

Essay

On the university mall of banalities

OR

Two or three banalities addressed to the students and some others regarding their conditions and the various temporalities of a confined everyday existence that concerns them more or less particularly but is still invariably considered from the perspective of a few specific refrains of which said everyday existence is full: politics love work festivities leisure family friendship revolt media public order communication and all the things we'd want...



Cellule H1N1

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On the university mall of banalities

“Dans le patio universitaire des lieux communs”

(2009)

Translated from french by *Jordan*

<http://anticoncept.phpnet.us>

The colonization of the various sectors of social practice finds its most glaring expression in the student world. The conveyance upon students of all society's bad conscience masks everybody's misery and servitude.

On the Poverty of Student Life, Mustapha Khayati

I see several flocks of naked souls, all weeping miserably, and it seemed they were ruled by several different sets of laws.

Inferno, Dante Alighieri

Preamble

1 - The strategic subtlety of the present western "democracies" essentially consists in the fact that they have made all the forces of resistance that have risen to oppose them simultaneously express a total approval of domination itself. This is why whenever and wherever the will to be liberated from some specific form of submission is found, one hardly ever finds anything but the demand for equal submission to the general whole.

2 - Examples abound in the last forty years of history of these "forces of resistance" which have made all kinds of compromises and renunciations thinking that they could thereby have a few crumbs left for them by the Empire.

3 - From issue-based struggles such as feminist or homosexual struggles - which still had some grandeur to them in the 1970s - to the anti-CPE demonstrations, all of these conflicts were in the final analysis merely the pure affirmation of an intensified adherence to capitalism, and its police- corollary, the State.

4 - No one should be surprised anymore that the student is almost always on the front lines when it comes to protesting against details so as to more effectively renounce the struggle against the whole. The students' imbecilic belief in a happy tomorrow when the system will give them a social position worthy of the education received, the point of which they perpetually miss, just as religiously commands them to consent to all the humiliations inflicted upon them by the state-commodity apparatus.

5 - But students wouldn't want to miss their chance to be part of that apparatus.

6 - Their disgust at the ineptitude of capitalism ceases where the hope of getting a position within it in the foreseeable future begins, where they think they'll enjoy a right to the full employment of their incompetence.

7 - It is thus understandable why just when they were protesting the introduction of the Introductory Employment Contract system and its two years of try-outs of the right to work, **it was simply to affirm their servitude that they shamelessly demanded the right to work, to Indefinite Employment.**

8 - Such a demand, in the last analysis, is the express avowal of their "desire" to be slaves indefinitely.

9 - Similarly, when the students oppose "university autonomy" : **though they clearly observed that in the guise of autonomy, domination was only really offering them the total submission of their abilities to the market, they certainly wouldn't have gone so far as to demand real autonomy.** No. They prefer to brag about their reasonable moderation, a kind of moderation which they always think is sufficient unto itself, as they believe it to be the highest intelligence, outside of which no salvation would be possible. And off they go to the voting booth.

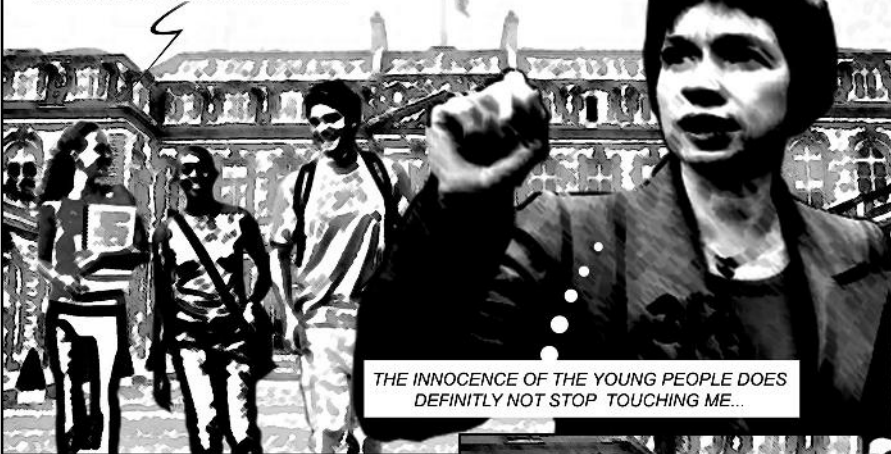
10 - Their faith is their ignorance; an ignorance above all of the fact that there's no point in getting rid of one kind of subjugation just to submit to another - all the more when that new subjugation is the very same that had wanted in the first place to subject them to market forces, forces of which it is simultaneously the police control instrument and the centralized Mafioso contraction which unilaterally passes legislation about its own legality and that of the other capitalist mafias.

11 - So, and without neglecting that they can at least offer to be more "permissive" than some corporation, they continue to demand that the universities remain dependent on the State to meet their needs is still merely to protest a detail so as to confirm their voluntary subjugation to the whole.

12 - **The general system of education is merely the general education of the system**, where fetishism of a metastasized cancer of the details of its partial malfunctions regularly hides the global immensity of its horrible success.

13 - This success finds its fairest representation in the actual harmlessness of student strikes - and of the other kinds of strikes too.

FINANCED BY THE EMPLOYERS,
UNIVERSITY BECOMES FINALLY AUTONOMOUS !
OUR FREEDOM TO STUDY INCREASES...



THE INNOCENCE OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE DOES
DEFINITLY NOT STOP TOUCHING ME...

THEY NAME AUTONOMY THEIR SERVITUDE,
AND FREEDOM WHAT HAS EVERYTHING
OF THE DIRTIEST SUBMISSION.



OUR ORGANISATION
STILL HAS BEAUTIFULLE DAYS IN FRONT OF HER.



WHAT THINK THE
SOCIALISTS
OF THIS REFORM ?

IT IS AN EUROPEAN MEASURE
THAT WAS ALSO IN THEIR PLAN.
BUT BEING IN THE OPPOSITION?
THEY ARE GOING TO PRETEND
TO OPPOSE TO IT.



I

Among the various spectacular categories magically specified by "commodity civilization" that of the student is one of the most miserable. Aside from them, up to today none or almost none have ever consented as much as the student to tolerating all the everyday subordination and humiliation that domination, ever indelicate, inflicted upon them; the student caste today is in such an unfortunate state that even an aged illiterate would hardly dream of regretting having never gone to school.

Since the situationist tract *on the misery of student life*, which more than forty years ago described, in language irreconcilable with domination, the immense nullity of the student condition, that condition has only gotten more degraded and debased, and today, in the eyes of the State at least, it has lost even the last of the foundations "justifying" its existence : to teach them a few partial truths. The few ruined remnants of truth once still offered students the possibility of finding a job, despicable as it may have been, within a completely despicable civilization, a civilization that students have only despised, if at all, during a few brief lapses of time in student life, and always without too clear an understanding of why. **But just as sure as they always dream of being part of the system after they're done with school, they also want, absolutely, to be hip and cool.** But these are just two sides of the same coin: for students, as their professors, or domination itself, have made clear, youth is (a) a time of protest - by which they mean political education - the second age of life is (b) citizenship, with work and family, and the third (c) is the moment when they must assent to stepping down from a life that hadn't ever really even been there.

A - The surprising thing is that the students of today have still not at all realized that politics has disappeared, or at least is totally absent from wherever they think they sense its presence : in parties, so-called citizens' associations, unions, NGOs, groups combatting unemployment, the media, partial "resistance"

movements, anti-racism, anti-fascism¹, and however many others.

Disavowing politics, renouncing politics, is the only real politics. There will always be more political materiality in smashing a supermarket window than in any election. All spectacular organizations, whether they call themselves political parties or non-government organizations, are organs of The *Empire*, which are indistinguishable from one another except by the names they give themselves. An association like ATTAC for instance, under cover of making a radical critique of, say, capitalism, is in reality devoted only to seeking "solutions" to save the Empire. Wherever it trembles and cracks, some old corpse's head pops up to bandage the wounds with a Tobin(-Hood) Tax. In all the social associations' meeting rooms you can smell the same stench of cancer as in the most officious parliaments. **Those who oppose the globalized world with a demand for an "alternative globalization," are obviously in a position identical to that of their so-called enemies.** The fact that some of them don't notice the aporia that the absurdity of such a position leaves them in gives them just enough of a tinge of sincerity to get people to swallow the globalist lie whose unfortunate promoters they themselves have become. It should be pointed out, among other things, how much these kinds of organizations speak a language analogous to that spoken by anyone in the ministries of the Empire - for example by referring as peace to the war that they are waging against us - to grasp the extent to which they are just a part of the imperial apparatus and a deceptive reflection of domination.

No matter how much students may claim that they've read *Orwell's 1984*², they go right on understanding nothing about it, and run from party to party, association to association, and end up running from nothing to nothing.³ And as is demanded of them, ever more insistently, from the employers' association to the most insipid women's magazines, the student has to get over it - to bounce back - endlessly.

***Get over it or die* is indeed the final leitmotiv of a world in decomposition that hasn't found any better way to make people forget that in reality *Get over it AND die* was really the last possible form of "existence" within it. *Get over it* means not letting anything traverse you and not traversing anything.**

or, *slamming like a pinball against all the normative flippers and walls of biopower and the transparent lies of the Spectacle*. To bounce back, to get over it, means to suffocate: **the stone of politics doesn't bounce ; it traverses the frosted windows of the apparatus to air out the space**. Fire itself, when it stops the gas factories running, can be a breath of fresh air too : and in this regard it appears obvious that most of the youth from the so-called housing estates know a lot more about the means of engaging in the struggle than most students do. *A fair request should be followed by the deed done in silence* (Dante, *Inferno*).

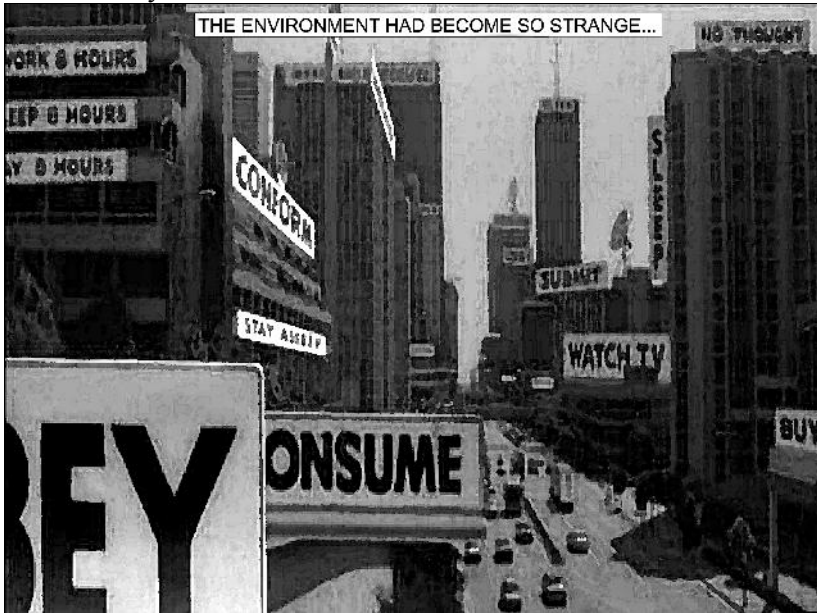
No official Left wing forces, even the officially non-uptight left, can provide an "alternative" to the Right wing forces, whether or not they're a popular movement. The object of power is always just to maintain law and order, to uphold the norms and to exhaust the potential for life that "surrounds" it. All living potential still not worn out necessarily represents a threat to power, and in particular to biopower which is its most complete paradigm. **Because the logic of potential is autonomy, which is incommensurable.**

The primordial common measure of autonomy is friendship, where the "economy" of giving gifts is rooted.

From the NPA to Badiou by way of Jose Bove, all the forces of the "new Left" into whose arms the students so often throw themselves, still retain all the lies and defeats of the old left; they're just the miserable remains of the old left that can hardly make anyone believe their illusions except by the most unoriginal posturing, where the same old Trotskyite depravity lives on with a name-change, and where the same old Maoist terror calls itself philosophical, and where the same old globalist citizenism presents itself fallaciously as the heir to some quasi-situationist 68ism. And in all of this one can easily recognize the old ruses of the Spectacle, where these scoundrels agitate their cadavers, held in sway by the posturing phoniness planted in their spines by domination.

As for ecology - that environmentalist "ideology" that students so often fervently sympathize with - although it continually presents itself as THE solution to all the evils caused by imperial industry, it too strictly serves to prolong its existence. **The "concept" of sustainable development means just that anyway: it always only means to sustain the "development" of the ongoing catastrophe,**

to make it last a bit longer. And indeed the catastrophe has already taken place, absolutely - that's why all that surrounds us now survives only as *environment*.



The environment is the *world-around-us* that has become so "foreign" to us that we call it *the environment*. It is the "space" from which all situations are removed, the "space" where *get over it and die* is the last "experience" permitted to us. So the **environment is not what we have to save, but what we urgently need to destroy**. This basically means that for every time an ecologist talks for instance about how necessary it is to replace gas vehicles with electric cars, we should burn a thousand cars. The essential issue of pollution has less to do with gas exhaust, and more with the apparatus of automobilization⁴ itself. **And nobody's ever recovered from an illness just by treating the symptoms.**

The ecologist is one of the symptoms of the catastrophe seeking to make itself sustainable. And doubtless today's students, born in this catastrophe whose contours and stakes they know only partially, if at all, prefer to cling to the "security" that hardly ever fails to remind one of suckling at mother's breast.

B - When on the other hand students do at last face up to the disappearance of work, particularly of skilled work, and the endlessly growing probability that they'll have to go on "living" in a precarious welfare dependent situation, **they only end up demanding full-time slavery more, so that at least they can consume a bit more of the very thing that subjugates them so totally: the commodity.** Apart from the *adolescents*,⁵ indeed, who more even than the students are always so eager to consume the various so-called cultural trinkets that a rather ungrateful commodity industry puts at their disposal each day. From the lofty intellectual heights they know they're supposed to prove themselves to be at, the students obviously brag that they're above all the commodity-formatted products the ordinary suckers get sold, and then run off to the mall to pick up the latest crap from Benabar or Green Day.

Of course, among the students one can certainly find a growing number of those who have at least the merit of illegally downloading digital versions of these cultural rations off the internet. **Piracy on the "web" has now replaced shoplifting, but only as simulacra, since this is obviously only the last means that the *Empire* has found of infinitely expanding the distribution of its images and "socially" noxious noises.** No one must be spared the *Spectacle* anymore, especially not the "poor."

Theft fraternizes with freeness in the digital realm. "Free stuff" is one of the apparatuses used by the *Empire* to increase the commodity lie. Freeness does not abolish exchange value; on the contrary, it confirms it, not negatively but as its reflection. **What is free is here never given (just taken),** and so the abstract equivalence of "things" to one another is maintained.⁶

Also, in most cases, it's just their lack of money that leads the students to illegally download the pathetic cultural entertainments that the *Empire* has produced for them. No theory, even partially subversive, has grown from it. Students want to consume, nothing more, and the meagerness of their means oblige them to dabble in false delinquency that only their false consciousness can make them think is real. **Such crime (even if authentically and consciously experienced) is at best any more than a meager individual solution.**⁷

Of course, those who, among the students, pretend to embrace that route in order to not submit to the hell of work sometimes do engage with it quite "sincerely," however they must very soon discover how totally this engagement condemns them to a survival as lost ghosts in the data-basic desert of cyberspace. No work, no family, no fatherland, sure, at best - but no life either.

For everyone else, it's the total misery of part-time employment where their youth dies full time. Convinced that getting paid a wage would somehow make them independent, when it doesn't even provide enough to stop depending on their parents, they wallow with genuine pride in the mire of that final voluntary servitude : *Even as waves that break above Charybdis, each shattering the other when they meet, so must the spirits here dance their round dance* (Dante, *Inferno*).

When eventually it occurs to the students to rejoice about a certain ongoing decomposition of the family, as assured as they may be about the "progressivism" of the position they take on it and the freeness of their moral values, it's only because they haven't grasped anything about the reality of such decomposition, which never really gives rise to our devotion to a broader community, but much to the contrary merely to the metastatic multiplication of the "bourgeois" family cell. **The decomposition of the family is the apparatus thanks to which it spreads and occupies the whole territory. In other words, the deterritorialization of the family is the very means it has used to colonize the whole space so that the whole country becomes the absolute household of the family.** Moreover the "financial" poverty of the youth alone makes them even more heavily dependent on the family cell, and it can hardly break off from them now except through ever more improbable "virtual" fraternal friendships - and so the student bares his soul ... on Facebook.

The result of this "neo-familial" apparatus is a general infantilization that the student generally can't escape - and that's why students get treated, and treat themselves, as school-kids, as disciples - not even really as respected academics, as fellow students. Outside the university, the *infantilized* masses are called *citizens*, i.e., *clones*. At the university they're called *disciples*, i.e., *clones*. **But these**

disciples don't really study ; they just obey the orders they get from the professors,⁸ who intend to make them into *full-fledged citizens*. And all citizens are disciples of the *Empire*.

This anthropological metamorphosis is quite regularly celebrated by the media, as a *cult of youth*, where infantilization takes on the deceitful appearance of overflowing, abundant life, which only conceals under a pile of advertising just how much life has faded away into "image", and in reality condemns youth to a survival flooded through and through. **When the youth undress they take off their "image," because aside from their image they're already nude.**



The spectacular *cult of youth* is not what it seems, i.e., the spotlighting of some kind of a greater freedom because of the "vital potential" proper to that age, in reality it is merely an incessant Billy-clubbing intended to religiously separate the latter from its own potential, relegating it to commodities.

The time of youth will of course be greatly shortened when it's purchased in the supermarkets of the *Empire*. That's why students so often only fear growing old in light of the withering they have always already been subject to.

C - Lastly, today's students are obviously acutely aware of the threat posed to their retirement. How could they fail to be, considering that ever since birth they've spent such a significant amount of time in front of screens, where frockless priests⁹ who constantly present to them the near-unavoidability of the "shortfall" in the retirement system. But all the signs given them make them think that this "shortfall" never existed before now, even when in fact it is now life itself that existence has been shorted on. Plunged into imperial war from birth to death as we are, retirement has now become one of those rare "statuses" that is allowed us, ontologically speaking, and this is essentially because no one has hardly ever wanted to acknowledge the endemic reality of said war up to now, a war which is more civil than social; at least in terms of its current decomposition, nothing guarantees the survival of society of any

kind or in any sense whatsoever, except that a few vague memories of it will remain, and the bitter aftertaste it's left us with.

To be plain, we are not denying the class struggle, but rather trying to get a grasp of how at this point proletarians¹⁰ are everywhere, as people with plenty energy and nothing to do.

It's in vain for anyone to feel bad about the passing of society, just as sure as it is in vain for anyone to deplore the poor compensations it once offered to people for growing old. The progressive disappearance of social security and welfare as a whole is anyway merely the disappearance of a communization of "wealth", the real object of which was always first and foremost the maintenance of the social order.

The Social Security system isn't dying, it's just changed clothes: now it wears a military uniform - i.e., it's put on dress more appropriate to the present social desolation.

The death agony of capitalism has forced the *Empire* to manifest its essentially repressive nature ever more visibly, and this has been going on for around forty years now.

The "crisis" that we've had pounded into our ears for several months now isn't just yesterday's news, contrary to what domination and its communication experts would have us believe. It started as far back as the 1970s and has never stopped since. Capitalism has long been the primary weapon employed by the *Empire* to maintain a certain kind of social order : the manipulation of abstract exchanges and the growth and spread of a pseudo-comfort which is in fact totally poisoned, which has essentially managed to keep everyone (more or less) in a sort of individualistic torpor with hardly any precedent in history - *we are of course speaking essentially about the west, and what is commonly referred to as the "glorious thirty" : 1945-1975*. The (neoliberal) capitalist weapon was somewhat efficient¹¹ - even if that western "order" has already been maintained only at the price of immense global disorder - and its progressive decomposition is in part at least exactly what has forced domination to make more use than before of the police and army, and of the whole technological panoply of apparatuses for the control of whole "populations."

True, in a world where the old themselves have started going on strike - but on strike from what ? - and where junior high students set

their schools on fire now and then, the "State" has necessarily had to prove its total lack of humor regarding whatever escapes its control, in spite of the obviously burlesque nature of the situations it has to deal with.

It won't be long now until the oldsters, the old timers, the crones, the senile, the old farts - and with them the youngsters, the kids, the spring chickens, the brats, little ones of all kinds will join the eruptions of rioting spreading incessantly over the planet. It's even a good bet that they'll apply themselves to them far sooner and with more of an awareness of what's at stake than university-goers will, particularly if those university-goers are profs. **The times never cease to be a good laugh.**



II

One of the primary "signs" of the withering of the students' condition is the increasing scorn piled upon professors, those essentially detestable beings, by the *Empire* itself. Though a few dozen years ago professors could still pretend that they were part of the so-called bigwig "class," and get the recognition that a Modern Liberal State sometimes still gives to its most zealous servants, since those days the slimming of their salaries has alone sufficed to relegate them to the edge of the commoner classes. **So since now no one but professors still believe in the upstanding necessity of fair pay for a fair day's work, they can hardly hide the miserable state of their own knowledge from themselves any longer.** This sudden "awareness" is no less true because of the fact that it comes to their consciousness by a deceitful route: the quantitative magnitude of their salaries = quantitative magnitude of work provided. On the contrary, the misery of the very reasoning itself that brought them to realize this truth confirms it to the fullest, and condemns him to suffer the legitimate mockery of the littlest elementary school dunce. Indeed, who but students could go on believing anymore that such a being, *immanentized* on the imperial altar, *clonified* as a professor, would still deserve any kind of respect or attention to his fastidious discourse ?

One of the moments when professors never fail to positively prove their concrete nullity in the truly citizen¹² - caliber non-life they're fixed to a position in, is the particular moment when they give up protesting some particular issue when it starts to exceed the norms authorized by the *Empire*. **That is, when the professors are no longer able to neglect the fact that domination pays them (for how much longer?) more for their submission than for their knowledge.**

Recently, we've seen - during strikes and university closures against the LRU law and *masterization* - ministers openly threaten to cancel the wages of certain professors who were reticent about climbing onto the gallows of the *norm*. And it's a good bet that this wasn't just an empty threat - the paranoia of biopower does not afford it the luxury of burdening itself with those scant appearances of decorum that feudal lords used to be able

to hand out. No one in the *Empire*, or hardly anyone, must now escape control and oversight and whoever fails to self-police and clonify themselves must quite soon feel the blow of the violent bio-billy-club of biopower, which comes in several forms.

That professors are more and more often referred to as teachers, both by themselves and by the media and domination as a whole, is quite telling about how important it is to hide their true role. It has been known for a long while that one of the ruses of spectacular newspeak is to keep calling things by a certain name even when they've already disappeared, or conversely to modify those names when they persist. Professors have now become teachers, because it is now more necessary than ever for the *Empire* to make people believe that they are *those who makes people aware of things, who let people know things and give people knowledge*, when in reality it is essentially these men and women's job to profess the imperial "word." And it is this total submission to the *Empire* that renders them so totally detestable and quite logically scorned by the *Empire* itself, as well as by many others.

Just as surely as journalists, professors are priests that endlessly take pride in how secular they are. But it's precisely because one of their primary roles is to religiously fence in everything that first appeared as our freedoms : **their quasi-fundamentalist belief in secularism is precisely what makes them religious.**

As for students, particularly those referred to as "leftist," they adhere to that faith with a seminarian zeal, with all the insolence of a simpleton blissfully happy to be able to give himself up to the *kingdom of emptiness*. Though generally they express their scorn for religion without hesitation, especially for Christianity, it is only because they don't see how religious their attachment to their own idols is, though they may perhaps be less Christian, Muslim, Jewish, etc. **Luckily not all the pantheons are on rue Soufflot, at the Vatican, in Mecca, or at the Synagogue, but they're fortunately still not at the concert hall, the college faculty, or the national stadium either.**

Another obvious "sign" of the decrepit conditions that students scrape by in is in the architecture of the spaces they have to frequent, and especially of course that of their universities. The latter, indeed,

aside from the fact that it may be a former military facility, like at Saint-Etienne, generally proves to have been designed to simply be another non-place, as heavily policed as a pedestrian walkway, where the urgency people feel that they have to get out as fast as possible immediately bars the possibility of meeting anyone at all. **There is not to be any demobilizing territory outside of the lecture hall.**¹³ The policelike management of flows, which for a long while has been in control of our cities, had to end up penetrating the colleges.

The best way of escaping the apparatus of control in the universities is not just with a strike, which quickly proves insufficient, but the reappropriation and repurposing of places by their active occupants during the strike - "stoppage" is just a name given to such practices out of habit.

With social welfare workers and artists, the separate urbanists and architects have all the best police on their side.

The acceleration of flows, partly provoked by the disappearance of really inhabitable places,¹⁴ has still not come to be despised by students, in spite of the inevitable "psychic" suffering engendered by that acceleration - and they rush off to see their psychologists, those neo-cops of the soul.¹⁵

Nothing, for students, and for many others, is practically inhabitable now; not even their housing, the size of which is rather ordinarily proportional to the respect given it : insignificant, and nevertheless quite costly. Though this kind of confinement certainly affords them the ability to jerk off with their playstation joysticks, they don't go so far as to give them enough space to comfortably host any friends. **The tiny confined space of their studio apartments invariably condemn students to vegetating in just as tiny and confined "adventures" with their friends and lovers; but knowing the transience of their condition, they suffer in silence, and brag about the interim grandeur of their sexual freedom, which most of the time is about up to the level of a glance at a porno film.**¹⁶

In the cafe on Saturday evening, in their drunken solitude, students can certainly still have a few encounters and joyously celebrate them ; they continue nonetheless to feel the bitterness of an

ever profounder loneliness, particularly because they believe that love obeys certain Laws. **Though the beautiful game of free love and the diversity of affinities may have some rules to it, it nevertheless obeys absolutely no Laws.** So they can congratulate themselves on proliferating their "conquests," as students so often like to do, but they don't necessarily have any more real amorous freedom to them than those who brag about being infallibly faithful.

Free play only exists when it's not subject to anything at all, except to the rules created by the players themselves ; this is the foundation that all concrete autonomy, and consequently all autonomous community, rests upon.



The "inhumanity" of urbanism in general is the root of the "inhumanity" of today's modes of communication. Just as surely as our cities are now designed exclusively for the passage of flows of nullified beings, under constant surveillance by cameras, telecommunications devices are apparatuses for the annihilation of speech as a flow, surveilled by snitches. **Bodies and words hardly leave any trace anymore, except digital traces, usable by the police.** But most often the student just sees all this as a kind of game, and simply LOLs about it.

A final "sign" of the magnitude of the students' poverty - since we have to keep this short so as to not lose the students' illiterate attention - can be found in the way that he loves setting up his primary ignorance as ultimate intelligence. **Students are essentially take pride in spitting on everything they don't understand, and most of the time put it down as intellectualism.** Intellectualism, of course, as an expression of false consciousness, is always the privilege of pedants, whose only talent is their total mastery of media-imperialist phraseology that allows them to pass their ignorance off as intelligence, and thus to get the students to understand them. And of course, the students will soon enough give us tomorrow's Bernard-Henri Levys and the latest fashionable sociologists.

As for the sociologists, it is interesting to point out that many of them end up finding jobs in *management consultancy* for big corporations like France Telecom or Renault: **we already knew that sociology is a combat sport, but now we know that it tempts people to suicide.**

Separate, dehumanized communication leads conscious students wanting to rediscover the possibility of sharing true speech and language to consume various drugs. **But the majority of these drugs are adulterated, since they're always made in the very heart of the imperial Mafioso system, like almost all food these days as well.** Cannabis, which could still open minds back in 1968, has subsequently undergone such a massive transformation that what one can smoke now is little more than counterfeit product that instead tends simply to numb minds. **The false rules everywhere that industry is master.** We can still obviously still dig out some good "product" here and there, but it's harder and harder to find as the commodity's grip spreads. Capitalism is above all the frustrating world of false abundance, or of undifferentiated abundance, which is of course quite similar, particularly as a real superabundance of want.

And it is because students survive full time like so many others in a regime of want where they swallow whatever's sold to them by the *Empire*, from hamburgers to weak rants from media hacks and "specialists" of all kinds. They must necessarily drink greedily from their deceptive discourses if they want to be recognized by them or

at least to receive a bit less scorn from them. Otherwise how could students pass their ignorance off as intelligence, since they're so scorned by these priests and have to win their consent even to be present in the same places as them.

The students' intelligence ceases where the imbecilic immoderation of their social ambition begins ; an ambition which is no more than the worn out old dream of all those who still haven't noticed society's total bankruptcy. **The *End of History* is the lie intended to hide just how much we are really irreversibly locked into the History of the End of a Civilization.** And we must lift ourselves out of it, not by going backwards, which pretense would be illusory anyway, but by a radical refusal both of the present conditions and of the conditions that the *Empire* is preparing for us tomorrow, in order to at least maintain its domination a little longer.

The abolition of work, money, the State and all hierarchy, the suppression of prisons - in short, the annihilation of all this nothingness, is today not a mere matter of opinion, but the always already legitimate demand of those who wish to live an absolutely poetic and free life.

Spark to Athène, fire in Paris, it is the uprising wich comes !



III

After a long period of lethargic sleep and permanent counter-revolution, a new era of contestation is starting to form now, borne by the youth. But the Empire, in its representations of itself and of its enemies, imposes its ideological categories to be used to understand the world and history. It acts as if everything that happens were part of the natural order of things, and isolates the real eruptions where its collapse announces itself in the restrictive framework of its illusory categories. But the revolt of the youth against the way of life imposed on them is in reality only the harbinger of an ever vaster subversion which will embrace all of those who are ever more profoundly sickened by the impossibility of living, a prelude to the upcoming era of insurrection.¹⁷

In this history, it is up to the students to make every feeling of depression into a strike, to make every feeling of solitude into a "blockade," and to make every feeling of having nothing to do into an insurrection. **The real independence of the universities only begins where such revolts begin to appear.** The same goes for all other "social bodies". **Putting these times back on trial would mean acknowledging their merits, which they don't deserve; everything condemns our times immediately.** The real merit, however, of a few of the students in the struggles of 2009, was that they not only occupied the universities for the whole time, but also and above all were able to make use of that time to start to forget all the partial demands, the corporate student associations, the old reformist nonsense, and started thinking more broadly, which necessarily pushed them towards what the real situation demands: a total condemnation of the *Empire* as a whole.

Those who do not understand the tyrannical violence of our times will see only a call to gratuitous violence in our words, but we aren't writing for them : **the legitimacy of our violence is immense because it is appropriate to the violence imposed on us by the *Empire*.**

We must not expect anything to be handed us from the heavens except the sun or poor weather ; the rest will follow naturally.

October 22, 2009.

Notes

1 – Anti-racism and anti-fascism are the two primary pseudo-political hobbyhorses of the student, as it's been in particular since 1981; these, along with anti-homophobia, are the last possible "struggles" left to a Left wing that no longer aims to radically overthrow capitalism. This abandonment of the class struggle and of social war in general by the official left really dates from immediately after the second world war, from a particular compromise reached between De Gaulle and said Left wing. During the popular front years, it was clear that a Left wing "in power," are never very inclined toward insurrection. But that abandonment was only officially admitted and fully applied as a properly governmental apparatus after the presidency of François Mitterrand. Otherwise the Jack Langs, the Kouchners, and the whole clique of "new philosophers", totalitarians calling themselves anti-totalitarians, have no trouble finding a place at the table.

2 - "There was a whole chain of separate departments dealing with proletarian literature, music, drama, and entertainment generally. Here were produced rubbishy newspapers containing almost nothing except sport, crime and astrology, sensational five-cent novelettes, films oozing with sex, and sentimental songs which were composed entirely by mechanical means on a special kind of kaleidoscope known as a versificator." - George Orwell, *1984*.

3 – The minor success of the NPA (New Anticapitalist Party) can't be explained by the existence of a new breed of youth, excited to concretely overturn capitalism, but rather by the fact that this youth with nothing to do found something in it that would let them rejoin the ranks of the imperial norm without having to feel too ashamed of it. They could even get the very "bourgeois" little tingle of appearing to be rebels, at least in terms of publicity. The NPA is the latest fashionable nothingness - and it's already plain to us that its "life" (or at least its minor success in terms of esteem) will be short, like any other fashion trend. The momentary role of the NPA within the "civilization" of the spectacle consists exclusively in capturing for a moment the lost children born from that "civilization" so as to prevent their wasted energy from being put to a more appropriate, more insurrectional use.

4 – Among all the other commodities that so tirelessly mobilize us, the car is really the great cannonball that Haussmann would hardly have imagined in his wildest dreams. We must however point out here that the "velib" (free bike) or "rent-a-bike" programs in today's cities, of which the students as we've just been pointing out, will of course always celebrate the incredible merits, was not installed in our cities to suppress or discourage vehicular circulation, but rather to increase that circulation by suppressing a large number of parking spots for motor vehicles, and to prevent the formation of barricades in the streets of our cities. Indeed it is quite easy to rapidly construct a barricade in a street where cars are parked on the sides of the road where now there's nothing but the famous "velib" bike parking areas. It's just a little ecology-rebel tickle for pathetic bourgeois bohemians gasping for air, hipsters who aren't any closer for all that to the "ordinary folks" that they claim enthusiastically to love so much.

5 – The "adolescent" is a specific category invented by capitalism. It didn't exist until the 60s, years when the rapid expansion of commodification demanded the appearance of a new, more malleable type of consumer: a few commodity advertisements and a James Dean or two were almost enough on their own to get all kinds of kids age 12-18 to feel like they belonged to that category. Adolescence, for commodity domination, is supposed to mean being a bit of a rebel (without a cause) and more specifically, in opposition to their parents; otherwise they would go on putting all kinds of "authoritarian" limitations on their consumption. From rock n' roll to teeny boppers, from the Beatles to Johnny Halliday, it's all one spectacle of rebellion and its

commodity-cultural industrial corollary until the moronic state of the "teens" and their parents (former adolescents themselves) becomes firmly entrenched enough that they can go on selling them whatever trash; otherwise they might go a little too far with the image of rebellion.

6 – Concretely speaking this equivalence is plain to see all over the internet; just go on google video and anyone can see how any image is abstractly equal to any other image - and they thus all show their true "nature" as commodities, paid for by advertisements.

7 – The computer geek is usually the mortified result of such solutions, who can hardly make any other "choice" besides that isolation and escape into the "virtual" world, of which he is the object. The geek is always in the final analysis himself little more than an absurd social suicide. His (quite real) consciousness of the global catastrophe pushes him to curl up into himself, as a cybernetic self-amputee.

8 – And anyway, what good would it do them to study, when the most they could hope for would be to offer to put their incompetence at the service of the global economic war ?

9 – By this we refer to "journalists".

10 – Proletarian does not only refer to those who have been cut off from the means of production they use, but also and above all those who have been dispossessed of any specific know-how - and in this sense today we can find proletarians in every social class. The proletariat is everywhere now, and is everywhere the insurrectional class par excellence from the moment that it begins to discover in that fact a way to make practical use of the wasted energy proper to their state.

11 – It should however be emphasized here that this efficiency was partly due to the fact that capitalism could still pretend to sympathize with a few old skills and know-hows that mostly came from artisanal creation that it has nevertheless never stopped undermining and stripping. But the ideal employee of capitalism is the proletarian - that being who can be molded at will and at the lowest possible cost, precisely because he has been stripped of all specific skill and know-how.

12 – The citizen is never a singular being, i.e., a sickened being, who faces up to what traverses him and to what he traverses, and does so idiosyncratically. The citizen instead is always just a clone of the Empire, recognizable by the fact that he only expresses himself in the Empire's newspeak, which consists in the dualistic categories specified by the Spectacle's black magic, the duality of which is a mere simulacrum - left/right; public/private, Socialists/Conservatives, NPA/national front, democracy/dictatorship, axis of good/axis of evil, globalization/alternative globalization, etc.

13 – The lecture hall is the temple where students are supposed to mobilize their attention in religious silence so as to religiously record the various sermons delivered by their professors.

14 – And vice-versa: the acceleration of flows provokes the disappearance of inhabitable places.

15 – Certainly, among students one can occasionally find a few that dislike the "psych" cops: but it's all too often just because they've read some Gilles Deleuze and have found in him a possible escape, a few points of flight, and those points of flight may even have something profoundly subversive about them. But everything, or almost everything, that Deleuze envisioned to subvert the "established order" was itself established by that order. No point of flight, no new flow, can subvert the Empire's points of flight and flows. That Gilles Deleuze is

primarily taught and worshipped in the big US American and English universities is quite telling about the pro-capitalist reality behind his conceptual thinking, whatever talent he may have had.

16 – Though this is doubtless less applicable to female students than to their male co-religionists.

17 – A slight alteration of a passage from "on the misery of student life".

On the everlasting presence of ectoplasms in a continuous academic background

told in twelve rough theses

Translated from french by *Le Viandier*

« Here all suspicion needs must be abandoned, all cowerdice must needs be here extinct. We to the place have come, where I have told thee thou shalt behold the people dolorous who have foregone the good of intellect. »

Dante Alighieri, *Hell*.

1 - **Among all the [political] false consciousnesses that fill our time, that of the *anti-blockade* students may again be credited with the first position.**

2 - The anti-blockade students never study anything : if they did, only a little, they would unavoidably expose themselves to the hazards of discovering with a fright the frightening poverty of their own condition - wherein their surprising cowardice invariably advise them to stick to their pupil's position. At their age !

3 - As the eternal pupils of their masters, the *anti-blockade* students don't want to rise up - or only "in society" -, and as mere users of their universities amphitheatres, they want diplomas for only food.

4 - That these diplomas only come to provide a confirmation of their ignorance, of that the *antiblockade* students are unaware. Therefore, they never grow weary of priding themselves unknowingly of that ignorance.

5 - But the reason is, as far as the *anti-blockade* students are concerned, boasting utterly falls within the highest possible degree of fulfilment. Their mistake on that exactly makes sure they will be laughed at, even by the most despised of the guests in an idiots' dinner.

6 - Among all the diversely pitiful qualities that the *anti-blockade* students pride themselves to possess though, one of the most noticeable is once again their spectacular capacity of adapting

to all the monstrosities of their time. Yet indeed, no other quality could be a better match to these people devoid of any quality that the *anti-blockade* students really are.

7 - The *anti-blockade* students always discover too late to what degree the adaptability they are so proud of is nothing other than the main "virtue" of the slaves. The fact alone that possessing such a "virtue" is always advised to them by their masters is enough to prove it.

8 - As slaves, the *anti-blockade* students barely contemplate the general through the eyes of their specific condition : hence that they mistake the whole for the part, the disease and the symptom, the time and the clock, life and death, and vice versa.

9 - Even the binges which the *anti-blockade* students still indulge in sometimes leave the bitter taste of a Christmas dinner in an old people's home. But the retired people at least know this truth that the wine they are provided with is fake.

10 - The *anti-blockade* students are cool. Understand by this that they devote all their energy to repeat their masters' views exactly as they are.

11 - The idiotic incoherence of the *anti-blockade* students are particularly obvious in the fact that they are sometimes in favour of the strike ; in their eyes obviously the latter always aims at the maintenance of law and order.

12 - From the mucilaginous way the *anti-blockade* students are brown noses one can tell them with an absolute certainty as ectoplasmic. But, as a reminder, *ectoplasms need not be shot, they have to be pushed aside off the target.*



No official Left wing forces, even the officially non-uptight left, can provide an "alternative" to the Right wing forces, whether or not they're a popular movement. The object of power is always just to maintain law and order, to uphold the norms and to exhaust the potential for life that "surrounds" it.



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