

NOTES

1. Association for the Tobin Tax for the Aid of Citizens. An extra-parliamentary coalition of leftists, once influential in France as the statist fringe of the anti-globalization movement. –tr.
2. The ‘White Overalls:’ Negriist militant organisation which dominated the anti-globalization movement in Italy. –tr. [Notably served to scuttle disruptive actions and opposed the Black Bloc. –ed.]
3. The mouthpiece of ATTAC. –tr
4. Mouvement des Entreprises de France, the union of French bosses. –tr.
5. Anarchist Federation. –tr.

Proposition I

The triumph of civilization lacks nothing.

Neither political terror nor affective poverty.

Nor universal sterility.

The desert cannot grow anymore: it is everywhere.

But it can still deepen.

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

We are among those who get organized.

Scholium

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

It attaches to the sensible, to worlds.

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

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

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

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

linger on;

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

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

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

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

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

Which is to say the same thing.

Then, on the fringe of this paralysis, there is the “something, anything, has to be done” of the activists. Seattle, Prague, Genoa, the struggle against GM or the movements of the unemployed, we have played our part, we have taken sides in the struggles of these last years; and certainly not the side of ATTAC¹ or the Tute Bianche.²

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

We have seen the most tedious economism – that of Le Monde Diplomatique³ – becoming the new popular religion. And Negriism

the extent that science participates in imperial pacification it is firstly by carrying out only those experiments, testing only those hypotheses, that are compatible with the maintenance of the prevailing order. Our capacity to ruin imperial order is conditioned upon opening spaces for antagonistic experiments. For these experiments to produce their related worlds we need such clearings, just as the plurality of these worlds is needed for the smothered antagonisms of scientific practice to express themselves.

In this process the practitioners of the old mechanistic and Pasteurian medicine must join those who practice medicine of the “traditional” kind, setting aside all new age confusion. The attachment to research must cease to be confused with the judicial defense of the integrity of the laboratory. Non-productivist agricultural practices must develop beyond the category of the organic. Those who feel the insufferable contradictions of “public education”, between the championing of “citizenship” and the workshop of the diffuse self-entrepreneuriat, must be more and more numerous. “Culture” must no longer be able to take pride in the collaboration of a single inventor of forms.

Alliances are everywhere possible.

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

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

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

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

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

Each science implements a series of hypotheses; these hypotheses are so many decisions regarding the construction of reality. This is today widely admitted. What is denied is the ethical meaning of each of these decisions, in what way they involve a certain life-form, a certain way of perceiving the world (for instance, experiencing the time of existence as the unwinding of a "genetic program", or joy as a matter of serotonin).

Considered in this way, scientific language games seem less made for establishing a communication between those who use them, than for excluding those who ignore them. The airtight material apparatus in which scientific activity is inscribed – laboratories, symposiums, etc. – carries in itself a divorce between experimentations and the worlds they configure. It is not enough to describe the way the "core" research is always connected in some way to military-commercial interests, and how in their turn these interests define the contents, the very orientations of research. To

imposing itself as the only alternative to the intellectual rout of the global left. Leftist militantism has everywhere gone back to raising its tottering constructions, its depressive networks, until exhaustion.

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

In these times, from Davos to Porto Alegre, from the MEDEF⁴ to the CNT, capitalism and anti-capitalism describe the same absent horizon. The same truncated prospect of managing the disaster.

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

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

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

Whoever denounces exempts themselves.

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

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

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

to the current confusion.

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

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

Everywhere things are working. Wherever the normal situation prevails.

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

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

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

The continuity we seek is the one which allows us, after having struggled for months, to not go back to work, to not start working again as before, to keep doing harm. And this can only be built during movements. It is a matter of immediate, material sharing, the construction of a real revolutionary war machine, the construction of the Party.

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

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

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

Of course, these monopolies are distributed in various ways

weakness, these situations of interruption appear as moments in which empire arises, takes its place in the materiality of worlds, experiments with new procedures. For it is precisely there that it ties itself more firmly to the populations it claims to rescue. Empire claims everywhere to be the agent of return to the normal situation. Our task, conversely, is to make habitable the situation of exception. We will genuinely succeed in “blocking corporate-society” only on condition that such a “blockage” is made up of desires other than that of a return to normality.

What happens in a strike or in a “natural disaster” is in a way quite similar. A suspension occurs in the organized stability of our dependencies. At that point the being of need, the communist being, that which essentially binds us and essentially separates us, is laid bare in each. The blanket of shame that normally covers it is torn apart. The receptiveness for encounter, for experimentation of other relations to the world, to others, to oneself, as it appears in these moments, is enough to sweep away any doubt about the possibility of communism. About the need for communism too. What is then required is our ability to self-organize, our ability, by organizing ourselves right away on the basis of our needs, to prolong, to propagate, to give effectivity to the situation of exception, which has always formed the basis of state terror only because it has remained a threat on the part of state. This is particularly striking in “social movements”. The very expression “social movement” seems to suggest that what really matters is what we are heading towards, and not what happens here. There has been in all the social movements up till now a commitment not to seize what is here, which explains why they follow each other without ever becoming a force, like a succession of breaking waves. Hence the particular texture, so volatile, of their sociality, where any commitment appears revocable. Hence also their invariable drama: a quick ascent thanks to an echo in the media, then, on the basis of this hasty aggregation, the slow but inevitable erosion; and finally, the dried-up movement, the last group of diehards who get a card from this or that union, found this or that association, expecting in this way to find an organizational continuity to their commitment. But we do not seek such continuity: the fact of having premises where we might meet, and a photocopier to print tracts.

does in any office, in any factory. This is what any gang does. Any revolutionary or counter-revolutionary party.

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

Reality is not capitalist.

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

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

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

From now on all friendship is political.

Proposition II

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

the disaster.

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

Scholium

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

As it is reorganized and progressively recaptured, public space is covered with cameras. Not only is any surveillance now possible, it has become acceptable. All sorts of lists of “suspects” circulate from department to department, and we can scarcely guess their probable uses. The social space once traversed by flâneurs is now militarily marked and sealed, and its ties of chatter and gossip have been transformed into recriminate whispers, the substance of new micro-legal constraints. In the UK the Anti Social Behaviour Orders have turned the most petty disputes among neighbors into personally tailored edicts of exile, banishing a marked individual from a street corner or proscribing the wearing of hooded tops within a specific zone. Meanwhile the Metropolitan Police, working with members of the special forces, pursue their campaign against terror with a series of “mistaken” shootings. A former head of the CIA, one of those

written in the very publication of the French Department of Youth, Education and Research: “From now on, everyone knows that without the concrete help of citizens, the state will have neither the means nor the time to carry on the work that can prevent our society from exploding.”

Defeating the Left, that is to say keeping continuously open the channel of social disaffection, is not only necessary but also possible today. We witness, while the imperial structures become stronger at an unprecedented rate, the transition from the old Labour left, gravedigger of the Labour movement and born from it, to a new global, cultural left, of which it can be said that Negriism is at the head. This new left has not yet fully established itself on the recently neutralized “anti-globalization movement.” The new lures they employ are not yet effective, whilst the old ones have long been useless. Our task is to ruin the global left wherever it comes forth, to sabotage methodically, that is to say in theory as well as in practice, any of its moments of constitution. Thus for instance our success in Genoa lay less in the spectacular confrontations with the police, or in the damage inflicted on the organs of state and capital, than in the fact that the spreading of the practice of confrontation peculiar to the “Black Bloc” to all the parts of the demonstration scuttled the expected triumph of the Tute Bianche. And so, in the aftermath, our failure has been to have not known how to elaborate our position in such a way that this victory in the street becomes something else than the mere bogey systematically brandished ever since by all the so-called “pacifist” movements.

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

2. From year to year the pressure increases to make everything function. As the social cybernetization progresses, the normal situation becomes more urgent. And from then on, in an absolutely logical way, the situations of crisis and malfunction multiply. A power failure, a hurricane, or a social movement, do not differ from the point of view of Empire. They are disturbances. They must be managed. For the moment, that is to say on account of our

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

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

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

1. The Left is periodically routed. This amuses us but it is not enough. We want its rout to be final. With no remedy. May the specter of a reconcilable opposition never again come to haunt the minds of those who know they won't fit into the capitalist process. The Left – everybody admits this today, but will we still remember the day after tomorrow? – is an integral part of the neutralization mechanisms peculiar to liberal society. The more the social implosion proves real, the more the Left invokes "civil society." The more the police exercises its arbitrary will with impunity, the more they claim to be pacifist. The more the state throws off the last judicial formalities, the more they become "citizens". The greater the urgency to appropriate the means of our existence, the more the Left exhorts us to appropriate the conditions of our submission, to wait and demand the mediation, if not the protection, of our masters. It is the Left which enjoins us today, faced with governments which stand openly on the terrain of social war, to make ourselves heard by them, to write up our grievances, to form demands, to study economics. From Léon Blum to Lula, the Left has been nothing but that: the party of the man, the citizen and civilization. Today this program coincides with the complete counter-revolutionary program. Which consists in maintaining all the illusions that paralyze us. The calling of the Left is therefore to expound the dream of what only empire can afford. It represents the idealistic side of imperial modernization, the necessary steam-valve to the unbearable pace of capitalism. It is even shamelessly

people who, on the opposing side, get organized rather than get indignant, writes in Le Monde: "More than a war against terrorism, what is at stake is the extension of democracy to the parts of the [Arab and Muslim] world that threaten liberal civilization. For the construction and the defense of which we have worked throughout the 20th century, during the First, and then the Second World War, followed by the Cold War – or Third World War." Nothing in this shocks us; nothing catches us unawares or radically alters our feeling towards life. We were born inside the catastrophe and with it we have drawn up a strange and peaceable relation of habit.

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

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

Many wonder how no part of the left or far-left, that none of the known political forces, is capable of opposing this course of events. "But we live in a democracy, right?" They can go on wondering as long as they like: nothing that is expressed in the framework of politics will ever be able to limit the advance of the desert, because politics is part of the desert.

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

Wherever the classical conception of politics prevails, prevails the same impotence in front of the disaster. That this impotence is widely

distributed between a variety of eventually reconcilable identities does not make the slightest difference. The anarchist from the FA,⁵ the council communist, the Trotskyist from ATTAC and the Republican Congressman start from the same amputation, propagate the same desert.

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

That is how the classical definition of politics spreads the desert: by abstracting humans from their worlds, by disconnecting them from the network of things, habits, words, fetishes, affects, places, solidarities that make up their world, their sensible world, and that gives them their specific substance.

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

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

Therefore we say that the central political fact of the last thirty years went unnoticed. Because it took place at such a deep level of reality that it cannot be considered as "political" without bringing about a revolution in the very notion of the political. Because this level of reality is also the one where the division is elaborated between what is regarded as real and what is not. This central fact is the triumph of existential liberalism. The fact that it is now considered natural for everyone to relate to the world on the basis of his own distinct life. That life consists in a series of choices, good or bad. That each one can

alternatives to find. That we could, in other words, lift ourselves out of the situation that we are in, to discuss it in a calm way, between reasonable people.

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

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

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

In a general way, we do not see how anything else but a force, a reality able to survive the total dislocation of capitalism, could truly attack it, could pursue the offensive until the very moment of dislocation.

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

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

Proposition VII

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

Scholium

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

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

be defined by a set of qualities, of properties, that make him or her, by their variable weighting, a sole and irreplaceable being. That the idea of the contract adequately epitomizes the relations of commitment between individuals, and the idea of respect epitomizes all virtue. That language is only a tool to come to an understanding.

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

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

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

When they see us withdraw from the painful rituals – the general assembly, the meeting, the negotiation, the protest, the demand –

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

Proposition III

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

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

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

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

We envisage this with serenity.

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

we often hear about everything being "free" in the sense of "free shops," "free transport," "free meals." We would rather speak of communism, for we cannot forget what this "freedom" implies in terms of organization, and in the short term, of political antagonism.

So, the construction of the Party, in its most visible aspect, consists for us in the sharing or communization of what we have at our disposal. Communizing a place means: setting its use free, and on the basis of this liberation experimenting with refined, intensified,

and complexified relations. If private property is essentially the discretionary power of depriving anyone of the use of the possessed thing, communization means depriving only the agents of Empire from it.

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

And when this is not obvious, there is discussion, and in the worst of cases, there is the gamble.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Being attentive to worlds, to their sensible configurations, is exactly what renders impossible the isolation of something like “relations of production.” In the places we open, the means we share, it is this grace that we look for, that we experience. To name this experience,

Scholium

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

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

Running after the movements.

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

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

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

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

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

Activists mobilize themselves against the catastrophe. But only prolong it. Their haste consumes the little world that is left. The answer of the activist to urgency remains itself within the regime of urgency, with no hope of getting out of it or interrupting it. The activist wants to be everywhere. She goes everywhere the rhythm of the breakdown of the machine leads her. Everywhere she brings her pragmatic inventiveness, the festive energy of her opposition to the catastrophe. Without fail, the activist mobilizes. But she never gives

herself the means to understand how it is to be done. How to hinder in concrete terms the progress of the desert, in order to establish inhabitable worlds here and now.

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

Old leftist militantism provides the opposite example. There is something remarkable about the impermeability of militants in the face of situations. We remember a scene in Genoa: about 50 militants of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire¹ wave their red flags labelled "100% to the Left." They are motionless, timeless. They vociferate their calibrated slogans, surrounded by peace-police. Meanwhile, a few meters away, some of us fight the lines of carabinieri, throwing back teargas canisters, ripping up the sidewalk to make projectiles, preparing Molotov cocktails with bottles found in the trash and gasoline from upturned Vespas. When compelled to comment on us the militants speak of adventurism, thoughtlessness. Their pretext is that the conditions are not right. We say that nothing was missing, that everything was there, but them.

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

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

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

that feels it. The need is just the name of the relationship through which a certain sensible being gives meaning to such or such element of his world. That is why those who have no worlds – metropolitan subjectivities for instance – have nothing but whims. And that is why capitalism, although it satisfies like nothing else the need for things, only spreads universal dissatisfaction; because to do so it has to destroy worlds.

By communism we mean a certain discipline of the attention.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Needs are not what capitalist rule has accustomed us to. To need is never about needing things without at the same time needing worlds. Each of our needs links us, beyond all shame, to everything

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

Fighting for a guaranteed income is, at best, condemning ourselves to the illusion that an improvement of capitalism is necessary to get out of it. Whatever form it takes, it is always the same dead end: the subjective resources mobilized may be revolutionary; yet they remain inserted in a program of radical reforms. Under the pretext of overcoming the alternative between reform and revolution we sink into an opportune ambiguity.

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

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

Just as the witches had to be disposed of, their medicinal knowledge as well as the communication between the spheres which they allowed to exist, today peasants have to renounce their ability to plant their own seeds in order to maintain the grip of multinational

corporations and other bodies of agricultural policy.

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

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

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

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

There is tax evasion, fictitious employment, insider dealings and fake bankruptcies, embezzlement of grants and insurance fraud, forged documents and welfare scams. There are the voyages across borders in airplane baggage holds, the trips without a ticket through a town or a country. Fare-dodging and shoplifting are the daily practices of thousands of people in the metropole. And there are illegal practices of trading seeds that have saved many plant species. There are illegalities that are more functional than others for the capitalist world-system. There are some that are tolerated, others that are encouraged, and eventually others that are punished. An improvised vegetable garden on a wasteland has every chance of being flattened by a bulldozer before the first harvest.

If we consider the sum of the laws of exception and customary rules that govern the space that anyone goes through in one day, there is henceforth not a single existence that can be assured of impunity. There exist laws, codes and decisions of jurisprudence that make

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

Proposition VI

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

Scholium

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

The most extreme separation reveals the content of the word “communism.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

every existence punishable; it would just be a matter of applying them to the letter.

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

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

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

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

We know it is too early and also that it is too late, that is why we have

time. We have ceased to wait.

Proposition IV

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

Scholium

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

Liberalism may have invented the individual, but it was born mutilated. The liberal individual, which expresses him or herself better than ever in the pacifist and civil rights movements of today, is supposed to be attached to his or her freedom as far as this freedom does not commit him or herself to anything, and certainly does not try to impose itself upon others. The stupid precept “my freedom ends where that of another begins” is received today as an unassailable truth. Even John Stuart Mill, though one of the essential agents of the liberal conquest, noticed

themselves as parties to the world civil war.

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

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

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

Many that leave get lost. Many never arrive.

Our strategy is therefore the following: to immediately establish a series of foci of desertion, of secession poles, of rallying points. For the runaways. For those who leave. A set of places to take shelter from the control of a civilization that is headed for the abyss. It is a matter of giving ourselves the means, of finding the scale in which all those questions, which when addressed separately can drive one to depression, can be resolved. How to get rid of all the dependencies that weaken us? How to get organized so as to no longer have to work? How to settle beyond the toxicity of the metropole without “leaving for the countryside”? How to shut down the nuclear plants? How to not be forced, when a friend goes mad, to resort to psychiatric pulverization; or to the acerbic remedies of mechanistic medicine when he falls ill? How to live together without mutually dominating each other? How to react to the death of a comrade? How to ruin empire?

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

“moralization” of any form of autonomous organization. All that exceeded the ideal of the honest worker was marginalized as gang behavior. In the end there was the mafia on the one hand and the unions on the other, allied in their reciprocal amputation.

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

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

All that deserts.

All that stands out.

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

that an unfortunate consequence ensues: one is permitted to desire anything, on the sole condition that it is not desired too intensely, that it does not go beyond the limits of the private, or in any case beyond those of public “free expression”.

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

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

Existential liberalism is the spontaneous ethics suitable for social democracy considered as a political ideal. You will never be a better citizen than when you are capable of renouncing a relation or a struggle in order to maintain your place. It will not always be exactly easy going, but that is precisely where existential liberalism is efficient: it even provides the remedies to the discomforts that it generates. The cheque to Amnesty International, the fair trade

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

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

If the obsession of the founders of liberalism was the neutralization of sects, it is because they united all the subjective elements that had to be banished in order for the modern state to exist. For a sectarian life is, above all, what is adequate to its particular truth – namely a certain disposition towards things and events of the world, a way of not losing sight of what matters. There is a concomitance between the birth of “society” (and of its correlate: “economy”) and the liberal redefinition of the public and the private. The sectarian community is in itself a threat to what is referred to by the pleonasm “liberal society”. It is so because it is a form of organization of the secession. Here lies the nightmare of the founders of the modern state: a section of collectivity detaches itself from the whole, thus ruining the idea of social unity. Two things that society cannot bear: that a thought may be incorporated, in other words that it may have an effect on an existence; that this incorporation may be not only transmitted, but also shared, communized. All this is enough to discredit as a “sect” any

territory, the same scission between everyday life and political activity, the same identity paranoia. In addition, for the luckiest, the luxury of periodically fleeing from their local poverty by introducing it somewhere else, where it is still exotic.

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

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

We remember the beginnings of the labor movement.

They are close to us.

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

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

It is in the United States that the indistinction between forms of workers’ organization and organized criminality was the most tangible. The power of the American proletarians at the beginning of the industrial era stemmed from the development, within the community of workers, of a force of destruction and retaliation against capital, as well as from the existence of clandestine solidarities. In response to the perpetual reversibility of the worker into the criminal, a systematic control was called for: the

living allowed in the metropole. The normal state is the isolation of everyone in their private cubicle. This is where they return tirelessly, however great the encounters they make elsewhere, however strong the repulsion they feel.

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

In “traditional societies” isolation was the harshest sentence that could be passed on a member of the community. It is now the common condition. The rest of the disaster follows logically. It is only the narrow idea that everybody has of their own home that makes it seem natural to leave the street to the police. The world could not have been made so uninhabitable, nor sociality so intently controlled – from shopping centers to bars, from company headquarters to illicit backrooms – had not everyone beforehand been granted the shelter of private space.

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

collective experience beyond control.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Proposition V

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

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

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

Scholium

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

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

That in us which is most singular calls to be shared. But we note this: not only is that which we have to share obviously incompatible with the prevailing order, but this order strives to track down any form of sharing of which it does not lay down the rules. For instance, the barracks, the hospital, the prison, the asylum, and the retirement home are the only forms of collective