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A Few Words: *against binomial thinking*

As our desire to create our lives as we see fit, to realize ourselves to the fullest extent, to reappropriate the conditions of our existence, develops into a real project of revolt against all domination and oppression, we begin to encounter the world with a more penetrating eye. Our ideas sharpen as they become tools in a life and in relationships aimed at the destruction of the social order and the opening of unknown possibilities for exploring the infinity of singular beings. With a clear aim, a resolute project of revolt, it is much easier to throw off the methods of thought imposed by this society: by school, religion, television, the media, advertising, elections, the internet — all the educational, informational and communications tools through which the ruling order expresses itself. One who has a life project, a project of revolt that motivates her activities to their depths, based on his desires and passions, not on an ideology or cause, will thus express her ideas analyses and critiques with the assurance of one who is speaking from life, from the depths of his own being.

But where a projectual practice of revolt is lacking (and, let's be clear, I am not talking about having a bunch of random "radical" projects like an infoshop, a pirate radio station, a "Food not Bombs", etc, but of creating one's life and relationships in active revolt against the current existence in its totality), people continue to encounter the world in ways that they were taught, using the methods of thinking imposed by the current social order — this tolerant order of democratic discussion where there are two sides to every question; where we all have a choice... among the limited options offered in the marketplace of goods and of opinions, that is; where the "ideas" offered have all been separated from life, drained of all except the most instrumental passions and desires, drained of joy and sorrow and rage; where every desire is drained of its singularity and immediate content and conformed to the needs of whatever ideology and of the marketplace. There is no place here for the strong and passionate critique that springs from our desire for the fullness of life, from our awareness of the complexity of the world we face and the world we want to create, because here all ideas have been flattened in to opinions and every opinion is equal — and equally empty.

And so without a project of revolt that springs from the fullness of our being and our relationships, even we anarchists find our thinking permeated with the methodology of opinion. Thus, the binomialism of the public poll penetrates into the expression of so-called anarchist ideas: are you a communist or are you an individualist? do you sacrifice yourself and your desires to a moralistic “green anarchist” vision of a distant future where what is left of humanity reverts to the supposed edenic conditions of prehistoric foragers or to an equally distant “red anarchist” vision of the self-managed industrial workers’ paradise? do you adhere to feminism or do you uphold male domination? The list could go on, but the point is that such binomial thinking is a clear sign that one’s revolt is still in the realm of morals and ideals external to oneself and thus in the realm of opinion.

To imagine a communism developed precisely to expand individual freedom and to see such freedom as flourishing in the context of that equality of access to all the tools necessary for determining the conditions of one’s existence that is true communism — this is a bit complex for the world of opinion. To conceive of a critique of civilization that originates in one’s desire for the fullness of being that civilization cannot offer, because its expansion can only be based on a homogenization that diminishes existence in the name of monolithic control, and to therefore envision and act to realize not a model of an ideal world, but that revolutionary rupture that opens myriads of unknown possibilities from which a new decivilized existence could develop based on our desires and dreams — this is nothing but pure egoism from the standpoint of ideology and morality. To criticize the poverty of the practice of feminism and the emptiness of so many of its theoretical constructs which have left it incapable of truly confronting and moving beyond gender because one imagines a liberation from the constraints of gender that is not homogenization into a universal androgyny but rather the opening up of the full spectrum of singular expressions of one’s being in the sexual and passional spheres and every other sphere that gender has affected — this is pure arrogance particularly if one happens to be a man. No, it is better to keep one’s thought within the constraints of offered choices, to flatten one’s ideas into opinions, to not only tolerate blatant stupidity, but to blind oneself to it even among those who are supposedly our comrades, to avoid living and thinking in a projectual manner. Otherwise, one risks meeting life face-to-face and truly having to grapple with existence.

But for some of us revolt is not a hobby, anarchy is not a word we use to make ourselves feel more radical. These are our life’s project, the way of being we are striving to create. The ideas we develop are not mere opinions, but the outgrowth of the passionate reason of our project, based in our lives, our desires and our dreams as they encounter the world. They are as fluid as lived desires and dreams, but this fluidity is strong, assured and determined. And if, as some have said, this makes us dogmatic and arrogant, then we need more dogmatic and arrogant anarchists.

Because it is not the ceaseless negotiation of opinions, of democratic discourse, that will bring down the ruling order, but the revolt of indomitable individuals who refuse to compromise themselves, coming together to destroy all domination.

Against the Logic of Submission: Revolt, not Therapy

When the situationist idea that revolution would be therapeutic found its way into the English language, it opened a Pandora's box of misunderstanding. It seems clear to me that the situationists were pointing out that a real revolutionary rupture would break down the social constraints which underlie so much of what is considered "mental illness" and "emotional disturbance", freeing people to discover their own meanings and methods of thinking and feeling. But many have understood this concept differently, taking it to mean that revolution is to be something like an encounter group, a counseling session or psychological "self-help" activity. Ceaseless self-examination, embarrassing confessionality, the gamut of support groups, safe spaces, and the like come to be understood as "revolutionary" activity. And many so-called revolutionaries, in conformity to such a practice, tend to become the emotionally crippled neurotics that they assume they are, searching for a revolutionary healing that will never come, because this assumed role is inherently self-perpetuating and, thus perpetuates the society that produces it. What is missing from this therapeutic conception of revolution is revolt.

The destruction of the social order with the aim of liberating ourselves from all domination and exploitation, from every constraint on the full development of our singularity, certainly requires an analysis of how our lives, our passions, our desires and dreams have been alienated from us, how our minds have been constrained to reason in certain ways, how we have been trained to follow the logic of submission. But such an analysis must be a social analysis, not a psychoanalysis. It must be an examination of the social institutions, roles and relationships that shape the conditions under which we are forced to exist.

Consider this analogy. If a person has broken her leg, of course, she must try to set it, get a cast or splint and find a crutch. But if the reason why he is having trouble walking is that someone has put a ball and chain on his leg, then her first priority is to cut off that chain and then to guarantee that it won't happen again by destroying the source of the chain.

By accepting the idea (promoted heavily by progressive education and publicity) that the structures of oppression are essentially mindsets inside of ourselves, we become focused on our own presumed weakness, on how crippled we supposedly

are. Our time is eaten up by attempts at self-healing that never come to an end, because we have become so focused on ourselves and our inability to walk that we fail to notice the chain on our leg. This endless cycle of self-analysis is not only tedious and self-indulgent; it is also utterly useless in creating a revolutionary project, because it gets in the way of social analysis and it transforms us into less capable individuals.

The therapeutic approach to social oppression ends up focusing on a myriad of “isms” with which we are infected: racism, sexism, classism, statism, authoritarianism, ablism, agism, etc., etc. Because the first two give very real and clear expression of the difference between psychoanalysis and social analysis, between the approach of therapy and that of revolt, I will examine them briefly. Viewing racism and sexism as essentially unconscious mindsets and the behavior these produce, the nature of which we are not always aware, we are drawn onto a practice of constant self-examination, constant self-doubt, which effectively disables us, particularly in our ability to interact with the other. Racism and sexism become something nebulous, a pervasive virus which infects everyone. If one has the bad fortune of being “white” and “male” (even if one consciously rejects all the social constraints and definitions behind such labels), then he is required to accept the judgment of “non-whites” and “females” about the significance, the “real” unconscious motivations of his actions. To do otherwise would constitute arrogance, a lack of consideration and an exercise of “privilege”. The only outcome I can see from such a way of dealing with these matters (and it is certainly the only outcome I have ever seen) is the creation of a bunch of shy, yet inquisitorial mice tip-toeing around each other for fear of being judged, and just as incapable of attacking the foundations of this society as they are of relating to each other.

If, on the other hand, we view racism and sexism as expressions of the social ideological constructs of race and gender which have specific institutional foundations, a very different approach applies. The concept of race as it is currently understood here in North America has its origins in the institutions of black slavery and the genocide against the indigenous people of this continent. Once established by these institutions, it became rooted into all of the power structures on one level or another due to its usefulness to the ruling class, and was trickled down to the exploited classes as a means of separating them and keeping them fighting among themselves. Sexism has its origins in the institutions of property, marriage and the family. It is here that patriarchy and male dominance have their seat. Within this framework, gender is created as a social construct, and as with race, it is the continuing usefulness of this construct to the ruling class that has kept it in place in spite of the increasingly obvious absurdity of the institutions that are its basis. Thus, the destruction of racism and sexism must start with the explicitly revolutionary project of destroying the institutional frameworks which are the current

basis for the constructs of race and gender. Such a project is not one of therapy, but of revolt. It will not be accomplished by shy, tiptoeing mice — nor by inquisitors — but by self-confident, indomitable rebels.

I won't go into the absurdity of such terms as classism or statism here because that is not my purpose. My purpose is to point out that, though revolutionary struggle may, indeed, have the "therapeutic" effect of breaking down social constraints and thus opening the mind to new ways of thinking and feeling that make one more intelligent and passionate, this is precisely because it is not therapy, which focuses on one's weakness, but a self-determined project of revolt springing from one's strength.

Freedom belongs to the individual — this is a basic anarchist principle — and as such resides in individual responsibility to oneself and in free association with others. Thus, there can be no obligations, no debts, only choices of how to act. The therapeutic approach to social problems is the very opposite of this.. Basing itself in the idea that we are crippled rather than chained, inherently weak rather than held down, it imposes an obligatory interdependence, a mutuality of incapacity, rather than a sharing of strengths and capabilities. In this, it parallels the official way of dealing with these problems. And no wonder. It is the nature of weakness to submit. If we all assume our own weakness, our perpetual internal infection by these various social diseases, then we will continue to nurture a submissive way of interacting with the world, ever ready to admit guilt, to apologize, to back down from what we've said or done. This is the very opposite of responsibility, which acts consciously with the assurance of one's projectual approach to life, ready to take the consequences of one's choices — the outlaw worthy of her transgressions.

In the face of ten thousand years of institutional oppression, ten thousand years in which a ruling class and the structures that support its power have determined the conditions of our existence, what we need is not therapy, but strong-willed revolt aimed at developing a revolutionary project that can destroy this society and its institutions.

The Power of the State

[This is the first in a series of articles examining the various institutions, structures and systems of domination and exploitation which define our current existence. These articles are not intended to be comprehensive nor to be final answers, but rather to be part of a discussion that I hope will go on in anarchist circles aimed at developing a specifically anarchist theoretical exploration of the reality we are facing. A great deal of the analysis that currently goes on in anarchist circles is dependent on marxist or postmodernist categories and concepts. These may indeed be useful, but to simply accept them a priori, without examining social reality in terms of our own specifically anarchist revolutionary project indicates an intellectual laziness. So I hope we can begin to discuss and examine the world in terms of our own projects, dreams and desires, certainly grasping all analyses that we find useful, but in order to create our own theoretical and practical revolutionary project.]

It is not uncommon today, even in anarchist circles, to hear the state described as a mere servant of the multinationals, the IMF, the World Bank and other international economic institutions. According to this perspective, the state is not so much the holder and arbiter of power as merely a coordinator of the institutions of social control through which corporate economic rulers maintain their power. From this it is possible to draw conclusions that are quite detrimental to the development of an anarchist revolutionary project. If the state is merely a political structure for maintaining stability that is currently in the service of the great economic powers rather than a power in its own right with its own interests maintaining itself through domination and repression, then it could be reformed democratically made into an institutional opposition to the power of the multinationals. It would simply be a matter of “the People” becoming a counter-power and taking control of the state. Such an idea seems to lie behind the absurd notion of certain contemporary anti-capitalists that we should support the interests of nation-states against the international economic institutions. A clearer understanding of the state is necessary to counteract this trend.

The state could not exist if our capacity to determine the conditions of our own existence as individuals in free association with each other had not been taken from us. This dispossession is the fundamental social alienation which provides the basis for all domination and exploitation. This alienation can rightly be traced to the rise of property (I say property as such and not just private property, because from very early on a great deal of property was institutional — owned by the state). Property can be defined as the exclusive claim by certain individuals and institutions over tools, spaces and materials necessary for existence, making them inaccessible to others. This claim is enforced through explicit or implicit violence. No longer free to grasp whatever is necessary for creating their lives, the dispossessed are forced to conform to conditions determined by the self-proclaimed owners of property in order to maintain their existence, which thus becomes an existence in servitude. The state is the institutionalization of this process which transforms the alienation of the capacity of individuals to determine the conditions of their own existence into the accumulation of power into the hands of a few.

It is futile and unnecessary to try to determine whether the accumulation of power or the accumulation of wealth had priority when property and the state first arose. Certainly now they are thoroughly integrated. It does seem likely that the state was the first institution to accumulate property in order to create a surplus under its control, a surplus that gave it real power over the social conditions under which its subjects had to exist. This surplus allowed it to develop the various institutions through which it enforced its power: military institutions, religious/ideological institutions, bureaucratic institutions, police institutions and so on. Thus, the state, from its origins, can be thought of as a capitalist in its own right, with its own specific economic interests that serve precisely to maintain its power over the conditions of social existence.

Like any capitalist, the state provides a specific service at a price. Or more accurately, the state provides two integrally related services: protection of property and social peace. It offers protection to private property through a system of laws that define and limit it and through the force of arms by which these laws are enforced. In fact, private property can only be said to truly exist when the institutions of the state are there to protect it from those who would simply take what they want — without this institutional protection, there is merely the conflict of individual interests. This is why Stirner described private property as a form of social or state property to be held in contempt by unique ones. The state also provides protection for the “commons” from external raiders and from that which the state determines to be abuse by its subjects through law and armed force. As the sole protector of all property within its borders — a role maintained by the state’s monopoly on violence — it establishes concrete control over all this property (relative, of course, to its real capacity for exercising that control). Thus the cost of

this protection consists not only of taxes and various forms of compulsory service, but also of conformity to roles necessary to the social apparatus that maintains the state and acceptance of, at best, a relationship of vassalage to the state, which may claim any property or enclose any common space “in the common interest” at any time. The existence of property requires the state for protection and the existence of the state maintains property, but always ultimately as state property regardless of how “private” it supposedly is.

The implied violence of law and the explicit violence of the military and the police through which the state protects property are the same means by which it maintains social peace. The violence by which people are dispossessed of their capacity to create life on their own terms is nothing less than social war which manifests daily in the usually gradual (but sometimes as quick as a police bullet) slaughter of those who are exploited, excluded and marginalized by the social order. When people under attack begin to recognize their enemy, they frequently act to counter-attack. The state’s task of maintaining social peace is thus an act of social war on the part of the rulers against the ruled — the suppression and prevention of any such counter-attack. The violence of those who rule against those they rule is inherent in social peace. But a social peace based solely on brute force is always precarious. It is necessary for the state to implant the idea in people’s heads that they have a stake in the continued existence of the state and of the social order it maintains. This may take place as in ancient Egypt where religious propaganda maintaining the divinity of the Pharaoh justified the extortion by which he took possession of all the surplus grain making the populace absolutely dependent on his good will in times of famine. Or it may take the form of institutions for democratic participation which create a more subtle form of blackmail in which we are obliged to participate if we want to complain, but in which we are equally obliged to accept “the will of the people” if we do participate. But, behind these forms of blackmail, whether subtle or blatant, the arms, the prisons, the soldiers and the cops are always there, and this is the essence of the state and of social peace. The rest is just veneer.

Though the state can be looked upon as capitalist (in the sense that it accumulated power by accumulating surplus wealth in a dialectic process), capitalism as we know it with its “private” economic institutions is a relatively recent development traceable to the beginning of the modern era. This development has certainly produced significant changes in the dynamics of power since a significant portion of the ruling class are now not directly part of the state apparatus except as citizens, like all those they exploit. But these changes do not mean that the state has been subjugated to the various global economic institutions or that it has become peripheral to the functioning of power.

If the state is itself a capitalist, with its own economic interests to pursue and maintain, then the reason that it works to maintain capitalism is not that it has been subordinated to other capitalist institutions, but because in order to maintain its power it must maintain its economic strength as a capitalist among capitalists. Specific weaker states end up being subjugated to global economic interests for the same reason that smaller firms are, because they do not have the strength to maintain their own interests. The great states play at least as significant a role in determining global economic policies as the great corporations. It is, in fact, the arms of the state that will enforce these policies.

The power of the state resides in its legal and institutional monopoly on violence. This gives the state a very concrete material power upon which the global economic institutions are dependent. Institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF do not only include delegates from all the major state powers in all decision-making processes; they also depend upon the military force of the most powerful states to impose their policies, the threat of physical violence that must always stand behind economic extortion if it is to function. With the real power of violence in their hands, the great states are hardly going to function as mere servants to the global economic institutions. Rather in proper capitalist form, their relationship is one of mutual extortion accepted for the benefit of the entire ruling class.

In addition to its monopoly on violence, the state also controls many of the networks and institutions necessary to commerce and production. Highway systems, railway systems, ports, airports, satellite and fiber optic systems necessary to communications and information networks are generally state-run and always subject to state control. Scientific and technological research necessary to new developments in production is largely dependent on the facilities of state-run universities and the military.

Thus corporate power depends upon state power to maintain itself. It is not a matter of the subjugation of one sort of power to another, but the development of an integral system of power that manifests itself as the two-headed hydra of capital and the state, a system that functions as a whole to maintain domination and exploitation, the conditions imposed by the ruling class for the maintenance of our existence. Within this context, institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank are best understood as means by which the various state and corporate powers coordinate their activities in order to maintain unity of domination over the exploited classes in the midst of the competition of economic and political interests. Thus the state does not serve these institutions, but rather these institutions serve the interests of the most powerful states and capitalists.

It is, thus, not possible for those of us who seek the destruction of the social order to play the nation-state against the capitalists and gain anything by it. Their

greatest interest is the same, to maintain the current order of things. For our part it is necessary to attack the state and capitalism with all of our might, recognizing them as the two-headed hydra of domination and exploitation that we must destroy if we are ever to take back our capacity to create the conditions of our existence.

The Logic of Measure

Many are the things that cannot be measured
but nothing is more immeasurable than man.

— Sophocles

The meaning of measure. It is an enclosure that is a dispute with and management of life at the same time, a prison that poses the existence of people equal to zero.

And yet, as Protagoras said, the human being is the measure of all things. His intelligence is the place in which they are linked together. If the human being herself is this measure, this threshold, it means that he has no place and that her home is atopia.

A measure to impose, and the punishment for those who arrogantly go beyond it, only has meaning if it provides a boundary, a homeland, to human life. And this homeland is nothing more than the designation of a space built around the limits in which one tries to constrain that which is particularly unlimited, singularity.

But it is really the place of the limit to create trans-gression, and to justify itself as limit through punishment.

Errare divinum est (To err is divine), said Savinio. Only when we pose the measure of individuals as something that transcends them do crime and punishment have a foundation. “To err” pertains to the gods. If their empire, their measure, falls, the limits created in their image and likeness fall as well. The human being cannot help but go beyond the limits, since he himself is the limit, the boundless threshold. Furthermore, only in this hubris, in this arrogance, is her possibility for affirming herself as individual to be found.

As Holderlin understood with regards to Sophocles’ Oedipus, the human being questions and lives “immeasurably”. Relegating his individuality to the place of law, aberrations will always occur, because ab-errare [“in wandering” and “in error” — editor] is where one’s individuality has its place. To the extent that the individual is her own measure, she succeeds in not sacrificing her atopia, in being rooted in the absence of place.

This absence of place is an utter absurdity for philosophy. And this is why its words have always advised moderation, the truth that stands in the middle. But

that middle makes the human being into a puppet of god (and of every authority), a result of hubris and power, a mistake that poses a remedy.

The measure is god's, the state's, society's. All attempts to harmonize, to tolerate difference refer to a limit that is always collective. Whether this boundary is the one and indisputable truth or the multiplicity of truths is of little importance. If the truths are constrained to compose a social ensemble of which they end up being a part, there is no space for singularity, but only for different appraisals with respect to the techniques with which to preserve these walls which one could not want to destroy. Each in her own way can only be a slave. The ensemble of society — the meaning of measure — is that which one need not take into account, “except as the object of destruction.”

The uniqueness of each of us cannot be an element of something else because difference is itself the common space. The only place for difference is the absence of place. Individuality must defend its difference and want the difference of others to exist as well. My difference is revealed because that of others exists.

Power, on the contrary, is the foundation of a territory of identity and measurement, a territory from which it is impossible to escape without destroying the community of those who have been made equal to zero (that Michelstaedter called the “wicked clique”) and building the common difference.

I think that affirming one's singularity is the exact opposite of the defensive armoring of oneself, that prison-like enclosure from which (as the skeptical “reaction” to the religion of the common good and sacrifice would have it) to control the world with the disenchantment of doubt. Difference is not a slit through which to spy on the movements of the other, afraid that she might go too far in making his way and thus could disturb our tranquility. There isn't any kitchen garden to cultivate as Voltaire believed. Distrust, the fear of the other that makes us move away suddenly when we touch a strange body, is an ivory tower under siege. The immeasurable dimension in which it is possible to live together without domination and abuse, and so also without their double, Harmony, can “settle” in no one place.

Singularity has no homeland because the homeland is power.

The individual in revolt is a “restless place between the night and the light”, between destruction and creation. And more. The light itself is darkness, since Phanes “sits inside, in the sanctuary of the night.” But not even the liquidation of the dialectic that always transforms the negative into the positive, annihilating it, is capable of becoming a certainty. If we were to look for the measure, the one of being against or outside, in the sanctuary of the night, we would end up becoming evangelists of demolition, pensioners of revolt.

In its endless skirmishes, the Logic seems unshakable. And yet its rigid form cannot resist anyone who wants to live without measure.

Once again, more than a project, it is a question of knowing how to live.

— Massimo Passamani

Introduction to Drop Everything *by* *Annie LeBrun*

[This piece first appeared in English in the book, *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology*, edited by Penelope Rosemont. It is a translation of the introduction of Annie LeBrun's book, *Lachez Tout (Drop Everything)*, a merciless critique of what she calls "neo-feminism" — what most of us here know simply as feminism — written in 1977. Annie LeBrun was born in Rennes, France in 1942. She was involved with the surrealist movement — which is more a revolutionary movement than an art movement — between 1963 and 1969, and has continued to be involved in creative projects of revolt since.]

Drop Everything

I have a horror of not being misunderstood.

— Oscar Wilde

At sixteen, I decided my life would not be as others intended it to be. This determination — and perhaps luck — allowed me to escape most of the misfortune inherent in the feminine condition. Rejoicing that young women today increasingly manifest their desire to reject the models heretofore offered them, I, nonetheless, deplore their seeming readiness to identify with the purely formal negation of these old-fashioned models, that is, when they do not settle for simply bringing them back into fashion. At a time when everyone complacently intones that one is not born a woman but one becomes a woman, hardly anyone seems to trouble herself about not becoming one. Indeed, it's just the opposite. Contrary to the efforts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century feminists who endeavored to eliminate the illusory difference that gave men real power over women, the neofeminists of recent years have made it their business to establish the reality of that difference in order to claim an illusory power that women are said to have been denied. So thoroughly do they work at establishing the reality of this illusive difference that in the end, the revolt against impossibility of being tends to vanish under the blows of militant stupidity, thus introducing the obligation to be. Do we forever need to

remind ourselves that in matters of revolt, we need no ancestors? And definitely, no technical advisers eager to exchange their recipes for feminine insubordination from A to Z.

In view of the extent of the crimes more or less legally perpetrated, not only against women but also against all those who refuse the social codification of sexual roles (homosexuals in particular), this revolt can only be regarded as urgent — so urgent that I cannot refrain from disrupting the chorus of those, male or female, who claim they are abstracting it from the private obscurity where it violently takes shape, and from whence it draws its overwhelming strength. I insist: this rebellion is always directed against the collective morale, no matter upon what bases the collectivity was founded. How, then, can we fail to see that today every woman will be dispossessed of the recovery of her self if she does not notice that every one of her tirades might be redirected and used to build an ideology as contradictory in its proposals as it is totalitarian in its intentions? We even find her tacitly encouraged on all sides to reveal the claims of her sex, ever since the so-called “women’s cause” was presented as the image of a rebellion tamed inside the net of the negative normalization that our epoch is so proficient at casting over the most remote spaces on the horizon.

Having always disdained masters who act like slaves as well as slaves eager to slip into the skins of masters, I confess that the ordinary conflicts between men and women have been of very little concern to me. My sympathy goes rather to those who desert the roles that society assigns them. Such people never claim to be constructing a new world, and therein lies their fundamental honesty: they never impose their notion of well being on others. With a powerful determination that can often overturn the established order, they are just happy to be the exceptions that negate the rule.

Oscar Wilde interests me more than any bourgeoisie woman who agreed to marry and have children, and then, one fine day, suddenly feels that her oh so hypothetical creativity is being frustrated.

And that’s how it is.

I shall not list my preferences in this regard: it would be useless to do so, and extremely discouraging for the cause of women.

The fact that I have done my best as far as possible, to avoid biological destiny’s psychic, social and intellectual hold upon me is my own business, but I shall never give in to society’s attempt to make me feel guilty in the name of all women and to force me back into the limitation’s of that destiny. Such sudden and inexorable promiscuity in search of each woman’s identity indeed threatens women at the very heart of their freedom when the gender difference is asserted at the expense of all other specific differences. Let us just consider calmly what we have all had to endure in the name of God, Nature, Man and History. It seems, however, that all

of that was not enough, for it is all starting up again under the banner of Woman. Specialists in coercion make no mistake when with sudden zeal they increase the numbers of national and international organizations dealing with “la condition feminine” without actually effecting any legislative change. And they can hardly go very far astray, since the moment when Louis Aragon, that choirboy for repression for almost half a century, announced that woman is “Man’s Future”. I have the gravest doubts about a future that might look anything like Elsa Triolet.¹

In all that is said and written in the name of woman, I see the return — under the pretext of liberation — of everything that has traditionally diminished women. They denounce the family but extol motherhood as the foundation of the family. They attack the notion of woman-as-object but promote the revival of “feminine mystery”. And the exposure of the relationships between men and women as power relations initiates theories about the most sickening and inane conjugal squabbles. For me these are just so many more reasons to be glad that I have turned my back on the dead-ends of so-called “feminine sensibility”. Moreover, nothing could make me alter my natural aversion to majorities, especially when they are composed of part-time martyrs — largely a phenomenon of the western world.

The more deafening the noise of our time, the more I feel certain that my life is elsewhere, gliding along my love whose shapes entomb the passing of time. I look at you. We shall meet on the bridge of transparency before diving into the night of our differences. We shall swim near to one another at a distance, tense or distracted, going against the stream of our enigma to find ourselves in the uncertain embrace of our fleeting shadows. We are not the only ones to have encountered a point of transparency before plunging into the night of our differences and who have come up not caring whether we are male or female. And if very few men find it easy to recognize themselves in Francis Picabia’s avowal, “Women are the agent of my freedom,” it is perhaps because that comes only with the triumph of a Marvelous that men and women have yet to discover. That is why I object to being enrolled in an army of women engaged in struggle simply because of a biological accident. My frantic individuality is exactly in proportion to all that strives toward the interchangeability of all beings.

This book is a call for desertion.

Translated from the French by Guy Ducornet

¹ Louis Aragon was involved with the original surrealist group until he converted to Stalinism. Elsa Triolet was his wife. (editor’s note)

Theses Against Democracy

1

If you accept the principle of representative government, then when the representative/democratic state goes to war, you must accept the worst-case scenario of civilian casualties, including your own death, because you were represented in the state's decision.

2

Neither can there be rules of war excluding civilian casualties, if the state is the People, and the People decide the actions of the state. To draft such rules of war is an insult to the democratic state, a fortiori the People.

3

These are not “problems” with representation and the democratic state; these prove that representation does not do what it says it does, that it is a falsehood.

4

If the thought of a war in which an enemy state bombs the hell out of US civilians bothers you, then you must concede that you do not believe in the existence of a “democracy” in which “your vote counts.”

5

Terrorists these days tend to believe the People are the state, and therefore that both deserve to be punished — “they may as well be the same” — these terrorists are the extreme ideologues of the democratic state, which is why their actions usually reinforce it.

6

The open debate, the dialogue, the airing of different opinions — all these things are ends in themselves for democratic ideologists; these things are their ideals to achieve. It is a conversation-ender to say “your opinion is yours, mine is mine. And that is the point of debate. That’s what democracy is all about.” Fortunately, they are right. Democracy is about producing precisely this deadlock, this denial of the faculty of reason, the dialectic in the Socratic and materialist sense. Everything is not true, everything is not equally false, everything is not worth equal weight or consideration, and the only way to test any proposition is negation, contradiction, contestation.

7

Meanwhile, there is no “relatively good” bourgeois position, liberal or conservative. There is no relativity across qualitatively discrete categories. Apples are not better than oranges.

Note: the original text can be found on the Italian language a-Infos page (www.ainfos.ca).

Some of our reflections on the days in Genoa

from El Paso

The heated comments about the events report (above all, obviously coming from the institutional press) the accusations from the heads of the organizations present in Genoa that speak, almost unanimously, of provocateurs in combat with the police (thoroughly filmed and photographed), or, in a minority of cases, of hooligans let loose to agitate, who played games with the police giving them an opportunity to attack the bulk of the peaceful demonstration.

The first observation that one can make is that these accusations have been methodically repeated for 25 years every time a street demonstration escapes the control of its presumed political organizers. To hear that there are always hot heads, comrades that blunder, people that 'fall into provocations' (fascists or police), or, in the most scandalous cases, infiltrators.

This is the only justification of those who try to manage and use the wills of the protest of thousands of people in arguments that touch everyone, in direct and indirect ways.

There are thousands of motives for protesting: a meeting of powers, the most powerful in the West, protected by thousands of men fully armed, the same men that in the first instance, everyday, everywhere, apply the decisions of the powerful.

The G8 is nothing. Nothing is decided there. But it is a symbol. And symbolically there were those who wanted to protest against them. In diverse ways and terms.

And at this point it is necessary to understand its terms. To contest democratically (in the accepted meaning of the so called organizers and exponents of 'civil society', this means without offending, without doing damage, without defending oneself) also means to understand — just as those same powers have remarked through their spokespeople — that these powers represent nations in which democracy reigns, that they have been democratically elected, and that they therefore represent all those that accept voting and accept the terms of democratic management, being governed from this and from that ordering politics. It is a system that doesn't leave gray areas: one accepts it or not. In this sense, those who thought

of protesting democratically were practically demonstrating only the disappointment of an institutional minority about the decisions of the government that they themselves have legitimized by voting.

We understand: even if there were a million people, they would have been democratically considered a minority. The electorate has decided otherwise, they have voted for others, and those elected democratically decide for everyone. Diverse millions of people have elected these powerful. The others continue to try. Scratch scratch maybe one time it'll be your turn to command.

What is the use of a demonstration of a minority? To let off steam, to show that we do not agree, to try to put pressure on our governors to make more just decisions... maybe because we must do it. But when we are in the streets, even for the second, the third, the hundredth time, after years of bearing limitations, oppressions, injustices, repression, violence, that are imposed by decisions on high, something else happens. It happens that we remember the anger of when we suffer wrongs, how it is impossible to manage one's own life because in each of its aspects we are limited and repressed by a system that has fabricated predefined platforms from which is impossible to escape. We understand how it may not even be possible to know who is responsible for that which befalls us.

Our employers are not responsible — if it wasn't for them we wouldn't eat; it's not those who make us pay taxes (now they take them directly out of the stipends, that way it is less painful); it is not he who fines us, in the end he's just doing his job; it isn't he who teaches us how to behave from the time we're children — we should have common customs — and afterwards if there are those who don't do these things, patience and endurance; it is not he who governs us, in the end they merely act as the expression of the majority of us; it is not he who beats and arrests us — someone has to do it — and then it is not with force that the divisions that keep some 'below' are created...

In this way, when in everyday life we understand that things don't work, no one is ever at fault, no one is responsible, they all have a justification, and it is not possible to do anything, if you don't beg, vote and ask for a few more crumbs (for some more money...).

For the great collective questions, there are not responsible ones: pollution, hunger, disease, wars, we no longer find those who are responsible. And we are left there to wring our hands, impotent.

There is she who has come down to the street with these feelings long since rationalized, who has felt them emerge during hours in the street. And so many have vented their anger, have exploded, understanding how, in these demonstrations, we have nothing else to do that doesn't bring you to a mere picnic. So many have destructively expressed their very anger and fury against a system which, indeed, is a black block, a block that doesn't leave space for any other method, much less

that of the self-determination of life. Every imprisoned being, eventually, rebels, no matter how long and comfortable her cage may be.

Then we can also say that the police would have charged people regardless, that they have charged those who did nothing, that they didn't expect anything else, that they like to beat, that the atmosphere was in any case that of intimidation, but the fact is there was no other sensible way to behave when faced with 8 powers that decide for everyone and that surround us with thousands of armed men.

And he who has seen the endemic violence of the institutional demonstration, of its blocks, of walls, of divisions, even before direct violence, knows that the responsibility is that of the State and its protectors, independent of provocateurs. Their very existence is a provocation, a menace.

When we protest against those who govern the world, we cannot use measured means. The system wants someone (or some people) to govern everyone, and the individual can do nothing. And in these days thousands of individuals, not only some anarchists (now that everything interests us except riding the tiger), have expressed and have lived their own anger without mediations.

They know — the organizers, the mediators, the institutional politicians — that no one, neither us, nor them, nor anyone in the streets yesterday or in the future, can govern protest, can restrain the fury of those who are constrained every day to live under the aegis of the State, of laws, of justice. They — the so called pacifists, social democrats, and reformists — cannot do anything but retrace the systems and methods of those that they say they are contesting: hierarchical and specialist organizations, delegation, representation, control, censure, repression. Power against power. They disappear. Or they resign themselves to organize trips for bored alternative-antagonistic tourists, even to exotic and far destinations, that don't touch them closely in their daily lives.

Some general and abstract critical notes: the danger of these demonstrations is that even the most determined and sincere subside when it is only on these occasions that one can express oneself, that is, only when there are mass situations, when the satisfaction of agitating is shared by many, and when these actions are disseminated by the media: the dangers therefore are the renunciation of projectuality and self satisfaction.

On the contrary, that which is materially extremely dangerous is the spreading of film, video and photographic cameras everywhere, even in our own ranks. The instrument most useful by repression for control is the identification and repression of individuals. It is necessary to eliminate first of all amongst us, this practice, this stupid and useless habit of filming and photographing. Representation, the spectacle of reality cannot do other than deviate our actions.

El Paso, Sunday July 22, 2001

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Comments and Quotes

Different Everywhere

It's an old story and a long one, that every community creates its own outlaws. Those individuals who, willingly or not, have not abided by the laws of the gods or the authorities have always been banished. The difference that was burnt at the stake by the Holy Inquisition is today constrained between the lines of traveling papers or an expulsion order, when not enclosed in an asylum or a prison. In contempt for those who would like to expel us or chain us up due to one of those descriptions ("armed band", "criminal association") on which unanimous preventative condemnation comes down, we will carry our difference everywhere as individuals determined to subvert the rules of the community.

On Limiting One's Critique

Over the past several years, one movement in the so-called third world has been particularly successful in driving out western colonialism. This movement is made up of people indigenous to the region in which it is active and has gone a long way toward reestablishing local traditional values as it perceives them while almost completely eradicating western cultural influence. I am talking about the Taliban.

Of course, its perception of traditional Afghani cultural values arises out of a fanatical Islamic faith. On this basis, women are forced to submit to a most oppressive role that changes from day to day depending on the caprices of the Taliban interpretation of the Koran. One day, they may be allowed outside, completely veiled, to sell baked goods, as long as they take great care not to flash an ankle or talk to a man. The next day, they may be banned from selling, confined to the house and subject to punishment if they are seen through a window. But, indeed, these are the old ways. Do we keep our mouths shut at the whipping of women for flashing an ankle or appearing in their windows at the wrong time simply because women's liberation is a "western" idea?

Life Goes On

“It’s disgusting” were the words Dee Hjermstadt, governing board president of the Recreation Centers of Sun City West, Arizona, used to describe “public” sex at the centers. It is doubtful that those taking part in the acts share her feelings.

What is particularly interesting in this case is that Sun City West is not just any town. It is a planned community for people 55 years old and older. Maybe what bothers president Hjermstadt is the age of these lovers. Certainly they should know better; they should have outgrown such passions and desires; they should have burned them out through years of labor and tedious consumption. But instead these white-haired lovers pursue their desires, making love in the pools, in the spas, on park benches and in parking lots, women with men, men with men, women with women, as the desires flow.

Of course, Hjermstadt, the symbol of authority called in the cops to help suppress this disturbing outbreak of passion. Puritanism is the necessary adjunct to the use of sexual imagery to sell goods, an essential element of capitalism. But for some, the energy of sexual desire recognizes neither the laws against open sexual expression nor the social norms which dictate that such desire should disappear with age. In such energy lies the potential for revolt. And for those who grasp their desires as their own, life does not end till they die.

Honor Work and Pay Homage to the Worker

Among the many idols that have miserably fallen into the dust, there is one that seems to remain unassailable and unattacked. Work serves as the framework and armor of social organization, consolidates it, aids in the maintenance and reproduction of this society based on hierarchy and exploitation. To work means to produce commodities (not only material) and to contribute to the social peace. Our entire existence is stressed by work, by its rhythms and its needs: even our rest, even our pleasures, even our so-called free time. Our mind is programmed by work. Even those who are quick to declare themselves satisfied with the job they do, perhaps making themselves useful and virtuous as volunteers, pay for their privilege with domestication. Precisely thanks to its totalitarian character, work is presented to us as the only possibility we have of realizing ourselves, of having relationships; it is imposed on us as the sole condition of life. To accept the inevitability of work is the best way to perpetuate the state of survival and society. There is no liberated work, no alternative work, no reduced work, not even when we are fooled into carrying it out in a space that we have conquered. The chains that bind us must be broken, even if they have been lengthened, even if they have been lightened.

Aware that indifference and detachment do not change conditions, it only remains for us to intervene directly:

LET'S DESTROY WORK!

— Canenero

Carlo Giuliani is not a Hero or a Victim

Carlo Giuliani is not a victim of police brutality.

He is another dead man in the fields of social war.

Carl Giuliani is not a hero.

He was a revolutionary who — with dignity — decided to resist violently against whatever was oppressing him.

We remind all those who will try to build political careers on the blood of our dead comrade, that he was one of those they call “provocateur” or “hooligan”.

Carlo Giuliani doesn't fit into their funeral orations or their crocodile tears.

We don't feel pity for Carlo. He died for something to which we have dedicated our lives. For freedom...

Carlo will always live in the hearts of revolutionaries.

The struggle continues...

anarchist group “Disobedience”

(Athens, Greece, July 27, 2001)

Mourning for Carlo Giuliani, Mourning for Us All: Against Reformism, Martyrs and Separation

(excerpts)

Last week, July 27, 2001 a demonstration was organized in Belo Horizonte, in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, in solidarity with the struggles in Genoa (G8 meeting), but it was especially called against the death of Carlo Giuliani at the hands of the Italian police during these events in Italy.

[...]

One thing that I see very clearly is that in our demonstration, we didn't focus on Carlo Giuliani as a martyr as we see in a lot of places throughout the world. T-shirts, emotional slogans that portray Giuliani as a hero only separate him from us.

Calling Giuliani and calling ourselves demonstrators, activists, separates us from the world. We all need, and are, much more than that! We need the revolution day-by-day, and not with this separation. We must understand that when somebody

dies in a demonstration, it is we who have died. We must see that when someone is killed or beaten by the police while going home after work only for being black, white or lilac, it is one of us who has been beaten or killed! When we put an end to this separation between demonstration and daily life (the space of revolution) we will really be struggling against capitalism, against the G8 (against all capitalist symbols) and against the already daily reformism with which a lot of groups that claim to be of “the base”, “grassroots” and “autonomous” are impregnated.

Without daily struggle/resistance and will for revolution we don't have radicality. The struggle is made day by day, and mournfully.

In solidarity,

EP

Coletivo Acratico Proposta

All the newspapers of July 21 said: “The antiglobalization demonstrations have their first death,” but we say: we aren't just against globalization, and, unhappily, we have deaths all of our days.

The Technicians of Certainty

*“I was frightened to find myself
in the void, I myself a void.
I felt like I was suffocating,
considering and feeling
that everything is void,
solid void.”*

— Giacomo Leopardi

The metaphor of “mental illness” dispossesses the individual of whatever is most unique and personal in her way of life, in his method of perceiving reality and herself in it; this is one of the most dangerous attacks against the singular, because through it the individual is always brought back to the social, the collective, the only “healthy” dimension in existence.

The behavioral norms that regulate the human mass become absolute, the “deviant” act that follows a different logic is tolerated only when stripped of its peculiar “meaning”, of the particular “rationality” that underlies it. Reasons connect only to collective acts, which can be brought back, if not to the codes of the dominant culture, to those of various ethnic, antagonist and criminal subcultures that

exist. The sharing of meanings, symbols and interpretations of reality thus appears as the best antidote to madness.

Thus if one who suddenly kills his family is a lunatic, or better, a “monster”, one who sets fire to a refuge for foreigners appears as a xenophobe (at most, from the method, a bit hasty, but still within reason) and one who slaughters in the situation of a declared war is nothing but a “good soldier”.

Thus, according to the classifying generalization that makes them all alike, expropriating them of their lived singularity, lunatics are “dangerous to society”. Truthfully, one can only agree with this, certainly not because of the supposed and pretextual aggressivity and violence attributed to those who suffer psychiatric diagnosis (the psychiatrists and educators of every sort are undoubtedly much more dangerous), but because they have violated, knowingly or not, the essentially quantitative codes that constitute normality. What is surprising is that after long years of domestication there is anybody who does not respond to cultural stimuli, if not quite automatically, at least in a highly predictable manner. Unpredictability is the source of the greatest anxiety for every society and its guardians, since it is often the quality of the individual; no motive, no value, no purpose that is socially comprehensible, only an individual logic, necessarily abnormal.

Defense from this danger is entrusted to the proclamations of science. In other words, the “unhealthy” gesture, the creator of which is not responsible, remains as a consequence of an external misfortune that could strike and give rise to thousands of people like him. The mechanism is therefore well contrived, a gesture deprived of meaning, of an underlying will, becomes innocuous, and it is easy to neutralize it, along with its creator, behind the alibi, which is “social” as well, of the cure.

The psychiatric diagnosis comes down on the individual like an axe, amputating her language, his meaning, her life paths; it claims to eliminate them as irrational, senseless; the psychiatrist behaves before them with the liquidating attitude of one who transforms the experiences of life into malfunctions of the psyche, the emotions into a malignant tumor to be removed.

Psychiatrists, as technicians of certainty, are the most efficient police of the social order. Reality, like the meaning of existence, has clear and unequivocal boundaries for these priests in white shirts; their mission: to “return” those who have gotten lost venturing onto the winding paths of nonsense “to their senses”.

If the police are limited, as is claimed, to beating you, the psychiatrist demands to hear you say, “Thank you, I am well now” as well.

The focal point in the discussion is not in the four walls and the bars of the asylum, nor in the electroshock and constraint beds, nor in bad as opposed to good psychiatry, but in “psychiatric thought” itself, in the form of thinking of anyone who addresses himself to different subjects with the clinical eye of diagnosis,

always looking for the symptoms of a pathology in them, in order to annul the difference with a “therapy” that brings them back to being more like us.

If the real purpose of the “new places” of psychiatry was that of stimulating creativity, individual growth, liberating communication and developing the capacity for relations, they would not be “psychiatric” or “therapeutic/rehabilitative” places, but probably ideal places for everyone, places of freedom. The problem is that these places are nothing but ghettos in which one does not find individuals interacting on the level of mutuality, but rather two “categories” of persons in asymmetrical positions: the professionals and the clients, the healthy and the diseased, those who help and those who are helped; in these places, the healthy try to persuade the diseased that what they did and thought up to that time was wrong, or rather “unhealthy”, and through the “joyful” method of the encounter group, of dance, theatre and music...lead them toward the binaries of normality.

The “autonomy” and “self-realization” about which these democratic operators flap their tongues are exclusively their own and, to them, it is necessary to conform in order to be able to leave the healing enclosure. Psychiatric medicine itself, as analgesic (anesthetic) for the mind, is the sign of the attempt to block every development, every pathway however painful at times, that an individual puts into action as a reaction to that which oppresses her. Without mystifying this process, this moment of “crisis”, that is not necessarily a pathway to liberation, the fact of the matter remains that the answer of power is generalized narcosis, collective stupefaction, that renders us static and tranquil, anchored to our placid misery.

— Marco Beaco

There Are Those Who Say

The world is full of cowards
they want you to be cowardly
miserable modest well-behaved
spit in their faces
shit down their throats
world of the violated
lice of life
phantoms of the sanctuary
of work
protected servants of the law
perverted by god
transmitted
appearances, alien,
dispossesses, unfortunate,
bitter bile,
people bitter with repressed froth
back bent
prostituted
your strength, your strength
sold in another's interest
police, repressed
repressors resentful
frightened, confined
remember! that house is not yours!
They can always enter
lock the doors and shutters well
you might have committed a crime
look out look out for the police
are you sure you haven't done wrong?
look around
circumspect
perhaps the taxes
or something else
you have not perhaps killed someone
you think?
Is that car
yours? Are you sure?
You are not committing a theft?
Is that woman yours
and won't she be unfaithful to you?
And won't you be unfaithful to her?
And is that child really yours
bred in the womb?
Watch out someone might denounce you
where have you put your license
and identification card booklet
and passport health card
work card, money, legal,
fiscal, postal
are they not perhaps counterfeit

– Federico

Acts of Terrorism, Acts of War

The recent attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, along with the one near Camp David in Pennsylvania, were undoubtedly acts of terrorism. The perpetrators of these acts hijacked passenger planes full of people and crashed them into buildings without giving a thought to the passengers of the plane or the visitors who frequent the World Trade Center. The indiscriminate nature of its violence, justified with a political rationalization, is what distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence. But if one thinks about this too carefully, some frightening parallels become evident. What, after all, is the bombing of hospitals, orphanages, residential areas, rice paddies, rural villages – if not indiscriminate violence? Yet this is the practice that the United States government carried out in Viet Nam and Iraq, and that the United Nations forces largely under U.S. control carried out in Yugoslavia. Oh, of course, there were good reasons for these acts, political rationalizations to justify these acts of indiscriminate violence. Yes, the parallels are, indeed, frightening. But these actions carried out by the U.S. government were acts of state, police actions, acts of war – and this apparently distinguishes them from acts of terrorism.

In this light though, the words of Senator John McCain are telling. Speaking of the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and Camp David, he said, “These attacks clearly constitute an act of war.” But if acts of terrorism can be acts of war, then the acts of indiscriminate violence carried out by the United States government and its allies in the Viet Nam war, in the Gulf war, in the “police action” in Yugoslavia must all be considered acts of terrorism – unless the definition of the act changes depending on who does it.

In fact, if we look at the origin of the word terrorism, we find that it traces back to the Reign of Terror in France in the 1790’s, when the newly established republican state used indiscriminate violence to destroy all resistance to its rule whether from the old aristocracy or from the underclass who dreamed of taking the revolution much farther than the mere founding of a republic. Thus, terrorism, in its origin, was a practice of indiscriminate violence carried out by a state to reinforce its power. Furthermore, this new French state was supposedly a democratic state – a rule by the people. According to the ideology of democracy, the state is the people. For the French state established in the 1790’s, this meant that all enemies of the state were enemies of the people, and this was sufficient justification for

the indiscriminate violence of the Reign of Terror. But the equation of the state with the people provides justification for terrorism in another way. If a people are the state that rules them, then an attack against those people is an attack against their state. The method of warfare carried out by democratic states throughout the world indicates that this is precisely the thinking of the leaders of those states — to bomb hospitals, schools, orphanages, rice paddies, residential areas is to bomb the Yugoslav, Iraqi, Vietnamese states. Should we then be surprised when the contenders for state power who lack the resources of the United States government use this same horrifyingly democratic logic with the means they have at their disposal? Though these people may not yet be established in power, their acts can rightly be considered acts of a state in potential — acts of war, and so, due to the current methodology of war, acts of terrorism.

The American state will use these recent acts to justify intensified repression, the democratically accepted suppression of freedom. Acts of revolt will be painted with the brush of terrorism. But real terrorism is always an act of indiscriminate, rationalized violence aimed at the establishment and enforcement of power. Thus one can rightly equate acts of war, police actions and acts of terrorism. All are acts of state — actual states or potential states. And only the destruction of the state can bring an end to terrorism. If, as Bush says, “we have seen evil”, it is in the terrorism the state imposes on our lives day after day.

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