysis into which thirty years of emaciated thinking have ended up leading critical activity could explain the need and reason behind our theoretical investigations. The question of community, which from now on poses itself as the stakes of the free creation of an autonomous Common, is the only issue that can bring us out of nihilism through social contestation. And as long as it speaks the language of domination, as long as it doesn't put itself explicitly on the metaphysical terrain, it will hardly deserve more than the mere curiosity that one might legitimately feel when faced with this unusual form of fascination with lost causes. We have to start from the historical pre-emption of the totality of commodity categories and of the world they build. "It is not an indifferent matter whether we forget metaphysical concepts or obstinately prolong their use without examining them." (Heidegger) – a text entitled *Fragments of a Theoretical Discourse*, to appear in *Tiqqun* number 2, will be dedicated to just such a clarification of the strategic function of the metaphysical categories in force in the management and organization of social misery. And so for the concept of "work" for example, which is no longer anything more than an empty form susceptible to indifferently containing any kind of manifestation at all in its definitive abstraction, and is thus appropriate to none – the proof being that the Negriists can even include in it the breastfeeding of newborns by their mothers (they then poetically talk about "producing infants" without even

having needed to read Swift), and that people can knock themselves out trying to replace it with “employment,” or even “employability.” Since the element of self-production that participation in social functioning was once able to contain has totally evaporated, work appears at last for what it really is: a contingent, limited, and confusional mode of disclosure, a fallacious qualification for pure servitude. If the affirmation that “there’s no more work” has any meaning, it’s not because it’s becoming harder and harder to get yourself exploited, but because now there’s nothing left but jobless negativity and negativity-less jobs. From this point of view, any contestation that already considers itself sufficiently radical to be able to limit itself to a critique of work, which regardless domination has already domesticated by and large, is falling behind the new mutations of capitalism. We have to take as our point of departure – and it is on this level we consider ourselves to have a chance of confronting the enemy – that work does not exist, outside of the system of domination’s representations, that is, another mode of reality-disclosure, true community, needs to be invented through war. It’s not about exterminating the dominators, or espousing the cause of the dominated from the lofty heights of the sociology chair at the College of France, but of destroying a world where certain Blooms exist as the dominators and others, the majority, as the dominated. For the rest, we can just let the slaves – whether of trotskyst, negriist, or bourdieuian obedience – go on disputing the straw men of their servitude.

The defeat of what we took part in designates negatively a task to be accomplished. Only those who understand it as such can inherit this infinite debt. To the attention of those that don’t think themselves free of the duty to carry into the future the “tradition

of the oppressed," we hereby reproduce two texts that were distributed during this short campaign of agitation [Marginal Considerations on the Present Movement and The Jobless Speak]. The first, distributed in the second week of our practical engagement, exposed an analysis that nothing that has come afterwards has yet contradicted. One of our weaknesses is that we believe that in spite of formulations which in places are naïve and have since been surpassed by us, it sketches out a position which at all points remains ours. The second was distributed to the employees of the INSEE [statistics and economic studies institute] on Friday the 13th of March, by forty of our comrades, invited to a luncheon there. Its interest lies in the fact that it constitutes the remaining traces of a direct attack on those that manufacture the form of appearance of the alienated social totality. We have as a indication of how hardly susceptible to the procedure they were the fact that we were called "Le Pen-ist Pol Pots" by the big despot around there because of its content. It goes without saying that the faculties that we engaged in this war only grew greater as a result of their expenditure. The history of our detrimental effects has only just started. And we'd like to be able to swear, like Leon Bloy, that:

"From now on there will be no more oaths mumbled on street corners by shivering, starving people as you pass by. There will be no more demands or bitter recriminations. All that is over. We are going totally silent... You can keep your money, bread, wine, trees, and flowers. You can keep all the joys of life and your inalterable serenity of conscience. We won't demand anything anymore; we don't want any of the things we've desired and demanded in vain for so many centuries anymore. Our complete

desperation will from now on carry out, against ourselves, the definitive ban you've placed on our enjoyment of them.

But be warned! We are keeping up the fire, and we beg you not to be too surprised at the coming fricassee. Your palaces and hotels will burn quite nicely, when one day we decide to set them ablaze, because we've listened very attentively to the lessons your chemistry professors give, and we've invented a few little contraptions of our own that will amaze you." (The Hopeless One)

# **MARGINAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PRESENT MOVEMENT**



These few remarks have been primitively jotted down in haste as personal reflections on a bad record. A comrade thought they might be useful to the movement, so I've transcribed them in identical haste, which should excuse their imperfections. They should be thought of as disorderly suggestions read over a stranger's shoulder.

# 1

It's rare to have a movement that's popular in proportion to its radicalness, which is true of ours. The sympathy that it gets provisionally comes from the fact that in a society without community, each person's identity is exclusively determined by their function in the production process, by their work. It follows that outside of that work which is the whole of the social existence of the Man of our times, he is but a being without identity, classless, anonymous, just any old singularity, unwaged. As such, the bum is the hidden truth behind all workers when they're not at work; a figure of their existence as a free individual. But the scandal of an empty freedom, a freedom without content, figures in to that as well: the bum's freedom is the freedom to do nothing, since as an individual, all the means of production are refused to him or her. Thus it is around the unwaged/the bum that the primary contradiction of the present social organization is woven: its maintenance requires, as part of the same movement, each person's exclusion from mastery over his or her own activity, participation in his own life, and the total mobilization of his energy in the form of work. For that mobilization, a kind of miracle has to take place where each person is simultaneously at peak enthusiasm and peak passivity. The bum is dangerous to the extent that he seeks to give content to his freedom, and power has understood that. If power is trembling now, it is because it knows that the networks of the unwaged are not only universal but above all radical: not a protest against any particular injustice, but against the pure and simple injustice of their having been marginalized in life; and the particular liberation of each of them is the liberation of all.



## 2

There's little doubt that the dominant language presupposes the dominant order. So it can't be adequately contested while the petty, bickering opposition between waged work and joblessness. Upon reflection, it quickly becomes clear that the function of an opposition like that is to hide the essentially passive nature of wage work and the truly active nature of the unwaged or the welfare recipient, busy with their own freedom. And so, the real choice here isn't between wage labor and joblessness, but rather between free activity and alienated activity, which is just a kind of agitated passivity. Though it isn't wrong of the movement to go on advancing, disguised with the name "movement of the unwaged and precarious," which is the only way that the present order can understand and thus falsify it, it should certainly not hide its own radicalness from itself: its true aim is the suppression of work as alienated activity.

### 3

We're lucky that we have the benefit of exceptional historical circumstances. Never, perhaps, has there been a society as hated as this one. The excessive nature of the present social crisis can be grasped positively as a gigantic individual and collective act of sabotage. There's not a housewife left that hasn't entertained the idea that a complete overturning of the present social organization is necessary. It's up to us to make the most obvious contradiction of this society burst, which is that it shows itself to be detestable, absurd, and irreparable, while simultaneously claiming that it's eternal. The present social situation is a "violent state that cannot last, because our fellow citizens are far too disunited to preserve the ancient form of the Republic much longer." In many minds the thought creeps up that there's no more time for secretly deploring our miseries, but that we must risk everything to free ourselves from them, that since the illness is a violent one, the remedy must be as well. We are many, we who silently curse this social order which we must either be the slaves or enemies of. It's already clear that our movement is an unheard of crystallization agent, that it is beginning a chaotic process the result of which will hinge on the slightest differences in its initial conditions: we will either have an entirely liberated society, or an even more totalitarian regime.

## 4

It is up to us to realize the hatred that this society devotes to itself, and make it conscious of the object of that hatred: commodity relations, which have devastated everything that once was human about our society. Our movement's function could be to constitute a plateau, a platform for the articulation of all the partial struggles in which we've managed to recognize the universal content of the struggle against the commodity. As pathetic as they may appear, the fight against genetically modified corn, resisting the continued degradation of the most elementary conditions of existence, or the search for alternatives to commodity relations that are awkwardly being sketched out in the Local Exchange Systems (S.E.L.), both have plenty to do with our movement.

# 5

Our movement's essential contradiction counterposes the party of partial demands, represented by the associations of the unemployed, and the party of disruption, which so freely expressed itself in the General Assemblies at Jussieu. Insofar as they are comprised of reformist and bureaucratic organizations, the unemployed workers' associations have corporatist, categorial, separate interests, and cannot truly desire an effective end to joblessness because it would mean they would have to come to an end. Their only objective is to eternally wage a fight without victory and with absurd content. They have anything but an interest in expanding the movement, which would then escape their control. Their collusion with the spectacular order and its sad soliloquy, ever full of reason, is proven by the nature of their so-called "spectacular" or "symbolic" actions. Because they remain within the sphere/register of representation, they make themselves the necessary allies of the Spectacle, and speak its language of numbers and despicable acts. Thus, when they end up wanting to loot a supermarket, they only do so virtually. They work in such a way as to make the mass of the people that they organize continue going to the cash registers, rather than just going in and consuming right there in the shop, sharing with other customers. Then they negotiate with the management to try to get the right to take out the shopping carts that their henchmen have filled, without having to pay. In so doing, they only work to confirm the sovereignty of power and property, by giving it a chance to make an exception to a new kind of privileged ones: they merely ask for the right to infringe upon rights. Anyway, it's only natural that they speak the language of separation, blind as

they are to the political aspects of economics – they can't understand the obvious fact that work now presents itself as a simple process of the maintenance of order by occupying the energies/attention of the greatest possible number of persons; no more than they can see that it is the police forces that in the final analysis provide the foundations for private property. Thus they only express themselves either in the jargon of specialized politics, or in the jargon of economy, but never in the "language of real life," which is the Common attribute of re-appropriated life, of autonomous existence. It should be remarked, finally, that they are not invulnerable, far from it, indeed, because in their internal functioning, as in that of this society as a whole, the management is autonomous of the "base," which is quite often more radical than its own spectacular bureaucracy. We can base ourselves on and draw an advantage from this weakness, there as elsewhere.



## 6

A global movement of social contestation has at the least one dimension insusceptible to recuperation: the new and real lifestyles that it experiences in practice. Its explosive power depends on the extent to which it attains to making felt the planetary distance that separates the possible from the real, through its own partial realizations. It is by making the movement of disruption and upheaval passionate that its aims can be made desirable. At such a point of social devastation and desertification as commodity society has brought us to, it's not just love that needs to be reinvented, but the whole of human relationships. Our success will mostly depend on our ability to give a living example of a free and authentic sociality. "Real life" is not mere vain words, nor a poet's chimera; it is so far from being such a thing that one single day of rioting suffices to render death preferable to an alienated everyday life. The experience of such a brutal transfiguration of consciousness is one of those rare things that can bring on a mass desertion from wage society. It's not with any kind of repugnant commiseration that we will win over the other sectors of the population to our cause, but by making them discover their own misery. The disappearance of the masters has not abolished slavery; it has generalized it. It is no longer a question of fighting against the fictitious management/administration of this society, but of self-organizing our lives with scorn for the survival of a Power structure that has only a police existence. The Spectacle colonizes the future; we must take over/occupy the present.



# 7

It appears that one of the most urgent problems that our movement has to deal with is how to get out of the ghetto of corporatist demands regarding joblessness, and how to find that exponential tipping point of unrest which will rally the other categories of the population to our side, of achieving a suspension in the tyrannical tempo of production. Such an effect was in part produced in 68 – the difference between the present context and that of 68 has to do with the fact that because the absurdity of this society is today concretely shown, it can be concretely resolved; the 60s had the means to give themselves a revolution without consequence, but we don't – by appealing in the form of written tracts for the constitution of action committees, tracts which would describe what an action committee is, how it can function, etc... The movement's progress saw them flourishing in a celebratory proliferation that alone was able to save the general strike from passivity. But the bureaucratic leftist organizations, which at the time had so much power, managed to infiltrate them, as was to be expected. The present non-existence of such parties allows one to speculate that they would not suffer the same fate today. We then saw the reversing effect of these little groups of a few dozen persons, who carried out their decisions the very second they were adopted. It wasn't just action that liberated them, anyway, but also speech, insofar as it is only to the extent that men have something to do together that they have something to say. The call to self-organization that concludes our communiqué to the headquarters of the Socialist Party only makes sense if we give this abstract formulation an effective, lived content. That still remains to be done.

## 8

The strategy adopted by the Spectacle to defeat us is quite clear; it's totally unoriginal. The regime's news organizations, in this first stage, last week sang a funeral hymn for our movement. Then, faced with the relative failure of this maneuver, they resolved to criminalize those who they had not managed to discourage. Finally, the unemployed workers' associations, in their sad struggle for recognition, could easily have undertaken a prudent little war of harassment while waiting for Tuesday's demonstrations, when the CGT and the various allies of the present order had their dreamed-of opportunity to make social contestation into a pretty little funeral procession. Though this movement must soon be defeated, according to their plans, it will only be because it trembled in light of its own radicalness, and because it didn't grasp the universal content of its goal: the abolition of commodity relations, which should have allowed it to gather together in unity within it all the isolated and fragmentary struggles aiming towards said goal. It could also be that it wasn't able to organize its diffusion and communications with the use of its own means. But the last word has still not been said in that respect. Though this whole undertaking is doomed to end in disaster, it will succeed in provisionally shattering the separation of men of good will. And domination has good reason to be disturbed by this, since it's just as dangerous for it as the gathering of a few beings determined to destroy it is – since in normal times it has reason to congratulate itself for its effectiveness in preventing encounters that might be dangerous to it. On this point at least, we've beaten them.

“You’re only equal to anyone else if you can prove it, and you only deserve freedom if you can conquer it.” (Baudelaire, Knock Down the Poor!)

Paris, Monday, January 26th, 1998.

# **THE JOBLESS SPEAK**

If anything should be more surprising than our presence here today at the INSEE [statistics and economics institute], it might be the fact that we didn't think to pay you a visit sooner. Motives aren't lacking. The commendable and well-known effort to falsify unemployment figures that the INSEE makes such sacrifices for so consistently already gave all of us quite the occasion to come hear all those for whom the adjusted lie of seasonal variations is a profession come clean then and there. We cannot let slide the insolence of such specialists, who talk about us without knowing us, and who, hiding in the corners of their fine offices, are so afraid to meet us. Well then, fine, you see; we've taken the first step ourselves!

But the obviousness of this primary motive might make it appear somewhat superficial. The second and more profound motive has to do with the very principle behind statistics and surveys. They're one of the most powerful instruments of domination and social control in use today. If the master of a society is he who holds control over the representations that it makes of itself, then the INSEE is the most zealous and efficient of servants in the hands of power. It is the INSEE in effect that pulls out of its ass the false self-consciousness that this society gives itself, and then spreads it all over whole pages of journalistic shithedery; it does so in accord with interests that are plain to see. They're the ones who fill up the empty concepts with numbers, thus forcing assent to the ignominy of the commodity society whose language it's never ceased to speak. But they are above all the active

symbol of the murderous quantification of life that is at work everywhere. The encrypted language of modern domination contains all the impudent arbitrariness of those who, acting behind closed doors, think there's no one they can't figure into their accounts. Polling opportunely takes the place of any real debate; the limitless horror of exclusion always appears ever so very moderate in the columns of numbers; and truth can always be silenced with surveys – all you have to know how to do is put the question the wrong way.

But today we've come in person to meet the men of the INSEE in person. If we can't expect anything at all from this institution which ought by all rights to be destroyed, it's not the same for those that comprise it: they are capable of some consciousness at least. They can recognize the social function that they are made to fill, which makes them the sad manservants of oppression. They can still recognize their statistician's misery: in their desolate offices, at the ends of hospital-looking corridors, where they waste their lives in the mute company of white noise, vectorial spaces, loose averages, and deviation-types, doing joyless, useless work. And having seen it clearly, they'll have to acknowledge the truth that they've become parasites, weakened men, their own executioners. And so then perhaps they will come to share with us the disgust they inspire in us, both them and the world that they relentlessly build. Perhaps they might even join us. And they'll be welcome, bag and baggage.





# EARLY TEXTS

**CALL**

# PROPOSITION I

The triumph of civilisation lacks nothing.

Neither political terror nor affective poverty.

Nor universal sterility.

The desert cannot grow anymore: it is everywhere.

But it can still deepen.

Faced with the evidence of the catastrophe, there are those who get indignant and those who take note, those who denounce and those who get organised.

We are among those who get organised.

# SCHOLIUM

This is a call. That is to say it aims at those who can hear it. The question is not to demonstrate, to argue, to convince. We will go straight to the evident. The evident is not primarily a matter of logic or reasoning.

It attaches to the sensible, to worlds.

There is an evident to every world. The evident is what is held in common or what sets apart.

After which communication becomes possible again, communication which is no longer presupposed, which is to be built.

And this network of evidents that constitute us, we have been taught so well to doubt it, to avoid it, to conceal it, to keep it to ourselves. We have been so well taught, that we cannot find the words when we want to shout.

As for the reigning order, everyone knows what it consists in: that a dying social system has no other justification to its arbitrary nature but its absurd determination – its senile determination – to simply linger on;

that the police, global or national, have got a free hand to get rid of those who do not toe the line; that civilisation, wounded in its heart, no longer encounters anything but its own limits in the endless war it has begun;

that this headlong flight, already almost a century old, produces nothing but a series of increasingly frequent disasters;

that the mass of humans deal with this order of things by means of lies, cynicism, brutalisation or medication; — these things no one can claim to ignore.

And the sport that consists in endlessly describing the present disaster, with a varying degree of complaisance, is just another way of saying: “that’s the way it is”; the prize of infamy going to the journalists, to all those who pretend to rediscover every morning the misery and corruption they noticed the day before.

But what is most striking, for the time being, is not the arrogance of empire, but rather the weakness of the counter-attack. Like a colossal paralysis. A mass paralysis. Which will sometimes say – when it still speaks – that there is nothing to do, sometimes concede – when pushed to its limit – that “there is so much to do”.

Which is to say the same thing.

Then, on the fringe of this paralysis, there is the “something, anything, has to be done” of the activists. Seattle, Prague, Genoa, the struggle against GM or the movements of the unemployed, we have played our part, we have taken sides in the struggles of these last years; and certainly not the side of ATTAC or the Tute Bianche.

The folklore of protests no longer entertains us. In the last decade, we have seen the dull monologue of Marxism-Leninism regurgitate from still juvenile mouths. We have seen the purest anarchism negate also what it cannot comprehend.

We have seen the most tedious economism – that of *Le Monde Diplomatique* – becoming the new popular religion. And Negriism imposing itself as the only alternative to the intellectual rout of the global left. Leftist militantism has everywhere gone back to raising its tottering constructions, its depressive networks, until exhaustion.

It took no more than three years for the cops, unions, and other informal bureaucracies to dismantle the short-lived “anti-globalisation movement”. To control it. To divide it into separate “areas of struggle”, each as profitable as it is sterile.

In these times, from Davos to Porto Alegre, from the MEDEF to the CNT, capitalism and anti-capitalism describe the same absent horizon. The same truncated prospect of managing the disaster.

What eventually opposes this prevailing desolation is merely another desolation, just one that is not as well-stocked.

Everywhere there is the same idiotic idea of happiness. The same games of power that are paralysed with fear. The same disarming superficiality. The same emotional illiteracy. The same desert.

We say that these times are a desert, and that this desert incessantly deepens. This is no poetic device, it is evident. An evident which harbours many others. Notably the rupture with all that protests, all that denounces, and all that glosses over the disaster.

Whoever denounces exempts themselves.

Everything appears as if leftists were accumulating reasons to revolt the same way a manager accumulates the means to dominate. That is to say with the same delight. The desert is the progressive depopulation of worlds – the habit we have adopted to live as if we were not of this world. The desert is present in the continuous, massive and programmed proletarianisation of populations, just as it is present in the suburban sprawl of Florida, where the misery lies precisely in the fact that no one seems to feel it.

That the desert of our time is not perceived only makes it harsher.

Some have tried to name the desert. To point out what has to be fought not as the action of a foreign agent but as a sum of relations. They talked about spectacle, biopower or empire. But this also added to the current confusion.

The spectacle is not an easy abbreviation for the mass media. It lies as much in the cruelty with which everything endlessly throws us back to our own image. Biopower is not a synonym for social security, the welfare state or the pharmaceutical industry, but it pleasantly lodges itself in the care that we take of our pretty bodies, in a certain physical estrangement to oneself as well as to others.

Empire is not some kind of extraterrestrial entity, a worldwide conspiracy of governments, financial networks, technocrats, and multinational corporations. Empire is everywhere nothing is happening.

Everywhere things are working. Wherever the normal situation prevails.



By dint of seeing the enemy as a subject that faces us – instead of feeling it as a relationship that holds us – we confine ourselves to the struggle against confinement. We reproduce under the pretext of an “alternative” the worst kind of dominant relationships. We start selling as a commodity the very struggle against the commodity. Hence we get the authorities of the anti-authoritarian struggle, chauvinist feminism, and anti-fascist lynchings.

At every moment we are taking part in a situation. Within a situation there are no subjects and objects – I and the other, my desires and reality – only a sum of relationships, a sum of the flows that traverse it.

There is a general context – capitalism, civilisation, empire, call it what you wish – that not only intends to control each situation but, even worse, tries to make sure that there is, as often as possible, no situation. The streets and the houses, the language and the affects, and the worldwide tempo that sets the pace of it all, have been adjusted for that purpose only. Worlds are everywhere calibrated to slide by or ignore each other. The “normal situation” is this absence of situation. To get organised means: to start from the situation and not dismiss it. To take sides within it. Weaving the necessary material, affective and political solidarities. This is what any strike does in any office, in any factory. This is what any gang does. Any revolutionary or counter-revolutionary party.

To get organised means: to give substance to the situation. Making it real, tangible.

Reality is not capitalist.

The position within a situation determines the need to forge alliances, and for that purpose to establish some lines of communication, some wider circulation. In turn those new links reconfigure the situation. The name we give to the situation that we are in is “world civil war”. For there is no longer anything that can limit the confrontation between the opposing forces. Not even law, which comes into play as one more form of the generalised confrontation.

The ‘we’ that speaks here is not a delimitable, isolated we, the we of a group. It is the we of a position. In these times this position is asserted as a double secession: secession first with the process of capitalist valorisation; then secession with all the sterility entailed by a mere opposition to empire, extra-parliamentary or otherwise; thus a secession with the left. Here “secession” means less a practical refusal to communicate than a disposition to forms of communication so intense that, when put into practice, they snatch from the enemy most of its force.

To put it briefly, such a position refers to the force of irruption of the Black Panthers and the collective canteens of the German Autonomes, to the tree houses and art of sabotage of the British neo-luddites, to the careful choice of words of the radical feminists, to the mass self-reductions of the Italian autonomists, and the armed joy of the June 2nd Movement.

From now on all friendship is political.

## PROPOSITION II

The unlimited escalation of control is a hopeless response to the predictable breakdowns of the system. Nothing that is expressed in the known distribution of political identities is able to lead beyond the disaster.

Therefore, we begin by withdrawing from them. We contest nothing, we demand nothing. We constitute ourselves as a force, as a material force, as an autonomous material force within the world civil war. This call sets out the conditions.

# SCHOLIUM

Here a new weapon of crowd dispersal, a kind of fragmentation grenade made of wood, is being subjected to live field tests. Meanwhile – in Oregon – demonstrators blocking traffic face sentences of twenty-five years imprisonment. In the field of urban pacification the Israeli army is becoming the most prominent consultant. Experts from all over the world rush to marvel at the latest, most formidable and subtle findings in anti-subversive technology. It would appear that the art of wounding – wounding one to scare a hundred – has reached untold summits. And then there is “terrorism”. That is to say, according to the European Commission: “any offence committed intentionally by an individual or a group against one or several countries, their institutions or their populations, and aiming at threatening them and seriously undermining or destroying the political, economic or social structures of a country.” In the United States there are more prisoners than farmers.

As it is reorganised and progressively recaptured, public space is covered with cameras. Not only is any surveillance now possible, it has become acceptable. All sorts of lists of “suspects” circulate from department to department, and we can scarcely guess their probable uses. The social space once traversed by flâneurs is now militarily marked and sealed, and its ties of chatter and gossip have been transformed into recriminate whispers, the substance of new micro-legal constraints. In the uk the Anti Social Behaviour Orders have turned the most petty disputes among neighbours into personally tailored edicts of exile, banishing a marked individual from a street corner or proscribing the wearing of

hooded tops within a specific zone. Meanwhile the Metropolitan Police, working with members of the special forces, pursue their campaign against terror with a series of “mistaken” shootings. A former head of the CIA, one of those people who, on the opposing side, get organised rather than get indignant, writes in *Le Monde*: “More than a war against terrorism, what is at stake is the extension of democracy to the parts of the [Arab and Muslim] world that threaten liberal civilisation. For the construction and the defence of which we have worked throughout the 20th century, during the First, and then the Second World War, followed by the Cold War – or Third World War.” Nothing in this shocks us; nothing catches us unawares or radically alters our feeling towards life. We were born inside the catastrophe and with it we have drawn up a strange and peaceable relation of habit.

Almost an intimacy. For as long as we can remember we have received no news other than that of the world civil war.

We have been raised as survivors, as surviving machines. We have been raised with the idea that life consisted in walking; walking until you collapse among other bodies that walk identically, stumble, and then collapse in turn in indifference. Ultimately the only novelty of the present times is that none of this can be hidden anymore, that in a sense everyone knows it. Hence the most recent hardening of the system: its inner workings are plain, it would be useless to try and conjure them away.

Many wonder how no part of the left or far-left, that none of the known political forces, is capable of opposing this course of events. “But we live in a democracy, right?” They can go on wondering as long as they like: nothing that is expressed in the

framework of politics will ever be able to limit the advance of the desert, because politics is part of the desert.

We do not say this in order to advocate some extra-parliamentary politics as an antidote to liberal democracy. The popular manifesto “We are the Left”, signed a couple of years ago by all the citizen collectives and “social movements” to be found in France, expresses well enough the logic that has for thirty years driven extra-parliamentary politics: we do not want to seize power, overthrow the state, etc.; so we want it to recognise us as valid interlocutors.

Wherever the classical conception of politics prevails, prevails the same impotence in front of the disaster. That this impotence is widely distributed between a variety of eventually reconcilable identities does not make the slightest difference. The anarchist from the FA, the council communist, the Trotskyist from ATTAC and the Republican Congressman start from the same amputation, propagate the same desert.

Politics, for them, is what is settled, said, done, decided between men. The assembly that gathers them all, that gathers all human beings in abstraction from their respective worlds, forms the ideal political circumstance. The economy, the economic sphere, ensues logically: as a necessary and impossible management of all that was left at the door of the assembly, of all that was constituted, thus, as non-political and so becomes subsequently: family, business, private life, leisure, passions, culture, etc.

That is how the classical definition of politics spreads the desert: by abstracting humans from their worlds, by disconnecting them

from the network of things, habits, words, fetishes, affects, places, solidarities that make up their world, their sensible world, and that gives them their specific substance.

Classical politics is the glorious stagecraft of bodies without worlds. But the theatrical assembly of political individualities cannot mask the desert that it is. There is no human society separated from the sum of beings. There is a plurality of worlds. Of worlds that are all the more real because they are shared. And that coexist.

The political, in truth, is the play between the different worlds, the alliance between those that are compatible and the confrontation between those that are irreconcilable.

Therefore we say that the central political fact of the last thirty years went unnoticed. Because it took place at such a deep level of reality that it cannot be considered as “political” without bringing about a revolution in the very notion of the political. Because this level of reality is also the one where the division is elaborated between what is regarded as real and what is not. This central fact is the triumph of existential liberalism. The fact that it is now considered natural for everyone to relate to the world on the basis of his own distinct life. That life consists in a series of choices, good or bad. That each one can be defined by a set of qualities, of properties, that make him or her, by their variable weighting, a sole and irreplaceable being. That the idea of the contract adequately epitomises the relations of commitment between individuals, and the idea of respect epitomises all virtue. That language is only a tool to come to an understanding.

That the world is composed on the one hand of things to manage and on the other of an ocean of atomic individuals. Which in turn have an unfortunate tendency to turn into things, by letting themselves get managed.

Of course, cynicism is only one of the possible features of the infinite clinical picture of existential liberalism. It also includes depression, apathy, immunodeficiency (every immune system is intrinsically collective), dishonesty, judicial harassment, chronic dissatisfaction, denied attachments, isolation, illusions of citizenship and the loss of all generosity.

Existential liberalism has propagated its desert so well that in the end even the most sincere leftists express their utopia in its own terms. "We will rebuild an egalitarian society to which each makes his or her contribution and from which each gets the satisfactions he expects from it. [...] As far as individual desires are concerned, it could be egalitarian if each consumes in proportion to the efforts he or she is ready to contribute. Here again the method of measurement of the effort contributed by each will have to be redefined." This is the language chosen by the organisers of the "alternative, anti-capitalist, and anti-war village" against the G8 summit in Evian in a text entitled *When capitalism and wage labour will have been abolished!* Here is a key to the triumph of empire: managing to keep in the background, to surround with silence the very ground on which it manoeuvres, the front on which it fights the decisive battle – that of the shaping of the sensible, of the forming of sensibilities. In such a way it preventively paralyzes any defence in the very moment of its operation, and ruins the very idea of a counter-offensive. The



victory is won whenever the leftist militant, at the end of a hard day of “political work”, slumps in front of the latest action movie.

When they see us withdraw from the painful rituals – the general assembly, the meeting, the negotiation, the protest, the demand – when they hear us speak about the sensible world rather than about work, papers, pensions, or freedom of movement, leftist militants give us a pitying look. “The poor guys”, they seem to say, “they have resigned themselves to minority politics, they have retreated into their ghetto, and renounced any widening of the struggle. They will never be a movement.” But we believe exactly the opposite: it is they who resign themselves to minority politics by speaking their language of false objectivity, whose weight consists only in repetition and rhetoric. Nobody is fooled by the veiled contempt with which they talk about the worries “of the people”, and that allows them to switch from the unemployed person to the illegal immigrant, from the striker to the prostitute without ever putting themselves at stake – for this contempt forms part of the sensibly evident. Their will to “widen” is just a way to flee those who are already there, and with whom, above all, they would fear to live. And finally, it is they who are reluctant to admit the political meaning of the sentiments, who can only count on sentimentality for their pitiful proselytising. All in all, we would rather start from small and dense nuclei than from a vast and loose network. We have known these spineless arrangements long enough.

## PROPOSITION III

Those who would respond to the urgency of the situation with the urgency of their reaction only add to the general asphyxiation.

Their manner of intervention implies the rest of their politics, of their agitation.

As for us, the urgency of the situation just allows us to be rid of all considerations of legality or legitimacy. Considerations that have, in any case, become uninhabitable.

That it might take a generation to build a victorious revolutionary movement in all its breadth does not cause us to waver.

We envisage this with serenity.

Just like we serenely envisage the criminal nature of our existence, and of our gestures.

# SCHOLIUM

We have known, we still know, the temptation of activism.

The counter-summits, the No-Border camps, the occupations, and the campaigns against evictions, new security laws, the building of new prisons; the succession of all of this. The ever-increasing dispersion of collectives responding to the same dispersion of activity.

Running after the movements.

Feeling our power on an ad hoc basis, only at the price of returning each time to an underlying powerlessness.

Paying the high price for each campaign. Letting it consume all the energy that we have. Then moving to the next one, each time more out of breath, more exhausted, more desolated.

And little by little, by dint of demanding, by dint of denouncing, becoming incapable of sensing the presumed basis of our engagement, the nature of the urgency that flows through us.

Activism is the first reflex. The standard response to the urgency of the present situation. The perpetual mobilisation in the name of urgency is what our bosses and governments have made us used to, even when we fight against them.

Forms of life disappear every day, plant or animal species, human experiences and countless relationships between them all. But our feeling of urgency is linked less to the speed of these extinctions

than to their irreversibility, and even more to our inability to repopulate the desert.

Activists mobilise themselves against the catastrophe. But only prolong it. Their haste consumes the little world that is left. The answer of the activist to urgency remains itself within the regime of urgency, with no hope of getting out of it or interrupting it. The activist wants to be everywhere. She goes everywhere the rhythm of the breakdown of the machine leads her. Everywhere she brings her pragmatic inventiveness, the festive energy of her opposition to the catastrophe. Without fail, the activist mobilises. But she never gives herself the means to understand how it is to be done. How to hinder in concrete terms the progress of the desert, in order to establish inhabitable worlds here and now.

We desert activism. Without forgetting what gives it strength: a certain presence to the situation. An ease of movement within it. A way to apprehend the struggle, not from a moral or ideological angle, but from a technical and tactical one.

Old leftist militantism provides the opposite example. There is something remarkable about the impermeability of militants in the face of situations. We remember a scene in Genoa: about 50 militants of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire wave their red flags labelled "100% to the Left." They are motionless, timeless. They vociferate their calibrated slogans, surrounded by peace-police. Meanwhile, a few meters away, some of us fight the lines of carabinieri, throwing back teargas canisters, ripping up the sidewalk to make projectiles, preparing Molotov cocktails with bottles found in the trash and gasoline from upturned Vespas. When compelled to comment on us the militants speak of

adventurism, thoughtlessness. Their pretext is that the conditions are not right. We say that nothing was missing, that everything was there, but them.

What we desert in leftist militantism is this absence to the situation. Just as we desert the inconsistency to which activism condemns us.

Activists themselves feel this inconsistency. And this is why, periodically, they turn toward their elders, the militants. They borrow their ways, terrains of struggle, slogans. What appeals to them in leftist militantism is the consistency, the structure, the fidelity they lack. This allows the activists to resort to slogans and demands – “citizenship for all,” “free movement of people,” “guaranteed income,” “free public transport.”

The problem with demands is that, formulating needs in terms that make them audible to power, they say nothing about those needs, and what real transformations of the world they require. Thus, demanding free public transportation says nothing of our need to travel rather than be transported, of our need for slowness.

But also, demands often end up masking the real conflicts whose stakes they set. Demanding free public transportation only retards the diffusion of the techniques of fare-dodging, at least for this specific milieu. Calling for the free movement of people just eludes the issue of practical escape from the tightening of control.

Fighting for a guaranteed income is, at best, condemning ourselves to the illusion that an improvement of capitalism is necessary to get out of it. Whatever form it takes, it is always the

same dead end: the subjective resources mobilised may be revolutionary; yet they remain inserted in a program of radical reforms. Under the pretext of overcoming the alternative between reform and revolution we sink into an opportune ambiguity.

The present catastrophe is that of a world actively made uninhabitable. Of a sort of methodical devastation of everything that remained liveable in the relations of humans with each other and with their worlds. Capitalism could not have triumphed over the whole planet if it was not for techniques of power, specifically political techniques. There are all kinds of techniques: with or without tools, corporal or discursive, erotic or culinary, the disciplines and mechanisms of control, and it is pointless to denounce the "reign of technics." The political techniques of capitalism consist first in breaking the attachments through which a group finds the means to produce, in the same movement, the conditions of its subsistence and those of its existence. In separating human communities from countless things – stones and metals, plants, trees that have a thousand purposes, gods, djinns, wild or tamed animals, medicines and psycho-active substances, amulets, machines, and all the other beings with which human groups compose worlds.

Ruining all community, separating groups from their means of existence and from the knowledge linked to them, it is political reason that dictates the incursion of the commodity as the mediator of every relation.

Just as the witches had to be disposed of, their medicinal knowledge as well as the communication between the spheres which they allowed to exist, today peasants have to renounce their

ability to plant their own seeds in order to maintain the grip of multinational corporations and other bodies of agricultural policy.

These political techniques of capitalism find their maximal point of concentration in the contemporary metropole. The metropole is the place where, in the end, there is almost nothing left to reappropriate. A milieu in which everything is done so the human only relates to himself, only creates himself separately from other forms of existence, uses or rubs shoulders with them without ever encountering them.

In the background of this separation, and to make it durable, the most minor attempt at disregarding commodity relationships has been made criminal.

The field of legality was long ago reduced to the multiple constraints which make life impossible, through wage labour or self-management, voluntary aid or leftist militancy. As this field becomes always more uninhabitable, everything that can contribute to making life possible has been turned into a crime.

Where activists claim that “No one is illegal” one must recognise the opposite: today an entirely legal existence would be entirely submissive.

There is tax evasion, fictitious employment, insider dealings and fake bankruptcies, embezzlement of grants and insurance fraud, forged documents and welfare scams. There are the voyages across borders in aeroplane baggage holds, the trips without a ticket through a town or a country. Fare-dodging and shoplifting are the daily practices of thousands of people in the metropole. And there are illegal practices of trading seeds that have saved

many plant species. There are illegalities that are more functional than others for the capitalist worldsystem. There are some that are tolerated, others that are encouraged, and eventually others that are punished. An improvised vegetable garden on a wasteland has every chance of being flattened by a bulldozer before the first harvest.

If we consider the sum of the laws of exception and customary rules that govern the space that anyone goes through in one day, there is henceforth not a single existence that can be assured of impunity. There exist laws, codes and decisions of jurisprudence that make every existence punishable; it would just be a matter of applying them to the letter.

We are not ready to bet that where the desert grows also grows a salvation. Nothing can happen that does not begin with a secession from everything that makes this desert grow.

We know that building a power of any scale will take time. There are lots of things that we no longer know how to do. In fact, as all those who benefited from modernisation and the education dispensed in our developed lands, we barely know how to do anything. Even gathering plants for cooking or medicinal purpose rather than for decoration is regarded at best as archaic, at worst as quaint. We make a simple observation: everyone has access to a certain amount of resources and knowledge made available by the simple fact of living in these lands of the old world; and can communise them.

The question is not whether to live with or without money, to steal or to buy, to work or not, but how to use the money for



increasing our autonomy from the commodity sphere. And if we prefer stealing than working, producing for ourselves than stealing, it is not out of concern for some kind of purity. It is because the flows of power that accompany the flows of commodities, the subjective submission that conditions the means of survival, have become exorbitant. There would be many inappropriate ways to say what we envisage: we neither want to leave for the countryside nor gather ancient knowledge to accumulate it. We are not merely concerned with the reappropriation of means. Nor would we restrict ourselves to the reappropriation of knowledge. If we put together all the knowledge and techniques, all the inventiveness displayed in the field of activism, we would not get a revolutionary movement. It is a question of temporality. A question of creating the conditions where an offensive can sustain itself without fading, of establishing the material solidarities that allow us to hold on.

We believe there is no revolution without the constitution of a common material force. We do not ignore the anachronism of this belief.

We know it is too early and also that it is too late, that is why we have time. We have ceased to wait.

## **PROPOSITION IV**

We set the point of reversal, the way out of the desert, the end of capital, in the intensity of the link that each manages to establish between what he or she lives and what he or she thinks. Against the partisans of existential liberalism, we refuse to view this as a private matter, an individual issue, a question of character. On the contrary, we start from the certainty that this link depends on the construction of shared worlds, on the sharing of effective means.

# SCHOLIUM

Everyone is daily enjoined to accept that the concern of the “link between life and thought” is evidently naive, out of date, and shows at root a simple absence of culture. We consider this a symptom. For this evident is just an effect of that most modern liberal redefinition of the distinction between the public and the private. Liberalism works on the assumption that everything must be tolerated, that everything can be thought, so long as it is recognised as being without direct repercussions on the structure of society, of its institutions and of state power. Any idea can be admitted; its expression should even be favoured, so long as the social and state rules are accepted. In other words, the freedom of thought of the private individual must be total, as well as his freedom of expression in principle, but he must not want the consequences of his thought as far as collective life is concerned.

Liberalism may have invented the individual, but it was born mutilated. The liberal individual, which expresses him or herself better than ever in the pacifist and civil rights movements of today, is supposed to be attached to his or her freedom as far as this freedom does not commit him or herself to anything, and certainly does not try to impose itself upon others. The stupid precept “my freedom ends where that of another begins” is received today as an unassailable truth. Even John Stuart Mill, though one of the essential agents of the liberal conquest, noticed that an unfortunate consequence ensues: one is permitted to desire anything, on the sole condition that it is not desired too intensely, that it does not go beyond the limits of the private, or in any case beyond those of public “free expression”.

What we call existential liberalism is the adherence to a series of evidents marked by a constant propensity of the subject to betrayal. It is evident, for example, that everyone acts in their own interest, and no-one can be accused of infamy for becoming exactly the kind of bastard he would spit on as a young man. We have been taught to function at a lower gear in which we are relieved of the very idea of betrayal. This emotional lower gear is the guarantee we have accepted of our becoming-adult. Along with, for the most zealous, the mirage of an affective self-sufficiency as an insuperable ideal. And yet there is simply too much to betray for those who decide to keep the promises which they have carried since childhood.

Among the liberal evidents is that of behaving like an owner, even towards your own experiences. This is why not behaving like a liberal individual means primarily not being attached to ones properties. Or yet again another meaning must be given to "properties": not what belongs to me peculiarly, but what attaches me to the world, and that is therefore not reserved for me, has nothing to do with private property nor with what is supposed to define an identity (the "that's just the way I am", and its confirmation "that's just like you!"). While we reject the idea of individual property, we have nothing against attachments. The question of appropriation or re-appropriation is reducible to the question of knowing what is appropriate for us, that is to say suitable, in terms of use, in terms of need, in terms of relation to a place, to a moment of a world.

Existential liberalism is the spontaneous ethics suitable for social democracy considered as a political ideal. You will never be a better citizen than when you are capable of renouncing a relation

or a struggle in order to maintain your place. It will not always be exactly easy going, but that is precisely where existential liberalism is efficient: it even provides the remedies to the discomforts that it generates. The cheque to Amnesty International, the fair trade coffee, the demo against the last war, seeing the last Michael Moore film, are so many non-acts disguised as salvational gestures. Carry on exactly as normal, that is to say go for a walk in the designated spaces and do your shopping, the same as always, but on top of that, additionally, ease your conscience; buy No Logo, boycott Shell, this should be enough to convince you that political action, in fact, does not require much, and that you too are capable of “engaging” yourself. There is nothing new in this trading of indulgences, just another false trail in the prevailing confusion. The invocatory culture of the other-possible-world and fair-trade-thought leave little room to speak of ethics beyond that on the label. The increase in the number of environmentalist, humanitarian and “solidarity” associations opportunely channels the general discontentment and thus contributes to the perpetuation of the state of affairs, through personal valorisation, recognition by public opinion, through the worship, in short, of social usefulness.

Above all no more enemies. At the very most, problems, abuses or catastrophes – dangers from which only the mechanisms of power can protect us.

If the obsession of the founders of liberalism was the neutralisation of sects, it is because they united all the subjective elements that had to be banished in order for the modern state to exist. For a sectarian life is, above all, what is adequate to its particular truth – namely a certain disposition towards things and

events of the world, a way of not losing sight of what matters. There is a concomitance between the birth of "society" (and of its correlate: "economy") and the liberal redefinition of the public and the private. The sectarian community is in itself a threat to what is referred to by the pleonasm "liberal society". It is so because it is a form of organisation of the secession. Here lies the nightmare of the founders of the modern state: a section of collectivity detaches itself from the whole, thus ruining the idea of social unity. Two things that society cannot bear: that a thought may be incorporated, in other words that it may have an effect on an existence; that this incorporation may be not only transmitted, but also shared, communised. All this is enough to discredit as a "sect" any collective experience beyond control.

The evident of the commodity world has inserted itself everywhere. This evident is the most effective instrument to disconnect ends from means, to release "everyday life" as a space of existence that we only have to manage. Everyday life is what we are supposed to want to return to, like the acceptance of a necessary and universal neutralisation. It is the ever-growing renunciation of the possibility of an unmediated joy. As a friend once said, it is the average of all our possible crimes.

Rare are the communities that can avoid the abyss that is awaiting them, in the extreme dullness of the real, the community as the epitome of average intensity, a slow dwindling it cannot escape, clumsily filled with the stuff of kitchen-sink romances.

This neutralisation is an essential characteristic of liberal society. Everybody knows the centres of neutralisation, where it is required that no emotion stands out, where each one has to

contain himself, and everybody experiences them as such: enterprises (the family included), parties, sports centres, art galleries, etc. The real question is to know why, since everyone knows what these places are about, they can nevertheless be so popular. Why would one prefer, always and above all, that nothing happens; that nothing occurs, in any case, that might cause shocks that are too deep? Out of habit? Because of despair? Because of cynicism? Or else: because you can feel the delight of being somewhere while not being there, of being there while being essentially somewhere else; because what we are at heart would be preserved to the point of no longer even having to exist.

These ethical questions must be addressed first, and above all, because they are those that we find at the very heart of the political: how to answer the neutralisation of the affective, and of the effects of decisive thoughts? How do modern societies work with these neutralisations or rather put them to work? How does our tendency towards attenuation reflect in us, and in our collective experiences, the material effectiveness of empire?

The acceptance of these neutralisations can of course go hand in hand with great intensities of creation. You can experiment as far as madness, provided that you are a creative singularity, and that you produce in public the proof of this singularity (the "oeuvre"). You can still know the meaning of the sublime, but on condition that you experience it alone, and that you pass it on indirectly. You will then be recognised as an artist or as a thinker, and, if you are "politically engaged", you will be able to send out as many messages as you want, with the good conscience of one who sees further and will have warned the others.

We have, like many, experienced the fact that affects blocked in an “interiority” turn out badly: they can even turn into symptoms. The rigidities we observe in ourselves come from the dividing walls that everyone felt obliged to build, in order to mark the limits of themselves and to contain what must not overflow. When, for some reason, these walls happen to crack and shatter, then something happens that might essentially have to do with fright, but a fright capable of setting us free from fear. Any calling into question of the individual limits, of the borders drawn by civilisation, can be salvational. To any material community corresponds a certain jeopardising of bodies: when affects and thoughts are no longer ascribable to one or the other, when a circulation seems to be restored in which affects, ideas, impressions and emotions transmit indifferently among individuals. But it has to be understood that community as such is not the solution: it is its incessant and ubiquitous disappearance that is the problem.

We do not perceive humans as isolated from each other nor from the other beings of this world; we see them bound by multiple attachments that they learned to deny. This denial blocks the affective circulation through which these multiple attachments are experienced. This blockage, in turn, is necessary to become accustomed to the most neutral, the dullest, the most average intensity, that which can make one long for the holidays, the lunch-breaks, or the TV dinners as a godsend – that is to say something just as neutral, average and dull, but freely chosen. The imperial order revels in this average intensity.

We will be told: by advocating emotional intensities experienced in common, you go against what living beings require to live,



namely gentleness and calm – quite highly priced these days, like any scarce commodity. If what this means is that our point of view is incompatible with permitted leisure, then even winter sports fanatics might admit that it would be no great loss to see all the ski resorts burn and give the space back to the marmot. On the other hand, we have nothing against the gentleness that any living being, as a living being, carries. “It could be that living is a gentle thing,” any blade of grass knows it better than all the citizens of the world.

## **PROPOSITION V**

To any moral preoccupation, to any concern for purity, we substitute the collective working out of a strategy.

Only that which impedes the increase of our strength is bad.

It follows from this resolution that economics and politics are no longer to be distinguished. We are not afraid of forming gangs; and can only laugh at those who will decry us as a mafia.

# SCHOLIUM

We have been sold this lie: that what is most particular to us is what distinguishes us from the common.

We experience the contrary: every singularity is felt in the manner and in the intensity with which a being brings into existence something common. At root it is here that we begin, where we find each other.

That in us which is most singular calls to be shared. But we note this: not only is that which we have to share obviously incompatible with the prevailing order, but this order strives to track down any form of sharing of which it does not lay down the rules. For instance, the barracks, the hospital, the prison, the asylum, and the retirement home are the only forms of collective living allowed in the metropole. The normal state is the isolation of everyone in their private cubicle. This is where they return tirelessly, however great the encounters they make elsewhere, however strong the repulsion they feel.

We have known these conditions of existence, and never again will we return to them. They weaken us too much. Make us too vulnerable. Make us waste away.

In “traditional societies” isolation was the harshest sentence that could be passed on a member of the community. It is now the common condition. The rest of the disaster follows logically. It is only the narrow idea that everybody has of their own home that makes it seem natural to leave the street to the police. The world could not have been made so uninhabitable, nor sociality so

intently controlled – from shopping centres to bars, from company headquarters to illicit backrooms – had not everyone beforehand been granted the shelter of private space.

In running away from conditions of existence that mutilate us, we found squats; or rather, the international squat scene. In this constellation of occupied spaces where, despite many limits, it is possible to experiment with forms of collective aggregation outside of control, we have known an increase of power. We have organised ourselves for elementary survival – skipping, theft, collective work, common meals, sharing of skills, of equipment, of loving inclinations – and we have found forms of political expression – concerts, leaflets, demos, direct actions, sabotage. Then, little by little, we have seen our surroundings turn into a milieu and from a milieu into a scene. We have seen the enactment of a moral code replace the working out of a strategy. We have seen norms solidify, reputations built, ideas begin to function; and everything become so predictable. The collective adventure turned into a dull cohabitation. A hostile tolerance grasped all the relations. We adapted. And in the end what was believed to be a counter-world amounted to nothing but a reflection of the prevailing world: the same games of personal valorisation as regards theft, fights, political correction, or radicalism – the same sordid liberalism in affective life, the same scraps over access and territory, the same scission between everyday life and political activity, the same identity paranoia. In addition, for the luckiest, the luxury of periodically fleeing from their local poverty by introducing it somewhere else, where it is still exotic.

We do not impute these weaknesses to the squat form. We neither deny nor desert it. We say that squatting will only make sense again for us provided that we clarify the basis of the sharing we enter into. In the squat like anywhere else, the collective creation of a strategy is the only alternative to falling back on an identity, either through integration into society or withdrawing into the ghetto.

As far as strategy is concerned, we have learnt all the lessons of the “tradition of the defeated”.

We remember the beginnings of the labour movement.

They are close to us.

Because what was put into practice in its initial phase relates directly to what we are living, what we want to put into practice today.

The building up of what was to be called the “labour movement” as a force first rested on the sharing of criminal practices. The hidden solidarity funds in case of a strike, the acts of sabotage, the secret societies, the class violence, the first forms of mutualisation, developed with the consciousness of their illegal nature, of their antagonism.

It is in the United States that the indistinction between forms of workers’ organisation and organised criminality was the most tangible. The power of the American proletarians at the beginning of the industrial era stemmed from the development, within the community of workers, of a force of destruction and retaliation against capital, as well as from the existence of clandestine

solidarities. In response to the perpetual reversibility of the worker into the criminal, a systematic control was called for: the “moralisation” of any form of autonomous organisation. All that exceeded the ideal of the honest worker was marginalised as gang behaviour. In the end there was the mafia on the one hand and the unions on the other, allied in their reciprocal amputation.

In Europe, the integration of workers’ organisations into the state management apparatus – the foundation of social democracy – was paid for with the renunciation of all ability to be a nuisance. Here too the emergence of the labour movement was a matter of material solidarities, of an urgent need for communism. The Maisons du Peuple were the last shelters for this indistinction between the need for immediate communisation and the strategic requirements of a practical implementation of the revolutionary process. The “labour movement” then developed as a progressive separation between the co-operative current, an economic niche cut off from its strategic *raison d’être*, and the political and union forms working on the basis of parliamentarism or joint management. It is from the abandonment of any secessionist aim that the absurdity we call the Left was born. The climax is reached when the unionists denounce violence, loudly proclaiming that they will collaborate with the cops to control the rioting demonstrators.

The recent securitisation of the State proves only this: that the western societies have lost all force of aggregation. They no longer do anything but manage their inexorable decay. That is, essentially, prevent any re-aggregation, smash all that emerges.

All that deserts.

All that stands out.

But there is nothing to be done. The state of inner ruin of these societies lets a growing number of cracks appear. The continuous refurbishment of appearances can achieve nothing: here, worlds form. Squats, communes, groupuscules, barrios, all try to extract themselves from capitalist desolation. Most often these attempts fail or die from autarchy, for lack of having established contacts, the appropriate solidarities, for lack also of conceiving themselves as parties to the world civil war.

But all of these re-aggregations are still nothing in comparison with the mass desire, with the constantly deferred desire, to drop out. To leave.

In ten years, between two censuses, a hundred thousand people have disappeared in Great Britain. They have taken a truck, bought a ticket, dropped acid or joined the maquis. They have disaffiliated. They have left.

We would have liked, in our disaffiliation, to have had a place to rejoin, a stand to take, a direction to follow.

Many that leave get lost. Many never arrive.

Our strategy is therefore the following: to immediately establish a series of foci of desertion, of secession poles, of rallying points. For the runaways. For those who leave. A set of places to take shelter from the control of a civilisation that is headed for the abyss. It is a matter of giving ourselves the means, of finding the scale in which all those questions, which when addressed separately can drive one to depression, can be resolved. How to get rid of all the

dependencies that weaken us? How to get organised so as to no longer have to work? How to settle beyond the toxicity of the metropole without “leaving for the countryside”? How to shut down the nuclear plants? How to not be forced, when a friend goes mad, to resort to psychiatric pulverisation; or to the acerbic remedies of mechanistic medicine when he falls ill? How to live together without mutually dominating each other? How to react to the death of a comrade? How to ruin empire?

We know our weaknesses: we were born and we have grown up in pacified societies, that are as if they have been dissolved. We have not had the opportunity to acquire the consistency that moments of intense collective confrontation can give. Nor the knowledge that is linked to them. We have a political education to mature together. A theoretical and practical education.

For this, we need places. Places to get organised, to share and develop the required techniques. To learn to handle all that may prove necessary. To co-operate. Had it not renounced any political perspective, the experimentation of the Bauhaus, with all the materiality and the rigor it contained, would evoke the idea that we have of space-times dedicated to the transmission of knowledge and experience. The Black Panthers equipped themselves with such places; to which they added their politico-military capacity, the ten thousand free lunches they distributed everyday, and their autonomous press. They soon formed a threat so tangible to power that the special services had to be sent to massacre them.

Whoever constitutes themselves as a force knows that they become a party to the global course of hostilities. The question of



the recourse to or the renunciation of “violence” does not arise in such a party. And pacifism appears to us rather as an additional weapon in the service of empire, along with the contingents of riot police and journalists. The things we have to take into consideration concern the conditions of the asymmetrical conflict which is imposed on us, the modes of appearance and disappearance suitable for each of our practices. The demonstration, the action with faces uncovered, the indignant protest, are unsuitable forms of struggle for the present regime of domination, they even reinforce it, feeding up-to-date information to the systems of control. It would seem to be judicious, in any case, given that the frailty of contemporary subjectivity extends even to our leaders, to attack the material devices rather than the men that give them a face. This is out of sheer strategic concern. Therefore, we must turn ourselves to the forms of operation peculiar to all guerrillas: anonymous sabotage, unclaimed actions, recourse to easily appropriable techniques, targeted counter-attacks.

There is no moral question in the way we provide ourselves with our means to live and fight, but a tactical question of the means we give ourselves and how we use them.

“The expression of capitalism in our lives” a friend once said, “is the sadness”.

The point now is to establish the material conditions for a shared disposition to joy.

## **PROPOSITION VI**

On the one hand, we want to live communism; on the other, to spread anarchy.

# SCHOLIUM

We are living through times of the most extreme separation. The depressive normality of the metropole, its lonely crowds, expresses the impossible utopia of a society of atoms.

The most extreme separation reveals the content of the word "communism."

Communism is not a political or economic system. Communism has no need of Marx. Communism does not give a damn about the USSR. And we could not explain the fact that every decade for fifty years they have pretended to rediscover Stalin's crimes, crying "look at what communism is!", if they did not have the feeling that in reality everything prompts us in that direction.

The only argument that ever stood against communism was that we did not need it. And certainly, as limited as they were, there were still, not so long ago, here and there, things, languages, thoughts, places, that were shared and that subsisted; at least enough of them to not fade away. There were worlds, and they were inhabited. The refusal to think, the refusal to ask the question of communism, had practical arguments. They have been swept away. The eighties, the eighties as they endure, remains the traumatic indicator of this ultimate purge. Since then all social relations have become suffering. To the point of making any anaesthesia, any isolation, preferable. In a way it is existential liberalism itself that pushes us to communism, by the very excess of its triumph.

The communist question is about the elaboration of our relationship to the world, to beings, to ourselves. It is about the elaboration of the play between different worlds, about the communication between them. Not about the unification of world space, but about the institution of the sensible, that is to say the plurality of worlds. In that sense communism is not the extinction of all conflict, it does not describe a final state of society after which everything has been concluded. For it is also through conflict that worlds communicate. "In bourgeois society, where the differences between men are only differences that do not relate to man himself, it is precisely the true differences, the differences of quality that are not retained. The communist does not want to create a collective soul. He wants to realise a society where false differences are scraped.

And those false differences being scraped, open all their possibilities to the true differences." Thus spoke an old friend.

It is evident for instance that the question of what I belong to, of what I need, of what makes up my world, has been reduced to the police fiction of legal property, of what belongs to me, of what is mine. Something is proper to me insofar as it belongs to the field of that which I use; and not out of any juridical title. In the end, legal property has no other reality than the forces that protect it. So the question of communism is, on one hand, to do away with the police, and on the other, to elaborate modes of sharing, uses, between those who live together. It is the question that is eluded everyday with "give me a break!" and "chill out!". Certainly, communism is not given. It has to be thought out, it has to be made. Almost everything that stands against it boils down to an expression of exhaustion: "But you'll never make it... It can't

work... Humans are what they are...And it's already hard enough to live your own life... Energy has limits, we can't do everything." But exhaustion is not an argument. It is a state.

So communism starts from the experience of sharing. And first, from the sharing of our needs.

Needs are not what capitalist rule has accustomed us to. To need is never about needing things without at the same time needing worlds. Each of our needs links us, beyond all shame, to everything that feels it. The need is just the name of the relationship through which a certain sensible being gives meaning to such or such element of his world. That is why those who have no worlds – metropolitan subjectivities for instance – have nothing but whims. And that is why capitalism, although it satisfies like nothing else the need for things, only spreads universal dissatisfaction; because to do so it has to destroy worlds.

By communism we mean a certain discipline of the attention.

The practice of communism, as we live it, we call "the Party." When we overcome an obstacle together or when we reach a higher level of sharing, we say that "we are building the Party." Certainly others, who we do not know yet, are building the Party elsewhere. This call is addressed to them. No experience of communism at the present time can survive without getting organised, tying itself to others, putting itself in crisis, waging war. "For the oases that dispense life vanish when we seek shelter in them."

As we apprehend it, the process of instituting communism can only take the form of a collection of acts of communisation, of

making common such-and-such space, such-and-such machine, such-and-such knowledge. That is to say, the elaboration of the mode of sharing that attaches to them. Insurrection itself is just an accelerator, a decisive moment in this process. As we understand it, the party is not an organisation – where everything becomes insubstantial by dint of transparency – and it is not a family – where everything smells like a swindle by dint of opacity.

The Party is a collection of places, infrastructures, communised means; and the dreams, bodies, murmurs, thoughts, desires that circulate among those places, the use of those means, the sharing of those infrastructures.

The notion of the Party responds to the necessity of a minimal formalisation, which makes us accessible as well as allows us to remain invisible. It belongs to the communist way that we explain to ourselves and formulate the basis of our sharing. So that the most recent arrival is, at the very least, the equal of the elder.

Looking closer at it, the Party could be nothing but this: the formation of sensibility as a force. The deployment of an archipelago of worlds. What would a political force, under empire, be that didn't have its farms, its schools, its arms, its medicines, its collective houses, its editing desks, its printers, its covered trucks and its bridgeheads in the metropole? It seems more and more absurd that some of us still have to work for capital – aside from the necessary tasks of infiltration.

The offensive power of the Party comes from the fact that it is also a power of production, but that within it, the relationships are just incidentally relationships of production.

Through its development capitalism has revealed itself to be not merely a mode of production, but a reduction of all relations, in the last instance, to relations of production. From the company to the family, even consumption appears as another episode in the general production, the production of society.

The overthrowing of capitalism will come from those who are able to create the conditions for other types of relations.

Thus the communism we are talking about is strictly opposed to what has been historically caricatured as “communism”, and that was most of the time socialism, monopolist state capitalism.

Communism does not consist in the elaboration of new relations of production, but indeed in the abolition of those relations.

Not having relations of production with our world or between ourselves means never letting the search for results become more important than the attention to the process; casting from ourselves all forms of valorisation; making sure we do not disconnect affection and co-operation.

Being attentive to worlds, to their sensible configurations, is exactly what renders impossible the isolation of something like “relations of production”. In the places we open, the means we share, it is this grace that we look for, that we experience. To name this experience, we often hear about everything being “free” in the sense of “free shops”, “free transport”, “free meals”. We would rather speak of communism, for we cannot forget what this “freedom” implies in terms of organisation, and in the short term, of political antagonism.

So, the construction of the Party, in its most visible aspect, consists for us in the sharing or communisation of what we have at our disposal. Communising a place means: setting its use free, and on the basis of this liberation experimenting with refined, intensified, and complexified relations. If private property is essentially the discretionary power of depriving anyone of the use of the possessed thing, communisation means depriving only the agents of empire from it.

From every side we oppose the blackmail of having to choose between the offensive and the constructive, negativity and positivity, life and survival, war and the everyday. We will not respond to it. We understand too well how this alternative divides, then splits and re-splits, all the existing collectives. For a force which deploys itself, it is impossible to say if the annihilation of a device that harms it is a matter of construction or offence, if seizing sufficient food or medical autonomy constitutes an act of war or subtraction. There are circumstances, like in a riot, in which the ability to heal our comrades considerably increases our ability to wreak havoc. Who can say that arming ourselves would not be part of the material constitution of a collectivity? When we agree on a common strategy, there is no choice between the offensive and the constructive; there is, in every situation, what obviously increases our power and what harms it, what is opportune and what is not. And when this is not obvious, there is discussion, and in the worst of cases, there is the gamble.

In a general way, we do not see how anything else but a force, a reality able to survive the total dislocation of capitalism, could



truly attack it, could pursue the offensive until the very moment of dislocation.

When the moment will come, it will be a matter of actually turning to our advantage the generalised social collapse, to transform a collapse like the one in Argentina or the Soviet Union into a revolutionary situation. Those who pretend to split material autonomy from the sabotage of the imperial machine show that they want neither.

It is not an objection against communism that the greatest experimentation of sharing in the recent period was the result of the Spanish anarchist movement between 1868 and 1939.

## PROPOSITION VII

Communism is possible at every moment. What we call "History" is to date nothing but a set of roundabout means invented by humans to avert it. The fact that this "History" has for a good century now come down to nothing but a varied accumulation of disasters shows how the communist question can no longer be suspended. It is this suspension that we need, in turn, to suspend.

# SCHOLIUM

«But what do you actually want? What are you proposing?» This kind of question may seem innocent. But unfortunately these are not questions. These are operations.

Referring every we that expresses itself to a foreign you means first warding off the threat that this we somehow calls me, that this we passes through me. Thus constituting the one who merely carries a proposition – that cannot itself be attributed to anyone – as the owner of this proposition. Now, in the methodical organisation of the prevailing separation, propositions are allowed to circulate only on condition that they can give proof of an owner, of an author. Without which they risk being common, and only that which is proposed by the spectacle is permitted anonymous diffusion.

And then there is this mystification: that caught in the course of a world that displeases us, there would be proposals to make, alternatives to find. That we could, in other words, lift ourselves out of the situation that we are in, to discuss it in a calm way, between reasonable people.

But no, there is nothing beyond the situation. There is no outside to the world civil war. We are irremediably there.

All we can do is elaborate a strategy. Share an analysis of the situation and elaborate a strategy within it. This is the only possible revolutionary and practical we, open and diffuse, of whoever acts along the same lines.

At the last count, in August 2003, we can say that we face the greatest offensive of capital since the beginning of the eighties. Anti-terrorism and the abolition of the last gains of the defunct labour movement set the parameters of a diffuse discipline. Never have the managers of society known so well from which obstacles they are emancipated and what means they hold. They know, for instance, that the planetary middle-class that lives henceforth in the metropole is too disarmed to offer the slightest resistance to its planned annihilation. Just like they know that the counter-revolution they conduct is now inscribed in millions of tons of concrete, in the architecture of so many “new towns.” In the longer term it seems that the plan of capital is indeed to bring out on a global scale a set of high-security zones, continuously linked together, where the process of capitalist valorisation would embrace all the expressions of life in a perpetual and unhindered way. This imperial deterritorialised comfort zone of citizens would form a kind of police continuum where a more or less constant level of control would prevail, politically as well as biometrically. The “rest of the world” could then be treated, in the incomplete process of its pacification, as a foil and, at the same time, as a gigantic outside to civilise. The chaotic experiments of zone-to-zone cohabitation between hostile enclaves as it has been taking place for decades in Israel would be the model of social management to come. We do not doubt that the real stake in all this, for capital, is to reconstitute from the ground up its own society. Whatever the form, and however high the price.

We have seen with Argentina that the economic collapse of a whole country was not, from its point of view, too high a price to pay.

In this context we are those, all those, who feel the tactical need of these three operations:

1. Preventing by any means the reconstruction of the Left.
2. Advancing, from “natural disaster” to “social movement”, the process of communisation, the construction of the Party.
3. Bringing the secession to the vital sectors of the imperial machine.

1. The Left is periodically routed. This amuses us but it is not enough. We want its rout to be final. With no remedy. May the spectre of a reconcilable opposition never again come to haunt the minds of those who know they won't fit into the capitalist process. The Left – everybody admits this today, but will we still remember the day after tomorrow? – is an integral part of the neutralisation mechanisms peculiar to liberal society. The more the social implosion proves real, the more the Left invokes “civil society.” The more the police exercises its arbitrary will with impunity, the more they claim to be pacifist. The more the state throws off the last judicial formalities, the more they become “citizens”. The greater the urgency to appropriate the means of our existence, the more the Left exhorts us to appropriate the conditions of our submission, to wait and demand the mediation, if not the protection, of our masters. It is the Left which enjoins us today, faced with governments which stand openly on the terrain of social war, to make ourselves heard by them, to write up our

grievances, to form demands, to study economics. From Léon Blum to Lula, the Left has been nothing but that: the party of the man, the citizen and civilisation. Today this program coincides with the complete counter-revolutionary program. Which consists in maintaining all the illusions that paralyse us. The calling of the Left is therefore to expound the dream of what only empire can afford. It represents the idealistic side of imperial modernisation, the necessary steam-valve to the unbearable pace of capitalism. It is even shamelessly written in the very publication of the French Department of Youth, Education and Research: "From now on, everyone knows that without the concrete help of citizens, the state will have neither the means nor the time to carry on the work that can prevent our society from exploding."

Defeating the Left, that is to say keeping continuously open the channel of social disaffection, is not only necessary but also possible today. We witness, while the imperial structures become stronger at an unprecedented rate, the transition from the old Labour left, gravedigger of the Labour movement and born from it, to a new global, cultural left, of which it can be said that Negriism is at the head. This new left has not yet fully established itself on the recently neutralised "anti-globalisation movement." The new lures they employ are not yet effective, whilst the old ones have long been useless. Our task is to ruin the global left wherever it comes forth, to sabotage methodically, that is to say in theory as well as in practice, any of its moments of constitution. Thus for instance our success in Genoa lay less in the spectacular confrontations with the police, or in the damage inflicted on the organs of state and capital, than in the fact that the spreading of the practice of confrontation peculiar to the "Black Bloc" to all the parts of the demonstration scuttled the expected triumph of the

Tute Bianche. And so, in the aftermath, our failure has been to have not known how to elaborate our position in such a way that this victory in the street becomes something else than the mere bogey systematically brandished ever since by all the so-called “pacifist” movements.

It is now the fallback of this global left on the social forums – due to the fact that it was defeated in the street – that we must attack.

2. From year to year the pressure increases to make everything function. As the social cybernetisation progresses, the normal situation becomes more urgent. And from then on, in an absolutely logical way, the situations of crisis and malfunction multiply. A power failure, a hurricane, or a social movement, do not differ from the point of view of empire. They are disturbances. They must be managed. For the moment, that is to say on account of our weakness, these situations of interruption appear as moments in which empire arises, takes its place in the materiality of worlds, experiments with new procedures. For it is precisely there that it ties itself more firmly to the populations it claims to rescue. Empire claims everywhere to be the agent of return to the normal situation. Our task, conversely, is to make habitable the situation of exception. We will genuinely succeed in “blocking corporate-society” only on condition that such a “blockage” is made up of desires other than that of a return to normality.

What happens in a strike or in a “natural disaster” is in a way quite similar. A suspension occurs in the organised stability of our dependencies. At that point the being of need, the communist being, that which essentially binds us and essentially separates us, is laid bare in each. The blanket of shame that normally covers it is

torn apart. The receptiveness for encounter, for experimentation of other relations to the world, to others, to oneself, as it appears in these moments, is enough to sweep away any doubt about the possibility of communism. About the need for communism too. What is then required is our ability to self-organise, our ability, by organising ourselves right away on the basis of our needs, to prolong, to propagate, to give effectivity to the situation of exception, which has always formed the basis of state terror only because it has remained a threat on the part of state. This is particularly striking in “social movements”. The very expression “social movement” seems to suggest that what really matters is what we are heading towards, and not what happens here. There has been in all the social movements up till now a commitment not to seize what is here, which explains why they follow each other without ever becoming a force, like a succession of breaking waves. Hence the particular texture, so volatile, of their sociality, where any commitment appears revocable. Hence also their invariable drama: a quick ascent thanks to an echo in the media, then, on the basis of this hasty aggregation, the slow but inevitable erosion; and finally, the driedup movement, the last group of diehards who get a card from this or that union, found this or that association, expecting in this way to find an organisational continuity to their commitment. But we do not seek such continuity: the fact of having premises where we might meet, and a photocopier to print tracts. The continuity we seek is the one which allows us, after having struggled for months, to not go back to work, to not start working again as before, to keep doing harm. And this can only be built during movements. It is a matter of immediate, material sharing, the construction of a real revolutionary war machine, the construction of the Party.



We must, as we were saying, organise ourselves on the basis of our needs – manage to answer progressively the collective question of eating, sleeping, thinking, loving, creating forms, coordinating our forces – and conceive all this as a moment of the war against empire.

It is only in this way, by inhabiting the disturbances of its very program, that we will be able to counter that “economic liberalism” which is only the strict consequence, the logical application, of the existential liberalism that is everywhere accepted and practised. To which each one is attached as if it were the most basic right, including those who would like to challenge “neo-liberalism.” This is the way the Party will be built, as a trail of habitable places left behind by each situation of exception that empire meets. We will not mistake, then, how the subjectivities and the revolutionary collectives become less fragile, as they give themselves a world.

3. We shall see then that empire is formed in the simultaneous constitution of two monopolies: on the one hand, the scientific monopoly of “objective” descriptions of the world, and of techniques of experimentation on it, on the other hand the religious monopoly of techniques of the self, of the methods by which subjectivities elaborate themselves – a monopoly to which psychoanalytic practice is directly related. On the one hand a relation to the world free of any relation to the self – to the self as a fragment of the world – on the other hand a relation to the self free of any relation to the world – to the world as it goes through me. It thus appears as if science and religion, in the very process

of being torn asunder, have created a space in which empire is perfectly free to move.

Of course, these monopolies are distributed in various ways according to the spaces of empire. In the so-called developed lands, where the religious discourse has lost this ability, the sciences constitute a discourse of truth which is attributed the power to formulate the very existence of the collectivity. This is therefore where we must, to begin with, bring secession.

Bringing secession into the sciences does not mean pouncing on them as if on a stronghold to conquer or raze to the ground, but making salient the fault lines than run through them, siding with those who emphasise these lines. For in the same way that cracks permanently warp the fake density of the social, every branch of the sciences forms a battlefield saturated with strategies. For a long time the scientific community has managed to show the image of a large united family, consensual for the most part, and so respectful of the rules of courtesy. This was even the major political operation attached to the existence of the sciences: concealing the internal splits, and exerting, from that smooth image, unrivalled terror effects. Terror towards the outside, as deprivation of truth, for all that which is not recognised as scientific. Terror towards the inside, as polite but fierce disqualification of potential heresies. "Dear colleague..."

Each science implements a series of hypotheses; these hypotheses are so many decisions regarding the construction of reality. This is today widely admitted. What is denied is the ethical meaning of each of these decisions, in what way they involve a certain life-form, a certain way of perceiving the world (for instance,

experiencing the time of existence as the unwinding of a “genetic program”, or joy as a matter of serotonin).

Considered in this way, scientific language games seem less made for establishing a communication between those who use them, than for excluding those who ignore them. The airtight material apparatus in which scientific activity is inscribed – laboratories, symposiums, etc. – carries in itself a divorce between experimentations and the worlds they configure. It is not enough to describe the way the “core” research is always connected in some way to military-commercial interests, and how in their turn these interests define the contents, the very orientations of research. To the extent that science participates in imperial pacification it is firstly by carrying out only those experiments, testing only those hypotheses, that are compatible with the maintenance of the prevailing order. Our capacity to ruin imperial order is conditioned upon opening spaces for antagonistic experiments. For these experiments to produce their related worlds we need such clearings, just as the plurality of these worlds is needed for the smothered antagonisms of scientific practice to express themselves.

In this process the practitioners of the old mechanistic and pasteurian medicine must join those who practice medicine of the “traditional” kind, setting aside all new age confusion. The attachment to research must cease to be confused with the judicial defence of the integrity of the laboratory. Non-productivist agricultural practices must develop beyond the category of the organic. Those who feel the insufferable contradictions of “public education”, between the championing of “citizenship” and the workshop of the diffuse self-entrepreneuriat, must be more and

more numerous. "Culture" must no longer be able to take pride in the collaboration of a single inventor of forms.

Alliances are everywhere possible.

In order to become effective, the perspective of breaking the capitalist circuits requires that the secessions multiply, and that they consolidate.

We will be told: you are caught in an alternative which will condemn you in one way or another: either you manage to constitute a threat to empire, in which case you will be quickly eliminated; or you will not manage to constitute such a threat, and you will have once again destroyed yourselves.

There remains only the wager on the existence of another term, a thin ridge, just enough for us to walk on. Just enough for all those who can hear to walk and live.

# NOTES

1. Association for the Tobin Tax for the Aid of Citizens. An extra-parliamentary coalition of leftists, once influential in France as the statist fringe of the antiglobalisation movement.
2. The 'White Overalls' : Negriist militant organisation which dominated the anti-globalisation movement in Italy.
3. The mouthpiece of ATTAC.
4. Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF), the union of French bosses.
5. Anarchist Federation.
6. Revolutionary Communist League, main French Trotskyist party.

# **PRELIMINARIES TO THE WAR ON PRISON**

*When we indefinitely repeat the same refrain of the antirepressive tune, everything stays as it is and anyone can sing along without getting noticed.*

Michel Foucault

# 1.

The war on prison does not return the way that it left. And we do not take it up in complete innocence, as if we didn't know why, in the seventies, it failed.



## 2.

The function of prison in the overall economy of servitude is to materialize the false distinction between guilty and innocent, between law-abiding citizens and criminals. This “service” cannot be social without being psychological as well. The imprisonment and torture of prisoners produces the feeling of a citizen’s innocence. In addition, as long as the criminal aspect *of all existence* in the Empire is not admitted, the need to punish and to see punished will persist, and no *argument* against prison will be valid.

### 3.

The distinction between guilty and innocent is false. Abolishing it only reinforces the lie. In our struggle against prisons, every time we cast prisoners as the good guys, as the *victims*, we renew the logic sanctioned by prisons.

## 4.

The phrase “prison is the holding cell of society” is true with a corollary: that there is no “society.” It is not “society” that produces prisons. On the contrary, it is prison that produces society. It is by asserting, by constructing an imaginary outside, that WE create the fiction of an inside, of an inclusion and a belonging. The fact that the *techniques* with which WE manage the daily activities of both imperialist cities and prisons are appreciably the same: that must remain the secret knowledge of administrators. “A prison is a little city. You sleep there, you eat there, you work, you study, you play sports, you go to church. Except that life there is always constrained. Out on the street, there are stores, movie theaters, etc. And so I asked myself, why not bring those things into prisons? And how to do so without their precariousness being abused?” So says one of the principal architects of new French prisons; it would not be prudent to say more.

## 5.

The silence that constantly surrounds the operation of prisons compels us to sometimes speak *in the name* of prisoners. With that special feeling of being “on the right side of the barricades.” For a long time WE have also spoken in the name of workers, of the proletariat, of the undocumented, etc. Until they started speaking for themselves and they said something entirely different than what WE expected. This is the mistake of *political ventriloquism*. All political ventriloquism places us comfortably in brackets: we carry on a discourse that does not implicate ourselves and that therefore carries no risk. It spares us from acknowledging that in the Empire, under a regime of power that does not permit radical exteriority, all existence is *abject* as long as it participates, even passively, in the permanent crime that is the survival of this society. If we need a just cause for revolt, no city dweller has any right to claim that cause as their own, for we all profit every day from the universal pillaging. And no militant Stakhanovism, no self-sacrifice can atone for this connivance. Our condition is not that of the working class during the first “industrial revolution,” which could still pit the morals of producers against the morals of consumers, against *bourgeois* morals. Our condition is that of the *plebs*. We live in the central regions of the Empire amidst an indigestible abundance of commodities. Every day we accommodate the intolerable – an armed police patrol on the streets, an old man sleeping on a subway steam vent, a friend who openly betrays us, but who we do not kill, etc. Several times each day we engage in purely commercial relations. And, besides a guilty conscience, if we prepare the means for an offensive, we achieve a form of primitive accumulation. If the question is who

we *are*, it is obvious that we are not “the poor,” “the dispossessed,” “the oppressed,” precisely because of the extent to which we are still able to fight. In truth, what unites us is not our revolt against the excess of misery inflicted by the world, but an enduring disgust with the forms of happiness it proposes. Our position is, then, that of the plebs – disgraceful, extravagant, schizophrenic – who cannot rebel against the Empire without rebelling against themselves, against the position they hold. *There are no more revolts that are not revolts against ourselves.* This is the peculiarity of our time and the stakes, henceforth, of any revolutionary process.

## 6.

“Penal justice is becoming a functional justice. A justice of security and protection. A justice system that, like so many other institutions, has to manage society, detect what is perilous in it, alert it of its own dangers. A justice that gives itself the task of watching over a population rather than respecting legal subjects” (Foucault). Prison is not designed for the dangerous classes, but for rebel bodies – the millimillenary of coercion in bourgeois education or the obsession with comfort of the global petite bourgeoisie unquestionably explains the rarity of rebel bodies in certain milieus, and the underrepresentation of these groups in prisons. Through prisons and other apparatuses, civilization administers its putrefaction to postpone the anticipated collapse as long as possible. The Empire affirms itself to those that do not *function*, those that perturb the normal state of affairs. Thus civilization hopes to survive itself by assuring the solitary confinement of the “barbarians.”

## 7.

We know prison, the *threat* of prison, as an overt constraint on the freedom of our actions. The war on prison waged from the outside must break this constraint by making prison familiar to us, by eliminating the powerful fear that it produces. That struggle will suppress our fear of struggle. It is not a moral necessity that compels us to fight against prison, but a *strategic* necessity: that of making ourselves, collectively, stronger. "The effectiveness of true action resides *within* itself."

## 8.

“We say: no more prison at all. And, when faced with such a massive critique, reasonable people, legislators, technocrats, governors ask, ‘Then what do you want?’, the answer is: ‘It is not for us to pick our poison; we no longer wish to play this game of penalties and penal sanctions, we no longer wish to play this game of justice.’” (Foucault)



## 9.

Revolutionary logic and the logic of supporting prisoners *as prisoners* are not the same. *Supporting* prisoners is the demand of an affective solidarity (human if not humanitarian) with all those who suffer, all those crushed by power – the impulse of the Généri Catholics. Revolutionary logic is strategic, sometimes inhuman, and often cruel. It calls for a *completely different kind of affect*.

## 10.

In prison, all struggle is radical – survival or destruction, dignity or insanity: these are at stake in the contention of the smallest details. All struggle is also reformist because it must beg for what it obtains, even by rioting, from a sovereign power that holds the lives of the inmates in its hands.

# 11.

During all the revolutions of the 19th century – 1830, 1848, 1870 – it was traditional for there to either be revolts within prisons and for the prisoners to stand in solidarity with the revolutionary movement outside; or for the revolutionaries to force open the doors of the prisons and liberate the inmates. In either case, the shortest path to dismantling prisons remains the creation of a revolutionary movement.

## 12.

There are no convicts among us. There are friends who have served time. The convict as convict who, even once released, remains an *ex-convict*, is a figure of fiction, of crime fiction. The prisoner as prisoner does not exist. What exists are forms-of-life that the penitentiary machine wants to reduce to bare life, to docile preserved meat. The myth of the cell is the dream of replacing bodies animated by implacable reasons, violent affects, and insane ideas with inert pieces of meat.

## 13.

Under the Empire, that is to say within the global civil war, friendship is political. Any alliance forms a front in the general confrontation, and all confrontations impose alliances.

Imprisoning someone is a political act. Liberating a friend, perhaps by bazooka, like the recent occurrence at Fresnes, is a political gesture. The members of Action Directe are not political prisoners because they were incarcerated for *fighting*, but because they are *still* fighting.

## 14.

We have friends among the prisoners, but that's not all. The struggle *against* prisons is not a struggle *for* prisoners. We want to abolish prisons because they limit the possibility of forming alliances, they temper our disputes. We want to abolish prisons so that *real wars* may be freely waged, rather than the present pacification that eternalizes the false schism between guilty and innocent. It is again a matter of dividing the division.

## 15.

A society that needs prisons, no less than a society that relies on the police, is without fail a society where all liberty has been extinguished. On the other hand, a society without prison is not automatically a free society. If we consider that the prison only imposed itself as the dominant form of punishment at the beginning of the 19th century, there is no lack of historical examples that illustrate this point.

## 16.

The brutality of the prison guards, the arbitrariness of the penitentiary administration, and the fact that prison is, more generally, a machine to grind and crush you, none of this provokes scandal. It is admitted that the function of prison is to bring uncontrollable bodies into line, to domesticate the “violent.” Compared to the wheel, the stake, or the guillotine, imprisonment was immediately conceived of as a civilized and civilizing punishment. “Imprisonment is the penalty *par excellence* in civilized societies,” wrote P. Rossi in his 1829 *Treaty on Criminal Law*. Standing at attention is the proper virtue of the citizen; and asking permission before any action is a fundamental of his education. It is because our struggle is primarily a struggle against civilization that it is also a struggle against prison.



# 17.

In the fight against civilization, prison is “the groping fingers, the hand that kills.” But you do not win a fight by aiming for your enemy’s fists.

## 18.

The line of reasoning that says our society could not keep running without its prisons and that, by attacking them, we are weakening the entire system, is logically correct but false in practice. Prison is not “the weakest link.” The recurring debate on the anachronism of prisons reminds us, through its ephemerality, that this anachronism is what guarantees the “modernity” of everything else.

## 19.

Prison is, as a threat, one of the ways civilization dissuades us from communing with the savage within, from abandoning ourselves to the intense forces that traverse us. Even from this, we can understand that the enemy is not entirely exterior to us, that we have a direct hold on civilization to the degree that *it possesses us*. Because, in the end, our disagreement with citizens is this: that we might prefer “barbarism” to civilization.

## 20.

In truth, during this period of extreme alienation that we live in, the anti-prison struggle is foremost a *pretext* for us. We do not wish to add a chapter to the punishment of militants, but to use the project of abolishing prisons as a *basis for encounters* so as to organize ourselves more broadly. Just as the stakes of any struggle in prison are, ultimately, the conquering of a space of auto-organization necessary for the formation of a collective power against the administration, we must constitute ourselves *into a force*, into a *tangible* force, into an *autonomous* tangible force within the global civil war. The anti-prison struggle is at its height each time we frustrate repression. It triumphs wherever we are able to assume impunity.

## 21.

Faced with the lie of civilization, we stand in the right. But “a world of lies cannot be overturned by the truth” (Kafka). All the police proliferation that surrounds us is here to prevent such a shift, to prevent our becoming, little by little, a reality. Each day, a new apparatus controls our quotidian existence. They want to beat us down, to smoke out any remainder of power or savagery we may still possess. By day we kowtow, we knuckle under the excessive force wrought by the avalanche of apparatuses; at night we congratulate ourselves for having survived. But all for nothing: each time that we submit, we die a little. Prison is the mega-apparatus in which you cannot prevent yourself from dying a little bit every minute, from dying by surviving. If, together, we occupy a prison, it cannot be to once more discuss prison, imprisonment, isolation; but, the balance of power overturned, to deploy freely the play of our forms-of-life. And to show that we can make an entirely different use of our bodies, and of the space.

# MISCELLANEA

# **THE GREAT GAME OF CIVIL WAR**

**TIQQUN**

## **RULE NO. 1**

until further notice, all your rights are hereby suspended. Naturally you should keep the illusion that you still have some for a little while. That way we can violate them one by one, case by case.

## **RULE NO. 2**

Be nice. Don't mention laws, the constitution, or any of the lucubrations of another age to us anymore. Some time ago, as you will have noticed, we passed certain laws that put us above the laws, and the rest of the so-called "constitution."

## **RULE NO. 3**

You're weak, isolated, stupid, abused. We are numerous, organized, strong, and enlightened. Some might say we're a mafia; that's a lie — we are THE mafia, the one that's won out over all the others. We alone are able to protect you from the chaos of the world. And that's why it pleases us so greatly to make you think you're weak, to make you believe you are "insecure." That's what makes our racket profitable.

## **RULE NO. 4**

For you, the game will consist in you escaping, or at least trying to escape. By escaping we mean: going beyond your dependent state. For now, it's true, you do depend on us in all aspects of your life. You eat what we produce, you breathe what we pollute, you're at our mercy for the slightest tooth decay and above all you



can't do anything against the sovereignty of our police forces, which we have given the full range of powers both in terms of discretion and action.

## **RULE NO. 5**

You'll never manage to escape alone. You'll therefore have to start by building the necessary solidarity. To make the game a little harder, we've liquidated all forms of autonomous sociality. We've only let one thing survive: work; that is, controlled sociality. This will be what you'll have to escape from, through theft, friendships, sabotage, and self-organization. Ah, by the way: all the ways of escaping have been made into crimes.

## **RULE NO. 6**

We'll always say it again and again: criminals are our enemies. But from that you should understand this: all our enemies are criminals. As potential escapees, each of you is also a potential criminal. That's why it's a good thing that we keep our lists of the numbers you call on your phones, and that your cell phones allow us to locate you at any time, and that your credit card lets us get to know your habits so easily.

## **RULE NO. 7**

In this little game of ours, anyone that escapes their isolation will be called the "criminals." As for those who have the gall to protest this status, we will call the "terrorists." The latter may be shot to death at any time.

## **RULE NO. 8**

We are quite aware that life among our society contains almost as much joy as a suburban train ride; that capitalism has up to now produced, in matters of wealth, nothing but universal desolation; that there are no arguments left to defend our worm-eaten "order" besides police flash-balls. But what do you expect, that's the way it goes! We've disarmed you mentally and physically, and we have the monopoly over what we prohibit to you; violence, collusion, and emergence. And after all, frankly speaking, would you do otherwise if you were us?

## **RULE NO. 9**

You will know prison.

## **RULE NO. 10**

There are no more rules. All assaults are permitted.

*signed,*

YOUR GOVERNMENT

**THE HUMAN  
STRIKE WITHIN  
THE FIELD OF  
LIBIDINAL  
ECONOMY**

**CLAIRE FONTAINE**

[371]

The possibility of keeping together autonomy and an affective life is a tale that hasn't been written yet.

–Lea Melandri, *Una visceralità indicibile*, 2007

In 1974 François Lyotard published the surprising book entitled *Libidinal Economy* where he attacked Marxist and Freudian simplifications and he opened a new perspective on the connection between desires and struggle. What starts to crumble down at that time under the offensive of the two essential weapon-books by Deleuze and Guattari *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* is the fetishization of consciousness as the organ that will lead the revolution. As the myth of the avant-garde begins to decline, a psycho-somatic reorganization arises and its consequences on the relationship between people are brutal and inevitable. Like in an inverted Menenius Agrippa's speech the head, with all its metaphorical connotations, lost its privilege and the low body could find a new voice full of desire and fear. A new materialism was coming to life inside people's bodies. At this point the failure of the responsible and pyramidal militant structures becomes blatant: thirst for power, need for leaders and the insufficiency of language to resolve conflicts inside the groups reveal the impossibility of living and fighting in such formations. In '73 the Gramsci Group wrote in the Proposition for a different way to make politics: "it's no longer possible to talk to each other from avant-garde to avant-garde with a sectary language of "experts" politicians...and then not being able to concretely talk about our experiences. The consciousness and the explanation of things must become clear through the experience of one's own condition, one's own problems and needs and not only through theories that describe mechanisms" (p.508, *L'orda d'oro*). The language that served the purposes of traditional politics

seemed to have lost all its use value in the mouths of these young people; the members of the militant groups felt like they were “spoken,” traversed by a speech that didn’t transform them and couldn’t translate their new uncertain situation. A protagonist of the events describes as it follows his position of leader: “the leader is somebody who is convinced that he has always been revolutionary and communist, and he doesn’t ask himself what the concrete transformation of himself and the others is...The leader is the one that when the assemblies don’t go the way they should either because a silence takes place either because some political positions are expressed which are different from the ones of his own group, he feels that he must intervene in order to fill the verbal space or to affirm his political line against the others.” In this simple and clinical diagnosis we see the groups as spaces where subjective transformation attempts to be funneled into revolutionary efficiency; as a result of this process the positions of the singularities that composed the groups became progressively more and more rigid and the revolutionary space, in order to remain such, imposed the most conservative patterns of behavior within itself.

The term “human strike” was forged to name a revolt against what is reactionary even – and above all – inside the revolt. It defines a type of strike that involves the whole life and not only its professional side, that acknowledges exploitation in all the domains and not only at work. Even the notion of work comes out modified if seen from the ethical prism of human strike: activities that seem to be innocent services and loving obligations to keep the family or the couple together reveal themselves as vulgar exploitation. The human strike is a movement that could potentially contaminate anyone and that attacks the foundations

of life in common; its subject isn't the proletarian or the factory worker but the whatever singularity that everyone is. This movement isn't there to reveal the exceptionality or the superiority of a group on another but to unmask the whateverness of everybody as the open secret that social classes hide.

One definition of human strike can be found in Tiquun 2: it's a strike "with no claims, that deterritorializes the agora and reveals the non- political as the place of the implicit redistribution of responsibilities and unremunerated work."

Italian feminisms offer a paradigm of this kind of action because they have claimed the abolition of the borders that made politics the territory of men.

If the sexual borders of politics weren't clearly marked in the seventies in Europe, they still persisted in an obscure region of the life in common, like premonitory nightmares that never stop coming true. In 1938 Virginia Woolf wrote in *Three Guineas*, "Inevitably we look upon societies as con- spiracies that sink the private brother, whom many of us have reason to respect, and inflate in his stead a monstrous male, loud of voice, hard of fist, childishly intent upon scoring the floor of the earth with chalk marks, within whose mystic boundaries human beings are penned, rigidly, sepa- rately, artificially; where, daubed red and gold, decorated like a savage with feathers he goes through mystic rites and enjoys the dubious pleasures of power and dominion while we, 'his' women, are locked in the private house without share in the many societies of which his society is composed." Against the chalk marks, already obsolete in 1938 but that still keep ap- pearing under our steps even in the twenty-first century,

Lia Cigarini and Luisa Muraro specified in 1992 in a text called *Politics and political practice*: “We don’t want to separate politics from culture, love and work and we can’t find any criterion for doing so. A politics of this kind, a separated one, we wouldn’t like it and we wouldn’t know what to do with it.”

At the core of this necessity of a politics that transforms life and that can be transformed by life, there wasn’t a claim against injustice but the desire of finding the right voice for one’s own body, in order to fight the deep feeling of being spoken by somebody else, that can be called the political ventriloquism.

A quotation by Serena, published in the brochure *Sottosopra* n°3 in 1976, describes a modest miracle that took place at the women convention in Pinarella, “Something strange happened to me after the first day and a half: underneath the heads that were talking, listening and laughing, there were bodies; if I was speaking (and how serenely, and with no will of self-affirmation I was speaking in front of 200 women!) in my speak, in a way or another there was my body that was finding a strange way to become words.” What an example of miraculous transubstantiation of the human strike.

In her extensive research around the strike in the nineteenth century, Michelle Perrot talks about the birth of a sort of “sentimental strike” in the year 1890. May 4th of that year, in the newspaper from Lille entitled *Le Cri du Travailleur* (the worker’s scream) we can read that “the strikers didn’t give any reason for their interruption of the work... just that they want to do the same thing than the others.” In this type of movement, young people and women start to play a very important role, Perrot says. In a

small village called Vienne militant women encouraged their female comrades, "Let's not bear this miserable condition any longer. Let's upraise, let's claim our rights, let's fight for a more honourable place. Let's dare to say to our mas- ters: we are just like you, made out of flesh and bones, we should live happy and free through our work." In another small village, Besseges, in the same year a young woman of 32, wife of a miner and mother of five, Amandine Vernet, reveals her vocation of natural born leader, "she never made her- self noticeable before May 14th when she started to read a written speech in a meeting of 5,000 people in the Robiac woods. The day after she had started to speak, and the following days, made more self-confident by her success, she pronounced violent and moving speeches. She had the talent of making part of her audience cry."\*

In this type of strike, what Perrot calls the emotional strike, the movement is no longer limited to a specific target: what is at stake is a transforma- tion of the subjectivity. This transformation – and that is the interesting point – is at the same time the cause and the consequence of the strike.

The subjective, the social and the political changes are tightly entangled so that necessarily this type of uprising concerns subjects whose social iden- tity is poorly codified, the people that Rancière calls the "placeless" or the "part-less." They are movements where people unite under the slogan "we need to change ourselves" (Foucault), which means that the change of the conditions isn't the ultimate aim but a means to change one's subjectivity and one's relationships.



According to some interpretations, there have been some components of this kind in the movement of '68. Young people and women rose up then and claimed new rights that weren't only political in an acquired sense, but that changed the very meaning of the word "political."

The inclusion of sexuality as an officially political territory is actually symptomatic of this transformation. Sexuality isn't in fact the right term to be used, because it already designates an artificially separated field of reality. We should rather talk about the rehabilitation of the concept of desire, and analyze how new desires enter the political sphere in these specific moments, during the emotional strikes that we call "human strikes."

The feminisms that do not pursue the integration in a world conceived and shaped by male protagonists are part of these strikes. We can read on this crucial point in a collective book from 1987 entitled *Non credere di avere dei diritti* (Don't believe you have any right), "The difference of being a woman hasn't found its free existence by establishing itself on the given contradictions, present within the social body, but on searching the contradiction that each singular woman was experiencing in herself and that didn't have any social form before receiving it from the feminine politics. We have invented ourselves, so to speak, the social contradictions that made our freedom necessary." Where invented doesn't mean made up but found and translated the facts that reveal their dormant political dimension.

""They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work. They call it frigid-ity. We call it absenteeism. Every miscarriage is a work accident. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are both working

conditions... but homosexuality is workers' control of production, not the end of work. More smiles? More money. Nothing will be so powerful in destroying the healing virtues of a smile. Neuroses, suicides, de- sexualization: occupational diseases of the housewife."

–Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework*, 1974

"1) The house where we make the most part of our work (the domestic work), is atomized in thousands of places, but it's present everywhere, in town, in the countryside, on the mountains, etc.

2) We are controlled and we depend on thousands of little bosses and controllers: they are our husbands, fathers, brothers etc., but we only have one master: the State.

3) Our comrades of work and struggle, that are our neighbors, aren't physically in touch with us during the work as it happens in the factory: but we can meet in places that we know, where we all go when we can steal some free time during the day. And each one of us isn't separated from the other by qualifications and professional categories. We all make the same work.

(...) If we went on a strike we would not leave unfinished products or raw materials untransformed etc.: by interrupting our work we wouldn't paralyze the production but the daily reproduction of the working class. This would hit the heart of the Capitalist system, because it would become an actual strike even for those that normally go on strike without us; but since the moment we stop to guarantee the survival of those which we are affectively tightened to, we will also have a difficulty in continuing the resistance."

–Coordination from Emilia Romagna for the salary to the domestic work, Bologna, 1976

“The worker has the possibility of joining a union, going on strike, the mothers are isolated, locked in their houses, tightened to their children by charitable bonds. Our wildcat strikes manifest themselves as a physical and mental breakdown.”

–Adrienne Rich, *Born of a Woman*, 1980

The situation of not being able to draw the line between life and work that beforehand only concerned housewives is now becoming generalized. A strike isn't possible to envisage for most of us, but the reasons we keep living the way we do and can't rebel against anyone but ourselves are to be searched in our libidinal metabolism and in the libidinal economy we participate to.

Each struggle has become a struggle against a part of ourselves because we are always partly complicit with the things that oppress us. The biopower, under which we live, is the power that owns our bodies but allows us the right to speak.

According to what Giorgio Agamben writes in *The Coming Community*, the colonization of physiology by industry started in the '20s and it reached its peak when photography allowed a massive circulation of pornography. The anonymous bodies portrayed were absolutely whatever and because of this very reason generically desirable. Images of real human beings had become for the first time in history objects of desire on a massive scale, and therefore objects.

Stuart Ewen explains very well how advertising starts to target heavily women and young people in the fifties, right after the war; women and children were the absolute majority of the bodies portrayed in a promiscuous proximity with goods of consumption. The intimacy between things and human beings creates all sort of symbolic disorders since the very beginning. Since then the consumption shapes the actual life form of human beings – not only what is called life style. In the case of women the confusion and enforced cohabitation with objects within the sphere of desire – male and female desire – is clear for everybody. Advertisements talk to the affects, and tell tales of a human life reconciled with things, where the inexpressiveness and the hostility of object is constantly obliterated by the joy and the beauty that they are supposed to bring to their owners. Work is never really present and life has no gravity in advertising: objects have no weight, the link between the cause and the effect of gestures is governed by pure fantasy.

The dreams engendered by capitalism are the most disquieting of its products, their specific visual language is also the source of the misunderstanding between the inhabitants of the poorly developed countries and the Westerners. These dreams are conceived as devices of subjectivization, scenes from the life of the toxic community of human beings and things. Where the commodity is absent, bodies are tragically different.

If brought to its last consequences this implicit philosophy leads to the complete redundancy of art – and in this sense the message that we all know so well and that we all receive every day in the streets of the cities or from the television screen must be taken seriously. The artwork is no longer the humanized object – this

change started to take place in the nineteenth century with the industrialization of life in general. Duchamp himself explains the birth of the readymade in 1955 in an interview with James Johnson Sweeney by declaring that he came to conceive the readymade as a consequence of the dehumanization of the artwork. The task of making the objects expressive, responsive to human feelings, that for thousands of years has been taken in charge by artists, is now performed by capitalism essentially through television. Because what is at stake in the capitalistic vision of the world is a continuous production of a libidinal economy in which behaviors, expressions and gestures contribute to the creation of this new human body.

“I think that this generation (...) of the people that were 15 or 20 years old once they have made this [revolutionary] choice between 1971 and 1972, which in the following years becomes a generalized process in the factories and the schools, in the parishes, in the neighbourhoods, they have gone through an anthropological transformation, I can't find a better definition, an irreversible cultural modification of themselves that you can't come back from and that's why these subjects later, after '79, when everything is over, become crazy, commit suicide, become drug addicts because of the impossibility and the intolerability of being included and tamed by the system.”\*

That's how Nanni Balestrini describes a form of tragic human strike that took place during the eighties, when the movement of '77 fell under the weight of a disproportioned repression.

The bleed of revolutionary lives from the country makes Italy a nation of disappeared. Without needing a genocide nor a real

dictatorship, the strategy of tension and a modest amount of State terrorism achieved this result within a few years.

One should consider that what doesn't happen isn't a disgrace or the legitimate source of resentment against the anonymous and submitted population, but as a consequence of what has happened before.

The space of politics where Berlusconi rose without encountering any resistance was a territory where any opposition had been deported since the repression started to function directly on the life forms, since people couldn't desire in the same way anymore because the libidinal economy they were part of went bankrupt.

One question that still isn't considered with the adequate attention in the militant context is the one of the struggle-force. The struggle-force, like the love-force, must be protected and regenerated. It's a resource that doesn't renovate itself automatically and needs collective conditions for its creation.

Human strike can be read as an extreme attempt to reappropriate the means of production of the struggle-force, the love-force, the life-force. These means are ends in themselves; they already bring with them a new potentiality that makes the subjects stronger. The political space where this operation is possible isn't of course the same one that was colonized by the televised biopower. It's the one that we can foresee in Lia's words from 1976:

"The return of the repressed threatens all my projects of work, research, politics. Does it threaten them or is it the truly political thing in myself, to which I should give relief and room? (...) The silence failed this part of myself that desired to make politics, but it affirmed something new. There has been a change, I have started to speak out, but during these days I have felt that the affirmative part of myself was occupying all the space again. I convinced myself of the fact that the mute woman is the most fertile objection to our politics. The non-political digs tunnels that we mustn't fill with earth."

# **WE ARE ALL WHATEVER- SINGULARITIES**

**CLAIRE FONTAINE**



A love that does not die has its reasons rooted more often in the past than in the present. Certainly this is because love has less a sense of reality than it has a sense of the possible and it is closely related with the future and with the unhappened. That we love communism – and that we love it still – means for us the future exists and is not the private property of today's or tomorrow's dominants. This means that the love that allows the passing of time, that makes projects and memories possible, is not possessive, jealous, indivisible, but collective; it means that this love doesn't fear neither hate nor rage, it does not hide unarmed at home, but runs the streets and opens all closed doors.

One believes today that the affects are a private and personal matter, whereas they are the site that global government has chosen to colonize through merchandise, or terror. We all have desires and fears that we do not accept or wish to acknowledge, since they come from obligations made upon us and not from our own liking. And for example, all those other, terrible bodies of strangers who surround us, what could they share with us if not just streets, shops, and public transportation? Yet at the end of the day a possibility lies dormant at our tired fingertips, in the restless glances out of the window at cars stalled in traffic under the metropolitan sky. It is the possibility to discover that we are all whatever singularities, equally lovable and terrifying, prisoners in the meshwork of power, waiting for an insurrection that allows us to change ourselves.

That we love communism, it means we believe our lives,  
impoverished by commerce and information, are ready to rise in a  
wave that retakes the means of production of the present.

Claire Fontaine

September 2006

# **TIQQUN**

# **APOCRYPHA**

**AN INTERVIEW**

## **PRESENTATION FROM THE EDITOR:**

Given that union bureaucrats have nothing worse to fear than the effective emancipation of workers, the worst enemy of intellectuals is truth, which puts them out of work. Nowadays, their function is to accompany with their blabber the creation of events – for example “09/11” or more recently “the crisis” – by means of which the Empire justifies the accelerated planetary deployment of its mechanisms. Of course, there are other ways of using one’s intelligence; the productions of which are instantly recognizable to our times’ sore disregard towards them. No one – and especially not its supporters – seems to have thought of giving credit to Tiquun for having understood the physiognomy of our times, its lines of power and its weaknesses with an almost prophetic lucidity. Being right is a good start, but one must act consequently; and that is why Tiquun – publishing so seldom that it was more than once taken for dead – has meant a lot more than just a magazine to the last ten years : a part of a resistance plan that has been growing in depth and intensity. That lives have affiliated themselves with what has here been deemed true is a strong enough blow dealt to the ambient cynicism to justify being called a “terrorist”.

Conscious fraction of the Parti Imaginaire, Tiquun believes that truth doesn’t need to be signed with a name, practices anonymity like others practice terrorism, is comfortable with all forms of sabotage to come, does not criticize “society” to improve it,

spreads doubt about the very existence of the latter, attempts at shedding light on the stratagems of an interior enemy, faceless, engaged in a permanent conspiracy against this fiction and anticipates a mass desertion of the social corpse.

# INTERVIEW

E.H. (Eric Hazan): The last issue of Tiquun, issue number II, came out in Autumn 2001, which means the articles it contains have preceded 09/11 and in a way, predicted and analyzed it. It's true that two issues isn't a lot for a magazine. On the other hand, the "German Franco-Annals" published by Karl Marx in 1843 in Paris only ran one issue, and the texts in that issue have been read all over the world and are still being widely distributed, translated and commented in all possible languages. In the end, the frequency of publication doesn't seem to be such a determining factor. But Tiquun is not just a publication. It's something pretty well defined in what is written here at the bottom, in the space usually reserved for the editor. It says : "a zone of offensive opacity". Which seems to me like a very good definition of what Tiquun is.

A "zone"—that is to say a space that is very well defined in its political and intellectual component and at the same time, blurry and imprecise when it comes to geography.

In that sense, Tiquun, what happens around Tiquun and what surrounds Tiquun is not a group like one could say the surrealists were a group, or later the international situationist, who were people that would meet regularly, publish manifestos, sign them,

that once in a while had purges, in any case one could tell those who were “part of it” from those who weren’t. Tiquun is something that is much less formal; it’s a space for thinking and, how can I say, communal speech.

“Opacity” because nothing in Tiquun is signed, all articles published in the two issues were more or less written collectively. But it’s impossible to say – even for friends – exactly who did what, who contributed. This will have nothing to do with protecting oneself from eventual police lawsuits; it is an ethical position, a refusal of the notion of authorship. The third word is “offensive”, and I don’t think we have to go into it, it is self-explanatory. I don’t know if I made enough clarifications, if there is someone from central intelligence in the room, I hope they understood.

I will let Giorgio speak, a friend who—I must admit—has been tied to Tiquun longer than I have, much intimately.

G.A. : Between 1975 and 1984, at a moment when political thought was going through a stagnant phase, the works of Michel Foucault came and got rid of the false concepts that were preventing it from moving forward.

In a class from January 5th 1983, Foucault offers a summary of his strategy in two parts:

Firstly, substitute a historical analysis of the techniques and procedures of governmentality for the history of dominations.

Secondly, replace the theory of the subject and the history of subjectivity with the historical analysis of subjectivation and practices of the self.

So, departing from a clear rejection of the empty universal formulas – law, sovereignty, general will, etc – that were monopolizing the theoretical attention given to politics going into a detailed analysis of governmental mechanisms and practices. Power not as a separate hypostasis but regarded as a set of relations. In the place of a transcendental subject, a punctual analysis of the processes of subjectivation.

I think that if we want to understand what the coming of Tiqqun meant to political thought 15 years after Foucault, this is the context from which we have to start.



If on the one hand, as we have just seen, Foucault fully suppressed the idea of an anthropological perspective; the space where methods of governance and subjectivation processes met potentially remained empty.

Or rather, there was nothing in that zone, the zone where techniques of governance and processes of subjectivation meet, there was nothing but figures which an extraordinary text from 1983, "The Life of Infamous Men"—actually he calls them "infamous lives", "shadows without faces" found in police archives and lettres de cachet, onto which power suddenly sheds its light, its obscure light. Something that is new with Tiquun is that it serves both a radicalization and a blurring together of two strategies: the analysis of techniques of governance and the processes of subjectivation; who with Foucault never seemed to find a point of junction.

Thus, as demonstrated by Foucault, in a microphysics of power, power does and always has circulated in mechanisms of all kinds; legal, material, etc. For Tiquun, power is nothing more than that. It doesn't stand as a sovereign hypostatic entity in relation to civil society and life; it coincides internally with life and society.

Power cannot be understood as having a center anymore; it is a mere accumulation of mechanisms into which subjects, or in Foucault's words "processes of subjectivation", are entangled.

In this context, Tiqqun tries to cause the two plans, the two analyses kept separate in the work of Foucault – mechanisms and techniques of governance, subject – to fully coincide with one another. There is a text in one of the essays published in the book called “métaphysique critique”, and it says it very clearly : “a theory of the subject is only possible as a theory of mechanisms.”

Thus, the search for new political subjects that have the potential to paralyze, one that still paralyzes the tradition of the left, becomes unthinkable. Theory of the subject and theory of mechanisms are one.

This is the opaque zone of indifference between theory of the subject and theory of devices in which the texts gathered for Tiqqun I and II – already with “Bloom Theory” – are situated, and the two major texts republished in the book, “Introduction to the civil war” and “A critical metaphysics could emerge as a science of devices”.

It seems clear to me that from one’s position within this zone of indifference, none of the notions associated with classical politics – state, civil society, class, citizen, representation, etc – make sense anymore. On the other hand it’s only from this specific perspective that the notions developed by Tiqqun – Bloom,

esthetic politics, the imaginary party, civil war (in the particular sense given to these words in the texts) – acquire a meaning of their own. And I think that one has to start from that situation in a zone of indifference to make sense of the writing, thinking and action practices at work within Tiqqun.

Regarding the writing – as Eric already mentioned – the aim is not to approach writing in a way that is anonymous, even less pseudonymous or teronymous. There, we see that efforts by the police to attribute a specific text to an author will be in vain. There could not be an author for this text because it stands in a zone where the very concept author is void. The concept of author, as Foucault demonstrated, has always had a double function in our culture. On the one hand it is a figure of the subject; on the other it is a mechanism for attributing penal responsibility. The fact remains, however, that Julien Coupat and his friends are not and could never be the authors of any of the articles published in Tiqqun – or anywhere else for that matter – because their position, from the outset, is one in which subjects and mechanisms coincide to such an extent that the notion of author does not apply anymore. Also, I believe that it is only when engaged from the perspective opened up by Tiqqun – for example regarding the permanent civil war waged by the state – that otherwise indecipherable macroscopic facts acquire a meaning in the said “democracies” in which we live. A fact I would like to point out, which we all pretend to be ignoring; and one needs only to go to a library and conduct a short research; there are readily available documents that support the evidence of it; that the current laws in France and other so-called democratic European countries are three or four times as

repressive as those in Italy under fascism. This is a fact we cannot discuss. From all points of view, length of detentions... It's something we never talk about. Another fact: we always blamed totalitarian societies and states for instating special tribunals. For example, the judges working on the Tarnac Nine case. We never use the words "special tribunal", but that's what it is. We don't know by whom and how the judges were named and therefore, it constitutes a special tribunal. And you probably are aware of the fact that by definition, a special tribunal is illegitimate, because it violates the principle of equality of all individuals before the law and the principle of interdiction of

So you see that regarding law and principles of law in our societies, it's devoid of any legitimacy. And we have said enough. We tolerate special tribunals but we blame fascist Italy and nazi Germany for having instated them. And I think it's in this sense that what Tiqqun calls the "civil war" has to be understood. And the same goes for understanding the extension of biometric screening measures conceived for recidivist criminals to the whole of the population. Did you know that all French citizens will soon have an ID card embedded with their biometrical data? These are things that were invented with criminals in mind. Each citizen is treated like a criminal or a potential terrorist; and it should be no surprise that those who refuse to comply with this be treated like terrorists.

Here I would like to conclude by recalling a story told to me by a great friend of mine, José Bergamin, who fought in the Spanish civil war in 36, and they had sent him, a poet and an intellectual, they had sent him with another poet, Rafael Alberti. The republican government had sent him to the United States to seek support from the government there, but they were stopped at the border by the police who had already began endless interrogations, accusing them of being communists. Ten hours of sustained interrogation, after which of course they still wouldn't let them in, my friend told them :

“Listen, I am not, and never was a communist; but what you call a communist, that I surely am”. And I think we have to say : “We are not, and will never be terrorists; what you seem to designate by the word terrorist, that we are.”

E.H. : (...) The book will be on sale on April 23, I understand your impatience. (Laughs)

G.A. : I would like to say that it's a great initiative that Eric published these articles, but personally I wish they would all get published, because it's difficult to chose one or another... they should all be published.

E.H. : “Bloom Theory” is still available at La Fabrique and “Theory of the Young Woman” at Mille et Une Nuits. Also, there will be a tome coming out in the fall with three or four articles from Tiquun I and II; we are still debating as to which ones will be included but the book will come out. And, there will undoubtedly be a third issue of Tiquun because Tiquun seems to keep functioning in spite of everything.

Since nobody in the room seems to have a question, I will go ahead with mine. There is, particularly in Tiquun II, in “Critical Metaphysics”, there is a Heideggerian – I was going to say stench but that’s a really negative word – connotation which I absolutely dislike, and it’s one of the main topics in my discussions with Julien when he is not in prison. Since you have known Heidegger personally, would it be possible for you to talk about how he and Tiquun...

G.A. : I can’t see what you are referring to here. What struck me when I first came in contact with the four or five people that were doing Tiquun back then... (from the back of the room, a man shouts : page ... it’s the Heideggerian reference... the concept of shame...) (Agamben resumes) Precisely, what I found amazing with these people was the range of theoretical and philosophical references, there was a bit of everything. In the end, political thought in Europe has always confined itself to the same authors; it’s always Machiavelli, Hobbes, Marx, Lenin, there’s rarely ever anything else. There, arguably for the first time, there was a range

of references that went from Heidegger to Aristotle; from kabala and the Jewish tradition to theological texts here and there... It struck me. For the first time we were leaving a certain way of reflecting upon politics that had become terribly redundant. So there is Heidegger too but that is a good thing.

(...) A question evoking Deleuze on Foucault. Not very clear.

G.A. : I'm not sure I understood the question properly. The point I tried to make is that with Foucault, we are already talking about a polarization of between a theory of mechanisms for governments of power and the subjectivation processes affecting subjects; and that indicates a correlation, which is to say that subjectivations always happen in relationship to mechanisms of power.

With Tiqqun, there is an extreme radicalization of this; there isn't a relationship between mechanisms of power and the subjects anymore. What it refers to as a situation of civil war in which we are living is caused by the fact that power mechanisms and theories of the subject have almost completely merged, and they find themselves flattened out, and that is the premise onto which they build their analysis, so in fact, there isn't a theory of the subject anymore. There is no need to look for a new subject because this flattening of power mechanisms and subjects is something completely different. That's the reason why the opaque

figure of the “Bloom” is at the same time everyone and anyone, it’s the ordinary man. It comes from Joyce, it’s the ordinary man, the whatever singularity. And so there is a re-thinking of the political subject, coinciding instead of colliding with the theory of mechanisms. There is no struggle between the mechanisms of power, the situation is such that we much re-think the whole.

E.H. : Could we say that this idea of civil war springs from what you just said?

G.A. : What Tiqqun refers to as “civil war” is the assessment of a situation, not a struggle to engage with. The realization that we are living in a planetary civil war is the first step to re-thinking political action.

F.C. (Fulvia Carnevale): I have a formal question. I’m here. (Hazan pretends not to see him) I heard a lot of nonsense tonight but I wouldn’t want to criticize because I understand that there must be reasons to that. I that Julien Coupat is one of the authors of Tiqqun and then that Tiqqun didn’t have authors. That too is a little bit clumsy. I would like to say that Tiqqun is not an author, first of all. Tiqqun was a space for experimentation. It was an attempt at bridging the gap between theory and a number of practices and certain ways of “being together”. It was something that existed for a certain time and that then stopped because the people working at it weren’t happy with the relation between theory and practice



and that certain people had decided that Tiqqun 3 would be a movie. So there might a third issue of Tiqqun – we look forward to it – but it has nothing to do with the previous issues, which it would be interesting to re-publish integrally – I agree with Giorgio – would it only be out of a philological impulse because as we said, we don't know who decides which texts are being chosen. You see, since there's not author, it gets complicated when comes the time to know who makes the decisions regarding publication and circulation. In any case, Tiqqun is not copyrighted, as far as I know. I just wanted to address this because it seemed important that "Tiqqun is not an author".

E.H. : I thought that was exactly what I said before.

F.C. : On the book it still says that Tiqqun is the author.

E.H. : Like it was the case for "Bloom Theory".

Unknown voice : Tiqqun is a meeting point. (same male voice as before)

E.H. : It seems to me that what you might be talking nonsense because it reproduces exactly what I said.

F.C. : Great then it looks like we all agree...

(...)

(the voice of a man) : (...) the resistance is bound to be defeated because it is always co-opted... (...) (Hazan interrupts him, you can ask the question to us?)

(voice resumes) : The question : page 118 : armed struggle, to be armed, the bear arms while at the same time loathing them. Dealing blows to the eternal enemy army without bearing arms, except for the eternal question : how to get rid of an army of occupation, how to get rid of an economy of occupation, how to get rid of a genocide of occupation, how to get rid of cemetery guards, how to get rid of gravediggers, how to get rid of those who invest in death if not by a shared resistance. Get the soldiers to mutiny and chop their officers' heads off.

Make it so that the rifle points its butt towards the sky, that soldiers chop their officers' heads off, you know, it's the theory of the crosse en l'air<sup>7</sup>.

E.H. : Yes, la crosse en l'air, that's really nice.

E.H. : Yes, it happened with the 17th line regiment in 1904 when it was deployed against the wine growers in the Languedoc. Monthéus wrote a beautiful song about it, maybe you know it.

I think one that looking back at Tiquun, one of the things that strike me the most is that back in 2001 when we were talking about civil war, people would look at you with a mix of pity and sympathy in their eyes. What's wrong with him? What is he talking about? And today it seems so obvious that people don't even bother discussing it anymore, which brings me to say that Tiquun has been somewhat of a prophetic voice, in that sense.

(voice of a man, unclear)

G.A. : I think that the Bloom theory is the assessment of a situation, like in the other texts, it's not that we want to push something so far as to provoke a dialectical reversal, because it's true that it is being done a lot and that one can always resort to it. But still I feel that the tone defining those texts is one of "assessment of a situation". What is going to happen next is not clear. It's not implicit whether or not, beginning with what Tiquun calls the Bloom, this "non-subject" referred to as the Bloom, there

will be a revolution. That's always what makes the the texts a little difficult, because on the one hand they could be read as a merciless, completely negative analysis and on the other, since it's the assessment of a political situation, one could discover a new set of potentialities. Any situation has its set of potentialities.

And it doesn't mean that when the situation is very negative, there is such a thing as a negative theology if one still tries to look for a potentiality.

(voice of a man) : In Tiqqun, there is an attempt to define the abolition of class struggle put into... in a metaphysical way...  
(interrupted by Hazan)

E.H. : I don't think this would be a problematic in the texts, not at all. I am not sure I understood them correctly, those texts. It begins with the end of big ideas, class, class struggle, and that's where things start off for Tiqqun.

G.A. : One thing that struck me with Tiqqun was this completely radical posture that wasn't concerned with the finding a subject. There was autonomy, negrism, the figure of the factory worker diffused throughout society... In Tiqqun, there is no such thing anymore, it's not good or bad, the gesture is not about looking for

a subject that would take on the role of savior or revolutionary subject; it's beginning with this flattening, symptomatic of the society in which we live, and trying to search for unsuspected potentialities in it.

(woman's voice) : question about the concept of spectacle... And G.D.

G.A. : We should ask the interested parties... Debord is of course very present. Sometime one gets the impression that he has a strong presence, even just on a stylistic level. But at the same time there's always been a critique of situationism. That's why I chose to allude to the works of Foucault rather than to the situation created by Debord and the situationists. Because even if Debord is mentioned a few times, I don't really see a continuity, whereas Foucault is mentioned without anyone invoking an influence, and it seems to be a better starting point to understand what's happening. You can ask questions... to... (F.)

(man's voice) : Is there a need to revise the Bloom theory today? So if Tiquun III ever comes out, I know you are not the only author so the question is not just for you, I know you have your own conception of this Bloom theory which you already evoked in "The Coming Community" with the whatever singularity, this idea of... (inaudible). At the same time, Julien Coupat has to admit that the fact that he's in prison does not make him such a

whatever singularity. So I was wondering if given the fast deterioration of the situation since 2001, it wouldn't make sense to bring some adjustments to this definition of the conditions of contemporary existence that Bloom represented. To conclude, coming back on this idea from Deleuze, who talked about the need to "shift", and for whom if I remember correctly, one shouldn't talk about "I, me" but about an event...

G.A. : By no means do I have the authority to speak in the name of Tiquun. But I can say that, and Fulvia remembers, we were discussing the Bloom theory and whether or not we could try to improve it and make it more precise since there was something there that resembled a theory of the subject. But the articles I have quoted from Tiquun II are very clear on the matter. "A theory of the subject can only exist as a theory of mechanisms of power of governance." So in the end, it is saying "no". It seems to me that there is a refusal to elaborate something like a theory of the subject. I don't know if it was meant as a criticism to what I was saying. But the sentence caught my attention, and that's why I wanted to start by mentioning it, because it gets the idea that there would be a new theory of the subject to found out of the way. So this means that the Bloom theory was something else than a theory of the subject.

It remains valid, but as I said, one must understand as something else than a theory of the subject. The task to be done at the junction of theory of the subject and theory of mechanisms is not

an easy one. It seems like there's no space for a subject to fit in there. The article about "Critical Metaphysics" goes a bit further. It refers to a "crisis of presence"<sup>9</sup>, an acknowledgement of the collapse of the subject. What is at work here, contrarily to what Foucault was describing as a process of subjectivation, is rather one of "desubjectivation". How can one imagine a politics that is not founded on a subject? It's not easy because political theories were always built on the premise that there was a subject bearing some sort of meaning, with certain needs and certain desires connected to them. And here we have something new – whether it is completely new, that I can't say, but it seems very important to me to attempt to re-think political action without the anthropological reference to a subject. It implies an anthropological critique that was already present in the work of Foucault but that re-emerges here in a much more radical form.

E.H. : Do you think that what you just said could be partly responsible for a relative occultation that happened within Tiqqun? It has something to do with the date too, 2001, but it also probably has to do with what you just mentioned, this complete refusal of anthropology. Isn't that the reason why Tiqqun didn't see, didn't perceive the strength that the anticolonial struggle represents in a country like France. Is the relative occultation not partly explained by the date, 2001, when things weren't so clear as they are today and maybe also by this radical rejection of the subject. Isn't everything somehow linked and isn't the occultation somehow partly explained by this?

G.A. : The occultation you are talking about is a paradox directly linked to the position chosen by Tiqqun.

If we are addressing the Bloom, the “non-subject”, it’s a paradox, because what does it mean to be addressing a non-subject? Of course there won’t be an answer. The occultation happens because the gesture of founding a politics without a subject to refer to is something new.

(man’s voice) : Regarding what you say about a radicalization of the Foucauldian position, what surprises me is that if the main big concepts disappear not only from the labor movement but from the political thinking of this last century, it is quite surprising that amongst the new ones that emerge, the one that being insisted upon the most is that of the civil war. It’s a notion that was already present in positions from the past, namely military and revolutionary ones. So taking your idea as a starting point, I begin to wonder and that is the problem with this kind of writing, in which there are things I find extraordinary and at the same time, moments when it indulges in polysemy, even sometimes in conceptual puns which actually rely on ancient imagery a little bit much for my taste. Is the concept of civil war really the best suited to talk about an ongoing war where all that remains are states of exception, which brings us to your own work to say that yes, the democracy in which we live is nothing more than a generalized state of exception. But still I must say that I am less than glad to see such an old notion as that of the civil war being employed.



G.A. : I think it's one of the rare instances with Tiqqun when a notion whose novelty, as you say, is linked to a whole tradition of thought. Why? Because the notion of civil war – and I think this is also being said in Tiqqun somewhere – is at the very basis of our political tradition.

Hobbes means : “Men are engaged in a permanent civil war”, “the war of everyone against everyone”, and it's against this civil war that we will think our own politics .

For once, Tiqqun's gesture references tradition, and will say here in fact, civil war is at the basis of the politics in which we live so we have to take that into account and not hide the fact that it's at the core of our way of thinking them. That's Hobbes, but at the same time, we always read him as being “good”. Now civil war is discarded, it helped lay the foundations for the system but it's not there anymore. But if we read Hobbes carefully, we see that he always had the idea of civil war in mind, that it was always there, it is not true that it's been repressed. Tiqqun's gesture is not to invent a notion of thin air, but to take something that is already there, to look at something. What has been repressed and hidden at the time of its founding emerges in our politics again. In the situation of a planetary empire in which we live the current events, the occulted foundation re-emerges. It's not a new concept but it works at showing something in the translation of western

politics that has always been repressed: the fact that the civil war is at the foundation of western politics.

E.H. : Also, I'd like to add that I'm not sure that the notion of civil war used by Tiquun refers to the same thing as the civil war in France Marx mentions in his works. It's something less historical and a lot more deep-reaching, isn't it? It's not conjectural, it's fundamental. Whereas the civil war we usually think about is an outburst.

G.A. : No, it's a constitutional fact.

(a man's voice) : Isn't the notion of civil war echoing the one Roberto Esposito describes in his essay "Comunitas"<sup>10</sup> ? (...) Isn't Tiquun a extension of Esposito's philosophy when it tries to define the nature of what we can found a politics on without an anthropological subject? For me, it's almost unthinkable. And while we're at it, why even chose this idea of civil war, if it's Hobbes, ok, but in the sense of Esposito's definiton rather than that of the commonly accepted doxa.

G.A. : First of all, I don't see any correlation between Tiquun and Esposito... Also, here, I don't think there is a theoretical pretention of having invented a new notion. For once, it's about

showing how a repressed foundational element of our politics emerges, and this is not what will constitute the community. It is not that civil war will be at the basis of a community. It's an acknowledgement. Something appears. We are in the middle of this civil war that the state was supposed to purge and repress.

(a man's voice) : (...) If there isn't a subject to speak of and we are talking about Bloom, and if we can't talk to Bloom anymore precisely because it is not a subject, who or what are we talking to?

And I think that this problem echoes the one Hazan was mentioning earlier, the recuperation of certain formulations from Heidegger, like the term WE for example. In fact, we will not be discussing the State or Capital, it's something that takes place at a biopolitical level and that although it seem to resist classification, still has consequences. And all of a sudden, the question, as dumb as it may sound, would be "who is attacking us?" "who is doing something against us?" Isn't Tiqqun in fact trying to reveal a new dimension in politics and in the end struggling with the impossibility of naming this new power? I get the impression that with Bloom and this difficulty of naming the power in its new decay, or its new evanescence, we encounter the problem of who makes what, who can resist against something if they can't even name what it is.

G.A. : It seems to me that the difficulty you are evoking comes from the fact that you keep employing the notions you pretend to think are not valid anymore; state, individual, subject, state, etc. But this is already present in Foucault, it was the main idea, the fact that there isn't one power, an evil subject that will repress others; there's only power relationships diffused in each one of us. And if we radically espouse this idea, things get complicated because there isn't a clearly defined enemy to be faced and there aren't any subjects that can resist in a clearly defined way and what not, but still, at least we are addressing the real state of affairs for once. So I don't see a problem, that being said, the difficulty appears when we once again try to rename subjects. But putting that aside completely, we are dealing with ontology and not anthropology. And that is the situation in which we are now, we are not searching anymore, we don't absolutely want to name a particular subject or a particular power. That's why the positions are in relation to the power mechanisms Foucault was talking about and which Tiqqun talks about today. And there might a debatable thesis in the texts about the civil war. There isn't a call to a civil society that could be turned against the state. Quite the contrary, the state so to say is nothing but the civil society taken as the whole of the mechanism.

I don't want to say it's simple. However it forces us to think the possibility of a true political action without referring to the figures of evil subjects on the one hand and clear subjects on the other. It's really about politics as ontology rather than anthropology.

(same man's voice) : I'm not sure if we can stand behind this brand of ontology that, in the end, insists on the degree of precision and atomization of power until it emerges in each individual. The question is not so much to know whether or not the strategy is good as much as to know if it can bring results we can use in a pragmatic way.

G.A. : To give a clear example. A philosopher for whom I have a lot of respect, very interesting, Alan Badiou, made a book about Sarkozy, as you may know, and here we are still wondering what that name means, a subject... Tiqqun's approach is completely different. And I'm not saying that to criticize Badiou. We don't have to name, to research what the definition of that name is, it's something else.

E.H. : It's the thesis put forward by Badiou in his book, because he asks : "What thing does the word Sarkozy designate?", which means that behind the gigantic entity, there is a mechanism, and it seems to me that it's not so much a book about Sarkozy as it is a book about the mechanisms underlying Sarkozy.

G.A. : That brought him to Vichy, all this, a whole tradition...

(a woman's voice) : I am not the only who thinks all of this is very abstract (applause and laughter). And you are asking "what does Sarkozy designate", ok, I guess there is a whole system behind it, but the name is his own, it's his name. I am not a philosopher, but I'll tell you what I think. And the Bloom, the Bloom! (laughs)  
From what I understood, it's the entangled mass of our fellow citizens, of people stupefied by television, the non-language, maybe that's what you call "mechanisms", then I agree, they are so scatterbrained that it's hard to shake things up, but I don't see what good your Tiquun philosophy could ever bring. But maybe I just don't understand.

(general laughter)

E.H. : Tiquun is extremely useful because it helps to avoid thinking dumb thoughts.

(a man's voice) : Maybe you could try to apply the science of dismantling mechanisms right now! Maybe Bloom is in fact just a sort of attitude that makes us follow, listen, follow, listen and that just now it's been broken. Thanks to the person who did that! Because talking about the philosophy of the civil war... Talking about the civil war, sure. Now think about the civil war philosophically, the mechanisms and how to recreate them, I think we are putting the civil war in the wrong place, the civil war is within us.

G.A. : What you just said is very abstract. That's what abstraction is. What you just said is abstraction. It's very abstract because what you just said was an opinion and you don't think it's an opinion.

(same man's voice) : I am not saying it wasn't an opinion, but there is such a big gap between theory and practice that...

E.H. : Tiqqun is not an insurrectional manual, if you want to grease your machine gun in the corner, there's nothing to stop you. But one should take Tiqqun for what it isn't. Tiqqun is not an insurrectional manual, it is not an insurrectional breviary, it's a way of trying to understand what is going on to act intelligently rather than the other way around.

(a woman's voice) : could we read an excerpt from it?

E.H. : You can buy the book on Tuesday. We can't give an answer to something that isn't even a question.

(a man's voice) : Joseph Goebbels says : "nowadays in Germany, the only time a German is free is when he's dreaming". So obviously we can draw a parallel. So my question for you Giorgio is: where would you find the joy not to succumb to our sad passion?

G.A. : That is the central question in Ethics. You made an allusion to Spinoza, well, it's each and everyone's duty, it's your duty not to succumb to a sad passion.

(same man's voice) : But I was really addressing the question to you. (laughs)

G.A. : I think I manage to not succumb to them and also not to under-estimate them. And I think that Tikkun is definitely not a place of sad passion.

(a woman's voice) : I have no idea what you are talking about.

(a young man's voice) : There is something pretty simple your are not really talking about. How does one act intelligently? How does one act within the situation we know by publishing books



like that? To what extent is publishing an act? The question could be for both of you. How is talking about this book a way of acting?

E.H. : These texts are not manuals for action. Nowhere in the book will you find instructions as to what to do. Nowhere. Before doing anything at all, I think one has to understand the situation, understand who we are and whom we are facing. It's a book that helps making sense of a situation whose evidence is misleading.

(?)

G.A.: I always find the easy division between theory and praxis to be a fallacy. It's silly. Some theories are very practical and some actions are completely theoretical. I don't agree with the idea that there is a theory and that one just takes it and wonders what to do. I don't recognize that division and you are not going to ask this question. Of course if you are stuck in the antithesis between theory and praxis, you are going to end up paralyzed, what is there to be done? False question.

(a woman's voice) : Could we have some connections between the non-subject and the bare life?

G.A. : Bare life does not spawn from power; it is the extreme figure of power's pressure on human beings and so of course that has something to do with a theory that tries to re-think desubjection. I don't think that there are any references to that in Tiqqun.

(voice of a young woman) : You gave a superficial answer to the man's question about action moments ago, saying that he wanted to posit an opposition between theory and praxis. I am not familiar with either Tiqqun or your thinking, but from the theoretical propositions I have heard from you today about ways to think the political by avoiding the category of the subject as much as possible, it's something that we could debate but that I find objectively very problematic. And so I think it is possible to ask oneself what notion of political action, without having to end up opposing theory and traditional praxis, but what thinking of the political action are possible using the categories you propose.

G.A.: I did not propose any category. I tried to present, from my point of view, the reasoning behind Tiqqun, in which there is no opposition between theory and praxis. I always find it out of place to go and ask someone what to do, what is there to be done? On the other hand, the model of action is always present in Tiqqun's thought. To think a political action that has no connection to a subject is something absolutely problematic, I give you that, but at the same time it's something that's very palpable, all time, and it's in all the texts published in Tiqqun. Those are not theoretical texts

that would then call for praxis. Everything is holistic thought. With Tiqqun, everything is thought together.

(voice of the same young woman) : that I understand. (...) But could you say something about the notion of action posited by the young man and to which you haven't responded.

G.A.: If someone asks me what action, it shows they missed the point because they still want me to say : go out in the streets and do this? It has nothing to do with that, it's completely...

(voice of a man) : How would you explain the misunderstanding by which you, having gathered so many people in one place, are constantly being asked this question...

G.A. : It's a misunderstanding that happens very often.

(voice of the same man) : so what does it mean?

G.A. : It means that people still make a distinction between theory and praxis.

(voice of a man) : What's this interest in making an assessment of the actual situation in a book? Maybe that would be the question.

E.H.: It seems to me that a good strategist begins with an assessment. Clausewitz begins with the following piece of advice: make an assessment, a ground assessment and an assessment of forces. The assessment is at the very basis of action. If you go straight into action without assessing anything, nothing good can come out of it. I really think that the very idea of books that explain what is happening but don't tell you what to do is a fallacy.

(the voice of a woman) : Earlier you were talking about the mechanisms of power, and think that those never function as much as when they are unconscious or hidden; and by unveiling them, we can already deprive them of a lot of their efficiency. So I do think that the false contradictions between unveiling and action, all of this goes hand in hand.

(a man violently hits the table where Agamben and Hazan are sitting)

(voice of a woman) : Mister Hazan, you were talking about an assessment, you were saying there was a time for assessing. I am wondering if there is a difference between what you are saying and what Giorgio Agamben is saying. You, Hazan, seem to situate action in another point in time, things arrange themselves in time. Now, I get the impression he is saying something different than what we are all saying, than we don't really understand him. He keeps coming back even though we understood already – theory and praxis are not separate -, but nevertheless the question about action keeps coming back. I don't think the question the question should be "what should we do?", it is not a command and we don't need help but it's still the place of action in time. There's something I don't quite grasp, you, Hazan, you seem to be saying that first comes an assessment and only then we can act, you said that in a few different ways.

E.H. : Then I didn't properly express myself. I don't believe in an assessment-action time sequence. During the civil war, action and assessment are completely entangled. I don't think there would be a peaceful moment of contemplation after which we would go out in the streets with machine guns. That's not what I was trying to say. If I said that then it was surely a mistake.

(the same woman's voice) : Then I probably misunderstood.

(voice of a very young man) : Indeed, your suicide is confusing. I am in the shadow, to your left. I'm not familiar with the Tiqqun experiment, and I don't know if I'll read the books you are proposing, it seems a little bit too obscure for me. And for now, the notion of non-author sounds problematic. I get the impression that people ask you about Tiqqun like they would ask a priest about the Bible. What I'm actually wondering, is that if we lose this notion of a subject, because in the end the action has entangled itself in our practices, during which we discover our sensibilities by constructing them at the same time, I was still thinking, to "act" as a group, and to develop sensibilities as a group, you have to address what you're saying to someone in particular. And for example in the case of your experiment with the non-author, it's hard to tell whom you are talking to and that makes it hard to act together, be it in the framework of your theory whose name I forget or that of your writing experiment with Tiqqun.

G.A.: (very angry) What a bizarre idea you have to be interested in someone... You say you don't know the books and that you're not interested in them, you don't have the faintest idea of what we're discussing? What are you interested in? In who I am? You're interested in my body, what do you want from me?

(he gets up and leaves)

Voices: he did not just say that.

## NOTE:

A kind NYC blogger did a quick-dirty translation of the Agamben/Hazan discussion on Tiqqun. It was later taken down. I can't speak to the quality of the translation, some things are obviously wrong (for instance the translator remarks that FC is male when in fact she is female...). I also do not know why it was taken down.

A few quick notes – the re-publication of the Tiqqun texts by La Fabrique weren't without controversy among those who formerly made up Tiqqun, we see some of these issues arise in the panel. Additionally, I'm not sure why or who it was in the audience who kept on pushing Agamben on perceived issues of 'praxis' (so much so that he got up and left). The second half of the video (the exchanges between people) seems to be missing now, too. I don't know if it was taken down in order to make the debate no longer public (which is reasonable if the issues could be settled between friends) or other reasons.



# **TO A FRIEND**

**PREFACE TO A COLLECTION  
OF BLANQUI'S WORKS,  
SIGNED "SOME AGENTS OF  
THE IMAGINARY PARTY"**

*"To judge from the current disposition of people's minds, communism isn't exactly knocking on the door. But nothing is as deceptive as the situation, because nothing is so changeable."* (Blanqui)

We are still afflicted by many superstitions. We have our collective hallucinations that are only doubted by the crazy, and our images of ourselves that are only distinguishable from those of yesteryear by being more secular. We meet our equals and we sincerely believe we see *persons* and *people*. We love someone, and we speak of "the Other." A century separates us from a certain life and we postulate it as being faraway. Dissimilar customs or a few variations in vocabulary are sufficient to convince us of an uncrossable distance. But what we *understand* can only be a part of ourselves; what we understand cannot go much further [than that]. Enlighten yourself: Blanqui<sup>1</sup> is not a historical person. He does not return to us as a phantom from the 19th century, though a century can traverse the ages. Blanqui is from yesterday, tomorrow, today. Blanqui did indeed exist, the facts attest to it, but the facts also attest to the fact he existed, above all, *as a conceptual persona*, like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Bataille's Gilles de Rais or Artaud's Heliogabale.<sup>2</sup> From whence comes Blanqui's proper eternity. Gustave Lefrancais notes in his *Souvenirs*: "For the

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) was a French insurrectionist.

<sup>2</sup> Unlike Zarathustra and Heliogabale, Gilles de Rais was a real person. But it is true that, for Georges Bataille, author of *The Trial of Gilles de Rais*, (original 1965, translated by Richard Robinson, 1991), de Rais was more (evil) than just a "mere" man.

400,000 voters of la Seine, 'Blanqui' is a revolutionary expression."<sup>3</sup> The name 'Blanqui' relates, not to a person, but to an *existential possibility*, to a manner of being-there, to a power of affirmation. If Blanqui was named "the Imprisoned One," this was in part due to his three decades in jail, but also due to the stubbornness with which this power remained in the *historical figure* of Blanqui. Prison, glory and calumny are the means that opportunely command the necessity of isolating [human] existences that are too ardent.

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The universal desire to be someone, to be *recognized*, founds the comic atrocity of our era and gives it an aspect of free improvisation in the midst of crazy people, an open-air theatre of narcissistic pathologies of all kinds. We divert our glance from this bad show. We imagine a being who could not close his or her eyes to the horror of the present (this canvas of boredom, injustice, stupidity, separation and cynicism, the disastrous coherence of which is guaranteed by the police); a being who a kind of infirmity, certainly, but also perhaps some spirit of defiance had rendered unable to remain at peace with such a state of things; a being who had also found, while still young and in the midst of rioting, fires and conspiracy, the exact contraries of what he saw around him: intelligence, courage, adventure, friendship and truth. Such a being -- and there is no doubt that there were a number of people who, at that very moment, lived and sought each other out -- would be Blanqui, as much as Blanqui was Blanqui. Each moment of his life, each beat of his heart, would be

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<sup>3</sup> Gustave Lefrancais (1826-1901) was a French anarchist.

propelled by these unique questions: How to do it? How to constitute a revolutionary force? How to win? Historical figures are there to provide screens for the powers that carry them. Nothing is simpler, clearer, more *communal* than Blanqui. And this is precisely why it will be necessary to cloud this menacing clarity with so many calumnies, rumors and dirty water. There is no "Mystery of Blanqui," despite all of his nocturnal intrigues, secret enterprises and [other] confabs. There is only bottomless evidence of a revolutionary existence. But what devil drove him? How could he still attempt, how could he still want to apply himself, always and forever, to theorizing [*penser*] the situation after so many betrayals, losses and disappointments? And what does it all mean? Don't worry, spectators: he will cave in one day and you will be able to whisper about him. Or he will triumph, and you will succumb. *By waiting* [for Blanqui], he will be your obsession; it will be *your* possibility that you will exhaust by incessantly conjuring him up.

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"The *me* has always left me cold."<sup>4</sup>

This is what Blanqui opposed to the malevolent hysteria, to the concert of jealousy that his very nature sufficed to unleash. And this redoubled the din. He who does not deign to respond to his accusers, who have in their turn circulated rumors, he must expect to see them become exaggerated, then dry up into thin streams of bile. Warning to the activist milieus:

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<sup>4</sup> Uncited quotations are phrases from Blanqui.

*If you encounter these personal hatreds, jealousies and rivalries of ambition, I will join with you to weaken them; they are one of the scourges of our cause; but remark that they are not a special plague of our party; all of our adversaries suffer from them as we do. They only explode with greater noise in our ranks because of the more expansive character and more open morals of the democratic world. Furthermore, individual struggles focus on human infirmity; it is necessary to resign oneself to such weaknesses and take men as they are. To lose one's temper about a fault of nature is puerile, if not stupid. Firm spirits know how to navigate through the obstacles that can't be removed but which can be avoided or overcome by anyone. Thus, we know to yield to the necessity and, deploring the evil, never slow down our march. To repeat: the truly political man doesn't keep obstacles in mind and instead goes straight ahead, without otherwise worrying about the pebbles on the road ahead.*

This is in the letter to Maillard.<sup>5</sup> Read it.

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Dionys Mascolo<sup>6</sup> said something about Saint-Just that is also worthy of Blanqui: "Saint-Just's 'inhumanity' lay in the fact that he didn't have several distinct lives, like other men, but a single one." The custom among human beings is to let life go by. The hand on the shoulder that says, "Go, have no cares, it will pass," is the best-known carrier of this grippe. Thus, 'inhuman' is the one who *devotes herself* to the highest intensity she has encountered like a truth. The one who does not oppose herself to the shock, to the

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<sup>5</sup> Letter dated 6 June 1852.

<sup>6</sup> See Dionys Mascolo's preface to collection of Saint-Just's writings published by Gallimard in 1968.

motion of experience, the hesitations of bad faith, skepticism and comfort. She becomes *a force* in her turn. A little discipline, and this force -- the force that attaches her to *this* intensity -- will successfully organize the maelstrom of attractions that compose all of us and imprint upon them a unique direction. What spectators stupidly call "will" is instead an unreserved abandon. For Blanqui, the intensity was insurrection. It was insurrection that, from the first days of July [1830], polarized his existence. "Liberty, equality, fraternity" is a decoration in bad taste for the porticoes of schools; for some it is also the most succinct expression of the experience of being in a riot. "Liberty, equality, fraternity" in street combat, facing death. It is still too soon to say how many Blanquis were born to the world in Genoa [Italy] on 20-21 July 2001. So many have already died from being unable to find, in the desert of the real, the road that leads there. "Weapons and organization -- these are the decisive elements of progress, the serious means by which to have done with poverty! He who has iron, has bread. We grovel before the bayonets; we sweep away the unarmed crowds. France bristles with workers in arms: it is the advent of socialism."

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We lead ourselves astray by reviving the specter of "the superman."<sup>7</sup>

Blanqui's enemies amply take up this question. "Somber temperament, haughty, unsociable, hypochondriac, sarcastic, great ambition, cold, inexorable, pitilessly breaking men to pave

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<sup>7</sup> Surhomme in French and uber Mensch in German.

his road. Heart of marble, head of iron." "The head and heart of the proletarian party in France" (a journalist). "The most cynical of the demoniacs conjured up by the fear of modern society" (a reactionary). These are maneuvers suited to assure the isolation of a being outside the prisons. The superman is a toy, as man is a chimera. It is sufficient to distinguish between the mediocre existence that floats and navigates by what is possible, and the settled existence that is attached to a truth and works and makes headway from it. It isn't curious that the word "destiny" [*destin*] is derived from the [Latin] verb *destinare*, which means "to attach."<sup>8</sup> He who becomes devoted [*s'attache*] must become less and less a "person" and more and more a presence. Less and less "human," but more and more communal, *simpler*. With good cause, the subject of such an attachment is treated as "irreducible," because it is no longer reducible to itself. For our part, we are please to name *the reducible* the crowd of those who, taking themselves for people, betray themselves at every moment.

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On the eve of the proclamation of the [Paris] Commune, [Adolphe] Thiers took Blanqui away. He kept Blanqui in secret and refused to exchange him for sixty-four hostages, including the Archbishop of Paris. Flotte<sup>9</sup> recounts this remark by Thiers: "To bring Blanqui to the insurrection is to send him a force equal to an armed corps." Blanqui is feared, and even in his own party, not as a leader, but as *power*. He knows how to show his abilities in

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<sup>8</sup> To fasten, make firm, establish.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Flotte.

[both] action and thought, and to practice [*tenir*] them together. One need search no further for the origin of the implacable hatred and the unfailing loyalty that Blanqui inspired. "The tribunes compare [*s'addresser*] the heroic and barbaric beastliness of the multitudes to a wild bearing, the lion's face, Taurus' neck. As for Blanqui, the cold mathematician of revolt and reprisals, he seems to hold between his thin fingers the tally [*le devis*] of the sorrows and rights of the people" (Valles, *L'Insurge*).<sup>10</sup> Blanqui addressed himself to justice and determination; he addressed himself to his equals. Unlike a leader, he neither flattered nor snubbed anyone, and he preferred to keep people at a distance than to take the risk of [mutual] seduction. By his very existence, he contradicted all the bourgeoisie's propaganda, which -- before turning insurgent Parisian proletarians into piles of cadavers as tall as barricades -- began by painting them as a shapeless mass, as a brainless Plebian class of thieves, drunks, prison-escapees, headless devils, creatures that were unintelligible, monstrous and foreign to all humanity. And so: *there is* a logic of revolt. *There is* a science of insurrection. *There is* an intelligence in the riot, an idea of upheaval. It is necessary to have all the class-hatred of de Tocqueville to fail to recognize it.

*There then appeared in front of the tribunal a man who I only saw that one day, but whose memory has always filled me with disgust and horror. He had haggard and sunken cheeks, white lips, a sickly, wicked and unclean air, a dirty pallor, the bearing of a moldy body, apparently no underclothes, an old black frock coat gathered about thin and*

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<sup>10</sup> Jules Valles, *L'Insurge*, published post-humously in 1886.



*emaciated limbs. He seems to have lived in a cesspool and crawled out; one told me that this was Blanqui. (Souvenirs).*

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"Sink the Romantics!"

These were Blanqui's first words, while he was still sweating, covered with gunpowder, at the end of the three days in July 1830. There is indeed a *romantic* feeling for life that extends down to us and even more profoundly infests our era than the previous century. Musset<sup>11</sup> codified it once and for all in 1836, in the first few pages of *La Confession*:

*A feeling of inexpressible malaise thus begins to ferment in all the young hearts. Condemned to rest by the sovereign of the world, delivered up to the pedants of all species, to idleness and boredom, the young people see recede from them the foaming waves against which they had prepared their arms (. . .) At the same time that the life of the beyond was so pale and petty, the inner life of society took on a somber and silent aspect; the most severe hypocrisy reigned in morals (. . .) This was like a denial of all things in heaven and on earth, which one could disenchantedly name despair, as if lethargic humanity had been thought dead by those who felt its pulse. In the same way that the soldier of yesteryear -- whom one had asked, "What do you believe in?" -- answered "In me," the youth of France would today say "In nothing."*

All that has been valuable in the last two centuries -- in all domains -- has been made *against* the romantic feeling for life, that

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<sup>11</sup> Alfred de Musset, *The Confession of a Child of the Century* (1836).

is to say, *by keeping it in mind*. Lautreamont's *Poesies*, Chklovski's *Lettres de non-amour*, Deleuze and Parnel's *Dialogues*, and Gang Of Four's album *Entertainment*<sup>12</sup> mark out a front that includes Durruti's cold passion, Lenin's best intuitions, Italian feminism, Huey P. Newton's speeches, the urban guerrilla and the wind that blows through la villa Savoye.<sup>13</sup> All this reveals what we would, in opposition, call *the Blanquist feeling for life*. [His texts] *L'Eternite par les astres* and *Instructions pour une prise d'armes*<sup>14</sup> are the purest expression of it in this volume. Starting with what is here, and not with what is missing, with what (as they say) will *default* on the real. Never wait; operate with those who are there. Learn oneself, learn [other] beings and situations, not as entities, but as intersections [*parcours*] of lines and planes, traversed by misfortunes [*fatalites*]. No afterlife, reveries, recriminations or explications. "One only consoles oneself too much." To renounce the idea of chaos, the simple mental transcription of renunciation - - "The shadow of chaos never existed, it will never exist, anywhere." Once what is there is accounted for, get organized. Do not recoil from any logical consequence. Those who speak of revolution without concerning themselves with the questions of arms and supplies already have cadavers in their hands.<sup>15</sup> Leave

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<sup>12</sup> Released in 1979, this album is strongly influenced by the Situationist International.

<sup>13</sup> A "machine for living" (a house) designed by Le Corbusier in Poissy, France, between 1928 and 1931.

<sup>14</sup> The Instructions for an armed uprising was first published in 1866, while Eternity through the stars was published in 1872.

<sup>15</sup> A detournement of a famous phrase by Raoul Vaneigem: "People who talk about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life, without understanding what is subversive about love and positive in the

the questions of origin and finality to the metaphysicians; the here-and-now is our only starting point, and what we can do *practically* is our only serious goal. If the state of things is untenable, it is not because of this or that, but because I am powerless within it. Never oppose the necessities of thought and action. Remain firm in moments of ebb, when one must start again, alone, from the beginning: one is never alone with the truth. Such a way of being can find no excuse in the eyes of those for whom life is only a scholarly collection of justifications. Faced with this Blanquist way of being, resentment hurls invectives; it denounces "the taking of power" and "megalomania"; it erects its security corridors of bad faith, stupidity and contentment; it

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referral of constraint, have corpses in their mouths." A great deal could be said about this detournement: 1) it removes love from the subversive equation; 2) it re-territorializes a remark from Vaneigem, whom Guy Debord once criticized for his "Blanquism" (see letter to Mustapha Khayati dated 13 November 1965); and 3) it reminds us of Debord's complete absence from this text on Blanqui, in particular, the following highly relevant remarks from Debord's Comments on the Society of the Spectacle:

The notion of acceptable political crime only became recognized in Europe once the bourgeoisie had successfully attacked previously established social structures. The nature of political crime could not be separated from the diverse intentions of social critique. This was true for Blanqui, Varlin, Durruti. Nowadays there is a pretense of wishing to preserve a purely political crime, like some inexpensive luxury, a crime which doubtless no one will ever have the occasion to commit, since no one is interested in the subject any more; except for the professional politicians themselves, whose crimes are rarely pursued, nor for that matter no longer called political. All crimes and offenses are effectively social. But of all social crimes, none must be seen as worse than the impertinent pretension to still want to change something in this society, which thinks that it has only been only too kind and patient, but which no longer wants to be blamed.

announces the banning of the monster that seems to be in the process of extricating itself from the human herd.

But when a sincere man, leaving aside the fantastic mirage of the programs and the mists of the Kingdom of Utopia, leaves the [romantic] novel to enter reality; when he speaks seriously and practically -- "Disarm the bourgeoisie, arm the people: these are the first necessities, the only signs of the health of the revolution" - - oh! then indifference vanishes and a long howl of fury resounds from one end of France to the other. Sacrilege! Patricide! Hydrophobia! There is rioting; the furies are unleashed upon that man; he is condemned to the infernal gods for having modestly spelled out the first words of common sense.

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The partisans of waiting have always used the adjective "Blanquist" as an unanswerable insult. The purists among the anarchists use it as a synonym for "Jacobin," while the Stalinists used it as the equivalent of "anarchist." The cultivated imbeciles of the Encyclopedia of Nuisances,<sup>16</sup> who for twenty years have had the lucid courage to relentlessly bet on counter-revolution, have [also] spoken of the Unabomber's "imaginary Blanquism" so as to better dissociate it from his gestures, and thereby introduce their

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<sup>16</sup> The Encyclopedia of Nuisances was founded as a group and a journal in 1984 by Jaime Semprun, Christian Sebastiani and others, in response to the murder of Gerard Lebovici, the editor of Editions Champ Libre. It began a publishing house in 1993.

grossly falsified translation of his *Manifesto*.<sup>17</sup> Among Marxists, "Blanquist" is a synonym for "putschist" that denounces an avant-garde adventurism and a haste to get organized without due care for theory, while the masses are not always ready for it. All this surface confusion is of no interest. "Let's go! With patience, always! With resignation, never!" *That* is the Blanquist way. The alternative is not between waiting and activism, between participating in "social movements" and forming an avant-garde army; it is between being resigned or organized. A force can grow in an underground [*sous-jacente*] manner, according to its own rhythm, and can seize the time at the opportune moment. If the success of the October coup d'Etat had value for the Bolsheviks [in the form of] the admiration of a crowd of followers and opportunists of all nationalities, the unfortunate attempts of Blanqui -- surrounded with an evil aura -- at least had the merit of distancing him from this race of wood lice. In its text *On the armed struggle in Western Europe*, the Red Army Faction cites a passage from the famous article on partisan warfare written by Lenin: "In an era of civil war, the ideal of the party is a *militarily engaged party* (. . .) In the name of the principles of Marxism, we categorically demand that one does not dodge the analysis of the conditions of the civil war via clichés and worn-out phrases about anarchism, Blanquism and terrorism, and [we demand] that one does not come to discuss with us the scarecrow of certain absurd procedures applied by such and such organization in a war fought by partisans."

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<sup>17</sup> The EdN published a translation of the Unabomber's allegedly anarchist manifesto, "Industrial Society and Its Future," in 1999.

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He who becomes absorbed in a destiny finds himself on equal footing with those who share it. The experience of friendship is the sweetest effect of such discipline. "I regard having made alliances and friendships with several hearts capable of great affection and great sacrifices like a conquest; it is an ability that everyone has." Just as love falls under the heading of the romantic cesspool, friendship belongs to Blanquist joy. It is that rare form of affection *in which the horizon of the world does not disappear*. Hannah Arendt says that "friendship is not intimately personal, but poses political requirements and remains oriented towards the world." Here beings belong to each other in a free state, that is to say, each belongs to the others as much as each always-already belongs to a destiny. If Cicero's *Lelius* foresees the dangers of secession that friendship poses to the City, it is because an unjust world, a detestable society, doesn't get forgotten in friendship as [it does] in the suffocating ecstasies of love. It still has the chance to orient itself *against* such a world, *against* such a society. To speak in blunt terms: *today, all friendship is in some way at war with the imperial order* or it is only a lie.

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Lacambre, Tridon, Eudes, Granger, Flotte and the majority of Blanqui's co-conspirators were at first only friends who did not repress their latent politics. Conversely, all friendships have a conspiratorial kernel. In 1833, Vidocq<sup>18</sup> deplored the fact that there

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<sup>18</sup> Eugene Francois Vidocq (1775-1857) was a French criminal who became a police spy.

were more than a hundred secret societies in Paris. Any history of the revolutionary movement in France between 1830 and 1870 carries the trace of the societies that -- clubs as far as the regime would permit -- changed into hotbeds of clandestine propaganda or conspiracies when repression came and once again became clubs the moment that the regime vacillated. In 1848, there were no less than 600 [secret societies] in Paris, including -- to mention only one -- the club of l'Emeute revolutionnaire, located at 69 rue Mouffetard and presided over by Palanchan, an old accomplice of Blanqui. The official history of the workers movement has it that the conspiratorial tradition -- with its oaths, admission rituals and secret decorum -- succumbed during the development of the workers movement, though it had been its crucible. Did not the members of the League of the Just, ancestor of the League of the Communists, participate in the aborted insurrection of 1839, launched by the Society of the Seasons? Wasn't it Buonarroti who delivered the precious message of Babeuf to the modern world? Certainly one wasn't admitted to the so-called Revolutionary Communist League as one was admitted to the Association of Egalitarian Workers in 1839.

*Listen with confidence and without fear: you are with communist republicans and consequently you now begin to live in the era of equality. They will be your brothers if you are loyal to your oath, but you will be forever lost if you betray it. They have all sworn to it just as you have sworn to it. Always listen with the greatest attention: the community is the veritable republic: work in common, communal education, property and pleasure; it is the symbolic sun of equality, it is the new faith for which we have all sworn to die! We know no borders, boundaries, or homeland; all communists are our brothers; the aristocrats [are] our enemies. Today, if you fear prison, torture or death; if you find*

*your courage to be weak; you should withdraw. To enter our ranks, one must confront all that: once the oath has been taken, your life belongs to us; you have risked your neck<sup>19</sup> and that of the one who will lead you for the rest of your days. Reflect and respond.*

With the end of the era of conspiracies, the workers movement supposedly passed from its infantile to its adult phase, from night to light. At least according to Marxist historiography. The public organizations of Social Democracy took up the slack from shapeless proletarian politics. From the League of the Communists one proceeds by degrees to the International Association of Workers and the existence of Social Democrat Parties in all countries [of Europe], while the anarchists [supposedly] sank stupidly into terrorism and syndicalism. The truth is that conspiratorial politics *never ended*. [Supposedly] all the traditional links, all the familiarities based on trade and neighborhood -- the village, in short -- on which proletarian politics rested until the Commune have been irreversibly destroyed. And that the *organizations* that have substituted themselves for a thenceforth missing "people" have only demoted [*repousser*] the conspiratorial to "*the informal*" and have consequently de-ritualized all that depends upon friendship. At bottom, the conflict between Marx and Bakunin concerning the International and its alleged infiltration by an obscure International Alliance of Socialist Democracy (founded by Bakunin) came down to this: *on the one side, a politics based on programs and, on the other, a politics founded on friendship*. A Prussian, Karl Marx did not expect the sad end of the League of

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<sup>19</sup> The French here is *tu es engagé sur ta tête* (literally, "you are engaged on your head").



Communists due to his hatred of the politics of friends. His 1850 review of Chenu's book *Les Conspireurs* already oozed pure hostility.<sup>20</sup>

*The entire lives of these professional conspirators are marked by the sign of Bohemia. Recruiting-sergeants for conspiracy, they shuffle from wine merchant to wine merchant, feeling the pulse of the workers, choosing their people, attracting them to [the] conspiracy by dint of cajoling them, and charging to the firm's account or their new friend the inevitable glasses that they themselves consume. In sum, the wine merchant may be consider the veritable fathers of their companionship (. . .) Due to a temperament that is very much shared by all Parisian proletarians, the conspirator doesn't delay becoming an accomplished "carouser" in this incessant tavern ambiance. The shady conspirator, who observes a rigid Spartan virtue in the secret sessions, suddenly loosens up and becomes someone who -- in the eyes of all the scholarly barflies -- knows how to appreciate wine and women. This tavern joviality is even more heightened by the constant dangers to which the conspirators are exposed: at any minute, he could be called to the barricades and perish there; at each step, the police lay traps for him that could lead to prison or even a galley ship. Such dangers precisely constitute the attraction of the trade: the greater the insecurity, the more the conspirator hastens to enjoy the pleasures of the moment. At the same time, the habituation to danger renders him completely indifferent to both life and liberty. He is as at home in prison as at a cabaret. Every day he expects to receive the order to go into action. The desperate rashness that manifests itself in every Parisian insurrection is precisely the contribution of these old*

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<sup>20</sup> This review by Marx is available on-line in an English translation. Ironically, this website -- "Marxist," though it is -- is the best on-line resource for Blanqui's writings in translation.

*professional conspirators, the henchmen. They are the ones who erect and command the first barricades, who organize resistance, lead the pillaging of armories, seize weapons and munitions, and carry out in full upheaval those audacious blows that so often throw the party in power into confusion.*

Here one has a faithful description of the type of man that *Bakunin* was at the continental level. Bakunin, who could not in the course of his incessant transcontinental peripatetics encounter a being whom he liked without unloading upon him the statutes of his most recently formed secret society, hoping that he would adhere to what the *Program and Object of the Secret Revolutionary Organization of the International Brothers* calls a "kind of revolutionary [general] staff composed of individuals who are devoted, intelligent and sincere friends, especially; neither ambitious nor vain; of the people; capable of serving as the intermediary between the revolutionary idea and working-class instincts. The number of these individuals thus must not be large. For the international organization in all of Europe, one hundred strongly and seriously allied revolutionaries would suffice." In truth, conspiratorial politics hasn't ceased to double all the organizational realities. In Spain, the FAI doubled the CNT, while its military office paid no attention to the Social-Democrat Workers Party in Russia. [in Russia,] Lenin was the only one up on the latest expropriation of Kamo, in 1912, [which worked] to the advantage of the Organization. [In Italy,] the "illegal work" commission of *Potere Operaio*<sup>21</sup> tasked itself with auto-financing, and [in France, it] was evoked by the constitution of the "invisible

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<sup>21</sup> Potere Operaio ("Workers Power") was an Italian group active between 1968 and 1973.

party." The party -- this is often forgotten -- has never ceased to be legal *and* illegal, visible *and* invisible, public *and* conspiratorial. It is one of the traits of the present that, at the moment we need all the resources of conspiratorial politics, we no longer understand anything about it. It is necessary, at any cost, to maintain the following epistemological principle: *the history of the revolutionary movement is, first of all, the history of the links that make up its reality [qui font sa consistance].*

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Resentment's rationalizations have the art of inverting logical relations. For more than a century, and notably since *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, every event finds its explication among the slaves in a conspiracy by the powerful. The global *petite bourgeoisie* dote upon this literature, because it comforts its ignorance and powerlessness. The progression of conspiracism [*complotisme*] has everywhere followed the progression of this "class." In fact, the revelation that the powerful conspire against us only serves to mask evidence of the contrary: the power that is found in friendship and through conspiracy. In his preface to *Histoire des Treize*, Balzac<sup>22</sup> expresses as no one else the ambivalence of this power, which can return as aristocratic secession just as it can give birth to a revolutionary force.

*It happened that, under the Empire and in Paris, thirteen men equally struck by the same feeling, all endowed with a very great energy for being loyal to the same thought; quite honest amongst themselves due to never betraying each other; quite profoundly political so as to dissimulate*

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<sup>22</sup> Honore de Balzac, *Histoire des Treize*: Ferragus, chef des devorants, XIII, 13.

*the sacred links that unite them; strong enough to be above the law; bold enough to undertake anything; very happy for having almost always succeeded in their designs; having run the greatest dangers, but keeping quiet about their defeats; insusceptible to fear, and having never trembled before the prince, the executioner or innocence; having accepted each other, such as each was, without minding social prejudices (. . .) This world apart from the world, hostile to the world, accepted none of the ideas of the world, and recognized no law in it (. . .) This intimate union of superior people, cold and teasing, smiling and cursing in the midst of a false and petty society (. . .) Thus there were in Paris thirteen brothers who were their own masters and yet under-estimated in the world (. . .) There were no leaders nor followers; no one could arrogate power to himself; only the most vivid passion, only the most demanding circumstance, was the best. There were thirteen unknown kings, but real kings, and, more than kings, they were judges and executioners who -- organized into flanks that could traverse the entire country -- deigned to be something else, because they could be everything.*

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All of Blanqui's texts are *circumstantial* texts. They are driven by the conditions in which and against which they were written. It isn't until *l'Eternite par les astres* [1872] that the Fort du Taureau is mentioned. From whence comes the nonexistence of Blanqui's *oeuvre*, in the sense of something that includes an entire treasure. From whence also comes the absence of a Blanquist *doctrine* as there exists a Marxist metaphysics. "A little passion; doctrines later!" There is, nevertheless, a Blanquist *style*.

*Revolutions desire men who have faith in them. To doubt their triumphs is to already betray them. It is through logic and audacity that one*

*launches them and saves them. If you lack these qualities, your enemies will have it over you; they will only see one thing in your weaknesses -- the measure of their own forces. And their courage will grow in direct proportion with your timidity.*

Everything's there. Blanqui is the author of the phrase "Neither God, nor master," the man who wrote "Honest [*reguliere*] anarchy is the future of humanity," and the author of an appeal against mutualism and in favor of integral association entitled "Communism is the future of society." Go find an orthodoxy there. Of course, constructing a revolutionary force when overthrowing an administrative monarchy, when there is only an elite to put down, this can be the work of an elite. When Bismarck's armies marched on Paris, acting in a revolutionary way was "making barricades and digging trenches; assigning churches to national usages; arming the priests and, consequently, suppressing all cults; mandating enlistment; placing food in common and rationing it; dismissing and dispersing the former police forces; and denouncing suspects and Bonapartists" (Dommanget, *Blanqui* [1972]). in current society, in which power circulates within the flows of nourishment, information and medicines; in which *citizens* take advantage of their rights to call the cops; it goes without saying that a revolutionary force must embrace *all aspects* of existence; it must be constructed as a force of supply-provisioning and as an armed force, as a power that is both poetic and medical; and it must seize territories. It must collect all useful intelligence about the adversary's organization and provoke desertions in all ranks of society. It must socialize itself to the same extent that the social becomes military. But no more than yesterday: things can't wait. Such a force is in the process of being

constituted. If this force closely studies Blanqui, it is only to better understand the war in progress.

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Time passes. That is its nature. As long as there is time, there will be boredom, and time passes. The past does not pass. All that has *really* passed carries in itself a spark of eternity; it is inscribed in some nook of communal experience. One can efface the traces, but not the event. One can indeed pulverize the memory, [but] each piece of debris contains the total monad of what one believed to have been destroyed and will engender it anew, when the opportunity arises. We repeat: historicism is a brothel in which one takes care that the clients never believe [the illusion]. The past is not a succession of dates, deeds or modes of living; it is not a closet full of costumes; it is a reservoir of forces and gestures, a proliferation of existential possibilities. Knowledge of it is not necessary; it is simply vital. Vital for the present. It is from the present that one comprehends the past, not the reverse. Each era dreams its predecessors. The loss of all historical meaning -- like the loss of all *meaning* in general -- in our era is the logical corollary of the loss of all experience. The systematic organization of forgetting doesn't at all distinguish itself from the systematic loss of experience. The most demented form of historical revisionism, which now manages to apply itself even to contemporary events, finds its compost in the suspended life of the metropolises, where one never experiences anything, except for [all] the signs, signals and codes, and their padded conflicts. Where one has experiences, private/tame experiences that float, mute, unwritable and empty; implosive intensities that cannot be communicated beyond the walls of an apartment and that any

narrative would empty out more than it shares. It is under the form of its privatization that the deprivation of experience expresses itself the most communally.

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December 2006.<sup>23</sup> The ship of state is taking on water everywhere. Soon it will only be a look-out post. France burns and shipwrecks. This is good. It revives memories. The schools on fire burn in memory of the generations of proletarians who therein experienced the bitter taste of timetables, work and obedience, and incorporated the feeling of complete inferiority. Those who no longer vote honor the insurgents of June 1848 -- that "revolt by rebellious angels who have not arisen since then" (Coeurderoy) -- whom one put to the bayonet in the name of universal suffrage. The leftist intellectuals [of today] wonder on the radio if the government has the *courage* to send the army into the banlieus, just as their ancestors [who in the early 1960s] applauded the generals who, upon returning from Algeria, massacred Parisian proletarians, though the generals had gotten into the habit of "civilizing" the indigenous people [of that country]. Today as yesterday, this species of skunk calls himself *republican* and speaks of "the rabble." The imprisoned members of Action Directe have long ago surpassed their mandatory-minimum sentences. Regis Schleicher<sup>24</sup> soon will compete with Blanqui for length of incarceration. More than ever, the army trains for urban warfare.

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<sup>23</sup> In the midst of spirited protests against the rescinding of the CPE (Contrat Premiere Embauche).

<sup>24</sup> Regis Schleicher, a member of Action Directe, was sentenced to life in prison in 1986.

In France, the historical clock is stuck at May 1871. The question of communism is invisibly the only question that haunts *all* social relations, even porn. The universe fidgets in place. Last March 31st, a wild demonstration of 4,000 people lasts more than eight hours: from the intervention of the president of this senile Republic -- he came on TV to announce that the CPE would be maintained -- to four o'clock in the morning. The demonstration wants to go to the Eylsee, oblique to la Concorde sur l'Assemblée national, which it fails to approach [*investir*] due to lack of materials and weapons -- same thing for the Senate.

At the edges of the march, determination grows. A martial scansion is heard at the door: "Paris! Get up, wake up!" It is an order. On the Boulevard de Sebastopol, then at de Magenta, the windows of the banks and interim-job agencies begin to fall, one after the other, methodically. Prostitutes at Pigalle salute from a window. The crowd mounts le Sacre-Coeur to cries of "Vive la Commune!" The door to the crypt does not budge; what a shame, one could have burnt it down. Descending to a small street, a lady in a baby-doll outfit leans on her third-floor balcony and yells at the top of her voice, "The bad days will end."<sup>25</sup> The permanently-open office of the vile Pierre Lellouche <sup>26</sup> will soon be sacked. It is three o'clock in the morning. The past does not pass. The burning

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<sup>25</sup> "The Bad Days Will End" was the title of an essay published in April 1962 by the Situationist International, and also the title of a film made by Thomas Lacoste in 2008.

<sup>26</sup> A right-wing French politician, born in 1951 and, one way or another, in power since 1993.



of Paris will be the worthy completion of Baron Haussmann's destruction.

(Signed "Some Agents of the Imaginary Party," this text was published as the preface to Dominique Le Nuz's collection of texts by Blanqui entitled *Maintenant, il faut des armes*, published by Editions La Fabrique in 2007. Translated from the French by NOT BORED! 26 May 2009.)